



CHANGING MINDS

A Northern Interior BC Schizophrenia Society Publication.
If you would prefer an electronic version of this newsletter email nansilong@bcss.org

Fall Issue
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ACE Celebrates 5th Anniversary

In the beginning BC Schizophrenia Society Prince George unincorporated branch President, **Evelyn O'Sullivan** saw a need for a safe place for individuals living with mental illness to gather downtown in the evenings and on the weekend. Her vision was confirmed when the BCSS branch conducted a community wide needs assessment in 1998. For over five (5) years Ms. O'Sullivan advocated for the centre, calling Northern Health Mental Health & Addiction Services (MHAS) every six months to remind them of the gap in service.

On September 11, 2003 Northern Health MHAS met with the BC Schizophrenia Society Prince George regional office and asked us if we could prepare a proposal for a safe place for individuals living with mental illness to gather downtown in the evenings and on the weekend. With the help of **Kathryn Lestage** and **Lynn Smoliak** BCSS completed the proposal for the Activity Centre for

Empowerment (ACE) before Christmas that same year.

Along with Kathryn and Lynn, **Nansi Long** was hired in January, 2004 to transform the corner of 6th Avenue and George Street into the Activity Centre for Empowerment (ACE). That first fiscal year (2004-05) the BCSS Prince George regional office managed both the Activity Centre and continued regional operations. During that first year of operations **Dave Halikowski** led the incorporation of the BCSS Prince George Branch. The management of ACE was turned over to the new Society April 1, 2005.

Over the past four (4) years the BCSS Prince George Branch board of directors has worked with ACE staff and membership to promote recovery among mental health service users through skills development and empowerment. Membership at ACE has grown from 100 during the first year to over 400 members today. ACE is the place where mental health service users, their families and service providers can work and play in an environment of equality.

ACE continues to work closely with **Kim Dixon** and **Kathryn Lestage** at the BCSS Prince George regional office and ACE membership is encouraged and supported in accessing the regional programs detailed in each issue of **CHANGING MINDS**. Kim and Kathryn are also enthusiastic supporters of ACE with annual memberships that allow them to access their favorite ACE service – the **Healthy Lifestyles Café**.

Congratulations to **Dave Halikowski** and the **BCSS Prince George Branch board of directors**, and to **Lynn Smoliak**, **Nansi Long** and their **team** of diligent and loyal staff and volunteers who have made ACE an exemplary best practice Activity Centre for mental health service users, their families and service providers – Partners in Recovery.



Kim Dixon
Regional Coordinator

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PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

For individuals living with mental illness and/or addiction:

Prince George *Recovery Group* for people living with mental illness and/or addiction meets for a brown bag lunch the 4th Thursday of every month from 12-1:30 PM at 1117-6 Ave.
Call Lee at 250-561-0187 or Maria 250-563-2991

NEW Prince George *Mood Disorders* educational support group co-facilitated by a consumer and service provider.
1st & 3rd Thursday, 2 - 4 PM
1117 - 6 Ave.
Call Kathryn at 250-561-8033 or Donna at 250-565-7396

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES TOGETHER

A course for family members affected by mental illness and addictions.

This 10-session national education program for family members and friends of individuals living with addictions and mental illness, aims at increasing accessibility to Canadian based information on topics associated with living daily with addictions and mental illness. *Strengthening Families Together* is about more than education. It is about strengthening family members and friends of individuals living with addictions and mental illness by providing support, awareness and tools.

Strengthening Families Together is sponsored by the BC Schizophrenia Society and is **FREE**, however, participants must **PRE-REGISTER** by calling the teacher(s) or Kim Dixon toll-free at **1-888-561-8055** or in Prince George at **250-561-8033**.



PLACE: PRINCE GEORGE, 1117 - 6th Avenue
DATES: Thursdays, September 11 - November 27, 2008
(No Classes October 2nd and November 6th)
TIME: 6:30 - 9 PM
TEACHERS: Kim Dixon 250-561-8033
Celia Perrins

PLACE: QUESNEL
DATES: 2009
TIME: TBA
TEACHER: Diana 250-992-8904
Call Diana for information and to be placed on a wait list for SFT in 2009.

PLACE: MCBRIDE
DATES: 2009
TIME: TBA
TEACHER: Norma 250-569-2637
Call Norma for information and to be placed on a wait list for SFT in 2009.

Please check out the new BC Schizophrenia Society family information list! Designed to facilitate friendly support and sharing of information among family members and friends/ supporters.

People can sign up by visiting:
<http://www.bcscs.org/cgi-bin/dada/mail.cgi/list/Families>
OR simply going to
<http://www.bcscs.org>
and click on ELIST SIGNUP top right of page.



Quesnel
Group for people living with
mental illness meets every
Tuesday from 11 AM – 1 PM
at 324 Hoy St.
Call Bonnie at 250-992-9332

Watch for NEW Vanderhoof
group for individuals affected
by mental illness starting in
2009



B.R.I.D.G.E.S.*

Education Program

A course for individuals recovering from mental illness and/or addictions

B.R.I.D.G.E.S. is a 10-week program of education and support run by and for individuals living with mental illness and addiction. The philosophy of the program is one of empowerment with the goal of recovering a new and valued sense of self, health and purpose.

B.R.I.D.G.E.S. is sponsored by the BC Schizophrenia Society and is FREE, however, participants must PRE-REGISTER by calling the teacher(s) or Kathryn Lestage toll-free at 1-888-561-8055 or in Prince George at 250-561-8033.

*B.R.I.D.G.E.S. - Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals through Education and Support.

The Secret Life of the BRAIN

You are cordially invited to attend a FREE showing and discussion of the five-part PBS series THE SECRET LIFE OF THE BRAIN.

Mondays, September 29th to November 3rd, 2008
(No presentation October 13th)
7 – 9 PM • 1131 – 6th Avenue (Activity Centre for Empowerment)

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE BRAIN explores the startling new map of the brain that has emerged from the past decade of neuroscience – a view of our most complicated organ that contradicts much of what was previously believed and holds out hope for dramatic advances in the areas of addiction, depression, learning disorders, Alzheimer's disease, and even schizophrenia.

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE BRAIN takes a chronological approach over the five part series, beginning before birth and ending with old age. Each of the individual programs explores a specific stage of human development from fundamental neural development and innovative medical treatments to behavioural therapies, new brain-based educational techniques, and the characteristics of the older brain that may form the basis of wisdom.

September 29th • The Baby's Brain: Wider than the Sky

October 6th • The Child's Brain: Syllable from Sound

October 20th • The Teenage Brain: A World of Their Own

October 27th • The Adult Brain: To Think By Feeling

November 3rd • The Aging Brain: Through Many Lives

Handouts and Refreshments will be provided.
Seating Limited. Call 250-561-8033 to reserve your seat.

B.R.I.D.G.E.S.

Education Program

PRINCE GEORGE

Youth Program (15+)

1117-6th Avenue
Wednesdays,
Sept 24 - Nov 26 2008
3:30 - 5:30 PM

Teacher: Kathryn 561-8033
Tammy and Marcy

PRINCE GEORGE

Adult Program

1117 - 6th Ave.
Tuesdays, September 16 -
November 25, 2008
6 - 8 PM

Teacher: JoAnn 250-961-5941
Lee, Kym and Marvin

ADULT PROGRAM

BALDY HUGHES THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

Thursdays, September 4 – November 6, 2008
9:30 AM – 1 PM
Leanne, Maria, & Kathy

Positively Peers

Positively Peers began in 2006 with funding from the Consumer and Family Initiatives Funding Committee as a partnership program between the BC Schizophrenia Society (BCSS), Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and the Psychiatric Unit at Prince George Regional Hospital (PGRH). It was designed by Barb Toews a Consumer Advocate at CMHA and Kathryn Lestage a Mental Health Advocate at BCSS. Together they designed the initial training which included education regarding symptom recognition, communication skills and knowledge of community resources. They also modeled clear expectations for the peers of acting as peers that were there to share resources and personal experiences of hope and recovery not to take on an advocacy role or problem solve with the people being served. They met with Maria Tejero, the Team Leader on the Psychiatric Unit at PGRH and decided to combine the weekly peer presentations of services with the cooking program on the unit. The people staying in the hospital are encouraged to prepare their own lunch and the Peers eat lunch with them before the presentation. In this way everyone gets used

to them being on the ward and they can engage in conversation about why they are there and that they are peers. After lunch the presentation is given by peers in the TV room and it always draws a crowd of interested onlookers who want to know where the shelters are, the food banks, the activity centre, the clubhouse, how they can get counseling, where they can go for volunteer work, and many other questions. The volunteers model recovery by talking about their own experiences, disclosing their psychiatric history, and giving knowledgeable first hand information about services such as the ACE Activity Centre and the Connections Club House. Positively Peers was designed to meet this need and has served at least 300 participants since inception. The peer volunteers receive a fee for service for attending to cover the cost of transportation and professional clothing.



Kathryn Lestage
Support, Education, Advocacy, Co-ordinator

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS • For family members affected by mental illness and/or addiction:

Watch for NEW Men's Group
for any man affected by
mental illness in 2009

BCSS Rural Family Support On-Line Forum.

Do you live in rural BC and support a family member or friend coping with mental illness and do you find it hard to get to an in-person support group? This private discussion area is available to you 24/7.

Go to <http://www.support.bcss.org/> to sign up
Call Kim at 1-888-561-8055 or 250-561-8033

BC Mental Health & Addiction Services

"An agency of the
Provincial Health
Services Authority"

In any given year, one in five British Columbians will experience a mental disorder. BC Mental Health & Addiction Services (BCMHAS) provide a diverse range of specialized, tertiary-level mental health services for people from across the province.

As an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, BCMHAS also has a provincial leadership role, working with an extensive network of community partners to deliver province-wide solutions and better health for those experiencing mental illness or addiction.

BCMHAS focuses on five key areas: specialized service delivery, mental health and addictions research, knowledge exchange, health promotion and illness prevention and system-wide improvements.

In 2006/07, BC Mental Health & Addiction Services recorded:

Child and adolescent mental health: 357 inpatients at BC Children's Hospital • 12,333 outpatient visits

Forensic psychiatry: 345 inpatients at Forensic Psychiatric Hospital • 2,576 regional forensic psychiatric clinic admissions

Riverview Hospital: 446 adult and geriatric inpatients

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Teacher Training

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) provides a simple system for monitoring and managing emotional and psychiatric symptoms, as well as avoiding unhealthy habits or behaviour patterns.

The WRAP workshop will help consumers:

- Develop their own list of activities for their everyday well being
- Track triggering events and early warning signs
- Prepare their personal responses if symptoms increase
- Create a plan for their supporters to care for them if necessary

In the upcoming year BCSS will support ten (10) hard working and well trained consumers to take part in the WRAP correspondence course followed by WRAP teacher training in Vancouver which will enable them to teach the WRAP to consumers throughout the region. Watch for details of upcoming WRAP courses fall 2009.

S.A.F.E. BC (Self Harm Finally Ends) Train the Trainer Workshop

BCSS was pleased to offer for the first time a unique partnership for mental health consumers, family members and service providers to participate in training on how to use the best practice "Overcoming Self-Abuse" Manual and conduct the ongoing education program for individuals and groups affected by self-harming behaviour.

The trainer, Mary Graham stated the training "specified the boundaries and guidelines necessary to produce a group process in which hope, support, companionship and acceptance empower the individual in their efforts to end self-abusive behaviours. In the resulting life affirming atmosphere individuals acquired the knowledge and skills, which permit them:

- To understand what 'triggers' self-harming behaviour
- To examine thinking for cognitive distortions
- To identify and deal with emotional reactions
- To formulate a variety of alternative strategies to deal with trigger events
- To choose a more constructive alternative and act on it

The training was held in the BCSS Community training room at 1117-6th Avenue on September 3rd and 4th. Over 18 consumers, family members and service providers participated. Watch for details of the S.A.F.E. BC psycho-education program in 2009.

Prince George

Family group meets the 1st Thursday of every month from 7-8:30 PM at 1117 6th Ave
Call Kim at 250-561-8033

McBride

Family group meets the last Wednesday of every month from 7:30PM at the McBride Health Clinic
Call Norma at 250-569-2637

Quesnel

Family support group meets the 3rd Tuesday of every month from 7:30-9 PM in the Quesnel Hospital upper boardroom.
Call Diana at 250-992-8904



**NEW Northern Health and
BC Schizophrenia Society**
joint initiative in Fall 2008:

COUPLE GROUP

* **B.R.I.C.K.**

*A Support and Education Group for
Couple's Affected by Mental Illness*

** Building Resiliency in Couples with Knowledge*

We are creating a group for couples and would like your input. This group is for couples affected by mental illness. We want to create a program that will best meet your needs and would greatly appreciate you taking a few moments to complete this survey. Should you wish to attend the group we will require that you complete some forms at a pre-interview. This will take about 60 minutes.

Place: PRINCE GEORGE, 1117 – 6th Avenue

Proposed Date: 8 Sessions from Sept 29 to Dec 1, 2008 (NO CLASSES October 13th and November 10th)

Proposed Time: Mondays from 5:00 to 7:00 pm

1. We plan to cover the following topics? Please check off all that you would be interested in:

Session Topic:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Communication Tips for Couples | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Emotional Reactions To Mental Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Limit Setting and Boundaries for Couples | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Living With a Mental Illness | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Problem Solving, Managing Couple Conflict, Identifying Topics | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Skills for Managing Stress Individually and Together | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Taking Care of Yourself, Healthy Thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| The Couple Context: What is couplehood? Companionship? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

2. Any other topics you would like to see covered?

3. How interested would you be in attending this program to learn more about mental illness and its influences and effects on your couple relationship? Please Circle your response.

1 2 3 4 5
Not at All Interested | Somewhat Interested | Very Interested

4. Can both of you come on the proposed day and time? Yes No

If "No", what day and time could you make? _____

If you would like to be placed on the list of couples who want to attend this group, please fill out the information below.
(Please Print.)

Your Name: _____ Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Partner's Name: _____ Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

For more information and to pre-register call Kim Dixon at BCSS 250-561-8033 or Blaine Powell at NH 250-565-2186

Prince George Mental Health & Addictions Planning Partners (PG MHAPP)

*"Mapping the Way
to Mental Health
& Addictions Best
Practice"*



In the spirit of collaboration and partnership, and in the interest of the people we represent and serve the Prince George Mental Health & Addiction Planning Partners (PG MHAPP) continues to "map the way to mental health and addiction best practice."

PG MHAPP is a coalition of Prince George mental health & addictions consumers, family members and service providers working in partnership to implement mental health and addiction best practice in Northern Health including:



- Addictions
- Inpatient/Outpatient services
- Housing
- Consumer involvement and initiatives
- Psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery
- Assertive community treatment
- Crisis Response/Emergency services
- Family support and involvement

**PG MHAPP meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month
continuing September 9, 2008 from 3:30 – 5 PM at 1117 – 6th Avenue to:**

- Encourage and build collaborative relationships among the partners through regular interaction and information sharing.
- Bring current and pressing issues to the table for discussion AND to follow up with outcomes communicated to Northern Health.
- Select one mental health & addiction best practice issue of immediate concern and importance to all the partners AND to work together to prepare and present a position paper and/or action plan each year beginning January, 2008.

In 2008 PG MHAPP established two working groups to tackle two best practice issues:

- **C.H.A.T.** (Community Housing & Assertive Treatment) group is working on a variety of issues and strategies related to community housing and assertive treatment.
- **F.A.C.E.I.T.** (Family and Consumer Education Involvement Toolkit) group is creating a toolkit for community groups conducting mental health and addiction education initiatives. The F.A.C.E.I.T. toolkit will include background information from Northern Health's 2007 Let's Talk about Addictions & Mental Health community consultations and evidence based best practice family and consumer involvement in education. The second part of the F.A.C.E.I.T. toolkit will introduce the best practice partnership education model used to address discrimination. The F.A.C.E.I.T. toolkit will be available in January, 2009 to community groups who support a letter of agreement to include mental health & addictions consumers, family members and service providers in partnership education presentations.

PG MHAPP currently has seats open for family members affected by mental illness. Please contact Kim Dixon at 250-561-8033 or kimdixon@bcsspg.org if you are interested in participating or would simply like to receive a copy of the minutes.

BC Schizophrenia Society Group on Facebook

Please check out the new BC Schizophrenia Society Group on Facebook.com!

The URL is:
<http://www.facebook.com/>

Once you log in, the group is at:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5612665666>

If you already have an account, just go to GROUPS and search for BC Schizophrenia. We're taking mental illness to a global level, and a whole new audience!
By reaching out to everyone on Facebook, we will increase awareness of mental illness and decrease discrimination and stigma.
Please join our new group and get posting!

EDUCATION REQUEST FORM

The BC Schizophrenia Society (BCSS)

*– We'd like to
change your mind.*

The following educational workshops are available FREE of charge ANYWHERE in the Northern Interior and are suitable for youth and adult groups. Please check your request.

- _____ Partnership Education (1 hour): An individual living with mental illness and/or addiction, a family member and a mental health service provider share their personal stories and experiences with mental illness and/or addiction.
- _____ Reaching Out Early Psychosis Identification and Intervention curriculum for youth and community groups (1.5 to 3 hours): Psychosis refers to ANY condition where there has been a loss of contact with reality. Learn about the early signs and symptoms of psychosis and the importance of early treatment.

The following 1 – 3 hour presentations can be tailored to your needs:

- _____ Thought Disorders (Schizophrenia/Psychosis)
- _____ Mood Disorders (Bipolar/Depression)
- _____ Anxiety Disorders (Panic/Obsessive Compulsive disorders)
- _____ Addictions (Substances/Behavioral)
- _____ Concurrent Disorders (Mental Illness/Addictions)
- _____ Stigma & Discrimination in Mental Illness and Addictions
- _____ Mental Health Matters.
Most of us know what we need to do to maintain our physical health-but how do we make our mental health matter?
- _____ Healthy Thinking. Learn to think in a healthier way.
- _____ Other related topics available. Please specify. _____

Please complete workshop details below. You will be contacted to confirm details.

Date of workshop: _____ Time of workshop: _____
Location of workshop: _____ Number of anticipated participants: _____
(minimum of 8 participants required)
Contact name: _____ Contact tel. number: _____

Return form to: Kim Dixon, Regional Coordinator
Box 504 (1117- 6th Avenue). Prince George, BC. V2L 4S6
Fax: (250) 562-8015. E-mail: kimdixon@bcsspg.org
More information: Tel: (250) 561-8033. Toll-free: 1-888-561-8055



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY

NORTHERN INTERIOR REGION

The BC Schizophrenia Society has officially adopted the national Schizophrenia Society of Canada Iris logo and tag line. "The means to cope. The reason to hope." The open hands of the iris are now a symbol of support, education, and advocacy for families and people living with mental illness across the country.

Northern Interior BC Schizophrenia Society
Kim Dixon, BA MSc Candidate
Kathryn Lestage, RSW MSW Candidate
Toll Free 1-888-561-8055
In Prince George call 250-561-8033
www.bcsspg.org