**Changing perspectives with a Slice of Life**

Through years of education, AIDS awareness has changed from something incredibly taboo to an important discussion highlighted by World AIDS Day every Dec. 1.

“When I hear people talk about AIDS being a silent epidemic,” says Joanne Ashley, chair of HIV/AIDS Action, “honey… don’t even use those words in 2016. It truly was a silent epidemic but it’s changed dramatically I believe.”

For the fifth year in a row, Ashley brings a unique way to learn about AIDS to the Abilities Centre with the Slice of Life event later this month.

Ashley herself lost her brother to AIDS in 1991. At the time the negative stigma surrounding those infected was so great, the cause of death listed was simply cardiac arrest.

“He was an immensely bright man,” Ashley says. “We were raised in a small farming community and people would not have understood.”

Since losing her brother, Ashley, a former nurse, dedicated her time to learning all she could about AIDS and changing the perspective of anyone she could.

“How do you walk into a rotary club, at that point with a lot of men, and talk about AIDS?” says Ashley “Because they didn’t know about it.”

From this inner desire to erase the stereotype and honor her brother’s memory, Ashley changed the conversation on AIDS in the area.

The Slice of Life event has no charge and welcomes those interested to come take in a slice of something delicious like pizza or pie, while also being welcomed into a slice of the life of someone infected of affected by AIDS.

The evening will host seven speakers with unique stories of how AIDS has touched their lives in ten minute increments.

“The speakers are phenomenal,” Ashley says, “We choose them with care. We’ll have a couple of surprise people speaking, we can’t give everything away.”

Ashley is proud to put on an evening that goes at AIDS awareness from a different angle than similar events.

“We’re not preaching to them or talking to them about safer sex,” she says, “we’re letting these people say ‘I was born with it’ or ‘This is what happened to me’. That’s what it’s about, people giving their story from their own hearts and their slice of life.”