

Promoting healthy sexuality

The Overcoming Resistance project is hosting a forum entitled Promoting Healthy Sexuality. The forum is intended to bring together community members to explore how people talk about and access the information and services needed to help maintain sexual and reproductive health across the life span.

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre project co-ordinator Amanda Workman explains the initiative behind the program, "Promoting sexual health involves recognizing the positive aspects of healthy sexuality. It also recognizes prevention of disease, prevention of unplanned pregnancy, and addressing abuse, exploitation and other negative consequences of uninformed sexual activity.

"Healthy sexuality includes the ability to enjoy and control our sexual and reproductive behavior without fear or shame. Our community is like other rural communities in that we are reluctant to speak openly about sexuality and sexual health. This fact limits our ability to assess risks and to choose healthy behaviors.

"Our community is not immune to sexually transmitted disease, infertility, unplanned pregnancy, sexual violence, or to the mental and

emotional impacts of uninformed sexual activity. The economic and social benefits of healthy sexuality awareness are significant. For these reasons it is important for us to overcome our resistance to talking about sexuality and to increase our awareness."

The forum opens on Thursday evening, March 31 at Immaculata Hall, St. Francis Xavier University.

Executive director of Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD) Katherine MacDonald will provide the keynote address reflecting on the impact and importance of access to sexual and reproductive health information from a global perspective.

ACPD mobilizes public support for international population and development issues "on the inter-

relationships between population growth and structure, the environment, over-consumption, poverty, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equity and equality, human rights, migration, economics, and other development issues."

On Friday, April 1, a full day of activities is planned with the goal of improving the health of constituent communities in Antigonish and

Guysborough. The forum represents an opportunity for community members to meet, share information and develop strategies on how to reduce barriers for people seeking access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Partners in the Overcoming Resistance project are the School of Nursing at St. Francis Xavier University, Xtending Hope Program

at St. Francis Xavier University Department of Women's Studies, St. Francis Xavier University, and the Guysborough Antigonish Stra Health Authority. This project funded by the AIDS Community Action Program, Health Canada and sponsored by The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. Contact Amanda Workman, Project Co-ordinator at 863-2501.

The Casket Mar 23/05