

Hugs not hazmat suits for people with HIV: Casey House celebrates 30 years of compassion

March 1, 2018- (Toronto, ON) Thirty years ago today, fear of AIDS ran so deep Casey House's first patient was delivered to the door by a team of medics wearing hazmat suits. He was greeted at Canada's first AIDS hospice with an embrace. It was the first time he had been touched in months.

Three decades later, Casey House has evolved to become Canada's only stand-alone hospital for people with HIV/AIDS. Casey House serves people living with HIV and an ever more complex mix of medical and social needs. Today, Casey House works to build capacity for wellness among a group of people who frequently face barriers to accessing health care. The inter-disciplinary clinical team practises harm reduction, acknowledges trauma, and addresses mental health issues and the effects of stigma.

Despite visits from celebrities in the nineties, including Princess Diana and Elizabeth Taylor, which helped mitigate some of the fear, stigma is still a pervasive issue for those living with HIV. Casey House has recommitted to its activist roots, reaching beyond its four walls to address prejudice with their #SmashStigma campaign. #SmashStigma launched last fall with June's HIV+ Eatery, a pop-up restaurant staffed by 12 HIV+ people working as cooks, generating global conversation.

Founded by social justice advocate June Callwood and a group of intrepid volunteers, Casey House has a long history of community engagement. Boasting volunteers, donors and staff members who have been involved since 1988, there remains a strong commitment to a health care model founded on dignity and compassion.

Joanne Simons, CEO of Casey House says:

"I am honoured to be at Casey House to celebrate this milestone. We have had a tremendous year and on our 30th anniversary, we take time to reflect on the work of the community, board of directors, staff and volunteers who made the dream of our new hospital a reality. And, we pay great respect to June Callwood and all the founders for their fierce determination and spirit in 1988. Casey House continues to provide care with unequivocal compassion."

Casey House is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a variety of open houses throughout the year, beginning this spring.

About Casey House: Casey House is Canada's first and only stand-alone hospital for people living with HIV/AIDS, and provides inpatient, day health care and community programming, including outreach. Through our innovative and comprehensive approach, we remain one of the few places where people with HIV/AIDS can seek care without judgment. caseyhouse.com

For further information:

Lisa McDonald, communications specialist

416-962-4040 ext. 4006 lmcdonald@caseyhouse.ca