



“Make
your own
recovery
the first
priority
in your
life”
Robin
Norwood

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AGM Summary	1-2
Staff Reports	4-5
Poetry	6
Regional Reports	8-12
Story of Stigma	13
Pharmacare update	16
Contact information	20

Annual General Meeting Weekend

Slightly Cracked

Chorus:

I'm not nuts, just slightly cracked.
Don't call me mad! Now take that back!
For I'm quite happy. I am in fact.
I'm not nuts, just slightly cracked.

If I wasn't slightly cracked, I wonder what I'd do.
Can't make much sense of humans. Tell me. Do you?
The way that humans carry on, drives me 'round the bend
Times I have to wonder if, I'll find my way back again.
(Ch)

If it weren't for medication, and Malcolm, my good doctor,
Lord knows what state that I'd be in. It might be Alaska.
Everyone gets sad I know. Sometimes I'm right depressed.
To be abnormal is quite normal. Do I fit in? I guess!
(Ch)
Terry Rilley

The singing of this song was but one of several entertaining moments during our AGM weekend, November 12th– 14th.

Terry was inspired to write this song about the “normalcy” of mental illness. I think it is a very happy perspective to have about ourselves and what we face each day in living with our illness’.



More Crackin' Good AGM
Stuff Inside

Provincial Appointments

On November 27 the province of Newfoundland and Labrador announce the formation of the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

The announcement was made by the Honourable Susan Sullivan, the Minister responsible for the council.

Seventeen people covering a representation of cross-disabilities have been appointed as the first sitting council members.

Karon-Ann Parsons, we are proud to say, is one of those seventeen! This speaks a great deal about Karon-Ann's work ethic, commitment and how she is seen as a leader, by government and her peers, as an advocate. Joan Edwards-Karmazyn was also appointed. Congratulations to both.



Terry and his Funky Style!



Paula and the James Vardy Award

AGM Weekend

The time spent together as CHANNAL members and volunteers over our two days together was both educational and entertaining. Technically, for many people, Thursday was a travel day. Everyone from outside of St. John's all gathered at a local B&B to get reacquainted and catch up before heading into the weekend.

Friday morning Karon-Ann held an educational session on the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Approximately twenty consumers and service providers gathered to hear about recovery and how to use WRAP as a tool to help us on our journey. It is something that CHANNAL as an organization has been teaching both members and others to use as a tool. That afternoon was our actual General Meeting. We had members sit in at our St. John's location and others from across the province join us via teleconference. Outside of business matters we had Lorraine Thorne, Peer Support Specialist, as our guest speaker and we also gave out our annual awards. Lorraine moved us all with her story of illness and her path of recovery.

Three awards were presented: Past Presidents Award- Joan Edwards-Karmazyn; Presidents Award: Colleen Simms and the James Vardy Volunteer Award- Paula Evans. Paula is our Central Newfoundland Regional Coordinator. She was not only nominated by CHANNAL members but also by members of her community at large. Our records show that Paula has performed approximately 600 hours of volunteer work for CHANNAL in this past year. She is dedicated, quick to make sure everyone has what they need as soon as a request is made and, most importantly, she shows a compassion to all that is unequalled. Congratulations to all. Friday finished with a delicious banquet at the Hungry Heart Cafe. The forty plus people in attendance were greeted with mouth-watering food, fine entertainment by James Power (THE DUDE!) and Max Jacobs and the warmth of friends. Our guest speaker for the evening was Terry Riley. Terry led us down a path in his world of mental illness and health. Very open and engaging he brought forth many nods of agreement, points to ponder and a copious amount of smiles.

Saturday again started on an educational note. Lorraine Thorne presented and instructed on the topic of peer support. The information she provided, and the perspective she brings to the subject, was welcomed by all

“To the soul, there is hardly anything more healing than friendship.” Thomas Moore

The Timeless Letter Steve O'Brien

When my grandfather Fred died in early December of 1979, my grandmother Nell was devastated. They had married in 1919, shortly after his return from France where he had served three years during the First World War. In their 60 years of marriage, they had survived the Great Depression, another World War, Confederation with Canada and Joe Smallwood's tenure as premier, all without a scratch! However, Nan was not looking forward to spending Christmas without her lifetime companion, best friend and soulmate. She refused to leave her house to move in with our family, but it was obvious to everyone how lonely she was feeling.

My younger sister Susan was very close to Nan, and offered to stay with her to provide companionship and a shoulder to lean on if Nan wanted to talk to anyone. My grandmother somewhat reluctantly agreed, but spent a great deal of her waking hours feeling bitter and sorry for herself. In an effort to snap Nan out of her funk, Susan thought that decorating the house for Christmas might help to divert her attention, at least for a while. About a week before Christmas Day, Susan was rummaging around in the attic looking for the Christmas ornaments. Opening a large metal box, she discovered a quantity of what were obviously very old letters, still in their original envelopes! The ink and paper were well preserved; however, the names on the envelopes were clearly visible. They had been written to my grandmother by my grandfather during World War I. Nan had kept them, but obviously hadn't read them in quite some time.



The next evening after supper, Susan presented Nan with a large envelope. "Please forgive me for looking through your personal letters, but I couldn't stand to see you so upset, especially at this time of year. I hope this helps!" With that, Nan opened the envelope to find a letter from her beloved Fred, mailed from France in December of 1917! It read: "My darling Nell, although we are separated by a vast distance, I feel closer to you than ever. The years since we've met have been the happiest of my life. If I am fortunate enough to survive this conflict I'll be the proudest man in Newfoundland the day we walk down the aisle together. My time spent apart from you has made me realize just how short life can be. Whether we are together for three months, three years or three decades, I'll cherish every moment, as I hope you will. With all the suffering and death (Con't pg. 17)

St. Thomas' Christmas Dinner

SOME INFORMATION RE ST. THOMAS' CHRISTMAS DINNER

- 1) What is the official name of the free Christmas dinner at St. Thomas' Anglican Church? St. Thomas' Anglican Church Christmas Outreach Dinner
- 2) When is it held and where? December 25th at Canon Wood Hall at 8 Military Road (right next to the church)
- 3) It's a free Christmas dinner right? No strings attached? **Yes, completely free - no strings attached.** (con't pg. 17)



Karon-Ann giving gifts AGM weekend

Karon-Ann's Korner

Seasons Greetings Everyone,

Life has been busy over the last few months. CHANNAL celebrated Mental Illness Awareness Week the first week in October. There were various activities throughout the week in different communities. On the west coast we held a women's wellness day and talked about Stress, Goal Setting and the Myths of Mental Illness. Presentations took place throughout the province talking to our peers about recovery and the importance of self-care.

From November 13-15 we held our Annual General Meeting at which we talked about the possibility of CHANNAL becoming a Charitable Organization. We are hoping that everyone has taken time to read the information sent out about Charitable Status. We would love to hear what you think. Should we become a Charity or not is the question. This weekend was one full of wonderful learning experiences and an opportunity to meet with old friends and make a bunch of new ones. Thank you to everyone who attended for making it such a great success!

We are now at that time of year when we all are either terribly frantic trying to get everything done in time for the holidays or terribly lonely looking for someone to share the holidays with. Often times, even when we are in the busyness of the season, we still feel lonely during the holidays. I would like to offer a couple of suggestions for you to try if you are like me and feel the loneliness of the holidays.

- Find a way to help someone else. This is the time of giving and we really don't have to look far to find someone who could use a friend to listen or walk with as they journey somewhere. Little things really do make the difference to any person's day, so look around and lend a helping hand. This helps me to take my focus off my situation and think about others.
- Go for a walk in the snow. Walking is a great way to take care of you. Getting some light and fresh air, breathing deeply, and watching the snow as it falls. Snowflakes are unique. Like each of us, we are truly unique as individuals and all of us bring beauty to the world around us.

Just before I go, I would like to introduce to you the 2009-2010 Board of Directors for CHANNAL: Peter Ralph - President, Sherril Gilbert – Vice-President, Jan Dymond – Treasurer, Moyra Buchan – Secretary, Brent Parsons – Director, Herman Wilkins – Director, Rob Evans – Director, Glenda Osmond – Director and Raylene Newman – Director. Thank you for your dedication to CHANNAL!!!!

My wish for all of you is the Best of the Season. May 2010 bring exceeding prosperity to all of you and CHANNAL!

***“Holidays
are an
expensive
trial of
strength.
The only
satisfaction
comes from
survival”
Jonathan
Miller***

Serena's Score

Ok, the Holiday Season is upon us- soon many of us will get some sort of break from our day to day lives and have a couple of moments to slow down and enjoy life. I know that not all of us are big into the celebrations of this time of year or have family or friends to spend time with. I do find, though, that even when this is the case the world still seems to slow down and that, in and of itself, can bring some sense of peace. It is my hope that we all find some sense of peace during what can be a very trying time of year.

In St. John's this year we created a Holiday Stress Busters Series. We have presentations from five different groups/individuals speaking on topics that will hopefully give people some skills to deal with holiday stress. Topics are: Credit Counselling, Health Relationships, Budgeting, Wellness Recovery Action Plan, Writing/Self Expression and Spirituality. I would like to thank our volunteer presenters - Al Antle, The NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, Lorraine Thorne, Terry Riley and Sherril Gilbert. They have helped to create a wonderful series filled with knowledge and information. I hope next year to be able to compile similar series in all regions. This year is the "test flight."

There are other projects that CHANNAL volunteers are working on or are working with other organizations to create. In St. John's we have partnered with Community Connections to offer a support group that will be focused on recovery. James Power is taking on the role of lead facilitator for that group. The group will begin early in the New Year. Paula is in the Central region working with Community Cafe in order to provide more opportunity for her group members to have access to information and opportunities. Also, newly appointed to the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities is Karon-Ann. So CHANNAL has really started to grow and connect with others in the province in order to help best serve people living with mental health issues.

So, after four months on the job many things are rolling. The next thing on the agenda is the creation of two to three focus groups to see how people have felt about volunteering with CHANNAL in the past. What they found good about it, what they would change and how they, overall, felt about their volunteer experiences with CHANNAL. I will be contacting some of you to ask you to be involved in these groups. Input is vital.

The hope going forward in the New Year is that our membership continues to grow, our volunteer base grows and educates itself and others and that CHANNAL explodes onto the provincial scene. My plan is to help the branches that we have now grow and prosper. Giving them tools to succeed even more despite the geographical isolation some of them face. Secondly, we need to find volunteers in other regions and communities who can begin support groups in that area and/or create an awareness of mental health issues. I am also in preliminary talks with some other non-profit groups so that we may be able to bring some of their information to you and for us also to work together to create new programs. It promises to be a year filled with possibility. That being said- Cheers to a New Year of growth and prosperity for us all and CHANNAL!!!



Peter's Place

AGM 2008-2009 - Presidents Report

***“Never
doubt that a
small group
of
thoughtful ,
committed
citizens can
change the
world;
indeed , it’s
the only
thing that
ever has.”
Margaret
Mead***

CHANNAL is a unique organization in our province. There is no other organization in the province that is created by consumers for consumers. For many years, we were a part of CHMA. This was in many ways a convenient and helpful place to be. However, it eventually came time for CHANNAL to become independent and leave home. We became independent from CHMA on April 26, 2006 and it has not always been easy. Everyone involved from members to volunteers, board members to employees and group leaders have been learning how we should run CHANNAL. This is difficult because CHANNAL wears many hats. For some members, CHANNAL is a community and social support network. For others, CHANNAL is the weekly meeting of a group whether that is face to face or on our chat line via the internet. CHANNAL also plays roles that are not always obvious to many members. Karon-Ann and other members participate on a weekly basis in committees dealing with such things as housing, Mental Health Care and Treatment Act, and many other issues which affect the lives of consumers. What CHANNAL is depends on who you talk to; it depends upon your perspective. At our last AGM, we had a wonderful visioning session. That session was just the beginning of a process which must involve everyone who wishes to participate so that we can make CHANNAL the organization that we want it to be.

This year saw some big changes for CHANNAL. Joan Edwards Karmazyn stepped down from the board. Joan played a pivotal role in CHANNAL for many years both as an employee and as the first President after independence from CHMA. She is one of the central figures in the history of CHANNAL and also one of the central figures in the recovery/self-help community movement in Newfoundland and Canada. Her appointment to the Mental Health Commission of Canada was well deserved and should be a source of pride for all members of this organization. Joan will be sorely missed.

CHANNAL also saw the creation of a new position as a result of an increase in funding from the provincial government. The funding was some recognition of the important role that CHANNAL must play in the Mental Health Care system in our province. We are very pleased to have been able to hire Serena Payne in the position of Provincial Volunteer Coordinator. This position is one more step in creating the capacity required for CHANNAL to do the things that many of the members want CHANNAL to accomplish. We are hopeful that the government will give us the ability to employ a Peer Support Specialist. These positions will hopefully enable us to reach out to the multitude of

people in this province who suffer from mental illnesses without support, without hope and without a voice.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who, over the past year have, given so much of their time and their selves. Without the volunteers there would be no CHANNAL. I would also like to thank my fellow board members for the sacrifices they make and I would like to welcome to the board the new members who include Sherril Gilbert, Rob Evans, Glenda Osmond, and Raylene Newman. Finally, I would like to thank Karon-Ann for the tremendous job that she is doing. Her report gives you a sense of the amount of time and effort required to meet the demands of her job. Karon-Ann has a great work ethic which combined with a belief in this organization gives us a bright future. Congratulations to Karon-Ann and to every one of you who continue to make CHANNAL what it is today.

Peter Ralph,
President, CHANNAL Board of Directors



Peter Ralph presenting Colleen Simms with the CHANNAL Presidents Award in “recognition of contributions to lives of those living with mental illness”



Snowflakes melt alone - but together they can be traffic stoppers!

Teamwork allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Some people want it to happen, some wish it to happen, others make it happen.

Volunteers aren't paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.

Anonymous





Truly,
you have called us Kings
though, in Truth
we know ourselves as pilgrims.
Searching Heaven,
finding Light,
we bring Him gifts,
leaving palaces behind.

You, pilgrim, journeying still,
Do not let your heart be troubled.
Upon this road, we have all tired and sighed
"How far we have come!
How far now must we go?"

Look above and see,
the star in Heaven
is reaching out towards Forever!
Look above and see,
the star in Heaven
has cast His Light to travel here!

And, in Truth
are you too not Kings and Queens?
Let Hope then Live in your Hearts!
For you have not left palaces,
you are journeying towards one.
And though you may not lay gold at His feet
you give the wisest gift,
Love.

Stephen Quinn

A New CHANNAL

A deep sharing has just taken place,
while gently taking us to a wonderful place
where each of our hearts
have been welcomed to open.
And really, the journey hasn't been so long.
Along the way, I discovered a song,
to express my gratitude,
that together, we have chosen

Chosen together - this path to share,
not knowing for sure what we'd find here.
But so naturally
it seems to have happened.
And naturally, love like a deep, deep spring
found it's path, and it's opening.
May we all feel delight
at this lovely fountain.

This is a CHANNAL that simply awaits
for us to be ready, to open the gate.
I breathe deeply and know
this would likely happen.

(My 1st CHANNAL meeting, October 24'09)

Terry Rilley



**“Poetry comes nearer
to vital truth than
history” Plato**

Regional Reports

The Wellness Connection– Central Region: Paula Evans

The Wellness Connection self help group is steady at six members and holding. We have a new member that joined this month. We held our Christmas party at the usual meeting grounds to celebrate another successful year and to welcome a New Year with bright new ideas and more members to come.

AGM Provincial Conference from November 13 – 15 was a success. Lorraine Thorne, Certified Peer Support presented a lecture on Peer Support on Saturday, November 14 and there was quite an attendance. Later that evening we had entertainment by Terry O’Reilly who performed a Kitchen Party during the James Fardy Award was presented to me. I am much honored to achieve this award because of the gentleman who represents this, what he achieved and what he stood for. Here is to you James and your wife, Debbie Sue.

I have revised the PSA’s here in the Central region and updated them on the local media channel, radio and in the local newspaper. I have also begun to scan the local advertising directory for organizations and the like and will be faxing our PSA out to the public a little at a time.

Karon-Ann, Peter and I attended the ‘Into the Light’ Conference in Vancouver, BC. The accommodations were wonderful. The city is breathtaking and beautiful. Everyone that lives there do not let the rain stop them from performing anything, each one continues on with their plans, and so did we. The Conference was exhausting as there were a lot of information sessions over riding each other. That was disappointing because there were some sessions I would have liked to attend which I could not. We all had to select on a ratio of 1/12.

Some group members attended the Vigil at the local College of the North Atlantic, Grand Falls-Windsor region in memory of the Montreal Massacre. There they met with Millie Walsh, mother of murder victim Samantha Walsh along with other victims of violence for Canada’s National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. These events were held on December 3rd.

There are concerns around accessible housing issues in the region. Apparently **con’t pg 18**



**“Mental Health problems do not affect three or four out of every five persons but one out of every one”
Dr. William Menninger**

St. John's– Ed Sawdon

On Friday, September 11th, I attended the CHANNAL St. John's Regional Volunteer Staff Meeting at 2 pm and later, we had our annual CHANNAL Barbeque at 4 pm. Thirteen people attended, including Karon- Ann Parsons and Volunteer Coordinator, Serena Payne. Hotdogs and hamburgers for all. Everyone had a Good Time.

The week of October 4 - 10, 2009 was known nationwide as MIAW - Mental Illness Awareness Week. I, CMHA-NL's Roger Baggs, new E.D. George Skinner, Mark Gruchy & Paul Fifield, along with my CHANNAL colleague, James Power were present at St. John's City Council chambers, where St. John's Mayor Dennis O'Keefe read the Proclamation for Mental Illness Awareness Week at a St. John's Council Meeting, Monday, October 5th!

On Wednesday, October 7th in the afternoon and early evening, I attended the CHANNAL St. John's Regional OPEN HOUSE @ 4 pm

On Thursday, October 8th afternoon, and evening I went to one Mental Health related meeting, and later, a Canadian Mental Health Association - NL social!

From 1 pm to 4 pm, I represented CHANNAL at the Mental Health Stakeholder meeting at the MCP/Belvedere Building, 57 Margaret Place, St. John's At 6:30 pm, my CHANNAL colleagues James Power & Doug Smith and I went over to the Battery Hotel, St. John's where CMHA-NL held their 3rd Annual Gala "Joie de Vivre!"

On Wednesday, October 14th afternoon, I went to St. John's City Hall, as CHANNAL Representative to the Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Status of Persons With Disabilities.

We were supposed to have a November 5th OPEN DOORS Guest Speaker, Ruth MacDonald from Vibrant Communities/Citizens Voice had to cancel. Instead of a Guest Speaker, we watched two DVD's from Veterans Affairs/Department of National Defence's Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS) Group - "Leave None Behind" and "A Stranger in Our Home." If you want to learn more about Operational Stress Injury and how it affects Canadian Forces Personnel (Airmen, Sailors & Soldiers), Veterans and their Families go to their website: www.osiss.ca

St. John's— Ed

On Tuesday, November 10th, I participated in the "Building for Bridges 2" workshop, 9 to noon. This meeting was arranged by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Friday, November 13th was the first day for CHANNAL's two-day Annual General Meeting Weekend. I attended the CHANNAL AGM at the Health Science. The Keynote Address was from Ms. Lorraine Thorne, Newfoundland and Labrador's First Certified Peer Support Specialist. Both CHANNAL President, Peter Ralph, and executive Director, Karon -Ann Parsons presented their annual reports.

In the evening, I went over to the Hungry Heart Cafe, where CHANNAL had their Banquet. The Food was delicious; everyone had Beef Wellington for their main course. Entertainment was provided by both my colleagues, James Power and Max Jacobs. Max and James sang "I can See Clearly Now," and Bob Dylan's "Knocking On Heaven's Door." Later, we all sang "The CHANNAL Song!" which went with the same tune as John Fogerty's or Creedance Clearwater Rivival's "Out my Back Door." Max and James performance was excellent, and they should call themselves "Maximum Power" or "Power to the Max!"

On Thursday, November 26 I looked after the CHANNAL Exhibit at the Emmanuel House Health Fair, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, St. John's.

During this time period, we had three OPEN DOORS Guest Speakers: Olive English and Martina Hickey, Day Treatment Program, St. Clare's Mercy Hospital, September 17th; and Martha Muzychka, MHCTA, "Patient Representatives and Rights Advisors," October 15th.



A Toast to Friends



Max And James Rockin' the House

**“Music is well said to be the speech of Angels”
Thomas Carlyle**



**“Music is sounds cognitive apologist”
Stephen Smoliar**

St. John’s– James Power

I met Max Jacobs a couple of years ago when he was playing guitar for an open mic event and I sang a song. The last Thursday of each month, there is an event called Shared Space at Gower Street United Church, and several times I have gone down and sang while Max played guitar. Last March he told me about P.A.C.T. (Pulling A Community Together), a presentation Max wanted to facilitate centered around music. He did it here at CHANNAL St. John's, and we wrote the CHANNAL Song. We did the song at the Hungry Heart Cafe during the CHANNAL AGM this year. We have also done the P.A.C.T. thing at The Meeting Place on the Waterford site and The New Hope Community Centre on Springdale Street. We have a couple of more scheduled, and I am looking forward to it. We have had a lot of fun.

I did a WRAP session at CHANNAL, and that was beneficial to me. In addition, I facilitated two PEER Support meetings here in November. Recovery is possible, and it does not matter how slow you go, just as long as you do not stop. Perseverance is what it is all about. Take a look around at where you are, and take note of the time. Be aware. Otherwise, you may miss some of what's happening. Be where you are.

My goals, my dreams, are above me, but I will keep reaching for them. Thanks for your support, and Happy Holidays. May the New Year bring you opportunity and happiness.

Miami— James Power

I think I'll change the station until I hear my name
I'm calling and I'm falling and I'm drowning in champagne
My baby's not here with me and it's plain to see
I made no reservation and I'm standing in the rain

Yes I'm going to Miami

Remember when I told the man about a certain goal
It doesn't feel as half as bad as long as I can roll
I was told a story but it was just untrue
There's always something left to say, nothing left to do

So I'm going to Miami

There's music in the air tonight, the words don't make sense
I cannot cross the line so I'm sitting on the fence
The lights are bright like Broadway and I smell perfume
The phone is ringing all alone in a lonely room

Because I've gone to Miami



Dealing with the Stigma Associated with Mental Illness—

Steven O'Brien

For the past 41 years, I've been living with a mental illness, specifically Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). I'm a 51 year-old male resident of St. John's, born and raised in the city, who first noticed some of the symptoms of the disorder while I was in elementary school. While some people with OCD have obsessive thoughts (such as an unnatural fear of death of a loved one), others like myself display some type of obsessive behaviour. In my case, the unusual behaviour took the form of excessive hand-washing, as well as performing little "rituals" throughout the day. I clearly remember the morning routine I just HAD to go through each day before leaving for school. This included re-arranging the cushions on the living room sofa, straightening the ornaments on the mantelpiece, and making sure that all the labels of food items in our pantry faced outwards! I was also overly concerned about how my clothes were stored and how books were arranged on shelves.

My parents may have liked having a kid who wasn't a slob but this fact sometimes led to friction with my two younger brothers. We shared the same bedroom for several years as children, with many common areas such as the clothes closet, bookcase, and a desk to use for homework. As you can imagine, my policy of "*A place for everything; and everything in its place*" didn't go over very well, especially within the confines of a small and sometimes cluttered room! Despite all this, I managed to do well at school, graduating from Brother Rice High in June of 1974, and entering Memorial University that fall. After losing a year because of a change in my course of study, I finished my degree program in 1979 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Political Science.

Around this time, the symptoms of OCD stepped up dramatically, especially the ritual behaviour I had to go through at the start of each day. In addition to the "*tidy up the house*" routine, I became fixated on having to complete EVERYTHING to perfection! This included such everyday tasks as washing, dressing, and especially shaving. During my worst periods, I could often spend several hours each day on these "*routine*" chores- a problem made even more acute in a one bathroom house for a family of six! By 1984, I had (reluctantly) started seeing a psychiatrist who prescribed some pills to help diminish the ritual behaviour. The following year that

“Mental
Illness is
nothing to
be
ashamed
of, but
stigma and
bias shame
us all” Bill
Clinton

doctor left the province and re-assigned my case to a colleague who urged me to consider hospitalization as a way to finally deal with the ever more powerful rituals- which by this time were ruling (and ruining) my life! It took another 30 months before I finally agreed to be admitted to the psychiatry unit at St. Clare's Hospital, where I was a patient from July to September 1988. While working with a team of doctors, nurses, psychologists and other professionals, I was able to finally reduce, and to later largely eliminate, the behaviour rituals that had been such a strong (and negative!) influence on my life for so many years!

Unfortunately for me, once I was discharged and left the controlled surroundings of the hospital ward, many of the OCD symptoms returned, although not as strong as before my admission. The medical staff, my family and I all agreed that some form of supportive housing environment might be helpful to reinforce and maintain the progress already made. So, I moved into ACCESS House in November of 1988. A few months later, I enrolled in a program designed to help mental health consumers obtain and maintain employment by developing skills necessary in the workplace. In my case, punctuality was one of the most important! It felt very satisfying to leave ACCESS each morning, walk to the nearest bus stop in time to make the right connection, and show up at the workplace before the start of my shift!

I completed the program in June of 1989 and three months later was hired, through a provincial program, at the local Canadian Mental Health Association. In those days before the Internet's popularity most of my duties involved organizing, updating and maintaining the CMHA's Resource Library of books and video tapes. The office was kept quite busy handling requests for information about a wide variety of mental health problems and conditions, often from family members who had no idea why their loved one's behaviour had so suddenly changed!

By the following summer, I was ready to move from the supportive housing environment of ACCESS to living in my own apartment; and that's when I found out firsthand how unfair and hurtful stigma and prejudice are in our society! I had responded to a newspaper ad for a furnished basement apartment in a house off Freshwater Road in the city. The owner/landlord showed me around, and seemed quite eager for me to move in right away, even offering extra perks such as cable TV and use of a snow blower at no extra charge! I liked the place, and agreed to move in that weekend; so I paid the first month's rent plus a damage deposit. He issued a receipt, and we shook hands with the owner promising to have the rental agreement drawn up and ready to be signed within 24 hours. Early the next morning, the landlord phoned the CMHA and left a message with the office manager for me to return the call. When I did, I was told that the apartment was no longer for rent since the man's daughter was returning to the province unexpectedly, and would need a place to live. He made arrangements to return the money already paid, but



Stigma

gave no indication when the apartment might become available. His telephone manner was noticeably less friendly than the previous day, but I assumed that he was preoccupied by concern over his daughter's problems.

Although disappointed about losing out on the apartment, I attributed the situation to just bad timing or hard luck, and continued the search. Three weeks later, I happened to be in the drug store on the corner of Empire and Freshwater Road, only a short distance away from the residence that nearly had become my address! The quickest walking route back to ACCESS meant passing in front of the house; and since I was curious to see the place again, that's what I did. While fully expecting the "FOR RENT" sign to have been removed from the basement window, I was surprised to see three men sitting in lawn chairs near the entrance drinking beer! Being a friendly sort, I said hello and asked if any of the apartments were vacant. One of the guys, who looked to be no older than twenty, said that he had just recently moved into the basement unit, and that his two buddies had stopped by for a visit. Since I had been told by the landlord that his daughter was supposed to be living there, I pressed my luck and asked how he had gotten the apartment, mentioning that I had been interested as well. He told me that when he initially contacted the landlord three weeks before, he was told that the apartment had just been rented to a guy -ME!- who was going to move in that weekend. Two days after that, the owner phoned, explaining that the tenant who was going to move in had backed out; and offered to arrange a viewing!!



Since I was that first tenant, and did no such thing, my first reaction was anger!! "*How could that so & so landlord change his mind so quick" and just as important" WHY?"* Checking with the office manager again, she recalled that when she answered the phone with the regular greeting of "*Good morning! Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland Division,*" the landlord initially thought he had dialed the wrong number, and asked that the name be repeated. Only when he was assured that I did actually work there did he realize that he had the right place! Thinking back to my first meeting with the owner, when he had asked where I worked, my reply was "*the CMHA on Water Street*" (I used the abbreviation instead of the full title!). Whether or not he confused the initials with those of CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) or some similar company, I'll probably never know. However, I DO know that he was caught in a lie; and that the lying started after he found out I was with an agency with the words "*Mental Health*" in its name!!

One of the many disturbing things about this incident is how everyone connected with the mental health care system seems to have been smeared by the same brush ---that we're all "*nut cases.*" My Prospective landlord didn't seem to make the distinction between the educational and advocacy functions carried by the CMHA staff, and the treatment of patients in a hospital setting. His actions seemed to follow along the lines that all "*crazy*" people stick together; and that he didn't want one as his tenant! Nearly twenty years later, that condemnation by a man that barely knew me, still hurts. It was one of the reasons why I became so involved with the mental health support group CHANNAL, which was just getting started at the time. The CMHA also invited consumers to participate in its own STOP STIGMA campaign, arranging visits to schools to educate both students and teachers. These sessions included information about the types of disorders (including OCD); **Con't pg. 18**

**“The religions of tomorrow will be less concerned with the dogmas of theology and more concerned with the social welfare of humanity”
Tommy Douglas, 1934**

Pharmacare Update— Sweden - Ed

PHARMACARE UPDATE - SWEDEN

Sweden is a Nordic country on the Scandinavian Peninsula in Northern Europe. Neighbouring countries, include Norway (West); Finland (Northeast) and Denmark (South).

Like Australia, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, & New Zealand, Sweden has a National Public Pharmacare Program for all its residents! Approximately, 9.2 million Swedes have access to Public Drug Coverage through the Swedish Government's Dental and Pharmaceutical Benefits Agency or TLV (Tandvards-och Lakemedelsformsansverket).

TVL follows three Principles:

- decide on whether a pharmaceutical product or dental care procedure shall be subsidized or not
- consider cost effectiveness i.e. whether or not the cost of treatment is reasonable in relation to the good it does
- providing more assistance to those people who have the greatest needs.

According to Swedish Government Health Official, Anne Nilsson (Deputy Director, Health Care Division, Ministry of Health & Social Affairs), Swedish citizens "are entitled to a safety net that limits the costs of medical products for the individual. The high cost thresholds also extend to people from other Nordic countries and persons eligible for health care benefits in Sweden according to the EU Council's ordinance (EEG) 1408/71".

Like other jurisdictions, some prescription drugs are covered privately by health consumers themselves. The most an individual Swede or Swedish Family pays in annual "co-payments" is SEK 1800 Krona (270.00 ~CAD). On average, Swedish Health Consumers pay 21% of their annual medication costs.

TVL's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is designed in such a way that the more Swedes pay for their meds the more they receive in drug coverage. For example, a Swedes whose annual drug costs are less than SEK 900 (135 CAD), receive no assistance whatsoever. Those Swedes, who annual Drug Costs are between SEK 900 and SEK 1700, receive 50% coverage. Those

Pharmacare

Swedes who spend between SEK 1700 (~255 CAD) and SEK 3300 (~495 CAD), receive 75% coverage. Those Swedes who spend between SEK 3300 and SEK 4300 (~645 CAD) receive 90% coverage. And, those Swedes who spend over SEK 4300 towards their annual medication costs, receive full 100% coverage.

In Sweden, TVL has made "Generic Substitution" mandatory. For example, mental health consumers who receive a anti-depressant prescription of Cipramel from their Psychiatrist or Physician have to go on the less-expensive generic Citalopram. And, for those mental health consumers who are prescribed Zoloft have to go on the less costly Sertraline. In general trends, this rule applies to Physically Health Related Medication too! Those Swedes, who require Losec for Ulcers or GERD, have to go on the generic Omeprazole.

However, Swedish Health Consumers have the right to decline a generic product provided they are willing to make the difference between the generic drug and the more expensive Brand name product.

According to the Swedish Government, "Generic Substitution" has enabled Sweden to save \$700 million Euro (~1,086,599,718 CAD.) in their Nationwide Drug Plan.

Sweden's TVL Program is quite similar to New Zealand's PHARMAC - Sweden has a Patient "User Council," whereas, New Zealand has a Consumer Advisory Committee.

Every foreign country, I have researched so far, has a NATIONAL PUBLIC PHARMACARE PROGRAM for all their citizens! Here in Canada, Canadian Health Consumers have 14 Federal, Provincial and Territorial Government Drug Plans. In his recent response to my latest Pharmacare Update, Federal Finance Minister James Flaherty states:

"Under the Canada Health Act, all necessary drug therapy administered within a Canadian hospital setting is insured and publicly funded. Outside of the hospital setting, provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the administration of their own publicly funded prescription drug benefit programs. Most Canadians have access to insurance coverage for prescription medicines through public and/or private insurance plans. The federal, provincial and territorial governments offer varying levels of coverage, with different eligibility requirements, premiums and deductibles. The publicly-funded programs generally provide insurance coverage for those most in need, based on age, income, and medical condition."

Minister Flaherty, whatever happened to the National Pharmaceutical Strategy and the Provincial & Territorial Health Ministers 2006 recommendation for a National Pharmacare Program?



***“In giving
advice,
seek to
help, not
please,
your
friend”
Solon***

by government housing laws, for every 10 units built in a year, only one has to be accessible. This issue is being pursued by one of our members on the committee and thus far a business in the Grand Falls-Windsor region has been accommodated to accessible individuals.

The Regional Quality Improvement Team accreditations are moving along perfectly. We had our Christmas dinner Tuesday, December 8.

Community Café is doing quite well and we will soon be having our Christmas festive coming up December 17.

CHAT on-line support group is going slowly as probably is to be expected for this time of year with people getting their last minute shopping done. The odd one pops up expressing stress building up with the Christmas season.



Stigma

dispelling some of the myths surrounding mental illness; and to allow the students to see for themselves that people living mental health problems could actually do that---live with the problems and still have useful and meaningful lives!

Even though more laws are now on the books to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities, attitudes seem to change much more slowly! Progress is being made, but sometimes only at a snail's pace. Affordable housing remains as a major problem for Canadians with low income, including mental health consumers. I can't help but wonder how many other landlords are still out there, as inflexible and close-minded as the one I encountered!!

St. Thomas'

- 4) Who can partake in the event? Individuals/families who are financially strapped; anyone who is alone or without family....international and out of town students, people staying in hotels and B&B's; people from out of town with family at the hospitals; and seniors
- 5) Menu – Traditional Christmas Turkey Dinner
- 6) Sitting Time: 11:45 a.m. and 1 p.m.

There are Social Rooms with Live Music where people can relax, talk to others before and after their meal. Some 40-50 drivers assist in providing transportation for those who require it, within the City of St. John's, as well as delivering meals for those who cannot join us for whatever reason. We are also pleased to advise that the year we will also be providing Wheelway service.

***"Small cheer
and great
welcome
makes merry
a feast"
Shakespeare***

The Timeless Letter

going on all around me, it's hard to believe that Christmas is just four days away. I pray that we can be together for next Christmas, but no matter how far I am away, please know that my love for you will never die!"

Immediately after reading the letter, Nan burst into tears before embracing Susan in a bear hug! Those words from my grandfather, despite being penned more than 60 years before, were just as meaningful that day as they were when they were written. Nan did snap out of her funk, she gave thanks for the many years they had spent together and was particularly appreciative on Christmas Day! She lived another dozen years, and whenever she felt down in the dumps, a quick re-read of "the letter" helped restore her spirits. It was the gift that not only gave at Christmas, but throughout the year!

AGM weekend

in attendance: consumers and service providers. Being an organization based upon the concept and the belief in peer support, it was a session that we all learned from.

Alas, our closing time came and how else do a good bunch of Newfies finish things up- with a Kitchen Party, of course. Terry Riley, his keyboard and a pretty funky jacket, provided the entertainment. Outside of the two pieces published here there were other things he wrote about concerning his experiences, thus far, with CHANNAL. All involved had a stompin' good time and Terry, you will forever be Notorious with CHANNAL!



Kitchen Party!

CHANNAL
Bridging the Gulf of
Understanding

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St. John's– Ed or James 753 7710

Head office– Karon– Ann | 888 636
4709 or 636 4709

Online Support Group

www.channal.ca

CHANNAL needs volunteers across the province! Particularly, we would love to hear from people who would start a peer support group in their region or community.

Also needed are people to do hands on work in their regions and towns. People who can promote CHANNAL, people to do educational work– if you can do it we need it!!!

Call Serena at 709 697 9109 or | 888 636 4709

Or email vol@channal.ca

Look forward to hearing from you.



The views and ideas expressed in this publication are those of the authors alone and not necessarily those held by CHANNAL, as an organization or its members.

Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy

On December 14th the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Government released their first progress report into their Poverty Reduction Strategy.

According to the report the incidence of low– income in this province has dropped by 5.7% between 2003 and 2007. The average low-income gap, according to their numbers, is also now the lowest in the country.

There are parts of this strategy that are directed at

people with mental health issues. Government is saying it will put more money into such organizations to better assist people with mental illness', especially in rural areas of the province. Monies have also been spent in providing a more accessible and easily navigated legal system. Home-

Educate yourself and speak loud and clear. We all need to be heard!

lessness initiatives for those of us with complex needs have also begun. There are other initiatives that are also being implemented or explored. A copy of the report can be found at www.gov.nl.ca. To find out more call | 866 883 6600 or email povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca

