



July/August 2010

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.

Peer Support

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,

Mon - Fri

Annual General Meeting and Scope Awards

Tuesday, September 21,
2010

35 Aikman Ave.

Hamilton, ON

4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Details on Page 3

Stealing from the Mouths of the Poor

By Amanda Carey

Addressing the issue of cutting special diet allowance for ODSP recipients. See page 4

Update on Trillium Grant— see page 2



2nd Annual Bayfront Event includes boat cruise.

See Page 3

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VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Voices Training Opportunity

See page 4

A unique training for consumers wishing to participate on boards and committees.



Changing Lives with Peer Support

One recent Peer Support Training Grad gives her perspective on Peer Support. See page 5.

Summer Self Care

A check list of ideas to stay cool and protect skin from the sun as well as ways to keep breathing easy. Checklist of ideas on page 5.

Please take advantage of the cool air at MHRC and come to participate in activities during July and August. The calendar of events is on page 7 & 8.



Whiteburn on Wednesdays for lunch. Please join us. Details on page 3



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Hamilton, ON L8P 1L2
Phone: 905-545-2525 Facsimile: 905-545-0211
Email: mentalhealthrights@bellnet.ca
Google Map

<http://maps.google.ca/maps?hl=en&q=20+Jackson+St.+W.+Hamilton+file=UTF8&ll=43.254609,-79.870522&spn=0.005017,0.009602&z=17>

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



Executive Director: Frances V. Jewell

OTF Grant Update

MHRC's Ontario
Trillium Foundation

grant "Mental Health at Work: Survive, Strive" is well underway with the paid peer support training wrapping up a week ago. We have had some great feedback around the training but also about the impact on a persons' recovery. When consumers are provided with opportunity, meaningful focus, fair compensation for work, are allowed to contribute and have supporters who believe in them they move more quickly toward recovery.

Here are a few of the comments from trainees.

"Being accepted for an interview, and then into training, made this feel like a great accomplishment for myself."

"I have undoubtedly gained a wealth of knowledge and useful tools that supplement my past training and educational endeavors. This training course offers a unique approach as well as a variety of perspectives that go far beyond that which

we learn through our educational system."

"I hope to maintain ties with the Mental Health Rights Coalition - I believe my journey through Peer Support has only begun."

"The issue of pay has given me a sense of value, I am worth investing in and that what I have learned will be useful in obtaining a job position."

"Well, it helped me get more groceries."

The applicants were outstanding in their dedication to the training and MHRC and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to each of the peer support worker trainees.

The next phase for the training is to complete a practicum with MHRC.

Steps To Health

Folks came back from STH camping with all sorts of stories. Fun was had learning archery, horseback riding and sleeping in a chuck wagon with spiders and a mouse or two. The food was good and campers said they enjoyed the time out of the city and away from the day to day of life. It sounds

like the trip conjured up all the things good camping should.

It took a while but I got the running shoes promised to me for completing the walking module. (I completed two walking modules)

It was worth the wait. My shoes are great and my favorite colour purple.

You might think it doesn't matter what the shoes look like or whether or not they are of good quality but it does. Consumers, like everyone else, would like to enjoy good quality apparel and shoes. We feel better about ourselves when we wear clothes that fit and are made of natural fibers. Shoes that fit and are high quality are also kind to our feet and joints. Thanks to Steps to Health I am able to retire my four year old runners for a pair of Omni 8 Saucony's. Thank you STH !



Suicide Prevention Strategy Consult

MHRC was pleased to host a focus group for the Suicide Prevention Strategy. Twenty six consumers gathered for two hours to make comments and recommendations to the strategy.

I have not seen the final document but I am hopeful the recommendations made by consumers will be implemented.



Program Manager

Peggy Guiler-Delahunt
mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca

Recently I had opportunity to be in another mental health agency and their bulletin board was of special interest to me. They have lots of planned activities and advertise activities at other organizations which their clients might attend. A highlight of the board was a list of suggested activities.

For the most part, the activity requests were much what might be expected. Trips here and there to local and provincial fun destinations. Some were more simple requests like a walk to Tim's. Some were extravagant like a dinner cruise on the Grand River.

The one that caught my eye was a little peculiar at first glance and my first response was to laugh but in seconds, as I thought of what this request represents, it actually made me cry.



The request: "To go somewhere to stand where there are fireflies."

For those of us who live in the country or near a river fireflies are pretty common but I know that whenever I see one there

is a flood of fun memories which accompany the moment.

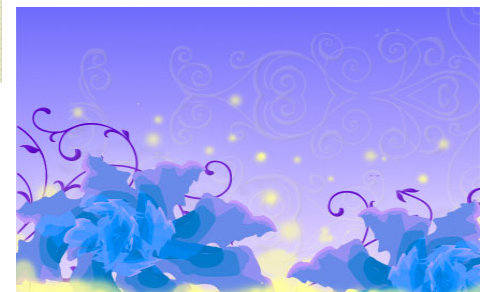
Fireflies, for me as a child, represented the fun of summer and being allowed to stay up a little later, until the sun went down. Often it was part of big family events at my grandparents home along the Grand River. Usually it included adults scrambling to find some sort of jar with a lid that holes could be put in (most jars in those days were sealer jars with glass lids).

Then it was the frolicking to catch the fascinating creatures. The "ooos" and "ahhhs" which ensued seemed to last for hours. My cousins and I might have more than one jar and spent an eternity running in the dark with our breathing lanterns.

When the lights began to fade parents were always quick to remind us that we needed to release our captives before they died.

For most the request to see fireflies may seem trivial. Who would need to ask to go and see fireflies?

I believe that the request to see fireflies is a



very important one for mental health consumers who are in care. The place the request originated is a locked facility. People don't get to even go off the unit without special permission and no one goes out after 9 pm. (When the fireflies come out)

I understand the constraints of secure care and I appreciate the need for it but I am saddened to think that the most simple pleasures of life are denied to people who, like me, might gain some wellness from pleasant memories and from watching one of the great mysteries of life.

I hope that we don't keep people in those locked facilities so long, that like the firefly, their light goes out and the person they are begins to die.

**Notice of
Annual General Meeting
and Scope Awards
Tuesday, September 21, 2009
35 Aikman Ave., Hamilton, ON
4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

**4:00 pm—Speaker—Laurie Albertini OCAN Consumer Lead
(Ontario Common Needs Assessment Needs Tool)**

4:30 Scope Awards

5-6 pm—Dinner

6-7 pm—AGM

Scope Awards presentations will take place after dinner

Supporting Consumer Opportunities for Personal Empowerment

S.C.O.P.E Awards provide our membership, staff and other consumers a means to publicly recognize and thank individuals or services who have helped empower them in their recovery process.

S.C.O.P.E is a non-competitive award event: every nominee receives a SCOPE certificate and is invited to the award presentations, along with their nominator.

Scope Award forms may be picked up at the MHRC offices—20 Jackson St. W. or on the website at www.mentalhealthrights.ca

This meeting will include the election of officers to the board of directors.

Please update your membership to assure your voting privileges.

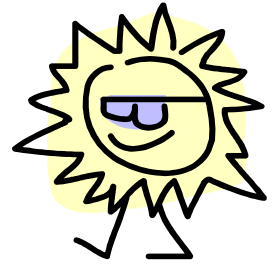
If you will be attending please call 905-545-2525



Wednesdays at Whitehurst

Bring your lunch and join us at Whitehurst for an outdoor concert. Lemonade, tea and cookies are served for \$1. If it's raining the concert is moved to the stable. This special event takes place every Wednesday during the summer. Admission is free but limited so come early. We will meet at MHRC and go across the street soon after 11:30.

This historic home in the heart of downtown Hamilton, is only steps away from MHRC at 41 Jackson St. W. It was the home of the McQuesten family and has been restored to its Victorian glory by the City of Hamilton as one of its museums.



2nd Annual Bayfront Event

With Harbour Cruise

August 4

Meet at MHRC at 9:00 am or at the dock (near Williams Pub) at 9:30.

Cruise leaves at 10 am sharp. - (One hour).

Picnic to follow at Hamilton Bay Sailing Club compound.

(Subs, pop and water will be supplied)

Games and fun by the bay


Cost \$7 per person - Visit MHRC to reserve your spot

Staff and members of Inspiration Place will be joining us again this year.

Be sure to wear hats and layers (cool on the water and hot on land), and bring sun screen.



**Thanks to Trivaris and Crazy Daisy for
sponsoring this trip and keeping the cost
low for our members.**

 **crazydaisy**

 **TRIVARIS**



Stealing from the Mouths of the Poor

By: Amanda Carey

The Special Diet Allowance (SDA) program is a part of Ontario's social assistance system intended to relieve the extra dietary costs related to therapeutic diets prescribed by health care professionals. A person can receive up to \$250 for specific medical conditions as outlined in the Special Diets Schedule (MCSS¹). This program will soon be terminated.

On December 7, 2009, the Ontario Provincial Auditor's Report claimed massive welfare overpayment fraud. It noted that spending had increased from \$5 million in the 2002/03 fiscal year to \$67 million in the 2008/09 fiscal year.² The current figure being quoted is \$200 million.³

⁴ The dramatic increase in the use of the SDA should be considered more an indication of the inadequacy of a social assistance income than the possibility of fraud. Many people living on welfare and disability cannot afford to eat properly and risk serious health problems. Many people argue there should be nothing "special" about the Special Diet Allowance; everyone on social assistance needs this money.

John Clarke of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty sees the special diet as an "opportunity". He says, "It created a situation where people were extremely poor, but at least there was food in the fridge at the end of the month, and money for rent to be paid."

Michael Hurley, president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, believes removing the allowance will end up costing more in the end. "These are people with frail conditions and vulnerable immune systems. If they are not fed properly...they are going to end up hospitalized and institutionalized," he said.

Rebecca, an ODSP recipient, believes she is living proof. She says, "I am now very afraid that I will have to go to the food bank instead of eating fresh food that helps me function well...I was sick many times and it all had to do with malnutrition."

On February 17, 2010, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal found that the province was operating the SDA program unfairly and recommended that the diet plan be extended so all people would be treated equally. They specifically advised the province not to cancel the program.^{4 5} Shortly thereafter, the province announced that they would be cancelling the

program and replacing it with a new "nutritional supplement" program administered by the ministry of health.^{4 5 6} Politicians and those speaking for the Ministry of Community and Social Services say that the current program is not sustainable and is not meeting its objectives.⁴

It is unknown what the new program replacing the SDA will consist of or when it will take effect. This is contributing to the buzz and uncertainty in the community. There is supposed to be a transition period and the creation of a central portal of information.⁴ No such information hub has yet to be revealed. Not everyone will be covered by the new program.⁴ The medical conditions covered may change.

Amy, an ODSP recipient says, "They don't even cover the foods I eat because of the medication I am on, not to mention the vitamins I need. It's ridiculous, the things that *already* aren't covered! I can't believe they are going to make it harder."

There was a general feeling of concern and anxiety as well as outrage among those I spoke to.

Rallies and protests have taken place in Hamilton, Halton, Brantford, Ottawa and Toronto among others. A photo appeared in the June 21 *Spectator* about a local rally. No article accompanied it. Is that the importance we place on the welfare of our poor and disabled?



Ron Albertson, the Hamilton Spectator

[Http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca)

[Http://www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca)

[Http://www.torontoobserver.ca](http://www.torontoobserver.ca)

[Http://odspdiet.wordpress.com](http://odspdiet.wordpress.com)

[Http://www.incomesecurity.org](http://www.incomesecurity.org)

[Http://www.torontosun.com](http://www.torontosun.com)

ODSP Fireside [Http://groups.google.com](http://groups.google.com)



Training Opportunity

FOR SUPPORT...



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

Voices of Experience is a unique training opportunity for consumers who would like to learn skills for working on Boards and Committees.

Mental health and addiction consumers bring a vital perspective to the decision making process for service providers and community agencies. They have first hand experience with a variety of issues and offer insight into the true affect of service.

The three day training will equip candi-

dates for a variety of positions and teach them the ins and outs of meeting etiquette and member responsibilities.

A certificate of completion is provided along with follow up and mentoring if it is required.

The course is free to consumers but has a value of \$400. Agencies wishing to sponsor consumers to take the training are asked to pay the full price of \$400.

Training will be held July 26, 27, 28.
Call 905-545-2525 for details.



Judy Stempski is an active volunteer at MHRC. Her varied experience in mainstream work and with mental health issues helps her

respond easily to the varied demands at the Coalition.

Judy graduated from the Peer Support Training program early this year and is anxious to take on new challenges in her life and to help others with the challenges they face.

Below she shares some of her own experiences with life, illness and recovery.

By Judy Stempski

When it came to my choice of jobs I have gone down many roads and it seems every road has turned into a dead end. In the past I worked in factories sewing filter-cloth bags and children's clothing, a flower shop and in hospitals as a Dietary Aide.

In 1997 I decided to leave my hospital job after ten years to go back to school. Those around me thought I was making a huge mistake leaving a well-paid job that had great benefits and an even better pension plan. Nonetheless I felt I was being guided to take this road and see what life would bring me next.

I enrolled as a student at Halton Business Institute for Executive Secretarial Program

I have suffered throughout my life with mental health issues and even though I would continue to push myself to carry on, this time I just could not push any further...I was done!

that consisted of bookkeeping, keyboarding, business English and various computer software programs. I chose Dental Receptionist as my elective.

When I started this course I promised myself that I was going to graduate with flying colours. I had never done very well in school, which has always saddened me.

Peer Supporting Changes Lives

I worked very hard at all of my classes and it did pay off. I graduated with honours in every course I chose to take. I was so very proud as I had kept the promise that I made to myself. Within a month I had my first office job. From there I worked as a receptionist in the manufacturing sector and worked my way up to Office Manager.

Working in an office was totally different. I enjoyed the work and the people and I stayed in this capacity for ten years.

I always started out enjoying my jobs but as time went by I felt there was something missing and I was not happy.

When I lost my job to corporate downsizing. I had mixed feelings. On one hand I was happy to be out of that toxic working environment but on the other hand I was in shock with no idea what I was going to do next.

The competition for jobs was very hard in the work place plus I was not getting any younger and knew that would have a big impact of finding another job.

At this point I could not handle the stress of life any longer and I became very sick, both mentally and physically.

I have suffered throughout my life with mental health issues and even though I would continue to push myself to carry on, this time I just could not push any further...I was done!

For the next three years I was put through the hell of our healthcare system. From specialist to specialist, one medication to at least 30 different medications trying to find the right one.

Finally, with the love and support of my brother, I got in to see his specialist. This doctor was truly my lifesaver and he has helped me get back on my feet and realize there is much more to life than I had been experiencing.

As I slowly recuperated I began to think of finding another job and the very big question was, what else was out there for me? I had already been down so many dead end streets. Clearly I have never been happy with my choices as I always had something missing in my life...but what was it?

I began to do some soul searching and realized that throughout my life and various jobs it was people who made me happiest. I became aware how much I wanted to help other people who have been down dead end streets in their life and people who have suffered the healthcare system, fighting to stay alive and get well.

I had so much life experience to offer. I had listened and helped many people who came for help in my work. The often said thing like, "You would make a great counselor Judy, you are wasting your gift by working here!" I had been told that many times throughout my life but finally I had an "ah ha" moment.

I began looking for courses to take that would lead me to working with people as a peer counselor. As fate would have it I found the Mental Health Rights Coalition and the course they offered in "Peer Support."

I took this course this past January and loved every minute of it. The instructor helped make the learning experience enjoyable. I did very well with the course, and am now volunteering one day a week. I

at MHRC with the members I am so happy and content and I look forward to seeing everyone. This is what I had been missing

absolutely love the people and the environment.

Recently I have been matched with someone I like very much and look forward to our meetings. I have been asked to attend a couple of conferences. I keep learning and experiencing so I will become a more effective peer support worker.

When I am at MHRC with the members I am so happy and content and I look forward to seeing everyone. This is what I had been missing throughout my life... helping other people just like me when they need it most. It only took me 56 years to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up and as they say..."better late than never!"

Seeking Donations

We make it a practice to make available toiletries like shampoo, conditioner, creams, soaps, tooth brushes, etc., which for many of our members are luxury items. Donations of sample and full size items are much appreciated.

Fresh fruit is also a rare treat to many and a great alternative to convenience foods.

Contact us at
MHRC

905-545-2525





Sunny Summer Day Checklist

Stay safe and have fun in the sun suggestions are adapted from the Minding Our Bodies web site.

- Check the news for weather conditions
- Wear a hat and sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Wear loose fitting clothing
- Wear sunglasses—100%UVA/UVB protection
- Drink water
- Plan activities to maximize time in cool or shaded areas.
- Limit time in sun from 11 to 4
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours
- Avoid busy streets where there is more pollution.
- Take extra breaks in shade or air conditioned place (like MHRC)
- Stop activity if you are coughing, wheezing, have tightness in your chest or difficulty breathing.
- Drink another glass of water.
- Monitor how you feel and watch for signs of dehydration, which can include light-headedness, tired, unable to concentrate, headache.

Getting In Shape with Special Projects

Moving our bodies often and eating well is a key component to wellness for those who live with mental health issues but the very nature of the illnesses, the affects of medication, and the poverty which illness often precipitates make this very difficult.

Minding our bodies is a three year project assigned to "increase capacity within the community mental health system in Ontario to promote active living and healthy eating for people with serious mental illness. It is a project of the Canadian Mental Health Association in partnership with Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, Nutrition Resource Centre, YMCA Ontario and York University — and representatives from a broad array of stakeholders.

The project is important because, says the Minding Our Bodies web site, "people with serious mental illness are at high risk for chronic physical conditions ...including diabetes and cardiovascular disease."

They also explain, "depression negatively affect peoples nutritional choices." They add, "to compound the issues, psychiatric medications can cause significant weight gain and many people with mental illness smoke, often to combat the side effects of medications.

Besides just living a more healthy life evidence proves that physical activity and healthy eating can actually alleviate many of the primary symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as the secondary symptoms like low self-esteem and social withdrawal.

Offering support in the form a toolkit, Minding our Bodies, supports several pilot project throughout the province and is still initiating new projects.

For more information about the project visit their web site at

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



Minding Our Bodies
physical activity for mental health

The Rights Stuff

Published every other month

by

Mental Health Rights Coalition

Editorial Policy

The Rights Stuff is published every other month by Mental Health Rights Coalition. Our purpose is to inform our membership and other interested partners in mental health and the community about issues and events which may be of interest. Included is a calendar of events for the upcoming month at MHRC.

The Rights Stuff is available to our members via mail and to others as requested via email and our web site at: www.mentalhealthrights.ca

The Rights Stuff welcomes submissions & letters of 250 words or less. Be advised that MHRC reserves the right to edit and/ or decline publication of any submissions.

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month previous to publication.

Printing dates are September 1, November 1, December 23, March 1, May 1 and July 1.





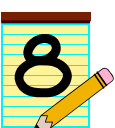

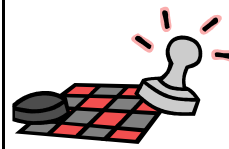








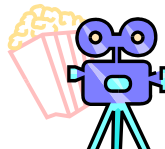





Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter represent those of individual contributors, and not necessarily of The Mental Health Rights Coalition.

Matches Available


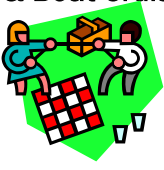







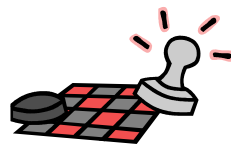









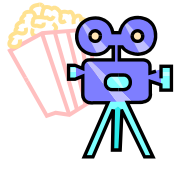


Any consumer looking for on-going peer support by a trained volunteer is encouraged to call the Program Manager at

905-545-2525.



| S | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | S |
|----|--|---|--|---|--|----|
| | <p>Calendar Activities begin at 1 p.m. unless otherwise stated.</p> <p>Walking/Exercise activities are dependant on weather. Please wear appropriate shoes and clothing.</p> | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | |  MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS COALITION | |  | Walk About  | |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | Air Hockey  | 11 am Support Group  | Crazy Eights Tournament  | Coffee Walk  | Chess & Checkers  | |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | Cards  | Crafts  | Crazy Eights Tournament  | Dominoes  | Current Events  | |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| | Birthday Party  | 11 am Support Group  | Crazy Eights Tournament  | Movie  | Members Meeting  | |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
| | Bingo  | Crafts  | Crazy Eights Tournament  | Jenga  | Euchre  | |

August 2010

| S | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | S |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Civic Holiday Closed | 11 am Support Group  | Bayfront Picnic & Boat Cruise  | Air Hockey  | Karaoke  | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | Walk About  | Crafts  | Monopoly  Picnic rain date | Trivial Pursuit  | Coffee Walk  | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | Chess & Checkers  | 11 am Support Group  | Karaoke  | Current Events  | Cards  | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| | Members Meeting  | Birthday Party  | Crafts  | Euchre  | Yahtzee  | |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |
| | Movie  | Crafts  | <p>Calendar Activities begin at 1 p.m. unless otherwise stated.</p> <p>Walking/Exercise activities are dependant on weather. Please wear appropriate shoes and clothing.</p> | | |  MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS COALITION |