

# Link-Up

Newfoundland and Labrador's only Province wide  
newsletter by and for Mental Health Consumers

Retro Edition 2007

## Remembering John Collins

By: Moyra Buckan ( First printed Summer 2005 Link-up)



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On April 23, 2005, a bright light in the provincial mental health world was extinguished. John Collins, a friend to many of us and a vital force in mental health education, died suddenly in his sleep, of sleep apnea. It is still almost impossible to believe.

As happens for many consumers, the course of John's life was changed by the experience of major mental illness. Always exceptionally bright, he told me once that if he hadn't become ill, he would probably have studied medicine. Major depression in his early teens and a diagnosis of schizophrenia at age 18 prevented that. But he was blessed with a wonderfully supportive family, and over the next ten years he was able to complete his B.A. and get work experience in the family business.

I first met John in 1991 at a meeting about mental health at the ARRNL. He was just emerging from his last major episode of illness and attending the Day Program at the Health Sciences Centre where the nursing staff convinced him to come along to this meeting. I remember vividly how impressed I was by the articulateness of this likeable young red-haired man. I approached him afterwards and urged him to get involved with CHANNAL, and with the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Before long John was a steadfast member of CHANNAL and part of the business com-

mittee that took on advocacy issues. The first presentation I heard him make was at a Partnership Conference, where he spoke about the challenges of completing his education while living with mental illness. He also played an organizing role in the mental health consultation for the new Community Health Board and got co-opted on to the provincial board of CMHA.

It was only a matter of time before he was nominated for the CMHA National Board. When he was running for election at the national annual meeting, all his political genes manifested themselves with great persuasiveness as he went round seeking the support of voting delegates from across the country. In the end he topped the poll. He went on to be the chair of the National Consumer Advisory Committee and a member of the CMHA National Executive Committee.

During this period John was working at the Independent Living Resource Centre and volunteering with CHANNAL and CMHA. He started making presentations about his experience of mental illness at the medical school, to social work and nursing students, and to other professional and community groups. Because he had with not only psychosis but also depression and mania, he used to describe himself as "an all-purpose consumer." With his irrepressible humour and his compelling accounts of what hallucinations and delusions are life for

the person inside them, he made a huge impression on his listeners.

At this time John had not "gone public" in the media, which is a major step. He crossed this bridge when he began working at CMHA and doing presentations as part of his job. After the deaths of Norman Reid and Darryl Power, he took part in a CBC Cross Talk program in which he talked about his own experience of schizophrenia. When the Judicial Inquiry into these deaths was announced and CMHA obtained legal standing, we asked him if he would be willing to be a witness. I remember talking this over with him, knowing that it was not a decision to make lightly because he would come under public scrutiny and cross-examination. John made a deliberate choice to expose his own vulnerability in order to benefit other people and bring about needed changes in the mental health system. Something came together for him at that point; he saw his illness not as a deficit but as an asset that could be used to positively effect, to enlarge understanding of the range of human experience and to improve our society.

John's expert testimony at the Inquiry was extremely powerful and certainly influenced the rec

### ANNOUNCEMENT CHANNAL

(The Consumers' Health  
Awareness Network New-  
foundland and Labrador)

**CHANNAL St. John's is  
moving!!!**

**As of July 7th 2007 CHAN-  
NAL St. John's will be lo-  
cated at:**

**Lawrence College  
120 Lemarchant Rd  
St. John's, NL  
A1C 2H2**

**Phone 753-7710**

**Drop By and See the new  
Place!!!**

## Remembering John Collins continued from front page...

Recommendations that were made in the Judge's final report. A radio reporter told me afterwards that they played back his testimony in full in the busy CBC newsroom and that everybody stopped working to listen: a rare occurrence in the hardboiled world of journalism.

In 2003-2004, John represented CHANNAL as a Consumer Consultant to the mental Health Strategy and traveled the province with the team responsible for ensuring that consumers and communities had their say in the development of the provincial Mental Health Plan. Sadly, he has not lived to see the results of this work.

Many of us had been concerned about him for some time; the weight gain caused by an attempted change of medication, the cough that increasingly plagued him, the sleep apnea that complicated his nights and days. As we all reeled from the shock of his

death, I found myself thinking about the mesh of difficulties that consumers have to deal with—not just the cruel effects of illness but the side-effects of medications, the impact on physical health, the challenges of working and negotiating accommodations and managing financially.

Many people live their lives without the challenges that John faced and make not a fraction of the contribution he did in his short life. We have lost a gifted educator who was always ready to help others. We are fortunate that his presence is captured in the *Changing Minds* program to which he contributed so much and through which his educational work will continue to live.

There are two stories from his last week of life which I think express the essence of John. Just two days before he died, he made a presentation to a class of Grade Six students. He

talked to them about mental illness and his own experience. At the end of the class he asked them how many of them knew someone with a mental illness. One student raised her hand. He asked how many of them had been in the classroom for the last hour and they all raised their hands. He told them, "Now you all know someone with a mental illness." And you bet they will remember.

Also during that final week, he attended a meeting where people introduced themselves around the room. When it came to his turn he said, "When I'm not hallucinating, I'm John Collins." It's that wit and warmth, that lively presence that could energize the whole room, that's so hard to believe is gone. He was just 43.

Our heartfelt sympathies go to his parents and family in their loss. Like them, we will miss him desperately.

## CHANNAL Remembers Rick Morris

(Ed. Note: This article "CHANNAL remembers Rick Morris was published in the Dec. 2004 issue of the CHANNAL Link-Up)

It is with regret that CHANNAL Provincial Office informs its members of the tragic passing of Rick Morris. Many CHANNAL members will remember Rick as the facilitator of the Strategic Planning Conference in July 2004. Rick was a social worker, researcher, counselor and community advocate and was known throughout the professional mental health community as well as by many mental health consumers. Rick played an instrumental role in CHANNAL's strategic planning session in July and prepared the session report that many members had received in August. It is this strategy that CHANNAL follows as it embarks on its road to independence.

Rick passed away on December 3 (2004) after a short illness. He leaves to mourn his wife Susan Pye, and his children Shane and Anna as well as many family, friends and colleagues.

## Thoughts...

*Take a look at those two open hands of yours. They are tools with which to serve, make friends, and reach out for the best in life. Open hands open the way to achievement. Put them to work today.*

*Wilfred A Peterson*

I believe that the above quote captures what John and Rick were all about. They used their hands to our benefit. They both made headway through the stigma and the challenges of mental health to show us that the job can be done, we just have to be willing to work at it.

My challenge to all of you and myself as well, lend a hand to someone, the reward may just be that, like Rick and John, you too can make the world a better place!

*Karon-Ann Parsons*

## Then and Now (Originally Printed in Link-Up Fall/Winter 2003)

When the very first meeting of a group of people who eventually became the CHANNAL Network met back in the late 80's there was bunch of consumers, really pioneers and an energetic, enthusiastic social worker, Moyra Buchan. Once people started dropping in each Saturday, a foundation of consumers began to emerge, building and solidifying what is now CHANNAL.

This grew regionally over a short period of time, spreading across Newfoundland & Labrador. More than ten years later, people are still drawn back to CHANNAL. Over time the office has at times been frantic, most of the time relaxed, but always safe. A part of this safety is the length of time CHANNAL has sustained itself. CHANNAL's foundation is growth, and the reasons for its being run deep. Making it easier to take risks outside, while being part of this sensible, rational, accepting group of people.

A change many have noticed is an evolution in the office jargon. There is quite a deal of discussion, but not only at the St. John is more than that. Talk is quite often geared at the provincial level, geographically and provincially there is movement and 's level.

CHANNAL growth in an interactive manner.

I know a great about the St. John's Region but not nearly as much about the rural areas of the province and the experiences of other CHANNAL members. When professional help is desperately needed but often not available, what are the viable options in this instance? Is there pressure, due to lack of services in your own community to move to an urban area? How does one cope with mental illness/problems, especially taking into consideration the nature of the geography of this island and Labrador?

I have an idea how sparse and isolating the situation could become from a situation I had to deal with some years ago. I also know how much being able to receive support and give support was to me at that time. CHANNAL has throughout the years provided me and others as well with a safe, supportive and non-judgmental environment to express the wear and tear of daily life as a person a consumer.

CHANNAL Member

Link Up Fall 2003

Minds Project. Video clips of individuals talking about their personal experiences with mental illness were at times riveting and had a tremendous effect on the viewers. One of the most important components of the training program development was the extensive consultation that was held with consumers of mental health services. The discussion among the participants that followed the video clips revealed a genuine appreciation for the challenges faced by people who are affected by mental illness, whether it be the person who is diagnosed family members who have to cope with the diagnosis as well.

Noted among some participants were the commonalities among many of the illnesses and how this must create additional challenges for the individuals affected. Some of the participants in the session who identified themselves as mental health consumers were able to address some of the comments and questions concerning the challenges of having a mental illness, thereby adding yet another dimension to the training program.

Changing Minds is being developed to meet the needs identified as a result of the Judicial Inquiries into the 2001 shooting deaths of Norman Reid and Darryl Power. This project is funded through: a grant from the Federal Department of Justice, National Crime Prevention Strategy Partnership program; a grant from the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services; a sponsorship by the Rotary Club of St. John's Northwest; and a sponsorship by GlaxoSmith-Kline.

CMHA's goal is to ensure that the Changing Minds program, once completed, is firmly rooted in the consumer experience.

*Information in this article was borrowed from the CMHA-NL Mental Health Matters newsletter.*

*By: Janet Battcock*

## Changing attitudes and minds

BY: Janet Battcock (Originally Printed Spring 2005)

On March 17 and 18, along with Eastern Regional CHANNAL member Inez Butt and CHANNAL's IDM, Joan Edwards-Karmazyn, I attended the first pilot session of Changing Minds - a training program designed to help front-line service workers communicate effectively with people who are ill or in emotional distress.

The first pilot session was held in Clarenville and was attended by individuals representing a variety of professions and community organizations. The two day session consisted of a slide presentation,

of video of people with mental illness talking about their individual experiences. A manual of the eight training modules covering different mental health topics was provided to participants.

The session was co-facilitated by Moyra Buchan and Francine Fleming. Moyra Buchan is the past Executive Director of CMHA-NL and has many years of experience working in mental health and Francine Fleming is an Award Winning Film Producer who was hired to coordinate the Changing with illness or the

## CHANNAL Provincial Conference a Huge Success!

### Conference 2004, St. John's, Newfoundland & Labrador

Consumer's Health Awareness Network Newfoundland & Labrador held its first ever Provincial Conference at St. John's Memorial University, July 2, 3, & 4, 2004. The purpose of this conference was to bring mental health consumers from across the province to reflect upon the history of CHANNAL, its development, its relationship with CMHA-NL, its current situation and future direction.

The planning session of CHANNAL was attended by approximately forty participants with at least thirty-five of these attending the entire three days. Throughout this time period old and new CHANNAL members examined the satisfactions and frustrations of CHANNAL; mission statement, objectives and priority objectives/plans, and a vision for this province wide mental health consumer services organization.

The conference started on Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> at Memorial University's Science Complex. CHANNAL Provincial Coordinator, Michelle Denine made a welcoming speech for all of the conference participants.

She also introduced three guest speakers – Geoff Chaulk, Executive Director of CMHA-NL, Eugene LeBlanc, Director of a consumer self-help network in New Brunswick; publisher of "Our Voice-Notre Voix" and 2003 New Brunswick Human Rights Award Recipient, and Rick Morris, conference facilitator from IHRD (Institute for Human Resource Development). Rick helped CHANNAL conference participants throughout the three day conference by providing guidance and facilitation for group discussion.

CHANNAL members listed several themes for the vision of CHANNAL;

- Advocacy for disability support ie. Home-care and Pharmacare
- Reducing stigma
- Greater consultation between consumers and government departments
- A revised Mental Health Act that would give consumer greater rights
- More support and recognition of self-help organizations like CHANNAL that deal with mental health issues
- General public and professionals to be better educated about mental illness

CHANNAL's future role should be as an independent organization that attends to mental health consumer issues. Other roles include: the education of the general public and health care professionals; a strong consumer advocacy group for persons with mental illness/disability; strong communications effort in terms of teleconferencing, a website, press release, promotion through public media; greater participation from CHANNAL members and volunteers and, greater

collaboration with other community organizations such as ILRC (Independent Living Resource Centre), Schizophrenia Society and the Arthritis Society and, the establishment of more CHANNAL groups across the province.

On Saturday we examined the satisfactions and frustrations of all CHANNAL members who attend the conference. Satisfactions include; CHANNAL is a supportive and caring organization; promotes individual participation and opportunity for growth; it's for and by consumers away from professional advice; decreases people's isolation; it's staffed by consumers and, CHANNAL offers a safe place where consumers are given hope and a sense of belonging. On the other side of the equation people are frustrated with CHANNAL's lack of communication including; no website; lack of information sharing, the irregular distribution of the newsletter, Link-Up; inadequate funding for staffing/salaries; limited funding, preventing effective mobilization; over dependence on CMHA-NL and the need for more control over CHANNAL's own resources; issues around membership tracking; lack of outreach to other groups; lack of appreciation for individual contributions; low morale and breach of confidentiality issues.

The purpose of CHANNAL is to promote mental health by creating and enhancing service delivery programs such as self-help groups and networking with those of the same mind; preventing some forms of mental illness by creating social supports and establishing various outlets to reduce isolation; and bridging understanding and educating the public on issues relevant to mental health by improving communication through the use of newsletters, the arts, a website, and increased advocacy.

On Saturday the Conference participants discussed mission statement drafts for an independent CHANNAL organization. One example states: "*CHANNAL is a self-help advocacy network run for and by consumers. Our mission is to improve the lives of people who have experienced the mental health system. CHANNAL is a provincial self-help advocacy network run for and by consumers whose aim is to reduce stigma and discrimination.*" CHANNAL members will have to create vision and mission statements from the information and discussions of the conference. Conference participants took the opportunity to relax midway through the conference on Saturday evening. A delicious buffet supper was served at Corte Real on the Memorial University campus in St. John's. When everyone had eaten their fill the tables were cleared and the chairs were moved aside to make way for the entertainment. A Karaoke machine was provided for anyone who wished to have their time in the spotlight. It was quickly discovered that CHANNAL is abundant with talent! Many members took the opportunity to sing their favorite tunes and some paired up for duets.

Memorable moments include Ed's ballad (*Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman"*)... Michelle's and Eugene's rendition of Celine Dion's "*Power of Love*," Harold's powerful delivery of "*House of the Rising Sun*," Roger's wonderful imitation of Gloria Gaynor's "*I'll Survive*," John C's memorable "*Unforgettable*," and Janet's lengthy and exhausting "*American Pie*." Other singers included Cathy C., Jean-Anne, Steven K., and Pat and Kayla.

Time was taken during the evening to present Michelle Denine with a Thank You gift for all of her hard work both with the conference and CHANNAL. Anne Nixon summed that presentation up very nicely with the song "*Wind Beneath My Wings*" by Bette Midler.

Sunday morning was the conclusion of the conference and conference participants discussed objectives and plans beyond the conference for CHANNAL. As Ed Sawdon declared: "*Go boldly where no CHANNAL has gone before!*" These objectives and plans are linked with CHANNAL's vision. They include: i

## CHANNAL Provincial Conference a Huge Success! Con't

independence-CHANNAL moving towards becoming an independent organization, while at the same time, enhancing the current relationship with CMHA-NL; reducing stigma; skill building for Consumers, especially leadership and advocacy; educating Healthcare professionals; establishing regional offices in more areas of the province; Outreach with other Community Groups; advocacy; strengthening internal communications; and increase support for Mental Health Consumers. The attendees who showed up on Sunday, enjoyed a delicious Lasagna Brunch before heading home.

The CHANNAL Provincial office would like to thank everyone who participated in the conference. It is because of the interest and active involvement of consumers that CHANNAL is permitted to exist. Consumers across the province make a valuable contribution to the goals and vision of CHANNAL by sharing ideas and experiences with other consumers and with the general public. This is YOUR organization! Be proud of your accomplishment!

By Edward Sawdon & Janet Battcock

## The Gathering

By: Joan Edwards-Karmazyn (Printed winter 2005)

On October 27<sup>th</sup> through to October 29<sup>th</sup> CHANNAL held a gathering for its leaders to come together to meet in what is called THE OPEN SPACE CIRCLE to begin to reset their vision of looking to creating what is now needed on their continued path to becoming independent. This group of Regional coordinators, Group leaders, Program Advisory Committee and me were lead through the Open Spaces process (for more information on the Open Space Technology just Google the author Harrison Owen and /or Open Space Technology) by Ellen Cohen.

Ellen is from Ontario and is a consumer leader in mental health and wellness as well as trained Open Space Technologist. Also joining Ellen, at my invitation, was Connie McKnight, E.D. of the NNMH (NATIONAL NETWORK FOR MENTAL HEALTH).

Connie was invited to present on the activities of the NNMH as well as be part of our gathering. Connie was also extremely helpful to CHANNAL and myself throughout these two and a half days by rolling up her sleeves and pitching in; from assisting Ellen to taking notes for us, to organizing and intervention for advocacy. This on the spot advocacy was amazing to be part of as well as watch and observe and learn as Connie lead us through it.

This was an exercise that left all of us at CHANNAL feeling that we carried the day and which left both sides in a win-win situation, which was the end goal. I will tell

CHANNAL, who came together with open hearts and minds and also who put their learning and sharing caps on.

You are truly an inspiration to me and this serves to give me the energy to keep on fighting the good fight for CHANNAL members and for all who live with mental illness and yet may have not found their own voice.

I salute all who participated in this gathering, for you where one and all very brilliant, brave and courageous -your voices were heard. You produced an amazing load of work with the end result of emerging from the gathering with four committees with various members signed on to share the great amount of work that will need to be carried out to enable CHANNAL to continue on the road of becoming independent. The four committees that were struck were POLICY AND PROCEDURE, ANTI STIGMA, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE. I look forward to working with all of you who signed on and with those future members who will be wanting to join us when we begin to create and carry out our goals. I would like to thank Ellen Cohen for gifts bestowed -thank you-it was amazing and the lessons learned will be forever impacted on the work that we do with CHANNAL.

## Quotes

To the people of Canada, I say welcome us into society as full partners. We are not to be feared or pitied. Remember, we are your mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, your friends, co-workers and children. Join hands with us and travel together with us on our road to recover.

Roy Muise-Self-Help Connection Halifax

May 9, 2005

Mentally ill and Proud

Renee Newell-2007

Never give up! If you slip back, it is O.K. Please remember you are not alone and you will step forward again.

Debra Murphy (nee Yetman)

Spring 2005 Link-Up

I will leave you all with this thought. Helen Keller put it best when she said: "The most beautiful things in the world we cannot see or even touch.... They are felt within our hearts."

Pat Summers,

Fall 2003 Link-Up

Reach out and help others and you will be helping yourself.

Violet Strugnell-Spring 2005 Link-Up

"Hello my dear fellow CHANNAL members, as I sit and ponder this amazing accomplishment I am truly inspired, empowered and respectful of the wonderful members and volunteers who spent the past year in assisting CHANNAL to arrive at this place in CHANNAL's history! I also have to pay homage and extend a thank you to all of the CHANNAL champions, leaders and members who have gone before us over the past 17 years, for they were so instrumental in laying the groundwork to enable us to make this day happen...I salute you one and all. We did it!! On April 26, 2006 we became a fully incorporated and independent organization and on June 16, 2006 we became divested, after 17 years, from our sponsoring agency, CMHA-NL  
Joan Edwards-Karmazyn Summer 2006

# Impressions of the First Ever CHANNAL AGM

By: Jan Dymond

Somehow I've ended up with the task of summing up our first Annual General Meeting with a birthday all our own.

We made it. We are free and clear and on our own. We've not only survived our first year of independence, we've thrived. We are one heck of a non-profit advocacy and support, not to be taken lightly by any community partner. And that's what the AGM taught me the most.

I'm not a formal writer. Well, I can write bureaucratese with the best of them, but I don't want to. It's a cold language. It should not be the language of those who live common lives. So, I'm not going to use it.

And I wasn't one of the organizers, though I would have been honoured to be in that circle. They did a great job and deserve all our applause and more.

So, I'm going to tell you my version of our AGM; kinda like what I did on my AGM vacation, if you will. And if I leave something out that you want mentioned, just send a note to this newsletter and we'll make sure it gets properly noted, okay? Believe me, I have no delusions of grandeur; at least not today.

Well, it's always an adventure to see who is going to get trapped next to me for the next few hours as I fly to Town, which is the nickname for St. John's in case you're new to the province. Y'all know I can be a real talker, and whoever shares my elbow room hasn't a chance of getting forty winks – or even a fake twenty. I may talk a lot, but I talk about interesting things, if I do say so myself.

I was hoping to save a couple of seats for Pat and Herman, who would be joining the passenger list in Deer Lake. But they did manage to sit close, and we managed to say "how good to see you again" before the engines got too loud.

The choice of arranging our mutual accommodations at The Roses was a real blessing. Hotel rooms exhaust me. But in my room, it was like staying at Granma's house, or on the set of the Antique Roadshow. Both suit me just fine. I love solid old furniture.

Since we were the early birds, it was

great to be there to greet all the other travelers as they arrived. It was like a big family reunion as Lorna and Brent pulled up, and Violet and Sherry quietly arrived amongst us, and Doreen beamed her delight about being with us all again. Once Paula got off the storm ravaged roads, we got settled into the glow of being together.

Now, you can imagine that after the flight over, and changing from rural to urban can be a bit tiring. So, I was thrilled that the first meet-and-greet was held right in The Roses. Trays of goodies, great conversation, chances to catch up with everyone; it was a heck of an evening.

I wasn't all that keen about the blocks of walking we began the first morning; and repeated many times after. Not at first. But then it was fun to have the time with others; always someone different. I got to know so many of my peers very well via those jaunts between here and there. And I now know that section of Town really well. I haven't window shopped since moving to Labrador, and I did a lot of that on those walks.

I couldn't have imagined a better set-up that the St. John's chapter office. Nothing fancy, just a simple place to drop in and catch the incredible variety of gatherings they offer. Someday maybe we'll have something like that in every

region; but for now, it's good to know that anyone from my world who makes it to that office will instantly feel comfortable and included.

Our first day was spent listening to the vastly collected wisdoms of Roy Muise from Self Help Connection in Nova Scotia. If you got to hear him, you'll understand when I say that he is born proof that consumers of mental health resources can also play big parts in changing our world for the better.

It was wonderful to hear that others from far away are working on the same principles we are in this province. He spoke about the importance of like helping like, and of how peer support makes therapeutic support richer and easier to apply to life in general. I had to keep knitting furiously in the back corner, or I would have been applauding him

constantly. He said so much of what I've come to believe.

No one can understand us like one of us. No one can have the same kind of compassion for someone in the midst of a time of suffering like someone who has suffered. And no one can advise governments and mental health professionals on how to meet our needs like those who've personally fallen into the huge, massive gaps we still navigate.

Most of all, Roy validated everything that CHANNAL has done to date, and hopes to do in the future. He's absolutely right in my books when he says that we can do an awful lot more than people expect of us. We might be crazy, but we're certainly not stupid. Or powerless. Or alone anymore.

I was exhausted after the day-long enthusiasm I'd just experienced, so I didn't go to see Renee's Blacklight Theatre that evening. I regret that choice. However, maybe my role was to be the one who everyone got to tell all about it. Sometimes the listening role is vital to helping someone sort through muddles of thoughts and impressions.

Everyone wanted to let me know that I'd missed out on seeing something rare. I think several were a little surprised by the degree of professionalism and creativity Renee's work presented. I know that some were strongly impacted by the performance she gave, and will probably never forget what occurred to them that night.

And I know everyone who spoke to me hopes that Renee's work goes far and wide, touching thousands of lives that need to think outside very old prejudicial boxes. It was quite lovely to see how everyone claimed Renee as one of our own, as if somehow she was representing all our possibilities.

The next morning at the centre, everyone was simply bubbly. It was obvious that we all were very comfortable with each other, and I knew that our happiness was as much about just being together as it was about how well the agenda was going

It took Bonnie Moore a moment or two to get us settled into our seats for her

# Impressions of the First Ever CHANNAL AGM

By: Jan Dymond CONTINUED

presentation on the importance of self-care. We were already feeling loved and cared about, so our group energy level was already pretty healthy.

So, when Bonnie guided us through the "shoe" exercise, no one hesitated. We were all in the mood for fun. While I listened to the laughter and honesty all around me, I kept thinking that I wished doctors and such could see us. We were alive, engaged with the day, and enthusiastic about being there – just like so-called normal people would have been. In fact, that's what kept hitting me; that in that room, we were all normal. That's a rare thing for those of us who keep hearing how different we are from regular folks.

I was given space on the morning agenda to speak about Advocacy and Non-Profits. Like so many of us who struggle with dark thoughts, I have a dozen complaints about how I did. But the kindness of the listeners helped me get through it.

I can only hope something I said made sense, and others got to see that advocating for others is medicine that feeds the soul. It can also be a source of frustration, self-doubt, and failures. But if one can keep their eye on the prize, then lives can be made easier, minds can be opened, and progressive changes can be encouraged. For those of us who are peers and not just saviours, it's all about balance and knowing the power in the idea that "helping you helps me".

That presentation also gave us all a chance to applaud the diligence Ed Sawdon has committed to his work advocating for a National Pharmacare program. He may be our gentle Mr. Sunshine, but on this issue he's like a dog with a bone that he ain't given up. Whether he gets to see his dream come true or not, he has done an invaluable amount of foundation building regarding shoving the national political will to see things our way. No one in Canada should be kept from the best health possible because of the size of their wallets.

You would have thought that the full day would have tuckered us out. But we had one more thing to do. We had to do some serious year end stuff; the kind of stuff all Annual General Meetings have to deal with.

Joan and Karon-Ann led us through the constitutional changes and annual reports smoothly. So much discussion and consultation had been going on steadily all year long, that there was no need to counter anything. We were just one big united "Yea" with every vote.

When it came time to thank the CHANNAL Board for getting us through our first independent year, despite all the challenges, I thumped my hands so hard they turned red and a tad swollen. I am extraordinarily proud of all they've done

The evening at Stella's circle was beyond wonderful. I still get emotional thinking about it. Every table was loud and nearly raucous with great conversations. It didn't seem to matter where anyone sat; they were guaranteed a seat next to a friend.

The food was fantastic. When I later heard that some of the people involved in preparing the gourmet tastes were like us, mental health strugglers, I just grinned. How perfect, eh?

The entertainment was just as perfect as one could wish for. Who doesn't know the words to at least half a dozen Elvis classics? Albert Murphy was the consummate professional, capturing every Elvis nuance that mattered, and some I'd forgotten. We swayed to the love songs, sang the chorus' of crowd favourites, and even saw a few of us swept up and onto the dance floor.

And at the risk of sounding elite, it was kinda fun to tell those who tried to come off the street to join our fun that this was all just for us nutsy people. How often have we all experienced being told we didn't belong simply because of who we were? And how rare is it for us to be able to claim such a night as our own?

If I hadn't had important reasons for going home, I would have found a reason to stay longer. Everyone in the St. John's chapter were gracious and welcoming, and just so much darn fun to be with. I don't dare mention even one name, because I don't want to leave anyone out. You are all one big wonderful Comfy Couch in my books, and I can't wait to be amongst y'all again.

Thanks to all the other Regional Co-ordinators for being so cool to hang out with. We got a lot of important talking done, and I know each of our regions our richer for it.

Thanks to the Board of Directors who don't get paid one red cent, yet worked through very difficult challenges without ever giving up. With that kind of belief in what CHANNAL can be guiding our Board, the future looks bright.

Thank you to Karon-Ann Parsons for coming into our circle just when we needed her, and for pulling together one of the best AGM's I've ever attended.

From beginning to end, those few days proved that mental illness is not an insurmountable hurdle to anything. Our presenters, food preparer's, entertainers and planners were all from amongst us. We were more than able to meet all our needs without relying on those who only 'almost' understand us.

We are sufficient onto ourselves. Look out world!! CHANNAL is definitely here to stay.



## Eastern Regional Update

**By: Lorna Garland (Eastern Regional Coordinator, CHANNAL)**

I have been involved with CHANNAL which is a self-help group for mental health for 4 years now. We meet the first and third Wednesday of every month from 1 - 3 pm at Health and Community Services in Harbour Grace. I am now the Regional Coordinator for the Eastern Region. I enjoy volunteering my time to help others. CHANNAL is province wide and provides a voice in the community that can advocate for the needs of its members. It offers support while increasing members personal independence. It educates the public about mental illness and mental health issues. Anyone who suffers from any form of mild depression or stress related form of illness are welcome. There is new consumers. There is a check-in and rules and regulations have to be read out at the beginning of each meeting. What is said is kept confidential and must stay in the room. Before leaving there is a check-out where you can say a few words or just say pass. We also provide a small snack. Members from the crisis hot line will help if you need it, because they are close as the nearest telephone. Become a member now to get better and easier access to resources. As a member you will receive our newsletters, Link-Up, on a regular basis. Also you will be able to participate in monthly Teleconference discussion and participate in special events.

Yours Truly,

A good friend

Lorna Garland

Regional Coordinator, Eastern Region

(Originally Printed Fall 2005)

## Central Regional Update

### Regional Coordinators Perspective

**Hello my name is Paula Barker and I recently became a CHANNAL Regional Coordinator for the Central Region. My experience so far has been very interesting, fulfilling and, at times, challenging.**

**I enjoy what I do because I enjoy helping others and have a lot of support through our Group members and an understanding environment in which we are all encouraged and have hope.**

**Although the CHANNAL Anxiety Group is fairly new to the Central Region, I feel I can contribute my knowledge and understanding as a consumer with the support of my peers. I have confidence that we can grow in this region.**

**There is much to be said for being a Regional Coordinator and I feel confident that my efforts will make a difference. At the same time, I am also open to new ideas and suggestions.**

**On a more personal note, I feel that facing these challenges have put some order into my own life. I am able to heal and broaden my horizons. The healthier I am, the more I can apply myself and the more proactive I can be.**

Paula P. Barker

Fall 2003 Link-Up

## Difficult Times In Life Can Help Us Grow

**There are times we can't understand the difficulties we face. But one thing is certain: we all face them at some point in our lives. Often times those difficulties shape us for a lifetime. Even though we search within ourselves for answers, there don't always seem to be any.**

**What has happened in our lives we may find difficult to accept but we cannot change these events however painful they might have been. And after all the "what ifs" and "why's" we learn we have to pick up the broken pieces and move forward, even though the difficult times seem to absorb all of our strength and peace.**

**May we always remember that there's coming a better tomorrow, but until then may we with God's help enter each day believing we can make someone smile and if we do we will surely make ourselves smile.**

Violet Strugnell

Link Up Fall 2003

# STIGMA

(originally printed Fall 2003)

The Consumers' Health Awareness network Newfoundland and Labrador - CHANNAL is a non-profit organization which provides advocacy, educational resources, and support to consumers of mental health services through Newfoundland and Labrador. One of our main goals is to reduce the isolation associated with mental illness. Self-help groups, distribution of educational materials, and increased public awareness are beneficial for consumers and family members as well as help us with this goal.

Mental illness can affect anyone regardless of age, education, economic or social status. According to the Canadian Health Network web site, one percent of the population of Canada is likely to have a serious and persistent mental illness at any given time. This is equal to about 300,000 Canadians!

Approximately one out of every five people is likely to be diagnosed with a mental illness during the course of their life time. That means close to six million people will have a mental illness at some point in their lives! It is **also reported** that 25% of the people with a serious physical condition such as diabetes, heart attack, cancer and stroke will develop a major depressive disorder along with their condition.

Mental illness is just that - an illness! It is a medical condition, often with a physical cause such as a chemical imbalance within the brain. In much the same way illnesses such as diabetes are treated, mental illnesses are often treated with the supervision of a doctor. The only significant difference for individuals with mental illness is that many are often regarded by society as though they should snap out of it or pull up their boot straps and get on with it.

No one that I am aware of would, for example blame anyone diagnosed with diabetes for causing their illness. Let alone hold them responsible for fluctuating blood sugar levels which inevitably results in further complications for the individual.

Yet, many people with mental illness

experience this stigma everyday.

It is through the myths and stereotypes that continue to persist within our society regarding mental illness which have provided fertile ground for this stigma to flourish. These stereotypes adversely affect not only society as a whole but those living with a mental illness, family members and friends as well.

*"The disparity between mental illness as it is perceived by much of the public and mental illness as it is lived and experienced is a gulf to be bridged."*

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Often when individuals are first diagnosed with a mental illness, may feel shock, ("What did the doctor just say?"), confusion ("What does this mean?"), shame ("What will people think of me or what will they say about me?"), fear ("What does my future hold?") and inevitably anger ("Why me?")

All of these feelings are a natural part of the inevitable process that allows for the eventual acceptance of ourselves and living with a diagnoses.

From a family members perspective feelings of guilt may be expressed by thinking that they have somehow done

something to cause their loved one to become ill.

Studies have shown that individuals who have supportive environments experience fewer relapses. Educating yourself, family members, friends, co-workers, class mates, etc., will go a long way toward establishing the support many find necessary for experiencing good mental health.

Learn about what your community has to offer regarding self-help groups, family support groups and organizations that deal specifically with mental health issues.

Offer practical support for your family member or friend. Above all, ask the person what he or she may need, how you can provide support and respect their decisions. After all, people living with a diagnosis of mental illness are capable to make informed decisions about themselves - just like any one else!



## POEM

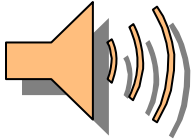
### Loneliness

By Irene Rogers

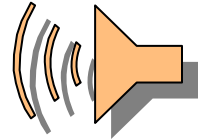
(Originally printed Fall 2003)

Loneliness is a disease  
that grows slowly and undetected,  
its symptoms are terrifying.  
Loneliness is a dark unseeing veil  
that covers you with sadness,  
a desperate race to conquer  
the complete spiritual and emotional  
emptiness  
in an unmerciful world

I am experiencing this decision  
and wish I could find a cure-  
But even a ray of sunshine/sunlight is  
a blessed thing  
for loneliness demands  
it takes everything from you  
and in return gives you nothing  
but solitude  
as if I were the only person



# Announcements



## Birthdays

- Joan Edwards-Karmazyn May 19
- Ed Sawdon June 12
- Greg Vaughn July 7
- Karon-Ann Parsons July 11
- Brent Parsons August 5

## Upcoming Events

Mental Illness Awareness Week October 1—6, 2007.  
 We would love to hear about your experiences with mental health issues for our next edition.

## Contributors

Paula Barker, Jan Dymond, Joan Edwards-Karmazyn, Lorna Garland, Karon-Ann Parsons, Edward Sawdon, Pat Summers, Janet Battcock, Irene Rogers, Paula Barker, Violet Strugnell and Moyra Buckan

## Celebrate

**Special NOTE: Congratulations!!!** to Brent Parsons and Lorna Garland on their successful completion and Graduation From Keyin College Way to go!!! ... Look for pictures in the next issue of the Link-UP

## Disclaimer

The opinions and statements made in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Link Up committee, CHANNAL membership or the organization as a whole.

All pictures that are submitted to the Link-Up may be used in a future issues of the Link-Up or on the CHANNAL website. The Link-Up committee will do its best to contact the individuals prior to their pictures being published.

If you are in need of someone to speak to please call the Mental Health Crisis Line at 737-4668 (St. John's Area) or 1-877-737-3668 (Toll free any where in Newfoundland and Labrador)

**CHANNAL WEBSITE**  
**[www.channalinc.ca](http://www.channalinc.ca)**

**Come and visit us online where you can find:**  
**Information about CHANNAL**  
**Our Partners**  
**Chat with us**

**Coming Soon: Moderated Chat on various topics**  
**Concerning mental health**

**Come on over and check us out!!!**

## RIDING THE WAVES (Originally Printed in Link-Up Fall/Winter 2003)

I didn't know what to expect from CHANNAL, but as a consumer and a person in need I know I wanted help. I came to CHANNAL to get help with my anxiety after seeing an info commercial on Anxiety about a year ago. Thanks to CHANNAL we now have choices for mental health.

Through the grapevine I contacted the person who represented CHANNAL at the time. She had another person who was willing to start an Anxiety Group in our region with me. I felt relieved. I was going to get help by helping myself. It was a decision I would never regret and at the same time wished I had made that move years ago.

It was a 911 point in my life. My life as I knew it would change. Today I have more confidence and less anxiety. Just knowing I had a place to go and share my experiences around anxiety with other people in the same boat was settling. But the boat we were in was a little rubber dingy in the middle of the ocean with no oars, swaying every which way randomly with the wind. Thanks to CHANNAL we're all in a wooden dory with a motor to propel us on a medium size, navigational pond.

Occasionally, there is a gust of wind against us on our mythical pond and our forward progress is set back but we forge on. Sometimes we have to throw in the anchor first to get our bearings, and think about where we are coming from in life and what we can do today. Not to worry about tomorrows adversity.

We progressed slowly at first with our little group and got to know each other. We had our first dinner, a pot luck a couple of months ago. Most of all, we learned about ourselves. We learned tips on attack-

ing our fears and anxieties. We found we could cope better thanks to CHANNAL. Life's situations or circumstances were not dreaded as much. We gained a new understanding of our problems and could reflect upon them. We developed some new tools to work with. Our attendance was up and down, something like life, but remained steady. We had fun and rode the waves.

Here is what some of the group members have to say themselves about the group. Ed mentioned that he felt *"It was a very supportive group of people, and it was nice to speak to people with the same problem."* Betty stated that *"Just knowing that resources and a place to go are available, finally!"* Len said the group was *"Informative and helpful, a place where I could share my anxieties with others that have been there."* Cindy simply stated that the group gave her *"Opportunity."* Jackie commented, *"It was a big step for me to come to the meetings. As for myself the group gave me more confidence. It was a turn around in my life. I knew there was help for me and that alone was settling."*

When everything is said and done, our Anxiety Group will have survived the rough waters and will eventually reach ground where we will be, of course more grounded!

I will leave you all with this thought. Helen Keller put it best when she said; *"The most beautiful things in the world we cannot see or even touch...they are felt within our hearts"*

Pat Summers  
Regional Coordinator  
Western Region

### SONG TO MAKE US THINK:

Anthem

Song by: Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang  
at the break of day  
start again

I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
has passed away  
or what is yet to be.

Ah the wars they will  
be fought again  
the holy dove  
she will be caught again  
bought and sold  
and bought again  
the dove is never free

Ring the bells that still can ring  
forget your perfect offering  
there is a crack in everything  
that's how the light gets in.

We asked for signs  
the signs were sent:  
the birth betrayed  
the marriage spent  
Yeah the widowhood  
of every government —  
signs for all to see.

I can't run no more  
with that lawless crowd  
while the killers in high places  
say their prayers out loud.  
But they've summoned, they've summoned up  
a thundercloud  
and they're going to hear from me.

Ring the bells that still can ring...

You can add up the parts  
but you won't have the sum  
You can strike up the march,  
there is no drum  
Every heart, every heart  
to love will come  
but like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
forget your perfect offering  
there is a crack, a crack in everything  
that's how the light gets in

Ring the bells that still can ring  
forget your perfect offering  
there is a crack, a crack in everything  
that's how the light gets in.  
that's how the light gets in.  
that's how the light gets in.

## JOAN'S JOURNAL:

### Poverty Reduction Strategy Summary Report – Another Exercise in Futility?

I am once again very angry at the NL government's blatant lack of respect for those who live in poverty in this province! In October 2005 the government's hired consultants Goss Gilroy Inc. sent out a summary report based only on the findings of professional stakeholders and actually stated that they have chosen not to include information and advice that was captured and sent to them by focus groups that were held by community based organizations that work with and advocate for those who live in poverty! In answer to the call from this government's Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment under the Ministry of the Honourable Joan Burke for focus and feedback to the Poverty Reduction Strategy (Working Towards A Solution) Workbook, CHANNAL held a focus group back in August 2005 with 18 people in attendance. I was the focus group facilitator that evening and I have to say that folks who participated kept stating to me that they felt that this focus group was a futile exercise to say the least – they in other words felt that this was a "make work project" for the bureaucrats. I did encourage them to give their voice once more to the cause and that they did. But since seeing the summary report I am sorry to say that I now have to agree with them – shame on you NL government! The topics that the focus group addressed were many in number; some of them covered not only the effects of poverty in all domains of living; that government just can't "get it" when they don't even "hear it"; to the fact that "poverty is a national disaster within our country and that the struggles of the poor are the government's wealth – that poverty is a commodity" taken from the book entitled Poor Bashing written by Jean Swanson; that government needs to begin to meet with the poor directly to begin to understand what needs to be fixed in order to make concrete changes within the system. The other area that was addressed was in the area of employment and the fact that those who are living below the poverty line and are receiving government assistance do want to work – this is not a myth! The poor feel that they are caught between "a rock and a hard place" due to the fact that if they do choose to go back to work full time or otherwise for (in most jobs) a minimum wage offering and no benefits they are in jeopardy after a very short time working of losing their medication benefits that are provided to them while on government assistance. This system that is in place only serves to keep those that live in poverty faced with the choice to stay on the social system and not work. If government could only understand that if a person were working they would be contributing to the government coffers and that by keeping this safety net in place for the working poor in terms of their medication benefits this would enable folks to stay well enough to work and in the end it would be a WIN-WIN! And another caution is that when systems are to be changed that once change is implemented it needs to be communicated down the line, so that the clerks and social workers that have the power to say no to folks are not operating through a wall of bureaucratic ignorance due to lack of communication and training. This has been a consistent problem that has been communicated to me by those trying to navigate through this when dealing with their social assistance.

It is unfortunate that government once again has let the poor down by producing a very expensive glossy exercise in futility once more....or perhaps not...perhaps the job was successful from the bureaucratic viewpoint...I imagine all including the consultants received the benefits monetarily and otherwise once again on the backs of the poor in the name of the "Poverty Reduction Strategy – Working Towards A Solution". I have to ask a solution for whom? From where I sit the consumers who attended the focus group that beautiful August evening at CHANNAL were right, this was unfortunately just another "make work project".

If you would like a copy of the CHANNAL focus group report that was sent to the NL government please get in touch with myself at [edkarm@hotmail.com](mailto:edkarm@hotmail.com) or with the CHANNAL Provincial office at [ed@channalinc.ca](mailto:ed@channalinc.ca) or 636-4709 or toll free 1-888-636-4709. And if you would also like a copy of the NL government's summary please email Aisling Goslin, Director, Poverty Reduction Strategy at: [povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca](mailto:povertyreduction@gov.nl.ca)

Love & light, Joan Edwards Karmazyn, CHANNAL Provincial Volunteer

Prepared and submitted to the Link-Up – February 11, 2006

### **Update: June 2007**

**Where we are today.** CHANNAL was approached by *Vibrant Communities* to hold a follow-up focus group in St. John's in order to provide feedback on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Report/Recommendations. Mental health consumers have witnessed minimal gains in poverty reduction here in Newfoundland and Labrador since the release of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Report. This is true particularly around Pharmacare, homecare, and single parent initiatives. However we have a long way to go yet. I feel that once again we need to be hopeful in getting our voice heard. Thank you to all St. John's members who attended the focus group held on June 14 2007. Our collective wisdoms and insights will be very useful in the coming year and we will be calling upon you for your experiences and insights to further the cause of poverty reduction.



Love & light, from Joan Edwards-Karmazyn, President, CHANNAL Board of Directors

## Pharmacare: Ed Sawdon's Call to Action

by: Ed Sawdon (Fall 2004 Link-Up) ***Special Note:*** This was the beginning of Ed's campaign for Phamacare for NL.

Email: Sawdon\_edward@yahoo.com

**Dear Sir/Madam:**

Some of you and some of your neighbours have some sort of disability whether it is physical and/or mental. Some of us have serious medical conditions which warrant expensive medication and/or medical devices. Do our governments value all people with disabilities? Do they care? Do they want to help all of us who require drugs and medical devices? Are they willing to implement Pharmacare as an essential part of the Canada Health act?

By having a universal public drug plan and Medical Devices program, this province will benefit in so many ways! First of all, by having such a province wide program, recipients of social services will have the incentive to get and keep a job while receiving assistance. The present government policy of a six month extended drug card for people who find employment is quite generous, however, for those who have serious physical and mental disabilities, whose drugs are in the hundreds if not thousands of dollars each month, this will certainly not enhance a move towards long-term employment. For many, this may mean a choice between paying their rent/mortgage, bills and food, or, paying for prescriptions and medical supplies. If this happens the province may end up paying more for hospitalization than the drug card would have in the first place. No one should be impoverished due to high medical or disability related expenses. I urge Ottawa and Newfoundland & Labrador to adopt the following policy proposals:

- 1) Implement a Catastrophic Drug Cost Program for working families, and those who have disabilities;
- 2) Improve the Provincial Drug Formulary to include all medications approved by Health Canada for treating illness and disability;
- 3) Implement the long overdue national Pharmacare (recommended in the Romanow report; [www.healthcarecommission.ca](http://www.healthcarecommission.ca)) and medical devices programs, and impress the Federal Government to pay it's fair share.

4) Make Pharmacare and Assistive Devices Program portable from province to province with no wait period, much like Medicare.

In my "Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Canada and All Elected Officials", I urged everyone that we need a province wide Public Drug Plan and Medical Devices Program for people with disabilities, especially those with low and moderate income.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien's Executive Correspondence Officer thanked me for writing and said that my proposals would be carefully reviewed by the Prime Minister. I sent a similar letter to Paul Martin as well. I received a letter from the former Liberal Minister of Health and Community Services, Gerald Smith, about his governments policies. According to Minister Smith, "discussion is underway nationally with respect to the Federal Health accord and the concept of a catastrophic drug program. The outcome of these discussions may lead to program re-design in the coming years, depending on the amount of additional health care dollars promised by the Federal Government. In the Interim, the province must determine whether the monies being provided by the Federal Government will provide the province with the fiscal means to expand and enhance coverage for drugs and to what degree... we continue to provide drug coverage to residents who qualify for either an income Support Drug Card or a Senior Citizen's Drug Subsidy Card."

Federal Progressive Conservative Leader, Peter MacKay was very sympathetic to my cause. He wrote, "I appreciate you having taken time to write to me and share your story. I was sorry to read of the difficulties that you have been experiencing...It is my belief that Canadians with disabilities must be provided the opportunities to fully participate in Canadian society..."

While MacKay did not respond to the important issue of drug coverage and

medical supplies, he did mention the need to reform the Disability Tax Credit and improve the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits.

Provincial P.C., M.H.A., Clyde Jackman of Burin- Placentia West said, "I am being made aware on a regular basis of people who fail to meet a particular criteria for drug coverage and other related medical costs. It is certainly unfortunate that this happens and I will do my utmost to bring matters such as yours forward. In any discussions I have with the new Health Minister, I will raise this as an issue of medical support and conscience."

NDP Leader Jack Harris's office responded by saying, "...What a great letter you sent out (re: Open Letter)..."

Here is some information for you on the NDP's position on pharmacare.

"Advance in medical treatment and drug therapies means people are released earlier from hospital and are increasingly reliant on home-based treatment for conditions that were once exclusively treated in hospitals, where the cost of drugs is covered like any other part of medical care. Our families too often face financial disaster because of the high cost of prescription drugs. And even those eligible for provincial government support find that the medications their doctors recommend are not included in the Provincial Drug Formulary. Too often our Families, friends and neighbors are forced to live knowing there is a medicine that would help their illness, but it is financially beyond their reach."

With the recent changeover in our provincial government and a federal election a year or so away, this is the best time to present this urgent matter to both our new Premier, Danny Williams as well as Opposition Leaders, Roger Grimes (Liberal) and Jack Harris (NDP). My message to both Prime Minister Paul Martin and Premier Danny Williams is this: The cost of covering all those who need Drugs and Medical Supplies may be high but I believe that the taxpayers would not begrudge helping people get the medications and medical devices they need to stay healthy and live dignified lives.

## CHANNAL Member Advocating for a Province-wide Drug Plan!!!



I received some good news through the local media Monday, April 23rd! The Provincial Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, and the Minister of Health & Community Services, Ross Wiseman announced a further Expansion of the Provincial Drug Plan Benefits to cover individuals and families making 150,000 dollars and less and who have no other private or public drug coverage in the purchase of prescription drugs for a lot of serious chronic mental and physical medical conditions. I went on VOXM Night Openline and told Linda Swain that this is certainly a big step forward towards Universal Pharmacare! And, I told Linda and VOXM listeners that it goes to show that all the hard work going in many people's (not just mine), Pharmacare Advocacy Role is starting to pay off! This is one clear example where we Pharmacare Advocates can and do make a difference!!! I told Linda that I like the idea that the Minister of Health & Community Services, Ross Wiseman did not favor one Health consumer group over others.

Everybody, no matter if we have Diabetes, Mental Illness, Alzheimers, Arthritis, Cancer, MS, Inflammatory Bowel Disease or any other

condition/disability, can receive partial coverage provided their annual income falls below the new threshold limits. It is long Overdue! I think the provincial government is finally starting to see the Light! The only unfortunate aspect about this announcement is that some health consumers like me have to wait till this new policy takes effect, which by the way is October of this year. Once this program is up and running, I hope the government will go retroactive and cover people drug expenses between their latest April 2007 announcement and October 2007? While this is good news, there is still lots of work us Pharmacare advocates have to do! We have to press both the Provincial/Territorial and the Federal Governments to develop and implement a NATIONAL DRUG FORMULARY so all Canadians have access to the same medications no matter where we live. And, there is the NATIONAL.

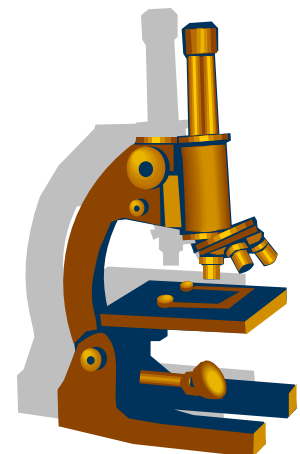
**PHARMACEUTICAL STRATEGY.** Said Newfoundland & Labrador Health & Community Services Minister, Ross Wiseman: "As you may be aware, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments are working together to develop a National Pharmaceutical Strategy that addresses catastrophic drug needs. One of the premises of this initiative is that all Canadians should have access to safe and effective drug therapies when they need them and that no Canadian should suffer undue financial hardship as

a result of prescription medications needed to treat a serious illness or injury."

Then there is the issue of out of province drug expenses. Will the Newfoundland & Labrador Government be like Manitoba & Alberta and cover resident's drug expenses when us people travel outside of the province? Also, there is the question concerning medical devices, such as Ostomy Supplies, Hearing Aids, Diabetic Supplies, Respiratory Supplies, Oxygen and various prosthetic devices? Will some or all of them be covered by our provincial Drug Benefit Plan? or will they be covered under another specialized healthcare program?

In the meantime, I will press on and advocate for both universal Pharmacare and Medical Devices - which is what I have been doing for the past five years.

*Edward Sawdon  
St. John's, NL*



**CHANNAL Provincial Office**

Executive Director (Acting): Karon-Ann Parsons  
120 Lemarchant Rd

St. John's, NL

A1C 2H2

Phone: 636-4709  
Toll Free: 1-888-636-4709  
Email: ed@channalinc.ca

**St. John's Region**

Support Groups meet at the St. John's regional Self-Help Centre which is located on the 1st floor of 120 Lemarchant Rd., St. John's

**Regional Coordinators:** Renee Newell & Ed Sawdon  
Phone: 753-7710  
Email: channalstjohns@nf.aibn.com

**Monday**

Bipolar Disorder Support Group  
7:00pm— 9:00pm

**Tuesday**

Depression and Anxiety Support Group  
7:00pm—9:00pm

**Wednesday**

Women's Thoughts Talk (New Group)  
Call for Group start up date and time

**Saturday**

Social Saturdays  
2:00pm—4:00pm  
Please Call for information on what's happening

**Eastern Region**

**Regional Coordinator:** Lorna Garland  
Phone: (709) 596-1287  
Email: lornag@persona.ca

**Trinity Conception Self-Help (formerly Harbour Grace)**

Meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Health and Community Services in Harbour Grace from 1:00pm — 3:00pm. For further information please call Lorna

**Burin Self-Help**

Meets regularly, Please contact Doreen at (709) 891-1540 for the next scheduled meeting.

**Central Region**

**Regional Coordinator:** Paula Barker  
Phone: (709) 489-4719  
Email: centralregionchannal@yahoo.com

**Grand Falls-Windsor**

We meet the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month. Please call for more information.

**Western Region**

**Regional Coordinator:** Pat Summers  
Phone: (709) 638-4919  
Email: channalwest@nl.rogers.com

**Corner Brook**

Anxiety and Depression Support Group  
Meets Friday's from 7:00pm-9:00pm at 20 Brook St.  
Please call for more information.  
Call Pat about the Laughter Club!

**Lake Melville-Goose Bay Region**

**Regional Coordinator:** Jan Dymond  
Phone: (709) 896-0349  
Email: jan.dymond@nf.sympatico.ca  
Call for a meeting schedule

**Labrador City — Labrador West Region**

**Labrador City—Regional Coordinator Needed**

If you would like to volunteer to lead a support group in this area Please contact the Provincial Executive Director (Acting) Karon-Ann Parsons Toll free at 1-877-753-5111

**Grenfell-Labrador South Region**

**Regional Coordinator:** Violet Strugnell (Port Hope Simpson)  
Phone: (709) 960-0250  
Email: violet\_strugnell4@hotmail.com

**Port Hope Simpson**

Self-Help Coping with Recovered Emotions, Grief and Loss  
For more information and for meeting schedule please call Violet Strugnell at (709) 960-0266

