



Communiqué



Building relationships, creating community



Mentorship

Legacy Project
Testimonials
Experiences
Personal Stories

Legacy Project

“The Need to Be”

Taking the time to get to know one another is a beautiful thing. Seeing community change and grow while embracing it by being part of the change is a beautiful thing. Change can be good. HIV is changing and we are the reason why the Legacy Project was created. It addressed a gap that was identified and was born from research.

Remember sharing your story with the “Life line” exercise when you shared a personal moment with a stranger. Sharing information with someone you don’t know during group activities was based on trust. This was only the beginning. Some mentoring relationships have now been developing for a year and a half. We are 80 participants strong and growing and this is exciting but also can become challenging.

The Legacy project is developing clear volunteer policies to ensure accountability and transparency. We will be addressing your concerns with engagement and growth of the project. Please be mindful of the process as we work on establishing these to address various concerns.

I will like to show my appreciation to each and every one of you for your commitment and dedication to the growth and success of the Legacy Project.



“The need to be more than the reflection of myself” Derek Yee



Orientation session # 4 - participants and facilitators.

“Legacy Spotlight”

The next Spotlight Event is planned for late August early September 2011 to give you the participants the opportunity to interact with mentors and mentees from all of our four orientation sessions held so far. At the event you will discover more regarding our diverse participants through a variety of open communication exercises. The facilitated process of getting to know each other through group activities will increase our sense of trust and community. This is also an opportunity to increase your self-awareness through interactive participatory exercises to build your self esteem and help clarify personal boundaries through practice of dynamic listening skills and learning how to respect personal boundaries and comfort levels.

“Reflective Practice”

The next Reflective Practice session is planned for June 27 and 28 2011, providing you the opportunity to share information on the valuable knowledge gained through experiential learning. Mentor and mentee from the four orientation sessions are all invited to attend one of the sessions. If you are in a peer based relationship please have the conversation with your match and decide on an individual date to attend. This will support being comfortable sharing and listening to others and valuing knowledge gained through experiential learning and valuing different communication tools to opens doors and makes others feel that they are being heard.

“Group Mentoring”

Group Mentoring was a way forward to address challenges and topics of common interests amongst the participants, providing everyone the opportunity to involve themselves as part of a community learning and growing together. The first group mentoring was on “Baking multigrain bread in a social setting”. The next couple of group sessions were on “How to Navigate Social media sites” as a way of communication. We have also recognized the challenges of Parents or Parents-to-be who are living with HIV/AIDS and our need to learn from each other, so in order to maximize communal learning, participation and leadership we created “PHA Parenting” group mentoring sessions. (LPG).

If you have a suggestion for a topic that you will like to learn more about or develop a workshop that you want to take the lead in or to co facilitate with a peer please talk to me.

“Practicum Opportunities”

Practicum opportunities were identified and will help to further the development of the specific goals of the Mentee. These are placements in relationships that support the developmental goal matched with interest and skill with specific mentors in a professional area of interest identified.

Legacy project participants are developing secondary mentors as their needs and areas of interest have developed to grow to include the broader non-HIV community.



My Experience as a Mentee in the Legacy Project at CAAT

By Amanuel Tesfamichael

It was in April 2010 that I received an information flyer about a “Legacy Project” at the Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT). As I have understood it then, the project is basically to develop a legacy of mentor – mentee support in the community.

Initially, I was hesitant as to whether to sign up as a mentee or mentor. As a newcomer with huge career ambitions and as an individual that doesn’t quiet boast a significant network, I finally decided to sign up as mentee. When I walked into the initial workshop, honestly, I was not sure what to expect, though I was hopeful to see a good mixture of community members in the room.

After some background information on the project and going through the process of mentee-mentor formation, the real mentee-mentor matching process started. I was matched with a mentor and I now am describing the experience of our mentorship journey.

It didn’t take us long to meet in person after we signed our initial mentee-mentor contract which included expectations, meeting times, potential conflict of interest and exit strategy. We met bi-weekly for the first 3 months in addition to frequent e mails and phone communication. I was in a critical stage of my graduate study – formulating a practical research idea. My mentor relied on his own knowledge and his networks to assist me in sorting out my plan and as a result I am now successfully undertaking relevant and realistic research projects.

Above all, he coached me to clearly define my long term and short term career goals in addition to the invaluable support and coaching he provided in my academic work, as well as the subaequent job search, resume preparation and job interview preparation.

He has also helped me immensely in my personal life to help me regain my self esteem and to believe in myself – It is not easy to find a person you can rely on and confide in this world of mixed views. He helped me to trust him by showing me unsaid trust and understanding.

Sometimes I ask my self what should I pay in return – as yet nothing is the answer except gratitude!

Christian’s Story: A Mentee’s Testimonial of the Legacy Project.

By Christian Hui

I have been involved with the Legacy Project since October 2010, and as a mentee, I would have to say “The Legacy Project has changed my life for the better in many ways”. Before joining Legacy, I had set a goal to return to school and become a social services worker, and was just re-acquainting myself as a volunteer after a few years’ break from being involved in the HIV/AIDS community. Boy, was I glad that I signed up for the project! In my orientation session, not only did I meet a great group of community members, mentors and mentees, but I also got to learn about how to establish and negotiate boundaries, resolve interpersonal conflicts, and how to listen effectively and empathetically through the use of dynamic listening.

The best outcome of attending the Legacy orientation session was I had learnt more about myself, and I am grateful to have been paired with a wonderful mentor who guided me on my personal goals and ways to become more involved in the community. My experience with Legacy was so positive that I felt I would want to become more active and involved with the project. With the encouragement and guidance of the Legacy Project coordinator, Derek Yee, I started doing some volunteering work for the Legacy Project, and was later hired as a Peer Assistant for the Newcomer’s Sexual Health Project of CAAT in January 2011.

Being involved with the Legacy Project has allowed me to learn about the many PHA-capacity trainings available. Since Legacy, I have attended the HIV/Immigration training offered by CAAT, learnt more about HIV/AIDS treatment and support through the Ethno-racial Treatment Support Network’s Level 1 training, and became a part of PWA’s Poz Prevention team as well as a peer for the Ontario HIV/AIDS Substance Use Treatment Program.

It is through my involvement with Legacy that I learnt about the GMIPA principle, and I must say the Legacy Project truly follows through with its mandate and commitment to build meaningful capacities for PHAs. Since my Legacy orientation in October, I have become a much more confident person and have slowly and steadily worked toward my goals of returning to school and becoming more involved in the community: I am currently the Support Program mentee at Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS), and will be returning to school full time in September at George Brown College in the Social Services Worker program. From the bottom of my heart, thank you Legacy!

A True Love Story - My spiritual journey begins

By Mark Byles

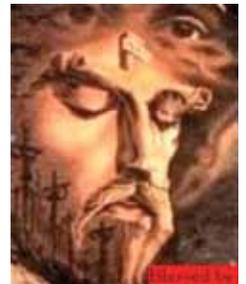
To set the record directly, I am NOT RELIGIOUS, but relationship driven. I don't belong to or am I a member of any organized religious group, nor do I go to any specific CHURCH. My challenges included my marital break up, my drug addiction, my sexual orientation, the color of my skin and my HIV status. My life journey has brought me into a loving personal relationship with GOD, who I choose to call my HIGHER POWER. This journey happened as I was growing up as a Roman Catholic in one of the most homophobic countries in the world, Jamaica.

I am able to transfer this love unto others, encouraging and bringing that ray of hope through the Legacy Mentoring Project, a program that I am forever grateful to. Sit back, relax and hopefully my journey will speak to the readers, one life at a time. My spiritual journey of discovering acceptance through God, even as a gay man.

I have come to know and experience an unconditionally loving God, who accepts me just the way I am, with all my broken pieces and baggage. This is demonstrated through the unconditional love of others who have the Spirit of God living in them, and getting to know and understand your journey here on earth, filled with love, compassion, grace (unmerited favor), humility, joy, peace, gentleness, faithfulness, wisdom and patience. Through the power of His Holy Spirit living in me; I as a PHA practice the five principles of being and effective leader given my own life experiences.



As mentioned before, my passion for things SPIRITUAL stems from my own life journey, a journey including struggling with my identity, resulting in issues with rejection that I took into adulthood. This rejection manifested itself in emotional neglect from close family members, being a victim of homophobic bullying and not living up to societies' image of a man to my friends and contemporaries back home in Jamaica, racial and ethnic discrimination faced after migrating to Canada and many more instances of rejection. I have come to realize and totally accept that I can affect change. However, I depend on my spiritual beliefs to give me the strength, wisdom, direction and purpose for my life and with my involvement with the legacy project I can help my peers learn about their spiritual side. Because I know and continue to experience God's unconditional love for me that knows no boundaries, I can truly say that this love has also resulted in me increasingly loving my self and others. To keep God's Circle of Love flowing I must pour out God's love unto others, encouraging and bringing that ray of hope. OH WHAT A LOVE STORY!!! We all can experience this LOVE STORY.



Samuel's Story

A few years ago I received an eagle feather from the Indigenous Community through a friend of mine. He commanded me and said: "I am leaving this feather here at your place. This feather is from the line of mentors and I pass it on to you as I see your leadership growing."

As a matter of fact, at that time I had started working on a documentary short film called El Cañaveral which soon enough became El Retorno and a feature film. Most of what had been filmed here in Toronto reflected the story of one of our peers from Latinos Positivos.

"THE RETURN" ("EL RETORNO") is a seventy minute documentary shot on digital video and super 8 mm film that portrays Joaquín Ramírez's struggle to free himself of the system that oppresses him. Fearing for his life, Joaquín, a member of the HIV+ gay community and a Salvadorian political activist, sets in motion a desperate attempt to seek asylum in Canada but the outcome of his refugee claim looks bleak. He is given a reprieve on a deportation order by a Federal Judge who orders a judicial review. Six months later he receives a letter in the mail summoning him to a meeting with an immigration officer at the Border Agency on Airport Road on the day after Canada Day 2009. They have a response for him and he must come in person. On the way to the meeting Joaquín says that he's not so sure he'll get a positive answer.

Joaquin, is now a permanent resident of Canada.

I travelled in December 2010 to El Salvador to gather images portraying what life is like for a PHA over there; what the country looks like and interviews with community workers including doctors and human rights activists.

Now, I am back in Toronto and I am in the process of editing the footage which does not do justice to over four years of work that this project has taken so far.

Thanks to the Legacy program, I have understood the concept of mentorship and therefore I have allowed myself to learn from my peers and hope to have a film ready for you in the months to come.

Meegwetch
Samuel López
Filmmaker



* Photo: Samuel López

Come Parent with The Legacy Project PHA Parenting Group (LPG)
By Paul Cogan

The Legacy Project PHA Parenting Group (LPG) was created when a need was identified to support parents involved in Legacy mentoring relationships.

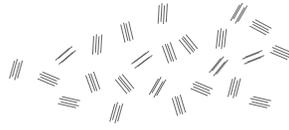
LPG members share common parenting interests and challenges. Members share lived experiences while offering useful parenting information, advice and suggestions to cope with challenging parental issues. Members find parenting encouragement, friendship and connections within LPG.

LPG assists PHA parents to better understand their parental roles in supporting their children, their families, and each other while working to resolve parental issues such as coping with grief, loss and learning parenting resiliency.

LPG does not replace medical or professional counseling but is intended to support PHA parents through the sharing of lived experiences in order to assist in the development of coping skills which have been validated by peer PHA parents. This validation process allows PHA parents to get past any shame their respective parenting problem may impart upon them while assisting them to recognize their parental responsibilities in their family's problem resolution process without imparting blame. This provides PHA parents with the benefits of the collective experiences of their peers while helping them to learn to apply proven lived strategies in dealing with their respective parental challenges.

LPG allows for the building of a parenting support network through the development of community. The friendships and contacts made in the PHA Parenting Group allow Legacy Members to continue to build, learn, and grow in their Legacy mentoring relationship(s).





Catherine Mossop

Mentoring Consultant, Legacy Project

A moment can change a life in such wonderful ways ... When I became involved with the Legacy Project, I knew a great deal about mentoring and quite little about the challenges within the HIV community; so, here I use this little vignette to tell a story that touched me so deeply.

On this January evening, we were at the lake-side conference centre to orient the first group of participants. I was looking for the lodge when I heard the voice of one of the participants:

“Caaaathhhherine??!!” he called.

“Yes?!” I called back.

He rushed to catch-up to me and breathlessly, yet with lots of enthusiasm, he inquired:

“I think it would be wonderful to have a bon-fire by the lake! What do you think?”

“Well,” I responded. “It is -16 degrees at the moment and it is just going to get colder – I don’t want to dampen your enthusiasm, but it is cold”.

“Oh!”, he said with such a flourish and continued: “I just thought it would be such a wonderful bonding experience, we so rarely get out of town ... ”

“-16C and getting colder ... at night it is really cold, we don’t want to make people sick from the cold ... how about if we have a fire in the fireplace instead?”

I responded.

“OK then, a fireplace”, and off he went to help organize a fireplace.

Much later that evening, the fireplace was surrounded and stories unfolded; stories of loss, stories of anguish, stories of unbelievable courage, stories that would touch the hearts of all who had the privilege of presence.



By the conclusion of the two days, I had heard even more. And then, one person stood, and said: “when I was invited to participate in the Legacy Project, I was at the point of despair – I have lost my family, my career, my community, my country, everything that was a part of me – gone, and now after being here, sharing with everyone, meeting my mentor ... I have hope, I feel I am beginning to live again”.

That moment, changed my life forever – it brought perspective in a way I never knew possible – anything is possible ... we can have a bon-fire at -16C.



Collaborators

Christian Hui



Amanuel Tesfamichael



Samuel López



Mark Byles



Paul Cogan



Francisco C.



[Wanted: Creativity](#)

We are looking for creative people -working in writing, illustration, photography, and design - who share our vision and who are ready to join our team. Please contact Derek Yee for further information.

Communiqué

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