



January 2008—Early Edition

THE RIGHTS STUFF

A Publication of The Mental Health Rights Coalition

Our Mission: To encourage, enable and empower the voice and participation of consumers in the Mental Health System in Hamilton.

Drop In and Peer Support

Hours:

11a.m- 4p.m,

Mon - Fri

NOTES FROM PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP POLICY FORUM

Dear Members,

The Provincial Mental Health and Addiction Partnership (Addictions Ontario, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CMHA Ontario, Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs, Ontario Association of Patient Councils, and the Ontario Peer Development Initiative) held a Policy Forum on Monday, November 26, 2007.

Special guest speakers were Carrie Hayward, Director of LHIN

Integration Branch, MOHTLC, and Hy Eliasoph, CEO of Central LHIN. Panelists were Trish Barbato, President and CEO, COTA; Barb Frampton; and Karen Parsons, Executive Director, Peel Addictions Assessment and Referral Centre.

Barb Frampton, immediate past President of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative and Executive Director of the South West Alliance Network, delivered the attached dissertation which highlights her personal belief in "Nothing about Us,

Without Us" which always informs her work. We are pleased to provide this written version for your reading enjoyment. Please feel free to distribute widely. If you have any further questions please e-mail Barb at:

barbframpton@execulink.com.

Sincerely,

The Board and Staff of OPDI

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COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS AND DEPRESSION

We've all experienced stress in our regular day-to-day activities, and have our ways of coping with it. For some, the holiday season can induce more stress and sadness than other times of the year. Whether this is because we are thinking of loved ones we won't see or the fact that we don't have as much sunlight in the winter, we all feel it to some degree. So why does it happen? There are three major triggers that contribute to our feelings of

anxiety and/or depression at this time of year:

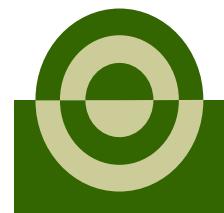
★ Relationships:

Relationships can cause turmoil, conflict or stress at any time. But tensions are often heightened during the holidays. Family misunderstandings and conflicts can intensify, especially if you're all thrust together for several days. Conflicts are bound to arise with so many different personalities, needs and interests. On the other

hand, if you're facing the holidays without a loved one, you may find yourself especially lonely or sad.

★ **Finances:** Like your relationships, your financial situation can cause stress at any time of the year. But overspending during the holidays on gifts, travel, food and entertainment can increase stress as you try to make ends meet while ensuring that everyone on your gift

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

DEB SHERMAN: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MHRCED@BELLNET.CA

You are receiving this January newsletter early, because the drop-in will be closed from December 21st at 4:00 p.m. to January 2nd, 11:00 a.m. In the past we had similar closures, but in more recent years it has been felt by our Board that our members need us at this stressful and for some, depressing time of year. However, since we improved our daily statistical tracking over the past few years, we have learned that in fact December, and especially the holiday week when we have been open for it, are our very slowest times all year - even despite a holiday party that boosts the attendance stats by up to 50 in one day. January, on the other hand, is consistently and by far the year's busiest month for drop-in and peer support. The board has looked at these facts and decided that staff, who are susceptible to the same stresses and depressions as the membership, would do better to be home recharging their batteries and returning fresh in January, than for us to be heating and lighting and sitting in an empty drop-in looking at a silent phone. We appreciate these extra couple of days, and thank the board for the family and self care time.

Speaking of self care, this issue

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Herman Westerik: President

Rosemary Garside: Vice President

Jennifer Armstrong: Secretary

Sharon Richards: Treasurer

Connie Bryce-McKinlay

contains some helpful hints on getting through the holidays, plus a list of places to call should you need help. Look for them inside.

Reflecting back on the year, MHRC has accomplished a great deal. We have just wrapped up the final report to the Ontario Trillium Foundation on the three-year grant that we managed for Wisemind Recovery Connections for Borderline Personality Disorder. Congratulations to former staffer Siobhan C, and to Patricia L and the other "Wise Guys" as I affectionately call them, on a great and challenging project. We hope that WiseMind will continue for a long time to come.

We completed our bylaw reform, which was a huge task for the Board and especially for your President, Herman. We have also worked very hard to revise and refine policies and procedures for the Board and for staff. These binder-thick tomes are currently in draft form and being examined, edited and double checked against bylaws by working groups. We expect them to be complete and accepted by the Board in January/February so that we will start our next fiscal year in April with all of these pieces completed.

Come the new year, we hope to

STANDING & AD HOC COMMITTEES

Development: R. Garside, Chair

Finance: Sharon Richards

Education: Staff Facilitated

Newsletter: Staff Facilitated

SCOPE: Staff Facilitated

Note: standing committees can include voting members who are not on the board. If you are considering running for the Board of Directors, your participation on a standing committee would demonstrate your commitment and give you some experience!

keep the heat on and move to front burners, a couple of our "pet projects".

Since our bylaw reform removed our own obstacles, we have finally sent funding applications to several sources to try to move the consumer run co-op housing project forward. If any of these are successful, we will hire a consultant to take us through the process of finding sites, negotiating zoning, licensing and myriad other processes, and preparing to build or renovate something. As soon as it looks like a project will indeed be able to move forward, the steering committee will reconvene those who expressed interest in living in a co-op, welcome others, and start forming, incorporating and educating a founding board of directors. I thank our members John S and Lance D for their hard work, and our partners

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Thank You

to Joan H for donating scarves, candy canes and holiday cards to our membership, and

to Lance D for donating money to our Christmas party efforts.

Both donations are greatly appreciated.



AMY ROGERS: PEER SUPPORT COORDINATOR

PEERSUPPORT@BELLNET.CA

We would like to officially welcome our newest Peer Support Worker, Carl, to our family of employees. Carl has volunteered extensively with us before he was asked to an interview for a relief position. Because of a current difficulty keeping the drop in staffed, our members will be seeing a lot of Carl in the next little while.

In the new year, there may be

meetings for Peer Workers, Peer Secondment Workers, and Peer Volunteers; you will be informed via a new mail out of the program calendar, via the website, or via phone.

We know that the holidays can be a stressful time for some people; even though the drop in is closed, and peer workers will not be available, there are other places you can call.

See page 7 for some phone numbers that you may need.

Also, we have prepared an article on how to cope with stress throughout the holidays. See pages 1, 6, and 7 to find some tips on coping.

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season, and an exceptional new year. See you in 2008!



KATE MOORE: MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

MHRCPROGRAMS@BELLNET.CA

WWW.MENTALHEALTHRIGHTS.CA

You may be asking yourself, "why a January newsletter two weeks before January?" As the one who handles printing and mailing the newsletter, I can officially let you know I'm not having an "episode". There is a perfectly good reason for this!

Because the drop in centre is closed for the week of Christmas, and the first two days of January, I do not have the resources to create and distribute the January newsletter in a timely manner; we've decided to send it early rather than late.

Also, because we are putting this edition out so early, we may need to re-send a calendar if our plans change. If you are really concerned that we have changed programming, our website will reflect any last minute planning modifications.

I'll let you know a secret for upcoming planning—something that won't be on the calendar because a date hasn't been set for it yet. I was talking to Diane A from The Hamilton Program for Schizophrenia (the one who plans all the wonderful bus trips and invites our members to attend) and she told me that there is a bus

trip coming up in January; we will be invited to attend a Bulldog's Game. Remember, in order for you to sign up, you'll need to do so in person, so give us a call and we'll be able to tell you when the sign up sheet is available.

Happy Holidays, all, and we'll be in touch!

-Kate

ACTIVITIES IN JANUARY

Because this newsletter is going out so early, it is difficult to tell you everything we have planned for the month. Here's a reminder of when the drop in is closed over the holidays:

The entire week of December 24-28, we will be closed.

We will also be closed the 31st of December (Monday) and the 1st of

January (Tuesday). We will reopen the drop in on Wednesday, January 2, 2008.

During the month of January, we will be showing movies with a Pink Floyd Theme, such as *Dark Side of the Moon*, *The Wall*, and *Doug Gilmour's Remember that Night*. Come in on Mondays at 1p.m. to view these films.

If you are looking for 100% up-to-date information on our programming in January, please visit our drop in or the website:

www.mentalhealthrights.ca

NOTES FROM PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP POLICY FORUM

(Continued from page 1)

Speech By Barb Frampton:

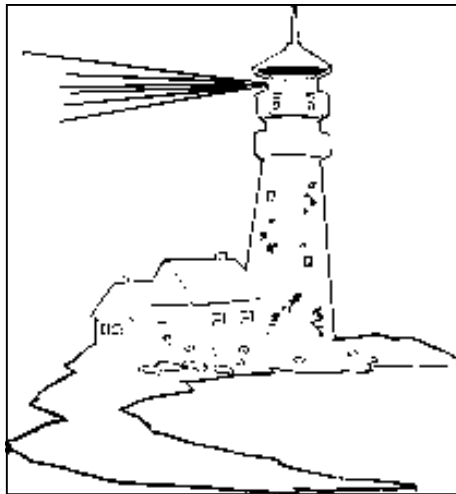
I have been asked to respond given my experience as a consumer/survivor and from my work with consumer/survivor organizations (CSOs) in the province. I want to preface my remarks by stating that because CSOs operate in a participatory and inclusive fashion, even trying to respond as the voice on behalf of my peers goes somewhat counter to that philosophy. However, that being said there are still things I can say based on information I have gleaned through my experience and through some consultation with my peers.

Thank you, Carrie and Hy for your informative presentation. It has been said that the mental health system is messy with so many different organizations, services and supports. When I look at the mental health system, I see a vast waterway with people in it that are struggling to survive and some are even drowning. I see lots of various vessels in that waterway, big and small, ranging from huge ocean liners to small rafts. There are barges, cruise ships, rescue boats, sail boats, motor boats, provision boats, tugboats and even canoes. I also see buoys and lighthouses in that waterway. And depending on the condition of the seas or the area needing to be navigated, they ALL serve their unique purpose. But each one of them is needed because consumers and survivors *need that choice!*

Lighthouses have been used as a symbol for peer support organizations. And I think buoys might represent patient or client councils. Lighthouses and buoys help to direct the way, and may provide

"indicators" or "measures" of where we are in the waterway. They also serve as beacons of hope, pointing to land and a *way out of the waterway*. Have you ever seen a beaten up old tugboat. Well I think these might well represent some consumer/survivor leaders in the province, in need of fuel and perhaps a new coat of paint. But they steadily continue to chug along and at times pull huge loads.

It is obvious from Carrie and Hy's presentations that Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), regionalization and integration are here to stay and as Carrie mentioned that "we are on a path". I think the importance to consumer/survivors of integration is continuity of care and



streamlining services. However, there are some cautions regarding integration that we need to be aware of, *so that we do this right*. For example, we

recognize the integral role of CSOs as unique and distinct components of the mental health system. So when we look at opportunities for integration; amalgamation or assimilation with larger provider organizations *is NOT an option*. This is backed up by the recently released David Reville and Associates report, "On Becoming New Best Friends". The fact is history has shown that this only serves to weaken the consumer/survivor leadership community. Integration isn't always about amalgamation or back office efficiencies. It isn't about certain larger ships doing the best job or everyone jumping into the biggest

ship. It can be about partnerships, communicating and working together on various projects. It could be likened to a flotilla of boats, sometimes where similar vessels support each other through the journey; or different sorts of vessels group together for a certain leg of the journey or to get to a common destination. And sometimes it may be about the beaten up little tugboats pulling the large barges or ocean liners through areas it is harder for them to navigate. Or maybe it is about tenders taking folks to and from the larger boats helping to deal with "wait lists". Therefore we need to get creative and focus on other ways of integration and we need to think about what that means or looks like for the system.

As a mental health sector we haven't always been very good at recognizing participatory process, so one of the unique directions that the Ministry of Health and the LHINs are taking towards integration are their "Strategic Directions" around *community engagement, performance measurement and accountability*. Is there a larger role for CSOs in these strategic areas identified and how do we ensure a stronger sector while recognizing the possibilities of CSOs in this role? CSOs are natural communities in which to roll out these "Strategic Directions".

Carrie mentioned the Ministry of Health's provincial stewardship role in "monitoring or establishing models and funding levels". Well what are some new approaches in this area? Hy mentioned needing "enablers". Are there some ways to show our integration through "partnership" by utilizing the *experiential expertise* of consumer/survivors as "enablers", planners, recovery educators, providers, evaluators, peer

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NOTES FROM PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP POLICY FORUM

(Continued from page 4)

supporters, or through governance, and policy and advocacy projects?

In other words, how can we use the rafts, the buoys, the lighthouses, the tenders or the tugboats, to guide us or be the bellwethers to lead the way or help us navigate those "bumps and detours" Hy mentioned earlier?

Besides the forgoing suggestions we can also organize forums like this, whether locally or provincially, removing the barriers to inclusion by making them accessible, offering travel subsidies, waiving fees, providing food and accommodation. But we need to go beyond that to ensure broad based consultation by looking at different milieus, alternate formats, like surveys, focus groups, etc. offering enough choices for people to work within, providing whatever tools folks need to participate in a meaningful way. We need to give folks opportunities to hear and then perhaps digest the information and then give them different mechanisms to respond through. It can no longer be one offs, one person on committees, one voice. It needs to be a chorus of voices.

Advocacy is a lot about education. Given that Consumer Survivor Initiatives (CSIs) are a "provincial strategy" recognized on the Ministry LHIN Accountability Agreements with Dedicated Funding Allocations, we need to look at where best to focus our policy and advocacy efforts so that it will do the most good. Not only where, but also how to focus them, who to and what those efforts need to be.

And how best do we advocate for those CSOs and patient/client councils that are still *autonomous* to maintain, strengthen

and broaden their role, when perhaps their funding is so low they don't have the human resources to work on integration partnerships or the opportunity to participate is impossible since they are back home working front line in their organizations? And what about those CSOs that are already amalgamated or that are currently being sponsored that may not even know about events like this, or the sponsor organization attends and speaks on their behalf.

Or perhaps their funding is being bleed into other areas of their sponsor's budget? Perhaps the unequal power relationship means that the sponsored CSO is treated more like a program of the agency rather than an autonomous group. Or perhaps because of being sponsored they are unable to freely advocate or say how they really feel about an issue because it may look like they are not supporting their flow through organization's position. Or perhaps they don't even have the decision making authority to decide who attends these various events?

What do we do when good integration recommendations are brought forward to the LHINs through participatory process like what happened in the Eastern Region CSI Network and then these recommendations are denied by the LHIN? What about forced amalgamations and co-locations that have already happened? What about things like the "Crazy Cooks" situation?

Or what about Patients Councils who also could serve an enhanced role in this integration mandate, when their autonomy is uncertain and their funding is at risk of

being diluted into the global budget of general hospitals. How do we ensure these mandates are stronger for these organizations and not just built on the backs of volunteers?

How do we deal with these issues and move forward? Is it by mandating consumer/survivor involvement through policies or accountability measures? Is by mandating that LHINS, hospitals, agencies, apply a specific percentage of their mental health funding to these accountability and performance strategies. Is it by integrating these "strategic directions" CSOs? Or is it by shaping a system in some other fashion. Is a stronger role for consumer/survivors and their organizations the way to change the system? Hy mentioned the LHINs as "incubators of integration". CSOs have been called "incubators of recovery".

So in conclusion, how do we lead the vessels or turn the ships around?

Are we looking for CSOs to conform to the system; or should we be looking to CSOs that embody the values and principles of recovery; as *THE WAY* to transform the system? If we truly believe in a consumer driven, recovery focused system we need to model it ourselves so that we move consumer/

survivors and their organizations beyond being the hood ornament on the front of the vehicle or the bumper sticker on the back to actually being the drivers of the vehicle.

I'll stop here and allow the rest of the folks here to bring forward their ideas in that participatory fashion, we speak so fondly of.

Barb Frampton



COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS AND DEPRESSION, CONT'D

(Continued from page 1)

list is happy. You may find yourself in a financial spiral that leaves you with depression symptoms such as hopelessness, sadness and helplessness.

✦ **Physical demands:** The strain of shopping, attending social gatherings and preparing holiday meals can wipe you out. Feeling exhausted increases your stress, creating a vicious cycle. Exercise and sleep are good antidotes for stress and fatigue but may take a back seat to chores and errands. High demands, stress, lack of exercise, and overindulgence in food and drink are all ingredients for holiday illness.

Take back control of holiday stress and depression

Remember, one key to minimizing holiday stress and depression is knowing that the holidays can trigger stress and depression. Accept that things aren't always going to go as planned. Then take active steps to manage stress and depression during the holidays. You may actually enjoy the holidays this year more than you thought you could. Here are some tips on handling the stress:

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If a loved one has recently died or you aren't able to be with your loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness or grief. It's OK now and then to take time just to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. **Seek support.** If you feel isolated or down, seek out family members and friends, or community, religious or social services. They can offer support and companionship. Consider volunteering at a community or religious function. Getting involved and helping others can lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. Also, enlist support for organizing holiday gatherings, as well as meal

preparation and cleanup. You don't have to go it alone. Don't be a martyr.

3. **Be realistic.** As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hold on to those you can and want to. But accept that you may have to let go of others. For example, if your adult children and grandchildren can't all gather at your house as usual, find new ways to celebrate together from afar, such as sharing pictures, e-mails or videotapes.

4. **Set differences aside.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all your expectations. Practice forgiveness. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. With stress and activity levels high, the holidays might not be conducive to making quality time for relationships. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then be sure to stick to your budget. If you don't, you could feel anxious and tense for months afterward as you struggle to pay the bills. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make one big food-shopping trip. That'll help prevent a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten ingredients and you'll have time to make another pie, if the first one's a flop. Expect travel delays, especially if you're flying.

7. **Learn to say no.** Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes only to what you really want to do, you'll avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed. If it's really not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

8. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is OK, but overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and schedule time for physical activity.

9. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Steal away to a quiet place, even if it's to the bathroom for a few moments of solitude. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

10. **Rethink resolutions.** Resolutions can set you up for failure if they're unrealistic. Don't resolve to change your whole life to make up for past excess. Instead, try to return to basic, healthy lifestyle routines. Set smaller, more specific goals with a reasonable time frame. Choose only those resolutions that help you feel valuable and that provide more than only fleeting moments of happiness.

11. **Forget about perfection.** Holiday TV specials are filled with happy endings. But in real life, people don't usually resolve problems within

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COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS AND DEPRESSION, CONT'D

(Continued from page 6)

an hour or two. Something always comes up. You may get stuck late at the office and miss your daughter's school play, your sister may dredge up an old argument, your partner may burn the cookies, and your mother may criticize how you're

raising the kids. All in the same day. Accept imperfections in yourself and in others.

12. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to

sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for several weeks, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

-Kate

Who To Call In A Crisis

- ✦ Call your family doctor. He or she likely has someone on-call during the holiday season that you can talk to
- ✦ The Good Shepherd Barrett Centre for Crisis Support will have staff working 24 hours a day: 905-529-7878
- ✦ Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)- 905-972-8338
- ✦ The Salvation Army Crisis Phone: 905-522-1477
- ✦ Telehealth Ontario—Contact a registered nurse—1-866-797-0000 TTY : 1-866-797-0007

Emergency Shelters

- ✦ Wesley Urban Ministries: 195 Ferguson Ave N, 905-528-5640
- ✦ Good Shepherd: 135 Mary Street, 905-528-9109 (MEN)
- ✦ Mission Services: 325 James St N, 905-528-7635 (MEN)
- ✦ Mary's Place: 50 East Ave N, 905-540-8000 (WOMEN)
- ✦ Martha House: 20 Emerald St S, 905-523-8895 (WOMEN)
- ✦ More resources available here: Hamilton Community Services Department, Emergency Shelter Unit: 905-546-2225

DEBORRAH SHERMAN, CONT'D

(Continued from page 2)

from WPOP, HPS, CMHA, Good Shepherd HOMES, the City of Hamilton, and helpful advisors from the Co-op Federation who have been part of this process.

The pilot project which has placed peer workers (trained and employed by us) into other mental health agencies will gradually wind down and we have reason to hope

that some of those agencies will be continuing the positions. We'll be looking for input from everyone involved - peer workers, staff and clients of the agencies - so that we can create a new, higher level peer support training package, and so that other agencies can learn of the benefits and overcome any challenges of having peer workers. There will be a dissemination event once all this is completed and compiled.

Also coming up in the new year, look for a couple of MHRC educational forums in February and March, and for a consumer conference that the Hamilton Peer Network is starting to plan.

Busy times behind and busy times ahead. Yep, I'm ready for a week of cocooning...

-Deb



JANUARY 2008

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

	<p>1</p> <p>MHRC Closed</p> <p>New Year's Day</p>	2	3	4
			2:00p.m: Drop in to say farewell to Kate	<p>Battlestar Galactica: 1p.m.</p> <p>Pilot Episode</p>
7	8	9	10	11
<p>Movie, 1p.m.</p> <p>Application Deadline, 4p.m:</p> <p>Administrative Assistant</p>	<p>Peer Network Brown Bag Meeting, 12 noon</p> <p>Music Video, 1p.m:</p> <p>Pink Floyd, Live at Pompeii</p>	<p>Movie, 1p.m: Pride and Prejudice, Episodes 1&2</p>		<p>Battlestar Galactica: 1p.m.</p> <p>Season 1, Episode 2-4</p>
14	15	16	17	18
<p>Movie, 1p.m.</p>	<p>Music Video, 1p.m</p> <p>Pink Floyd: The Wall</p>	<p>Movie, 1p.m: Pride and Prejudice, Episodes 3&4</p>		<p>Human Resources Committee — Interviewing</p> <p>Battlestar Galactica: 1p.m.</p> <p>Season 1, Episode 5-7</p>
21	22	23	24	25
<p>Movie, 1p.m.</p>	<p>Music Video, 1p.m:</p> <p>Pink Floyd: Pulse/ The Delicate Sound of Thunder</p>	<p>Movie, 1p.m: Pride and Prejudice, Episodes 5&6</p>		<p>Battlestar Galactica: 1p.m.</p> <p>Season 1, Episode 8-10</p>
28	29	30	31	February 1, 2008
<p>Movie, 1p.m.</p>	<p>Music Video, 1p.m:</p> <p>Pink Floyd's David Gilmour— Remember that Night</p>			<p>Battlestar Galactica: 1p.m.</p> <p>Season 1, Episode 11-13</p>

CALL US TO DROP IN OR CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR MORE PROGRAMMING IN THE NEW YEAR