



July 2008

THE RIGHTS STUFF

Mental Health Rights Coalition

Our Mission: To encourage, enable and empower the voice and participation of consumers in the mental health system in Hamilton.

**Drop In and
Peer Support**

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,
Mon - Fri

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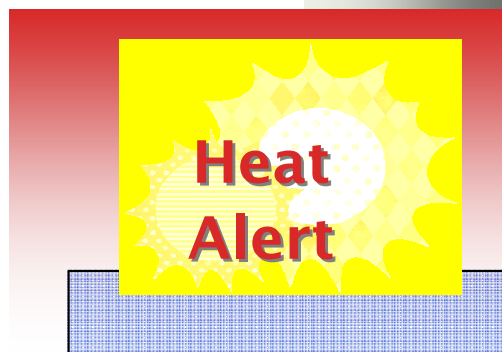
*Views and opinions ex-
pressed in this newsletter
represent those of individ-
ual contributors, and not
necessarily of The Mental
Health Rights Coalition.*

Stay Cool

Summer is fun for those who have lots of cool places to go for the day but for many mental health consumer/survivors and others who live with limited incomes it can be a difficult and even dangerous time. Many mental health consumer/survivors have other illnesses which may make them more vulnerable to the heat and there are even some medications which make consumers more vulnerable to the heat.

The Mental Health Rights Coalition and the city public health department work together to try to offer some relief in the heat. There are also things you can do to help yourself stay cool.

City spokesperson for the efforts being made to institute a municipal program for heat response, Steve Walsh, explained there is "no binary response to heat at the moment. The city has a three tier program which alerts people", but he agreed this may not be effective for those who do not have access to media reports. In a black out any media reports may be even more difficult to get because many



people do not have access to wireless radio and television.

Explaining the three tier system Walsh pointed out that the 40 degree humidex reading is "not a real value" and he says heat alerts are usually put into action when the temperature is 30 to 34 degrees C. He also pointed out, "it is difficult for science to define what is too hot from one community to another" because in cities like Hamilton, where poor air quality is often associated with high temperatures the real issues could begin at even lower temperatures.

One of the warning systems the city now has in
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Columnist blames all of us for Murder/Suicide in Calgary

By Peggy Guiller-Delahunt

Mental Health consumers have been talking about stigma for so long that our concern sometimes seems to fall on deaf ears. Some of our more assertive advocates have gone as far as to call it "discrimination" but still the general opinion often seems to be one which would just rather pretend that mental illness is something that only happens to people on the street or those who have done something to make themselves ill. In spite of all the statistics which tell people things like 20% of the population will experience mental illness there seems to be an alarming ignorance of mental health issues and a pervading opinion that it really isn't a problem for normal people.

It is unfortunate that it takes tragedy to wake communities up to the realities of mental illness.

Recently in Calgary, Joshua Lall, a 34 year old, successful, Calgary architect killed his wife, two of the couples three daughters, a tenant in their home and then killed himself.

In a Globe and Mail article on June 5, columnist Andre Picard, says, "There are those who do not want to say Mr. Lall was mentally ill for fear of besmirching his memory. Apparently, there is one thing more shameful than being a mass murderer, and that is being crazy."

Picard goes on to explain that Lall had told his wife he was stressed out and unable to sleep for a long time. He had told his parents he was not well, he booked some time off work, but he

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**If you would prefer to
receive an email copy of
this newsletter please
notify
the editor at
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I can't believe how quickly the time has gone since I began here. I'm still settling in to the job and learning about Mental Health Rights Coalition.

As I go out into the community on committees, as part of my work here, I am pleased to find that Mental Health Rights Coalition is highly regarded and respected as a leader in the community, particularly around peer support. This is a testimony of the work done by my predecessor, Deb Sherman, in the eight years she worked here. The groundwork she laid gives us a wonderful base for continued

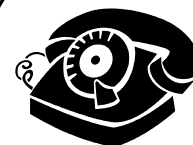
work and expansion of the vision for Mental Health Rights Coalition.

Summer can be a wonderful time for getting together with friends and family and I encourage you take advantage of that. For those who may not have a lot of family support I hope the Mental Health Rights Coalition will be a place where you will find the comfort and fellowship of a family atmosphere. We are here to support you and to have some fun with.

Public health has given us some items to help make your summer more comfortable. There is always

cold water and a place to get away from the heat for a while. We also have some personal care items which have been given to us for your use. When you need something be sure to ask us. If we don't have it we might be able to direct you to someone who does.

FOR SUPPORT....



**Give Us A Call! A Peer
Support Worker is
available Monday to
Friday, 11a.m.-4p.m.
905-545-2525**

Administrative Assistant

Peggy Guiler-Delahunt
mhrprograms@bellnet.ca

Living in the home of Friday the 13th motorcycle celebrations in Port Dover, I usually have a "get out of Dodge" attitude to the festivities. It isn't easy to be there because residents have to have a pass to move around town in their cars and most of the local businesses—with the exception of those which sell food and beer—are closed for the day.

This year however I stayed in town and worked with a group called Your Life Counts (yourlifecounts.org) to promote their "on line" service which offers a place for suicidal teens to go for help and support when they are struggling to stay alive.

It was a long hot day and some people made comments which were very hurtful but I understand that sometimes people say things which are insensitive because they just don't understand or because they have some pain of their own. In all it was a rewarding day. We made a little money for the organization with the sale of water and we handed out several hundred yellow ribbons attached to business cards with information on them. Many of those ribbons and cards found their way into the garbage cans down the street but we can only hope that some of them reached the lives of people who really need help.

July is the month with the highest suicide rates and I hope that anyone reading this, teens or adults, who may be considering suicide will seek out help. There is lots of help to be found in Hamilton and further afield.

If you or someone you know is suicidal please don't be afraid to ask for help.

You can always call 911 or visit the emergency department at the hospital. In Hamilton you can contact COAST at 905-972-8338. There is peer support available at Mental Health Rights Coalition on weekdays from 11 to 4 or you can call us at the



**MENTAL
HEALTH
RIGHTS
COALITION**

678 Main Street East, Suite 102
Hamilton, ON L8M 1K2

Phone 905-545-2525

*Our Mission is to
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empower the voice and
participation of
consumer/survivors in the
mental health system*

Peer Support Coordinator:

Amy Rogers

peersupport@bellnet.ca



As the summer heats up, so does peer support. The peer support team has gotten to know some new people recently at MHRC. It's exciting to know that more people are accessing our peer supporters.

Some people are coming by just to hang out in our drop in centre. While they are here, they are able to get to know our members and our staff. Sometimes it's nice just to be able to socialize with people and maybe make some new friends. We also have activities that people can participate in while they're here. Take a look at the calendar on the last page to find out what we're doing this month!

Members are also coming to Peer Support Workers for help with their goals. Whether those goals be to move to a new home, start a new training or education course, find a job, or learn to budget, peer support-

ers can help.

Peer supporters also help people by just being able to listen. Some people have many supports and are already connected to services, but still find that peer support helps. People call or stop by to access peer support for issues around symptoms, addictions, recovery, or problems with friends and family. Members also share their frustrations and accomplishments with the peer support team.

If you want to meet some new people, if you need support reaching your goals, or if you just need someone to listen, peer support could help you! You **do not** need to make an appointment or go through an intake process. Peer support is available for everyone.

We will have our next **Peer Support Volunteer meeting** on **Thursday, July**

17 at 2pm. We will discuss volunteer roles, expectations and ongoing learning opportunities. Please RSVP to Amy if you plan to attend.

Our next **Peer Support Worker meeting** will be on **Monday, July 21 at 10am.** All Peer Support Workers are expected to attend. Please RSVP to Amy.

Matches Available

Any consumer looking for on-going peer support by a trained volunteer is encouraged to call the Peer Support Coordinator, Amy Rogers, at 905-545-2525.

Up Coming Events of Interest

Annual General Meeting—

Monday, September 15 10—12:30—location to be announced. This meeting will include the election of officers to the board of directors. If you want to apply for a board position you must be a member of the Mental Health Rights Coalition for no less than three months. Applications for membership may be picked up at the coalition office or by requesting one via email at mhrprograms@bellnet.ca.

Application packages for the board will be made available by August and may also be requested by contacting the coalition in person, by phone or on the internet.

SCOPE Awards—Monday, September 15, 2008—12:30 to 3 p.m.— Location to be announced.

Information about SCOPE Awards and an application are included with this newsletter and are also available on the web site.

Canada Day in Hamilton

Friday, July 1, 2005, beginning at 7 p.m. at Bayfront and Pier 4 Parks.

- The Kevin MacLean Band
- Musical Fireworks at DUSK live to air on K-Lite FM, Oldies 1150 and 820 CHAM
- Free HSR bus shuttle service available from King/John Streets to Bayfront Park beginning at 6:00 p.m. and running until 11:45 p.m.

Other events taking place in the City of Hamilton include:

- Celebrations in Dundas Driving Park featuring the Dundas Rotary Pancake Breakfast from 8 a.m. until 12 noon.
- Canada Day Military Tattoo, Dundurn Park at 7 p.m.
- Lynden Canada Day Celebrations 11 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. Parade begins at 11a.m.

- It's Your Festival, Gage Park, June 30 – July 3, 2005

For more information contact the Special Events Office at 905 546-2424 ext. 2747.

No need to be Bored in this City

Great listings of local events at this web site.

<http://www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton>

If you know of coming events which may be of interest to mental health consumer/survivors in the Hamilton area please email at mhrprograms@bellnet.ca or call 905-545-2525

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place includes information about the use of fans.

"a fan may offer some comfort but there is evidence that the use of fans may actually increase the possibility of heat related illness."

Walsh expressed concern about people using fans in heat waves because, he says, "it is like using a convection oven". It just moves the heat around you more. He explained that while "a fan may offer some comfort but there is evidence that the use of fans may actually increase the possibility of heat related illness."

Making sure you use all the other means to keep cool along with fans Walsh says is very important. Things like drinking enough water seeking help if you have any symptoms of heat illness are crucial.

There have been suggestions that people who have community supports who have died or become ill because of the heat may not have been checked on often enough. Walsh says, studies show most of those with supports who have died or become ill actually were checked on within the previous 24 hours.

The city is planning a meeting on July 9th to consider the issue of heat warnings more carefully and Walsh says they will welcome input from those who are directly affected. There will be more information about this meeting at M H R C as it becomes available.

M H R C program

During the summer months the city will issue warnings to the public when there is an extreme heat alert. On those days there will be a heat alert sign in the M H R C window to let you know there is an alert. During our regular hours (11-4) members may drop in and get some cold water to drink and use the sun screen before going back out.

...drop in and get some cold water to drink and use the sun screen before you go back out. We also have a limited supply of hats.

The City of Hamilton Public Health Department has given M H R C a supply of hats, along with sunscreen and bottled water. Members are allowed only one bottle of water a day but are welcome to fill up the

bottle at the M H R C.

The M H R C is air conditioned and members are welcome to come and stay for as long as they need to during the day. All members are expected to be respectful of others at the coalition and are encouraged to take part in the planned activities for the day.

Public Health Program

The city of Hamilton has instituted a new program for hot days. When the temperature rises to 40C (with the humidex) for one day they will post a warning with the media and proper use of fans will be included in the announcements. If the temperature will be 40 for two days the warnings will include additional advice to check on elderly neighbours and consider air-conditioned public spaces (e.g. shopping malls, libraries) if home is uncomfortably hot. If the temperature remains at 40 or above for three days or more then the city will convene a City Emergency Control Group to consider how long the heat wave will continue and tailor an appropriate response which would include emergency plans in case of brown outs and black outs caused by high energy consumption.

Know the risks

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care says, "heat related deaths and illness are preventable, yet people die due to extreme heat every year." They explain that anyone can suffer from heat related illness when "their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool." Those at greatest risk, MHLTC says, are infants, people over 65, those with chronic medical conditions (heart disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes, etc.), people on certain types of medications (for high blood pressure, depression, insomnia, etc.), the homeless, people with limited mobility, with mental impairment and those who exercise or work vigorously outdoors or those who work in industries which are already hot (e.g. foundries, bakeries, dry cleaners.)

Symptoms

The MHLTC outlines some of the indications of a heat related problem are listed in the symptoms/signs below

- Heat cramps: painful muscular cramps, usually in the legs or abdomen
- Heat exhaustion: heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fainting

- Heat stroke: headache, dizziness, confusion or other altered mental state, fainting. Skin may be hot and dry, or the individual may be sweating due to high body temperature. This is a medical emergency that could be fatal.

Any increase of symptoms of a chronic, existing illness could also be indication of a heat related problem and increased symptoms should be treated.

If you have any of the above symptoms you should consult a health professional or call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

Any increase of symptoms of a chronic, existing illness could also be indication of a heat related problem and increased symptoms should be treated.

Have a Plan of Your Own

The MHLTC suggests there are some things you can do to look after yourself in the hot weather which will help avoid heat related illness. They are briefly outlined below.

- Check the weather and environment reports
- Wear light, loose fitting clothing
- Drink plenty of water or natural fruit juices
- Avoid alcohol, coffee, tea or cola
- Eat light, cool foods, and try to avoid using the oven or other hot appliances
- Stay in air conditioned rooms at home, with friends or in public places
- If you don't have air conditioning, open windows slightly but keep blinds and curtains closed on the sunny side of your home.
- Keep indoor lights low or turned off
- Take cool baths or showers periodically to cool down.
- If outdoors, stay in the shade and avoid strenuous physical activity
- Wear sun block and a hat if you are in the sun
- Check on your friends, family and neighbours who may be at risk regularly
- Do not leave people or pets in parked vehicles

Summer Romance

By John Gordon Kennard

Endless romantic summer nights

Busy cafes on streets with bright city lights

Help me to do my part

So I can stay in your heart

It only takes one look in your lovely eyes

And my feelings rise to the skies

And heart dances like a wind in the lovely trees.

An Idea I had

This section appears periodically in the Rights Stuff and is the work of members at the Mental Health Rights Coalition. The poetry and prose are the opinions of the authors and may not reflect the opinion of the Mental Health Rights Coalition. The Editor reserves the right to edit as seen fit, any material submitted for this column. Submissions from members are encouraged. They should be original material and include the name of the author. Names may be withheld from the readership if requested.



It was a little extra busy at the Mental Health Rights Coalition on June 26. Brian Awde (left), volunteer handy man spent the day replacing blinds and some other little jobs we found for him. Lance Dingman, Peer Support worker (right) put labels on envelopes for newsletter mailing in between his regular duties of peer support, program and reception.



Columnist blames all of us for Murder/Suicide in Calgary

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never sought medical help or talked about his issues at work.

Picard says, "if, Instead of hearing voices, Mr. Lall had been suffering heart palpitations, laboured breathing or other physical symptoms, do you think we would have hesitated ...before going to the emergency room or to a doctor?" He asks, "Why are physical wounds treated and mental wounds hidden?"

It is estimated that two thirds of mental health problems go undiagnosed, Picard explains. He says, "most people muddle through depression or ignore the strange voices rather than reach out for help. (And make no mistake, hearing voices and other forms of psychosis are a lot more common than most people realize.)"

"The mentally ill are not only among us, they are us."

The Globe article explains Mr. Lall was as a "loving father, an wonderful employee, a brilliant student and an all round good guy" and goes on to say, "Guess what?

So are most people with mental illness."

Picard states "The mentally ill are not only among us, they are us." He goes on to say, "yet we continue to view mental illness very differently from physical illness, as a type of moral failing and an affliction of losers.

The misconception that people with mental illness may be more violent than the rest of the population is just that. A misconception. Statistics in fact show people with mental illness are more likely to be victims of crime than they are to commit one.

Picard points out there is a "subset of people with untreated mental illness who are a danger to themselves and others." He adds, "Untreated mental illness destroys families in the most horrific ways imaginable."

The article clearly puts the onus for untreated illness on society. He says, "Mr. Lall undoubtedly heard other voices—the judgmental voices that are so commonplace in our society.

Stigma, says Picard, "is what keeps most










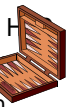










people from seeking help...leads those with mental illness to put on a smile to hide the searing pain inside...leads to isolation and to dangerous spirals downward.

Picard goes so far as to say, "Mr. Lall did not act alone. We are all complicit in those murders. Complicit because we turn away rather than reach out to those suffering from mental illness. Complicit in allowing so many barriers to are to exist. Complicit because we pretend this could never happen to us. Complicit because we refuse to say aloud that mental illness kills. Complicit in our silence."

Bravo to Picard for this brave and accurate comment. Shame on a society which does not heed the words and which might allow more tragedy to take place until one day it hits close enough to home to force them to pay attention.

Globe and Mail article at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080605.wpicard05/BNStory/specialScienceandHealth/?query=>



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	June 30 Closed	1 Canada Day Closed	2 11 Sign up for HPS trip to Valens 1 Karaoke 	3 1 Cards 	4 1 Board Games 	5
6	7 1 Card Games 	8 1 Movie 	9 9:45 HPS Trip to Valens Conservation Area 29 1 Cribbage	10 1 Karaoke 	11 1 A little artwork 	12
13	14 1 Card Games 	15 1 Craft 	16 11—Sign up for HPS trip to Port Dover 1 Backgammon  1-4 Peer Training	17 1 Movie  2 Peer Support Volunteer Meeting	18 1 Karaoke 	19
20	21 10 Peer Support Worker Meeting 1 Cards 	22 1 Karaoke 	23 9:30 HPS Trip to Port Dover 1 Movie  1 - 4 Peer Training	24 1 Card games 	25 1 A little artwork 	26
27	28 1 Karaoke Concert 	29 1 Tim Horton's Walk 	30 1 Birthday Party for July Birthdays 1:30 Bingo 1-4 Peer Training 	New this month: The Tim Horton's Walk (July 29th) —we will take a stroll to Tim's for a coffee. HPS has two trips this month—one to Valens Conservation area and the other to Port Dover. Sign up on July 2. You must sign up in person and hand in the \$2 on the assigned day.		