



mental health matters

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CMHA Toronto's Much Needed Safe Beds Program

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A New Look

The phone rings. On the other end of the line is a bail worker. He is calling because he has a man in his office who is in his mid-forties, and who has committed a minor criminal offence, due to his mental health issues. This man has no friends, no family and nowhere to stay. This is where the CMHA Toronto Safe Beds program comes in.

Started four years ago, the Safe Beds program is a part of CMHA Toronto's Mental Health and Justice Services (MHJ). It provides individuals with mental health issues who are in crisis and have come into contact with the law with a safe place to stay for up to 30 days. Safe Beds is used as an alternative to custody, to emergency room assessments, and hospital admissions, providing a non-medical approach to crisis intervention. Clients are not only provided with shelter, food and clothing, but with counselling and advocacy services as well. Safe Beds staff also work to link their clients with other community resources



Back Row: Jessica Lee, Judith LePage, Peter Sealy, Josh Gilfoy, Fawzia Essa, John Kristal Front Row: Khadija Abdalla, Faiza Khan, Kerrie Foster, Jennifer Myle



Safe Beds common room and recreation area.

such as case management, financial support (i.e. ODSP, Ontario Works) and permanent housing for when they move back into the community.

Jessica Lee, Program Coordinator of Safe Bed, continues the story. "We took this fellow in, and in a short time he got to know the staff and the other

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We're Getting Accredited!

CMHA Toronto has begun the process of accreditation, under the leadership of Garfield Bembridge, Executive Lead, Organizational Performance & Accreditation.

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a process used by health care organizations to accurately assess their level of performance. It involves continuous learning and improvement in the quality of services provided, in which our strengths are identified, along with our opportunities for improvement. While accreditation is an ongoing process, there is a detailed review every three years, and to be successful, accreditation needs participation from all stakeholders, clients, staff, volunteers and community partners.

Who conducts the accreditation?

Accreditation Canada, a non-profit, independent organization, is the body that is guiding our accreditation process. It is their mission to help organizations across Canada examine and improve the quality of service they provide to their patients and clients. Accreditation Canada is the leader in raising the bar for quality in health care, and their programs and guidance have been helping organizations strive for excellence for more than 50 years. All of the top health care organizations in Canada are accredited.

What is the purpose of accreditation?

The purpose of accreditation is to help organizations define, measure, report and improve their quality of care and services. Through accreditation, we will be able to ensure that CMHA Toronto provides an even safer environment for clients, staff, and the public. Accreditation Canada has made client safety an essential element of the accreditation program, reinforcing that health services cannot be of high quality unless they are safe. Through the process, we will be able to ensure that CMHA Toronto staff continuously strive for best practices, and that our service delivery is client-centred.

What does accreditation involve?

The accreditation process is both rigorous and thorough. It consists of a self-assessment and an external peer review process, which will include on-site visits by trained surveyors who have experience in delivering the types of services provided by CMHA Toronto. It will also include an on-site survey, and follow-up action for improvements. Every area of our service delivery and operations will be examined, including such matters as medication management, staff health and wellness, client records and privacy, disaster preparedness, board accountability, infection prevention and control, ethics, and environmentally friendly practices.



Garfield Bembridge, Executive Lead, Organizational Performance & Accreditation

Why is accreditation important?

By participating in the accreditation program, CMHA Toronto will be able to showcase and demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement, client safety, increased efficiency and accountability. Accreditation improves communication and collaboration both internally as well as with external stakeholders and partners. By participating in Accreditation Canada's program, we will be evaluating our performance as an organization against national standards of excellence.

Garfield Bembridge summarized the process by saying, "The essence of accreditation is to improve the quality of care and services that we provide to our clients."

Practical Help from the Green-Fischer Fund

by Virginia Wilson

At the CMHA Toronto Annual General Meeting in November 2008, three outstanding individuals were honoured with the Donor Recognition Award for their generous and on-going financial support of the Green-Fischer fund: Karen Green, George Fischer, and Christie Bentham.

Eleven years ago Karen Green and George Fischer decided to establish a fund when George, who was taking medication for his depression, wondered what people did when they could not afford to pay for their prescriptions. As a result, the Green-Fischer Fund was established to help individuals affected by mental health issues who were unable to pay the full cost of their medications. Since it was established in 1999, many other caring individuals have contributed to the fund, notably Christie Bentham. Over the years the combined contributions of these three donors has totalled nearly \$73,000, and the fund has evolved to provide for many other needs experienced by those living with mental illness.

For example, money from the fund has been used to purchase items such as pots, pans, and dishes, which are necessary when a person moves from supportive housing to their own accommodation; for metro passes, which ease the cost of traveling to and from appointments; and equipment for managing diabetes. It has also paid for chiropodist care, which was required by a CMHA Toronto client who was undergoing cancer treatment, and has paid for extensive dental work needed by another client, which was over and above what ODSP would cover. One of the more unusual items purchased through the Green-Fischer Fund was for a client who was hearing impaired. The financial support enabled him to purchase a system that connected his doorbell to his lights, so that he could tell when someone came to his front door. The Fund covers expenses which are not covered by ODSP or other social assistance programs (for which there is a limit), and pays for one-time expenses, rather than on-going costs, such as rent or phone bills. For those clients looking to return to school, and who are in need of financial support, they can apply to the Cameron-Lurie Bursary Fund.

The fund – now called the Green-Fischer Personal Assistance Program – is available to clients of CMHA Toronto, who demonstrate financial need, and who can show how the item



Karen Green and Christie Bentham.

or service would help them in their day to day activities. Applications are made by the client, or by their caseworker, and each is reviewed on an individual basis. Staff consider each request carefully, and try to process the application as quickly as possible. Clients are encouraged to contribute to the cost of the purchase or service, even if it is only a few dollars.

Karen Green is modest about the contribution that she and George have made to this valuable service. For the recipients, however, the financial support they receive from the Fund is immeasurable. After receiving the Donor Recognition Award at the AGM, many people came to Karen to personally thank her for what she does. "I was gratified to see that the fund is making such a practical difference in people's lives," she said.

Christie Bentham says that contributing to the fund appealed to her because she likes to "fill the economic gaps" in people's lives, so that they can move on and grow. The generosity of Karen, George, and Christie has helped many CMHA Toronto clients on the road to recovery, and serves as an inspiration and an example for us all.

Virginia Wilson is a writer and an active volunteer with CMHA Toronto. She has also been on staff, and served on the CMHA Toronto Board of Directors.

If you wish to contribute to the Green-Fischer Personal Assistance Program please make your cheque payable to CMHA Toronto re: Green-Fischer Personal Assistance Program. Credit card donations are also welcome. For more information, call Heather at 416-789-7957 x262

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The Ride for Mental Health

On Wednesday May 20th, 2009 Mel Thompson dipped the wheels of his bicycle in the Pacific Ocean. That act signalled the start of the The Ride for Mental Health, which will take Mel across Canada, arriving in St. John's, Newfoundland 100 days later on August 29th.

"Ride across Canada? What are you thinking?" was the initial reaction from family and friends when I shared my plans with them," said Mel, Vice President of Xerox Customer Services. "I set this goal four years ago and have been building up my ride distances each summer to the point where I am now ready to do it. I have run marathons and climbed mountains. When I set a goal I do everything possible to achieve it."

But the real inspiration behind the ride is Mel's daughter Lindsay. "Lindsay is the eldest of our four children. She was an excellent student, a talented artist, and a very good athlete," Mel says. "However, her behaviour started to change when she was a teenager, but we believed it was normal teenage rebellion." Lindsay's grades began to slip, she withdrew from the family, and she slept a lot. She seemed to swing from angry and irritable moods to depression and back. By the time she was eighteen, Lindsay was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. Mel and his wife Carol struggled as their daughter underwent many hospitalizations, and as they went through personal and family crises. As parents they were devastated as they watched Lindsay's dreams slip away. In looking back over those years Carol says, "For a long time the possibility of mental illness never crossed our minds. The telltale signs were there, but mental illness was not something that readily came to mind. Had we known about the signs and symptoms of mental illness when they began to appear we may have been able to intervene earlier."

The Thompsons believe it is vitally important for everyone to be aware of mental illness, as early treatment results in more positive outcomes. That is the whole reason behind The Ride for Mental Health.

Their goal is to raise awareness about mental illness, and to raise money for community based programs and services, such as CMHA Toronto. In sharing their experiences they hope it will encourage others to share



Courtesy Magpie Publishing, Inc./Barbara Horning.

Mel Thompson and his daughter Lindsay Thompson.

their stories too." As Carol said, "It's time to change and open the doors; let's take mental illness out of the shadows and into the light".

In speaking about her experience, Lindsay says, "Mental illness has had an impact on all aspects of my life. I've had to stop my life more than once because the illness had permeated my whole body and mind. There were points when I didn't know what was me anymore. In high school I was forced to take a decreased course load and an extra year in order to graduate. I felt so ashamed. At the same time I lost all my friends, which was the result of misinterpreting situations, people, and the subsequent withdrawal from everyone."

Lindsay now volunteers four mornings a week at a charity thrift store and hopes one day to be able to return to school and work, while building long lasting relationships. In the meantime, she has put her artistic ability to use by designing the The Ride for Mental Health logo, and she is beginning to share the story of her lived experience with mental illness. "There is no cure for mental illness, however there is hope and recovery. Consumers can become survivors. With the proper help from doctors, community

living working belonging



programs, workplace accommodation and medication, people with mental illness can reach a state of recovery. Everybody deserves a place where they can function within society and feel good about themselves and their contribution to those around them.”

As Mel cycles eastward, there will be a series of events designed to build awareness and acceptance about mental health issues, including an event in downtown Toronto on Friday July 17th. The donations that are raised by The Ride will go directly to support local programs and services that help people living with mental illness, including

CMHA Toronto. Carol said, “As a family we all agree that by dedicating the ride to mental health awareness we can make a difference. By raising funds for community programs we can lend a hand to people who live with mental illness and depend on these supports.”

For over ten years the Thompson family has been learning how to live with mental illness. They know there is recovery and that is how they stay optimistic. “We are proud of our daughter and her valiant struggle against the illness, and her determination to be well,” said Mel. “The Ride for Mental Health is creating a source of optimism for us. Whenever possible Lindsay will cycle sections of the ride with me, and my wife Carol will keep us on route and on time, driving the support vehicle. We hope that many people will support us by pledging their support to The Ride for Mental Health.”

To donate to the The Ride for Mental Health, please visit the website at www.therideformentalhealth.org, click onto the “Canada Helps” logo and select “Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto Branch.”

Save the Date!

CMHA Toronto Annual Charity Golf Classic

JULY 9TH, 2009

The 22nd Annual Charity Golf Classic hosted by the Scarborough Bluffs Rotary Club will be held on Thursday, July 9th at Sleepy Hollow Golf Club.

This event promises to be lots of fun with contests, a prize table, silent and live auctions, an old-fashioned BBQ luncheon, a reception, and a scrumptious dinner. There will be great prizes for both men and women.

We already have an excellent start with Yamaha Motor Canada Ltd., The Weather Network, and The Investors Group, Toronto East Office on board as Major Sponsors.

The proceeds from this event go towards our Holiday Gift Program, and are critical in helping us ensure that gifts of warmth are given to men, women, and children this December. Your help is needed! In order to ensure the success of this



event we still need sponsors, teams, individual golfers, gifts and prizes. If you would like more information, or to receive a package in the mail please call Paige Souter at 416-789-7957 x237.

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Safe Beds *continued from page 1*

residents. We helped him to get his income supports in place, and to find permanent housing.

After staying with us for the full 30 days, the permanent housing wasn't immediately available, so we arranged for temporary accommodation until he could move in. After he got settled in, he sent us a thank you card for all we had done for him."

This past November, CMHA Toronto's Safe Beds program moved from its old location in a residential apartment building, to a new facility in the Keele and Wilson area that is exclusively dedicated to the Safe Beds program. This new location provides a safer and more secure environment for clients, and it allows the staff to move throughout the entire building, instead of being restricted to one office area.

While many of the Safe Beds features have been carried over from its old location, having a building devoted to the program allows for some added benefits. For instance, Safe Beds now has a shared common area for clients, which makes for more interaction between the clients, and less isolation for the clients in their own units.

"It's great to have the common area," says Jessica Lee. "It creates the opportunity for a lot of social interaction between the clients and the staff. At any time you can find clients together playing foosball, cards, or watching movies or sporting events on TV. It gives it a nice homey feel." And unlike the old location where each unit had its own kitchen, the common area contains a kitchen

which allows clients to eat communal meals together and to continue to develop their overall social skills.

Since it began four years ago, CMHA Toronto's Safe Beds program has proven to be much needed and very well received among case managers and clients alike. The new location will ensure that the needs of those clients who have come into contact with the law are effectively met.

"It creates the opportunity for a lot of social interaction between the clients and the staff. At any time you can find clients together playing foosball, cards, or watching movies or sporting events on TV. It gives it a nice homey feel."



Safe Beds Building exterior.

Invest in Yourself

In surveys conducted by Desjardins Financial Security in recent years, Canadians have consistently said that their finances are the top cause of stress. You may be feeling the stress more than ever these days with the current economic climate. That's why the theme for this year's Mental Health Week (May 4 – 10) was "Now more than ever...Invest in yourself." Here are some practical suggestions on how to do that:

Invest in your family

Pay attention to the mental health of those closest to you. Share a warm meal and some kind words. Listen to each other. Be honest and open with each other about the stress in your life. If you have children, discuss finances with them. Don't scare them, but help them understand the household budget and how you plan to deal with the challenges.

Invest in your friends

Reach out to your friends. In times of economic stress, sharing challenges with friends is healthy. They might have insights into your challenges. You might have insights into theirs. And, remember to laugh. Friendships are built on laughter.

Invest in your community

When you join or volunteer with community groups, clubs and organizations you feel a part of something bigger. You feel connected to a place and to a network of people. It's a good way to build personal and collective resilience in difficult times.

Invest in your workplace

While the workplace can be a source of stress it can also provide you with positive networks, good friends and professional contacts. Take the lead to open lines of communication. Build supportive relationships with all people in your workplace, including employees, employers and even clients.

Invest in yourself

Address the big things that are causing you stress. Sometimes a professional perspective can help you turn things around.

- **Are your finances the source of your stress?**
Seek the help of a financial planner or debt counselor.
- **Feeling vulnerable in your job?**
Speak to a career counselor and make a career plan.
- **Are your relationships with loved ones strained?**
Speak to a counselor to work it through.
- **Do you fear that your stress is turning into depression?**
Meet immediately with a mental health specialist.



Learn to manage stress

One of the most effective ways to reduce stress is to take control of the situation. However, if you are really feeling overwhelmed, get help. Don't wait for your stress to become a crisis. There are many resources and professionals to help you manage your stress.

Take time for yourself

- Turn off your computers, cell phones and other distractions.
- Read a book, listen to music, play a game, go for a walk, meditate, write in your diary, or take up a relaxing hobby
- Make use of free resource in your community, like parks, libraries, swimming pools and community centres.
- Host a potluck dinner so you can enjoy company without a huge cost.
- Visit with a friend or family, just to talk and laugh.
- Eat healthy meals and snacks.
- Get fresh air and exercise everyday -- even just a little bit will do a lot of good.

From CMHA National

You Made a Difference!

Thank you to all our generous donors, Golf Tournament sponsors and participants who supported our Holiday Gift Program this past year. Once again, CMHA Toronto had the privilege of providing gifts to over 6,300 individuals in Toronto who are living with mental health issues.

For most Holiday Gift recipients, ours is the only gift they receive, so the brightly wrapped packages that you made possible brought cheer into the lives of those who are often forgotten during the busy holiday season, when loneliness is felt most keenly.

And a big thank you goes to all our fabulous volunteers who did so much to make the Holiday Gift Program happen. The donation of your time meant that all funds raised for the HGP went directly towards the cost of the gifts.

The Holiday Gifts of warm clothing helped to see many people with mental health issues through the cold Canadian winter, but more importantly, they sent a message of hope and caring to each person who received them.

Thank you for making a difference!



A New Look!

As you can see, we have updated the look of our newsletter, Mental Health Matters. Our goal is to make it reflect, both in look and content, what is happening at CMHA Toronto today.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Mental Health Matters, and we welcome your feedback.



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MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS is published three times a year by the Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto Branch. Members of CMHA Toronto receive all issues of Mental Health Matters. For information on becoming a member, contact Membership Services at 416-789-7957 x262. We welcome articles, photographs, and letters on mental health topics. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or official policies of CMHA Toronto. Mental Health Matters reserves the right to accept and edit material.

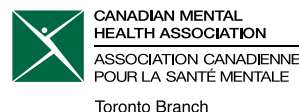
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Donation/Membership



YES! I would like to become a Member of CMHA Toronto!

Membership fees are:

Individual \$20; Limited Income \$5; Non Profit / Small Business \$50; Corporate \$100 \$ _____

YES! I wish to make a donation to the work of CMHA Toronto! \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Cheque enclosed (please make payable to: **Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto Branch**)

Please charge my: (please circle) **VISA** **MasterCard** **AMEX**

Card # _____ Expiry date ____/____ Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

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