



May/June 2009

The Rights Stuff

Mental Health Rights Coalition

Our Mission: To encourage, enable and empower the voice and participation of consumers in the

Drop In and Peer Support

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,

Mon - Fri

History in the Making: Our Part, Our Voice



About 150 mental health consumers and service providers from across the LHIN 4 (Local Health Care Initiative - area 4) enjoyed great food, great fun, lots of

learning and a feeling that all had something to contribute at the conference held on March 26th at Liuna Station. This first combined event for the five consumer groups of the LHIN 4 was, in the opinion of those who attended, a great success.

Dr. Geoffrey Reaume, author and professor at York University spoke about "Mad Peo-

ple's History and gave some understanding to why "madness" has so much stigma surrounding it. Running through historical references from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to children's books written in 1980 Reaume says people with mental illness have been characterized as animalistic and sinful or evil characters and the claw became the symbol for madness.

A painting which is an account of Philippe Pinel's "Unchaining of the Insane" in 1793, Reaume suggests may depict the beginning of more humane treatment of mental patients. He credits

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Peer To Peer Mentoring Open House

Peer to Peer Mentoring, a project of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits, in partnership with First-Pilgrim United Church is holding it's Open House on Thursday, May 28th at 1 pm in their offices at First Pilgrim, 200 Main St. E. You are asked to RSVP by phone at 905-524-0326 or email: peertopeerhamilton@gmail.com

The Peer to Peer Mentoring program, according to their brochure, "addressed the frustration and stress vocalized by people who have accessed the social safety nets that are supposed to help them."

A team of time staff and trained volunteers look forward to welcoming the community to this event.

MHRC Seeks New Finance Manager

Mental Health Right Coalition is seeking a Finance Manager to work about 17 hours a month. As indicated in the job posting on page 3, applications will be accepted until May 8.



A Wake-Up Call In The Soloist

- Schizophrenia Society of Ontario Applauds True Life Biopic Portrayal But Challenges - Policymakers to Improve Access to Treatment (press release from SSO April 24 2009

TORONTO, ON— In a combustible world swirling with voices from the past, a cocktail of memories and the hustle and bustle clatter of life in downtown Los Angeles, Nathaniel Ayers, played by Oscar winner Jamie Foxx is asked about his hopes and dreams. "That's easy," he says. "I just need another two strings for my violin". Foxx's portrayal of former Julliard student Ayers in the *The Soloist*, released today across North America, is already garnering Oscar talk for Foxx and co-star Robert Downey Jr. It is also raising much discussion about how society can best support those living with mental illness such as schizophrenia.

"The Soloist demonstrates how empathy and understanding can impact the lives of

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If you prefer to receive an email copy of this newsletter please notify the editor. mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca



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



Executive Director: Frances Jewell mhrced@bellnet.ca

Panic Attack in Italian Art Gallery is called Stendhal Syndrome

I've have just arrived back to work from a lovely holiday in Italy.

In early April I arrived in Reggio Emilia with my traveling partner to warm, sunny weather. Our plan was to explore art galleries in Tuscany region including Florence, Venice and Bologna. My friend and I have traveled to Europe several times and we have enjoyed some to the world's finest galleries and art.

On the list this time was the Joan Mitchell exhibit in Reggio Emilia, The Peggy Guggenheim and Academia in Venice, Giotto frescoes in Padua, and Uffizi in Florence.

Needless to say Italy does not disappoint when it comes to art. What was a surprise to me on this visit was an out-of-the-blue panic attack while visiting the Uffizi. Getting into the Uffizi is a feat in itself. A long line-up to get tickets even though we had purchased tickets before leaving Canada. Then another long line to get in another line. Fi-

nally in the door, we sought out the rooftop café to refresh ourselves before the daunting task of viewing more than 1,500 masterpieces. Room after room of once in a lifetime encounters with works of art I had read and heard about. It was hot and the crowds were building. I had a particular interest in five paintings in rooms twenty-six thru thirty. And that's when it hap-

I hadn't had an attack for some time. I had forgotten the unstoppable fear, dizziness, pounding heart, sweating and shaking I had at one time known so well. But there it was.

pened. A panic attack. I hadn't had an attack for some time. I had forgotten the unstoppable fear, dizziness, pounding heart, sweating and shaking I had at one time known so well. But there it was. I tried my smorgasbord of techniques. Stay put. Breathe. Relax. Stay in the moment. Talk to yourself in a friendly supportive manner. Breathe. Remove yourself, reframe and

come back. For about ten minutes I struggled with my panic. I felt sick, faint and strangely disconnected. After several attempts to quell my fears I left my friend



to finish the Uffizi on her own. I stumbled out of the massive gallery on to the streets of Florence. The fresh air helped a bit but I still wasn't right. With my legs wobbling and shaky I made my way back to the hotel. I was upset with myself.

After years of being panic free here it was back to haunt me. How could this be happening? What was different this time? Was this a sign of things to come?

At my hotel I rested a bit and replayed the situation. Yes, it was too hot, too many people and we had be rushed. The lighting wasn't good and the air was bad. I hadn't been eating properly for a week or so. And travel does have an element of stress for me.

I called home to distract myself and had some success with feeling better.

As I sat down in the arm chair in the suite I noticed a book on The Uffizi. Well, I might as well have a look at what I had missed. I opened the book and started to read.

"Stendhal Syndrome". I couldn't believe it. The chapter described in depth what I had just experienced. Maybe that's what has troubled me all along; large amounts of great art and immense beauty in the natural world. After all I do live in Hamilton!



Program Coordinator Peggy Guiler-Delahunt mhrprograms@bellnet.ca

The Move

Well we found the first aid kit yesterday but the BBQ is still missing.

The hazards of moving—one of the most stressful things that we experience in life but we seem to have all survived. We have even seen most of our members who used to frequent the location down the street. We are so pleased people have been able to make their way to this new location.

There has been lots of shedding and shredding going on since we moved. We have been forced into getting rid of stuff we don't use and the shredder hasn't stopped working for weeks.

Our space is much smaller and that makes it a little tight in the meeting room but for the most part we are managing well.

It's such a treat to look out the window and see sunshine rather than feet. What a treat to have these huge windows..

Peer Support Training

We have now finished another Peer Support Training and have a great group of volunteers about to begin their practicum.

We will begin an intensive 5 week training (6 hour days) on May 28. Training will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with two breaks and a half hour lunch. An interview is required before admission to the program.

Peer to Peer Mentoring Training

The Peer to Peer Mentoring Program has contacted us to do 6 of their 9 training sessions and they are almost finished too. It has been fun to work with them as they embark on this new venture. In this time of economic stress they will have no shortage of people who are needing their assistance in maneuvering their way through the financial support system.

Upcoming Events

There are all kinds of conferences coming up which are relevant to Mental Health.

Don't miss the free event on May 5th - Stigma and Mental Illness in the 21st Century. You can register by visiting the web site or call MHRC and we will register you if there are still seats. http://action.web.ca/home/camh/events.shtml?AA_EX_Session=e67a2cdc465e94417be93234a1cfcf03&x=124737

Calendar

You will note on our calendar there are some new and interesting events coming up. Sign up for the Art Gallery on May is limited to eight so sign up early.

A personal note

It's almost time to dig out the kayak. For those of you who read of my adventures in the kayak last year I assure you try hard to stay dry.



A Wake-Up Call In The Soloist

(Continued from page 1)

those with schizophrenia and how this relationship can change the way we understand, relate to and support individuals living with this illness, “ says Mary Alberti, Executive Director, Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. While it needs to be understood that schizophrenia is not synonymous with a life on the street, The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario applauds the movie’s fair and accurate portrayal of the complexities of living with schizophrenia.

The movie is based on the life of a gifted musician named Nathaniel Ayers whose mental illness drives him from the halls of The Juilliard School in New York to the streets of Los Angeles. There, he develops a friendship with *Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez, who struggles to find a way to help Ayers. With an enduring passion for music Ayers is able to find some level of comfort in the friendship, support and access to music -- a kind of music therapy -- that Lopez gives him. This friendship is complex and sometimes painful but it provides both Ayers and Lopez with a unique bond that lasts to this day.

The Soloist highlights how the definition of treatment reaches far beyond medication and needs to be re-imagined in a much broader sense to include social support, community-based services, family education as well as social/recreational opportunities. “It is essential that access to this broad range of services and support is ensured. Greater empathy and public support for this population can go a long way in changing the system for the better.” says Alberti.

The Access to Treatment Initiative is a three-year priority of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario that aims to improve access to treatment for those suffering from schizophrenia and their families.

Job Posting

Mental Health Rights Coalition

Finance Manager

To coordinate accounting activities for the agency and prepare financial reports required by management, the Board of Directors and funding sources.

A detailed job description is available at www.mentalhealthrights.ca

Duties will include the timely completions of all financial transactions. The successful candidate will have skills with Simply Accounting, General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Payroll, and Accounts Receivable modules including postings and will be experienced with MOHLTC, CDS reporting, WERS reporting for the LHIN, Budget and operational planning reports to the LHIN and MIS reporting.

Those with an understanding of the Recovery approach to mental health and with experience in the mental health field will be given preference.

Time required – 17 hours per month, Bi weekly payroll. Beginning salary \$22/hour.

Deadline for applications: Noon, Friday, May 8, 2009

Candidates are invited to submit cover letters and resumes by

noon, Friday, May 8, 2009 to:

Executive Director

Mental Health Rights Coalition

370 Main Street East, Suite 101

Hamilton, Ontario

L8N 1J6

A detailed job description may be found on the MHRC web site

www.mentalhealthrights.ca

Because people with schizophrenia require a range of services and supports to help in their recovery, “treatment” has been defined broadly to include three core elements: psychiatric treatment, community services and social support such as housing, employment and income support. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario believes that increased government funding and improved coordination of services can remove the many barriers that those with a mental illness and their families face in accessing treatment. Canadians are encouraged to visit www.schizophrenia.on.ca to learn more about treatment and support options that can help them or someone they know get vital professional help.

About the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

Founded in 1979, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO) is a non-profit organization offering a reason to hope and the means to cope for families and individuals affected by schizophrenia. SSO provides support, education and advocacy on behalf of people and families affected by schizophrenia through regional offices and a network of Chapters in communities across the province. SSO is the largest organization representing people affected by schizophrenia in Ontario. Further information is available at www.schizophrenia.on.ca <<http://www.schizophrenia.on.ca>>

The Rights Stuff

Published every other month

by

Mental Health Rights Coalition

Editorial Policy

The Rights Stuff is published every month by the 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 usually published two or three working days before the end of each month. It 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 each month (or the closest weekday).

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

History in the Making: Our Part, Our Voice

(Continued from page 1)

Percival's Narrative of 1839 as the beginning of Peer support. Percival was an English gentleman who because of mercury poisoning combined with watching his father, the Prime Minister, be shot to death, was committed to an asylum where he worked toward better treatment and release and published his narrative in order to promote his assertions.

Pointing out recent advocacy efforts, Raeume noted I'm Not Mad I'm Angry, the Butterfly Ward, and In a Nutshell.

Prejudice against mental illness fol-

lows people to the grave, according to Raeume and he has been working on a project recently to uncover the unmarked graves of patients buried in a cemetery in Toronto.

Raeume continues to work toward and encourages others to work toward ensuring consumers have decent pay for their work, requiring inquests into all deaths of patients while in hospital, and acknowledgment of the contributions made by mental health consumers. He sights the wall at the present CAMH site in Toronto and many other institutions buildings, which were built by patients with no pay.

There has been an ongoing struggle for inquests into hospital deaths for psychiatric patients for over a century and while all other hospital deaths require an inquest, even recent attempts to have this sort of inquiry have failed.

Laughter Yoga

The afternoon session of the conference included laughter yoga with Jackie West. With a fun twist on traditional yoga, the exercises are designed to help people laugh. Long considered "the best medicine", the laughter training is a "fake it till you make it" approach. Even if laughter isn't real the benefits to the body and mind are the same as if the laughter is real. If people weren't laughing when they started, certainly watching a room full of adults doing ridiculous laughter exercises got most laughing before it was over.

Interactive networking activity

At the end of the day, Fiona Wilson lead the group in an activity to help define for the LHIN what consumers think is needed to change the system. The group explored and prioritized their focus in small groups, then presented their priorities to the large group.

The Venue

What a treat for many who don't have much opportunity to be pampered. Thanks to Liuna Station for their special care

Membership Renewal

Due April 30, 2009

Those who have filled in memberships since February 1 will not have to renew their membership until April 2010.

Memberships must be renewed annually before the end of April.

If you are an existing member you may renew your membership by calling the MHRC at 905-545-2525 weekdays between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

New members may complete a form available at MHRC

Membership entitlements:

- Access to peer support
- Voting privileges at all General Meetings
- Receipt of the "The Rights Stuff" - the monthly newsletter via mail or email.
- Participation in the drop in
- Access to the Resource Library
- Access to special trips and events
- May join internal committees
- May apply for membership on the Board of Directors

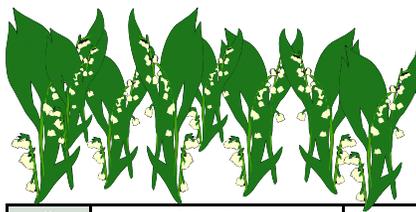
Non consumers members are considered associate members and will be non voting members. They will not be eligible for all the rights of membership.

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

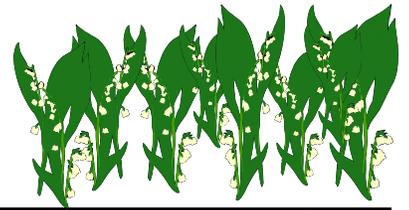
Members must be residents, working or receiving service within LHIN 4 (Hamilton, Niagara, Brant, Haldimand, East Norfolk)

Members must be mental health consumer/survivors.

Rights Stuff being printed less often—The Rights Stuff will be printed every other month. Updates will be available on our web site at www.mentalhealthrights.ca



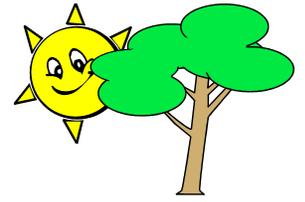
May 2009



S	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	S
					1	2
 MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS COALITION		Calendar Activities begin at 1 p.m. unless otherwise stated Walking/Exercise activities are dependant upon weather. Please wear appropriate shoes and clothing			Karaoke 	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Movie 	Coffee Walk 	Current Events 	Karaoke 	Crafts 	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Play in the Park 	12:30 Art Gallery Visit - sign up for this—only 8 spots 	Karaoke 	Members Meeting Community Events Review 	Window Shopping walk 	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Closed Victoria Day Holiday	Karaoke 	Movie 	Walk About 	Board Games 	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Karaoke 	Crafts Make a Kite 	Birthday Party 1:30 Cards 	Yatzee 	Cards Crazy 8 Countdown 	
31						



June 2009



S	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Air Hockey 	Karaoke 	Cribbage 	Yatzee 	Walk About 	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Cards 	Fly a Kite 	Karaoke 	Window Shop 	Crafts 	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Skip Bo 	Pictionary 	Coffee Walk 	Karaoke 	Members Meeting 	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Walk About 	Crafts 	Birthday Party  Play in the park 	Movie 	Karaoke 	
28	29	30	 <p>MENTAL HEALTH RIGHTS COALITION</p>			
	Karaoke 	Bingo 				
e 1, Issue 1					<p>Calendar Activities begin at 1 p.m. unless otherwise stated</p> <p>Walking/Exercise activities are dependant upon weather. Please wear appropriate shoes and clothing</p>	