



ACET News Christmas 2023

The theme for World AIDS Day this year was “Let Communities Lead”. This provocative headline has a deep history and yet is laced with unfulfilled potential. Allowing the communities most impacted by HIV and also most marginalised within our societies take the lead role in driving towards the end of the story of AIDS will seem counterintuitive. Our inclination is that the powerful should remain in power, yet this upside-down proposal is the only way forward.

In the Christmas story we encounter an Empire set on counting its power and wealth through a census. But the power that will bring real transformation is hidden in the margins. The tiny community shaped around a scandalised teenage pregnancy beckons “a new and glorious morn.” The stories in our newsletter offer, we hope, a glimpse of such new beginnings.

And as we go into 2024, a new year, we hope that each of you will experience new beginnings and that we will all see real transformation in our communities and in our lives.

With warmest Christmas wishes, the ACET team:

Richard, Terrie, Vivienne, Luky, Hansi, Chipo, Olivia, Aishling and Lynn

HIV and AIDS Monument: ‘Embraced Loop’

On a chilly December afternoon, the **Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD**, unveiled the new HIV and AIDS Monument in Phoenix Park which remembers and honours all those who have died and those that cared for them. The successful proposal entitled ‘Embraced Loop’ uses an abstracted form of the HIV symbol, the red ribbon, to create an embrace of solidarity. It was designed by artists **Anaisa Franco** and **Michael R. DiCarlo**. There are already early plans for events to take place in 2024 at the monument to remember specific communities and ACET staff are looking forward to spending time there with clients in the new year.

The monument is in the People’s Park of the Phoenix Park, very close to Chesterfield Avenue.



“Monument to a Plague”: the Foundry at Google was the spectacular venue for this 27th November event

Stunning digital displays, including some from the ACET archives, told part of the story of HIV and AIDS in Ireland while the NAMES Quilt Project joined some of our own Quilt Group’s work in remembering those we have lost.

GCN, Irish Queer Archive, HIV Ireland and Dublin Pride were among the supporters and sponsors as **ACET’s Chipo Harper** and **Richard Carson** featured in a panel discussion on how we remember and memorialise HIV in Ireland. While our debate was brief, it illustrated the many facets of remembering that must continue into the future.

The video of the evening’s proceedings can be watched [here](#).





Hampers 2023

As always, we are so grateful to everyone who contributed towards our Christmas hampers: they bring much joy and a spark of light to what can often be a dark season.

We are in the midst of delivering them around Dublin and taking time for lots of care calls along on the way, checking in with everybody before the year ends.

We are grateful for the support of **Adelaide Road Presbyterian Church, Eden Collective, Trinity Church**, many individuals and **Dundrum Ladybirds** who kindly donated loads of extra treats (above) to be added in.

Honouring Ian Black

The ACET Ireland team are grieving with founder Terrie Colman-Black and her daughters Sian and Lucy after the death of their husband and father, **Ian Black**, on 11 November.

ACET started in 1992 with a budget of £378 and an answering machine in Ian and Terrie's back bedroom and from then on, Ian continued to provide space, time and expertise to ACET.

He tirelessly fundraised, especially in the early days when there were no government grants or steady funding. Ian was a member from when ACET was first incorporated, ever keen to be sure governance and administration were done well, helping to lay a strong foundation on which we could build our work.



Always very interested and engaged, at the end of every AGM Ian warmly thanked the staff and volunteers for all their efforts throughout the year.

We will miss him but his presence will be felt in the ongoing good work ACET continues to do.

Ian in 2020 helping to cut out masks from leftover quilt fabric for the Christmas hampers.

'Equal: Check + Chat' — a new mobile HIV and STI screening service

A joint initiative of **HIV Ireland** and **ACET**, the 'Equal: Check + Chat' van has been designed to facilitate friendly, efficient testing options, free at the point of use to multiple communities. The project broadens our reach around Leinster where sections of our community experience barriers to accessing face-to-face rapid HIV and other STI screening services.

Having the van pull up at a local community centre to offer out-of-hours, accessible and culturally appropriate screening services, provided in a friendly non-judgmental way, can only improve rates of testing for HIV and STIs among traditionally underserved communities.

This project is funded through **Gilead Sciences' "Zeroing In"** community grants programme, with additional funding from **GSK-ViiV** and **Certified Proud**.



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