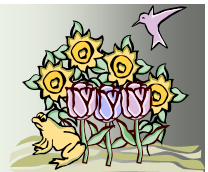




May 2008

# THE RIGHTS STUFF

Mental Health Rights Coalition



Drop In and Peer Support

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,

*Our Mission: To encourage, enable and empower the voice and participation of consumers in the Mental Health System in Hamilton.*

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## Pat Capponi challenges the "Crazies"

by Peggy Guiler-Delahunt

Well known mental health consumer/survivor advocate and author, Pat Capponi, spoke casually and frankly to the 75 mental health consumer/survivors gathered at Liuna Station in Hamilton on April 23 for the first annual Hamilton Peer Recovery Network Conference.

Capponi spoke of many of the wrongs of the system but also told consumers they need to "get ready for success" and "get started by doing."

Referring to consumers as "crazies" Caponni explained she uses that term because

*(Continued on page 2)*

Conference organizers were very pleased with the results of the day and consumers were enthusiastic about the special event just for them.

Next months newsletter will feature the findings and many comments from the event.

If you would prefer to receive an email copy of this newsletter please notify the editor at [mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca](mailto:mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca)

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter represent those of individual contributors, and not necessarily of The Mental Health Rights Coalition.



Pat Capponi address Consumer Conference

## Smitherman announces 2.25% increase to mental

An announcement of a 2.25% increase to the base budget for community mental health service providers by Minister of Health, George Smitherman was a highlight of his talk to the April 11 annual meeting of the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addictions Programs held in Toronto. The day also included several workshops and ratification of OFCMHAP business for the past year.

The budget increase announcement was greeted with applause and surprise by the members present.

Smitherman said, the increase is monumental in the present climate" and stressed it would take at least three months to see the money "roll out" to the

service providers.

The minister stated there are two issues he sees facing the "vision for health care" in Ontario. The first, Smitherman says is "too many people are having emergency room visit experience which is not good." He added that he believes many of those who access care might be better served by having better ways to "connect with care" which is available rather than having actual emergency room care. He stressed the importance of making the best use of the resources we already have and said what is needed is "to improve the reality and perceptions of those people

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Capponi Address to the “Crazies”

(Continued from page 1)

she doesn't want people to get “hung up on the labels” of their diagnosis because the labels “make us more suspicious about what they tell us. “

Capponi relaxed her listeners and got a laugh when she began her talk by telling the group that most of the consumers in Toronto she talks with are “highly medicated” and she was happy to see that the Hamilton consumers are “lowly medicated.”

For the first part of her talk Capponi spoke of her personal experience as a mental health consumer and her subsequent work as an advocate. She went on to tell about how her focus has changed from mental health to poverty issues because she believes “money is better than medication”.

Capponi challenged the consumers to take a more active role in their own recovery and in advocating for themselves. She said “ the world is waiting for us to break out of the mental health box.” She jokingly reminded consumers “being a mental patient is not a vocation” and encouraged them to begin the move out of poverty and start by moving their bodies, using their brains more and learning to eat properly.

Upstairs in the Crazy House was Capponi's first book and she told the group about some of her experience in the place which she depicted in that book. The 57 year old said her experience there began when she was still a teenager and she was the youngest person there. She described it as “something out Charles Dickens” and said no one

**...“something out Charles Dickens” and said that no one every thought that it was an “inappropriate place for us”...**

**“it was a safe place in an odd way and it was scary to think of going outside”...**

every thought that it was an “inappropriate place for us”.

“It was a safe place in an odd way and it was scary to think of going outside” says Capponi. She explained that after a while she began to think “somebody had made a mistake” and she started to make moves out to the community to see if she could make changes. She started at City Hall in Toronto and found another self proclaimed “crazy person”, David Revell, who was an alderman and willing to help.

Not content to upholster furniture for the rest of her life Capponi said she wanted to work with people and was able to find a job working at the Parkdale drop in.

At the drop in she soon began to under-

**...poor, hungry, had no sense of their own rights and they were being “infantilized” both at home in their boarding homes and at the drop in.”**

stand more about the treatment of mental health consumers and saw that the people she was working with were “poor, hungry, had no sense of their own rights and they were being infantilized both at home in their boarding homes and at the drop in.”

That was when she decided to write her book and it took some time but two years later Penguin published it.

She encouraged the group to find things they could do to make changes and said “if you don't think one person can make a difference you should look at a mosquito in a bedroom at night.”

The next stage of Capponi's work has taken her on trips around the province and then around the country. She says she “would bring all the crazy folks together in a nice hotel for three days”...“with no staff.” They would talk about their diagnosis and the grief they

suffered because of it. They talked about family and how everything had changed in their lives. Everyone else was moving on while “you tread water”.

Also noted was the use of drugs and alcohol by so many consumers who are trying to find relief from the pain of illness and poverty.

Describing her new book, Dispatches from the Poverty Line, Capponi says, “money doesn't buy happiness but it can buy us a break from the pain.”

While trying to work within the system Capponi realized “the guys who can really help us are the guys on the outside.” She says she began to understand it was the bankers and business people who really had the power to help with her cause and be the best allies.

“Poverty steals our potential more than mental illness does,” says Capponi.

She explained, ...‘we are robbed of our childhood...we keep waiting for a cure...people treat us like children” and then she told how the only way to change it is to talk to people who can help make change.

Capponi was also critical of the present “one on one approach” of the treatment models and says, “we need groups...we learn better in groups. She adds, “ we have to do things that help us avoid dependence.

Encouraging people to find ways to express themselves and tell their stories like she has, Capponi says, “We've show them ...now we have to show each other.”

**“We've show them ...now we have to show each other.”**

**More about Pat Capponi's challenges to consumers on page six.**



## Peer Support Coordinator:

**Amy Rogers**

peersupport@bellnet.ca

My role as Peer Support Coordinator has enabled me to use my voice to participate in many opportunities in our community. One of those opportunities has been as the co-chair of the Hamilton Peer Recovery Network.

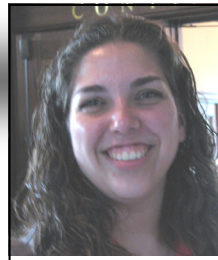
In April, the Hamilton Peer Recovery Network sponsored a conference specifically for consumers. This conference was such an incredible experience for me. The sheer number of people who attended was overwhelming. The interest generated in systemic advocacy and direct action was inspiring. The hope and encouragement given to me, and others, was empowering.

It was a fantastic opportunity to hear Pat Capponi speak. Her humour, experiences, and sincerity were an inspiration to many. Her message that one person *can* make a difference gives hope to those trying to create change.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the event a success. A special mention to MHRC's Peer Support

Workers: Mike, Jennifer, Carl, Lance and Mark, for helping to register people. Thank you to our community partners who helped the Peer Recovery Network advertise the conference and support consumers in attending. And I would especially like to thank the members of the Peer Recovery Network, both past and present, who brought their experiences and expertise to help shape the 5 Key Priorities.

Of course, the conference would not have been a success if it weren't for our peers. Thank you to those who participated; the Network is busy sorting through all the amazing feedback, comments and applications. Your opinions are all being taken into consideration for our next steps and where to go from here. Stay tuned to upcoming issues of The Rights Stuff for a formal summary of the conference. Until then, be inspired, be activated, be involved.



## Administrative Assistant

**Peggy Guiler-Delahunt**

Without an ED it's been very busy for everyone at the Mental Health Rights Coalition over the past month but as always it has been lots of fun.

As Amy mentioned above, the conference with Pat Capponi was a real highlight. I had never heard Pat speak before and was quite impressed with her relaxed and "real" approach with us. She is a person who is used to speaking to a variety of groups including political leaders and bureaucrats but she seemed very relaxed with her peers and was able to share from the heart about her experience.

I was also quite pleased that she didn't let us off the hook. While she spoke about things which need to change within the system and in society she was quite frank about telling consum-

ers we have a role in making changes too.

The challenge was not to try to make huge strides and change the world but rather to begin making change by changing ourselves with simple things like exercise and good food.

We'll spend more time on the conference next month.

Hopefully by next month we will also be able to give you information about the appointment of a new ED for Mental Health Rights Coalition. The board have been very helpful to the staff and made themselves available to help us get through this change.

*Always challenging. Always interesting. Always rewarding.*



## Membership Renewal Form

\*Please Note: if you fill in your phone number and/or email, address, we will assume it is ok for us to contact you to give notice of important events or meetings.

**Any personal information collected by Mental Health Rights Coalition is kept in strict confidence and is not shared with any other agency or corporation.**

**Do you live, work or receive services within LHIN 4? (Hamilton, Niagara, Brant, Haldimand, East Norfolk)**

YES

NO

**Please Print**

**Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Postal Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birth Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Check One:**

I am a consumer/survivor (full privileges)

I am not a consumer/survivor (Limited privileges, and news letter by email only)

I would like to receive the newsletter via email

If you would prefer to send this update via email please email the membership coordinator at [mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca](mailto:mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca) and ask for a form.

# Journey to Wellness

The right place to live makes a huge difference to MH consumer



*Ab Elmoudiane was not happy with his housing situation and with the help of peer support at the M H R C found direction to other agencies which helped him improve his situation.*

“The place I was living just wasn’t good for me”, says Ab Elmoudiane but because referrals and support from his peers Ab has been able to get a new place to live and is managing quite well on his own.

In discussion with Mental Health Rights Coalition staff it was pointed out that not all situations are good for everyone. Clearly Ab was not suited for the accommodation he had and it was causing a great deal of stress for him and making his living situation tense.

“I came here and they directed me to other services which helped me get my own place,” says Ab.

It took only about three months to get into his new place but sometimes it felt to him like it would take forever.

Along the path toward his new situation Ab found help with his peers at both the Coalition and through the Residential Care Facility Tenants Association. He says, “they were very supportive and gave me ideas of where to go and what to do.” He adds, “they made me

## FOR SUPPORT....



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

905-545-2525

## 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.

feel more comfortable and confident and they encouraged me when I felt like I couldn’t do it.”

While helping Ab find a solution to his problem the peer supporters at the Coalition were able to direct him to other organizations which he found quite helpful. The Housing Help Centre and Dundurn Community Legal Clinic were both very helpful with letter writing and legal advice as well as filling out lots of paper work which needed to be done for Ab to find another place to live.

Ab says, “I am very surprised that things turned out alright.” He says “Now I have my own place with city housing and I don’t have to answer to anyone.”

**The Mental Health Rights Coalition is privileged to have some part in the recovery of mental health consumer/survivors in the Hamilton area. This periodic feature of our newsletter will highlight those journeys to wellness in the words of the travelers.**

## Smitherman announcement

*(Continued from page 1)*

with mental illness who have come to expect behaviour and attitudes toward them which are not good.”

The other issue Smitherman suggests needs immediate attention is “the absence of family health care.” He indicated the province will be working on a new system which has “an unattached patient registry for health care.”

Smitherman also expressed some concern about “those who believe they are unworthy of care” in the health system and stressed this attitude is not acceptable.

In discussion with the members present Smitherman explained the new Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN's) “have created an opportunity for those who own the system to force themselves on those with the power to make good decisions. He went on to explain that the members on the LHIN's have community connections” and those who use the services “can powerfully impact” their decision making process.

When asked about strategic direction for the Ministry of Health, Smitherman said there was none and that it is “substantially overdue” but gave no indication of when it would be forthcoming beyond saying, “in

the fullness of time.”

Addictions are also high on Smitherman's own list of priorities and he told the group about his concern for addressing the gap in time between the expressed desire of addicts to get help and the actual ability to acquire service. He indicated a need for a much better “continuum of care” and a “better coordination of capacity” for addictions.

Concern about “offloading” and the proper dovetailing of programs which line up with provincial programs and values was the focus of Smitherman's comments about the Kirby Report. The report from the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,

## Featuring the Hamilton mental health system

While there is never enough service to help everyone the mental health system of Hamilton can be proud it has so many direct services and other support services available to mental health consumer/survivors and other marginalized people.

In an effort to make known some of those services this newsletter would like to feature one or two of them each month.

If your agency has information or input you think would be valuable for the readership of this newsletter please submit it to the editor care of Mental Health Rights Coalition.

If you are a consumer and have discovered a service or have some good things to say about a service you have used please let us know that as well.

## Hamilton's Community Legal Clinics

There are times when finding the right help, especially about legal issues, is very difficult and intimidating for many people but especially for those who may be the more vulnerable of our society. Many mental health consumer/survivors feel we live with one foot on the street—that is dangerously close to living on the streets—and we don't want to question or challenge anyone who has authority over our livelihood or our housing.

In our feature article on page four one consumer found his way out of a situation which was not suitable for him with much help from the Community Legal Clinic.

The Hamilton area has three offices serving different areas of the city.

Ontario's community legal clinics were established over 30 years ago by the Ministry of the Attorney General and are funded by Legal Aid Ontario. They have a mandate to provide “poverty law services” to those who cannot afford private lawyers. Their purpose is to “promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low income individuals.”

Besides helping individuals the legal clinics also work hard to help make systemic changes which they recognize, through their work, could be challenged at the source in a more pro active approach to problem solving.

The legal clinics are staffed by lawyers, community legal workers, support staff, community development workers and sometimes law students. All services are private and confidential.

The Hamilton CLC web site provides much information about the clinics and includes fact sheets available in many languages.

Each clinic services specific areas of Hamilton—contact the one closest to you.

**McQuesten Legal & Community Services - 1440 Main St. E.**

**905-545-0442**

**Dundurn Community Legal Services**

**110 King St. West (Plaza Level—Jackson Square)**

**905-527-4572**

**Hamilton Mountain Legal & Community Services—550 Fennell Ave. East**

**905-575-9590**

**Web Site: [http://](http://www.hamiltonlegalclinics.ca/)**

**[www.hamiltonlegalclinics.ca/](http://www.hamiltonlegalclinics.ca/)**

### Free Confidential Advice

or representation for:

- **Tenant Rights**
- **Ontario Works (OW)**
- **Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)**
- **Workplace Safety and Insurance (WSIB)**
- **Employment Insurance (EI)**
- **Canada Pension Plan (CPP)**
- **Employment Standards**
- **Human Rights**

## Finding different ways to be crazy...a challenge to consumers

At the recent Peer Recovery Network conference, guest speaker, Pat Capponi, challenged mental health consumer/survivors by saying "being a mental patient is not a vocation. She said it is time to "break out of the mental illness box and get started" by doing some things for ourselves. Below is a point form account of some of her suggestions.

- ✦ Move your body—get exercise. Start slowly with short walks...get out and see the greenery and the people and listen to the birds.
- ✦ Use your brain "medication and poverty rust our brains" - start by doing something that is harder than what you are used to doing. - read something, start a book club or a club about current events, watch and movie and then discuss what it was about
- ✦ Get up at a decent hour and go to bed at a decent hour—it takes work but you can adjust your schedule in stages.
- ✦ Talk to your doctor and tell them you want to get moving and have them help you do it
- ✦ Ask you doctor about giving you the lowest possible dose of the medication you take.
- ✦ Quit smoking
- ✦ Start eating a good diet—no peanut butter, no cheese, no hot dogs—eat lettuce, carrots, juice, whole bread, fish—Capponi adds, "The weird thing is I feel better".
- ✦ If you don't know how to cook find someone who does and who can help you learn.
- ✦ "When you are doing something, mental illness is less painful ...less of an impediment.", says Capponi. Find people who are moving and do what they do.
- ✦ Don't expect to be treated like a child and don't allow others to treat you like a child.
- ✦ Time is passing—you only have one life.
- ✦ Avoid dependence
- ✦ Find a way to communicate your experience—write about it—talk about it.
- ✦ Show one another how to do it.

## An Idea I had

This column will appear periodically in the Rights Stuff and is the work of members at the Mental Health Rights Coalition. It may contain poetry or prose. The opinions are those 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.

### The North Star

*By John Gordon Kennard*

The north star will always be your guide.

After the beautiful sunrise you will see the wonderful sunshine

Then you will see a lovely sunset

Then when the night time is still dark the North Star will appear again

And you thank God for your beautiful day.

### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

*By Rosemary Garside*

I often think this is a very true saying and it would be nice if more people put in action words that come into their heads. People often say things to themselves about what they would like to do but fail to follow through. For one reason or another things crop up and what we have said or thought either to ourselves or to other people never come to fruition. It is easy to talk ourselves out of doing things. We are tired, too busy, it will not be appreciated, it is too much bother or, why should we when nobody else does.

Our failure to act often affects other people, especially if we have actually said we will do something

and don't. On the other hand our actions or speaking a few words to someone can make a difference in somebody's life. The difference between "a good day or an ordinary day. A feeling that someone cares, or that people don't care.

Most people will try to follow through on a commitment and granted we are all human. However, I do feel that, it would be nice if more people took a little time and acted on some of the nice things that come into their heads.

*"Our love, must not be a thing of words and fine talk, it must be a thing of action and sincerity" [ John. 18, Bible*

# Healthy Canadians

## A new web resource for getting healthy

The federal government, reacting to pressure from consumers, especially with regard to the safety of imported products which may be hazardous to children, has tabled new legislation which makes amendments to the Food and Drug Acts and introduces the "Canada Consumer Product Safety Act."

The new website which accompanies this strategy (<http://www.healthycanadians.ca>) offers information on the recall of products which may be harmful but also provides a great deal of resource for people who want to take steps to become more healthy and active.

If you are one of those people who Pat Capponi was speaking to about getting moving and eating right there are lots of resources for you on this web site. They include the Canada Food Guide along with a wide variety of ideas about how to get healthy. One section called "Age is no barrier" might be of special interest to people who have not done much activity for a while.

It has some simple and inexpensive ideas about how to start getting active.

The Mental Health Rights Coalition has ordered copies of the Activity Guides for adults and for older adults. They should be available in May.

Also on the Healthy Canadians site is information about how to quit smoking.

The staff of Mental Health Rights Coalition are happy to help you find information on the internet. Please come in and look at the site. There is lots of stuff including some movies and interactive quizzes which might be of interest.

For More information visit [www.healthcanadians.ca](http://www.healthcanadians.ca)



## Up Coming Events of Interest

### Free Dental Clinic

Usually held one Saturday a month this free clinic is run on by volunteer dentists in the Hamilton area. It is a first come, first serve basis. The clinic is held at 201 Wilson Street East in Ancaster. For information call 905-304-6300.

### Lion Safari

Join the Mental Health Rights Coalition and HPS for a trip to Rockton on Wednesday May 21. Only \$2 per person. Limited space available. Sign up



sheet will be available at M H R C on May 7th. Other upcoming trips include a Blue Jays game and a journey to Port Dover.

### Karaoke at M H R C

Come and join us for lots of song this month. On May 2 we will be picking out a few CD's to order for the new Karaoke machine. We will add to our collection as funds permit.

If you like to sing this is your chance to come and have a little fun.

If you know of coming events which may be of interest to mental health consumer/survivors in the Hamilton area please email us or call.

## Getting moving in Hamilton






















In the Hamilton area there are 2662 acres of parkland at 310 locations, 1356 acres of natural areas at 32 locations, and 137 kilometres of trails, offering many opportunities for people of all ages to get outdoors and explore nature.

Hiking, cycling or rollerblading, you can enjoy nature not far from your home. Bayfront, Pier 4 Park, and the Waterfront Trail have beautiful views of the Harbour and northwest shoreline. See the lower City and harbour at Sam Lawrence Park, or take in some history at parks and museums like Fieldcote, Dundurn, or Battlefield Park.

Pack a picnic or just take a water bottle with you and find someplace nice to go for a stroll.

For more information about things that are going on in and around Hamilton visit [www.myhamilton.ca](http://www.myhamilton.ca)

# May 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p><b>Karaoke</b> - The M H R C has purchased a Karaoke machine and this month we will be adding lots of song to our calendar. If you have favourites be sure to let us know so we can add it to the list of possible purchases.</p> <p><b>Action Day—Monday May 5</b></p> <p>Pat Capponi challenged us to get moving at the recent conference. Lets see what we come up with to meet the challenge</p>  	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>1 Cribbage</p> 	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>All day—pick your favourite Karaoke songs and we will get some for our singing pleasure</p> <p>1—Fawulty Towers Movie</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>		
4	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Action Day Let's get moving</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Opening late today. See you by noon. 1 Checkers etc.</p> 	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>1 Backgammon  1-4 Peer Support Training 1:30 p.m. VOICE's meeting</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>1 Crazy 8's</p> 	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>1 Karaoke</p> 	10
11 Mother's Day	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>1—Karaoke</p> 	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>1 Movie</p> 	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>1— Movie  1-4 Peer Support Training</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>1 Euchre</p> 	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>1 Fawulty Towers Movie</p> 	17
18	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Coalition Closed for the Victoria Day holiday</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>1 Craft Day</p> 	<p><b>21</b></p> <p> 9 -3 African Lion Safari Trip with HPS 1 Backgammon 1-4 Peer Support Training</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>1 Movie</p> 	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>1 Karaoke</p> 	24
25	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>1— Karaoke</p> 	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>1 Bingo</p> 	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>1 Happy Birthday Party for May Birthdays  1-4 Peer Support Training</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>1 Crazy 8's</p> 	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>1—Fawulty Towers movie</p> 	31