



# MEDIA RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Julia Smith  
Director of Communications  
BC Persons With AIDS Society

**Phone:** 604.893.2209 **Cell:** 604.612.0222

**Email:** julias@bcpwa.org

## **This AIDS hero arrives with clean needles and an iron will**

Vancouver BC – Armed with clean needles and an iron will Samantha Mohan is tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic head on. In honor of her unwavering commitment to the AIDS movement, for over 15 years, Mohan has been nominated for a prestigious AccolAIDS Award. AccolAIDS honor the extraordinary achievements and dedication of organizations, businesses, groups and individuals responding to the AIDS epidemic in BC. The Awards Gala will be held on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver.

For years, Mohan tried to establish a needle exchange in the Fraser Valley, however every time she got the facility set up community pressure, and sometimes personal harassment, forced her to close it. Not willing to give up, she started a mobile needle exchange. She continues to travel weekly to remote areas such as Agassiz and Boston Bar to provide harm reduction services to injection drug users. With similar determination Mohan refused to accept a common perception that youth should not discuss sexual transmitted diseases. Instead, she worked within the Fraser Valley community to establish the Youth AIDS Mentor Program, a unique youth driven AIDS education program.

“Heroes aren’t daunted by resistance and opposition,” says Glyn Townson, the Chair of the BC Persons with AIDS Society. “Samantha is a hero. She has fought hard and with compassion, against numerous odds, to prevent the virus wrecking havoc on the lives of women, youth and others.”

Mohan works with those groups who are increasingly at risk of contracting HIV: injection drug users, women, youth and Aboriginals. She has worked with Chilliwack Connection and the Pacific Community Resources Society for over 15 years. Though her work has often caused community censor, she has also built strong networks with city councils, the RCMP and other service providers. She was nominated for the AccolAIDS Award in the category of Health Promotion and Harm Reduction by colleagues at the Pacific Community Resources Society and Fraser Health.

AccolAIDS is one of BCPWA largest fundraising events. The gala includes gourmet cuisine, live entertainment and, silent and live auctions. Proceeds benefit the vital programs and services provided by the BC Persons With AIDS Society. Tickets are now on sale.

The British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society (BCPWA Society), a non-profit, consumer-driven organization is in its 21<sup>st</sup> year of operation, is dedicated to empowering persons living with HIV disease and AIDS through mutual support and collective action. As western Canada's largest AIDS organization, with a membership of more than 4,400 HIV+ individuals, the Society provides support and advocacy services, treatment information, and volunteer opportunities to its diverse membership.