



August 2008

THE RIGHTS STUFF

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

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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.

Poverty Discussion Continues in Hamilton

By Carl Johnson

A community conversation about poverty reduction, held on July 14 at the Convention Centre, addressed a number of issues which may be of interest to mental health consumer/survivors.

Mental Health Rights staff member, Lance Dingman, presented to the crowd of almost 200 people, pointing out many of the difficulties faced by those who live in lodging homes.

About 900 people in Hamilton live in lodging homes and many of these are seniors or people who live with some sort of disability including mental illness.

(Continued on page 5)



After brightening MHRC with her smile, talent and enthusiasm for 2 years Amy Rogers has decided to go back to school. Amy will be leaving MHRC in late August. Members and community partners are invited to join us in saying thanks to Amy from 1-3 on Thursday, August 14. Light refreshments will be served.

Mental Health Stigma has "Gone Postal"



There are many phrases like "Gone Postal" which have a negative influence on the public perception of mental illness but a new initiative by [Canada Post](#), which includes the issue of a new mental health stamp on October 6, aims to alleviate such stigma. The stamp and the foundations being established by Canada Post will work toward the elimination of stigma surrounding mental health.

"We are the first major company to adopt this cause, which has too long been an orphan nobody wanted," says Moya Greene, President of Canada Post. Greene points out Canada Post has over 60,000 people working from coast to

coast and she hopes their efforts "will change the face of mental illness in Canada."

"One in five Canadians are touched by mental illness," says Phil Upshall, the national director of Mental Health Awareness Week. Upsall complimented the initiative by Canada Post and pointed to stigma and discrimination as the most profound barrier to treatment.

The new stamp has a domestic rate of 52 cents and includes an additional 10 cent donation to the face value which will be directed toward mental health research and patient support.

The Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health hopes to raise one million dollars in it's first year and will be directing money, with the help of an independent board, to 'where it will do the most good for those directly affected my mental illness,' says a June 18 news release.

If you would prefer to receive an email copy of this newsletter please notify the editor at mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca



Executive Director: Frances Jewell

This is my favorite time of year.

Like every year, this summer seems to be rushing by so fast. There's so much to do in so little time.

Here's my Top Ten List for summer.

1. Ice cream-any kind!
2. The song birds that wake me every morning
3. Listening to the crickets as I walk in the country near my Mum's home
4. Cherries from Winona
5. Festival of Friends (Gage Park, August 8, 9, 10, Noon to 11 p.m.)
6. Watching big fluffy clouds in the sky
7. Walking at Bayfront Park
8. Napping in the hammock
9. Sitting in the garden during the evening watching fireflies and listening to the tree frogs

10.A day at the beach in Turkey Point

I hope you are enjoying the things that make summer great for you.

There are many things to enjoy in and around the city during the summer so please take advantage of the sunshine and festivities. Many of them are even free.

If MHRC members need help finding things to do they are welcome to ask our staff to assist in looking up events on the internet.

There are also plenty of things to do at MHRC and it is a good way to take a break from the heat and have some fun. On hot days you can also find a bottle of water here before you go back into the sweltering heat.

We have added some fun to this months calendar so be sure to come and join us for special events.

Ice cream day is happening on Tuesday, August 5.

Other new events on the calendar include a walk once a month to everyone's favourite coffee shop. Air hockey has also returned to MHRC and the staff are becoming very creative with some inexpensive craft and art ideas.

The all time favourite here seems to be Karaoke and it is held once a week.

Cards, board games, movies are also part of the schedule but can also be added to the day when people are interested.

Seeking Donations

If you or anyone you know might have access to fresh fruit or would like donate toward the purchase of fruit we would like to be able to provide it for our members each weekday.

For more information contact us at MHRC

678 Main St E, Ste. 102- Hamilton, ON L8M 1K2
Phone: 905-545-2525 Facsimile: 905-545-0211
Email: mentalhealthrights@bellnet.ca

Peer Support Coordinator:

Amy Rogers
peersupport@bellnet.ca

As I prepare to go back to school in the fall, I realize that this will be my last newsletter article for MHRC. I have been reflecting about my time here and what it has meant to me, both personally and professionally. Over the past two years I have had the advantage of meeting, working with, and supporting many wonderful people. True to its mission, my experience with MHRC has been encouraging, empowering and enabling.

The members who come through our doors on a daily basis to say, "Hi", socialize, tell me about their day, play a game, sing a song, make a card, watch a movie, and, of course, to get peer support, remind me of why I ended up here, and where I came from.

I feel privileged that you have let me into your lives and shared so much of yourselves with me. Your stories encourage me to carry on supporting others to reach their recovery goals. Training and facilitating wasn't new to

me when I started, but my skills certainly improved each time I facilitated the Peer Support Training. Thank you to all the volunteers and trainees who have questioned me, challenged me, offered a new perspective, or agreed with me. Through your active participation, I have been able to empower myself by developing my skills for my future endeavors.

It has been especially meaningful to be part of moments when consumers begin to recognize they have the skills and abilities to support others; moments when "peer support" becomes not just a catchphrase but a verb. When I witness one of these moments, I see a shift in the peer supporter. Suddenly theory becomes practice and the peer supporter becomes empowered with the ability to support others effectively.

My role here at MHRC has enabled me to become part of a larger movement. I have been able to expand my experiences and participate in sys-

temic advocacy projects. Most enabling has been participating in the

Hamilton Peer Recovery Network. It has been a privilege to have been part of this group from the beginning.

As I get set to close this chapter in my life and move on to the next, I will take with me all the lessons I have learned. I am grateful for the people I have met and for the experiences I have had. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for MHRC.



Peer Support Matches Available

Any consumer looking for on-going peer support by a trained volunteer is encouraged to call the Peer Support Coordinator, Amy Rogers, at

905-545-2525.

Administrative Assistant

Peggy Guiler-Delahunt
m h r c p r o g r a m s @ b e l l n e t . c a



Laughter is something we all know is good for us but for many of us who live with mental illness it is also something that often alludes us.

I was recently reminded about the great joy of laughter, especially when it is directed to one's self—allow me to share.

(Please laugh with me—not at me :)

About four years ago I was at a friend's cottage and we were visited by someone who arrived via kayak. The woman allowed me to try out the small vessel and it immediately became a heart's desire to own one of my own.

This year when I moved back to my home town of Port Dover from the country, the dream seemed to make more sense because the nearby creek and the sometimes calm lake were near by.

When a kayak which was within my financial reach, came on sale at Canadian Tire this "woman of a certain age" took the plunge (so to speak), and stuffed said vessel into my car and headed toward the nearest body of water.

Being the sort of person who prefers to learn by doing as opposed to researching, I strapped on the life jacket and from the ladder at the local yacht club, I lowered the kayak down the five foot drop into the creek. Carefully I slid into the little boat, regained my balance, and set out on the maiden voyage.

Black Creek is quite long and besides the natural beauty further upstream, also bounds many of the town's more prestigious homes. From my little craft I was able to enjoy the scenery while I learned some of the fine points of kayaking—like which side of the slanted paddle you are supposed to put in the water first.

After about 40 minutes travelling upstream I decided I was becoming a little tired and should head back to the ladder from which I descended.

It was when I arrived at the ladder that I discovered kayakers were never meant to be gotten out of from a dock or ladder which is on the side of the boat.

My cousin, an expert kayaker and trainer, explained to me later that they are only meant to be used from a beach.

Well, as you may have already surmised, my exit from my pretty blue and white vessel was not nearly as dainty as my entrance.

As I leaned toward the wall and grabbed on to the ladder I discovered it was not only my arms which were tired from the journey but that my legs, which had been pushed tight in front of me on small stirrup type mounts for close to two hours, were like jelly. When I tried to stand they were practically useless. That left me to pull myself up the ladder with the waning strength of my arms.

At the precise moment I turned to pull myself up the ladder, the kayak also turned and to my amazement, within about one second, completely filled with water. The result was me standing in a submerged kayak, hanging on to the ladder for dear life.

A few minutes later I was able to show my head above the ground level and with shame on my face and soaked to the waist I approached a friend sitting nearby. She and her companion eagerly helped me retrieve the kayak from the creek and I will be forever grateful to them both.

You would be amazed how heavy a 60 pound kayak becomes when it is full of water and has to be raised five feet before it can be drained.

I hope you had a good laugh.

I'm actually getting better at it now and have found some good launching spots which don't have ladders or docks. It does seem though, that getting a little wet is pretty hard to avoid.

I hope you can find something about yourself to laugh at. Try something new and see what happens. Messing up isn't so bad when you can turn it into laughter.

Membership Renewal Form

Any personal information collected by Mental Health Rights Coalition is kept in strict confidence and is not shared with any other agency or corporation.

Do you live, work or receive services within LHIN 4? (Hamilton, Niagara, Brant, Haldimand, East Norfolk)

YES

NO

Please Print

Today's Date: _____

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

*Phone: _____

Birth Date: _____

Email: _____

Please Check One:

I am a consumer/survivor (full privileges)

I am not a consumer/survivor (Limited privileges, and news letter by email only)

I would like to receive the newsletter via email

If you would prefer to send this update via email please email the membership coordinator at mhrcprograms@bellnet.ca and ask for a form.

*Please Note: if you fill in your phone number and/or email, address, we will assume it is ok for us to contact you to give notice of important events or meetings.

THAT'S CRAZY

CSI could be making you fat or it could help with lots of things regarding your mental health—investigate how

by Peggy Guiler-Delahunt

(CSI—crime scene investigation or Consumer Survivor Initiate)

Psychotropic medication is often blamed for the terrible weight gain experienced by mental health consumers but a recent study from Rotterdam indicates “consumers (meaning those who purchase goods), especially those with a lower self-esteem, might be more susceptible to over-consumption when faced with images of death during the news or their favorite crime-scene investigation shows. An article in Medical News Today on July 14, 2008 explains the study says, “Those with low self-esteem, writing about their death ate more cookies and listed more items of a hypothetical shopping list compared to those who wrote about the dentist.”

The study authors explain the phenomenon calling it “escape from self-awareness.” It goes on to explain, “when people are reminded of their inevitable mortality, they may start to feel uncomfortable about what they have done with their lives and whether they have made a significant mark on the universe. This is a state called ‘heightened self-awareness.’ One way to deal with such an uncomfortable state is to escape from it, by either overeating or overspending.”

Other contributing factors cited by the article include death-related news. According to the article, the news may also influence whether people buy products which are local or from other areas. If a news story about death was from a foreign country consumers might buy foreign



William Petersen, who plays Gil Grissom, in the popular CSI-Crime Scene Investigation television drama

foods where if it is a local story they are more likely to buy domestic brands.

This study could explain a great deal for mental health consumers who have difficulty with excessive weight gain. For many “low self-esteem” is integral to mental health issues. Also for many of us thoughts of death are not only something we entertain on the news and watching TV but are also part of our usual thought process. It is well known that those with mental illness are more likely to die by suicide than other groups. Those with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are particularly at risk.

Overeating and low self-esteem, if this study is accurate, only feed themselves (excuse the pun) when it comes to mental health consumers. Whether we overeat because of our medications or because we have low self-esteem, we know it leads to a spiral affect and the one leads to more of the other.

On top of all this we also know many mental health consumers may be predisposed to diabetes and that some psychotropic medications have been proven to cause diabetes.

In consideration of the general health of mental health consumers, it appears CSI may be contributing to weight problems but in a strange turn of words it is the CSI’s (Consumer Survivor Initiatives) which may be able to help with self-esteem, health suggestions and information on mental health.

That’s Crazy is a column which appears periodically in The Rights Stuff and which will bring ideas and “stuff” which affects mental health consumer/survivors. We hope this will be informative and will provoke some thought and even discussion about the topic. If you have ideas about the subject or other subjects we might use for this column please send to the editor.

Up Coming Events

HPS IDOL 2008

Free event

August 6 & 7

@ Hamilton Theatre Inc.

140 McNab St. N.

Show times

Wednesday, August 6—1:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 7 6:00 p.m.

Seating is limited. Please contact Karen, Tammy or Samantha at 905-525-2832 to reserve seats.

Donations can be made in honour of the Cottage Studio

<http://cottagestudio.ca/>

Annual General Meeting— Scope Awards

Monday, September 15

AGM 10:30 to Noon

Light Lunch 12-1

Scope Awards 1-3

Emmaus Place—35 Aikman Ave.

Hamilton, ON

This meeting will include the election of officers to the board of directors. Only members in good standing will have a vote. Applications for membership may be picked up at the coalition office or by requesting one via email at mhrcprogams@bellnet.ca.

Information about SCOPE Awards and an application are available on the web site or at the MHRC offices.

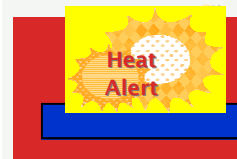
No need to be Bored in this City

Life Long Learning Week— September 15—21, 2008: An impressive list of events which promote literacy and life long learning can be found at

<http://www.abea.on.ca/llw/calendar.php>

Great listings of local events at this web site.

<http://www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton>



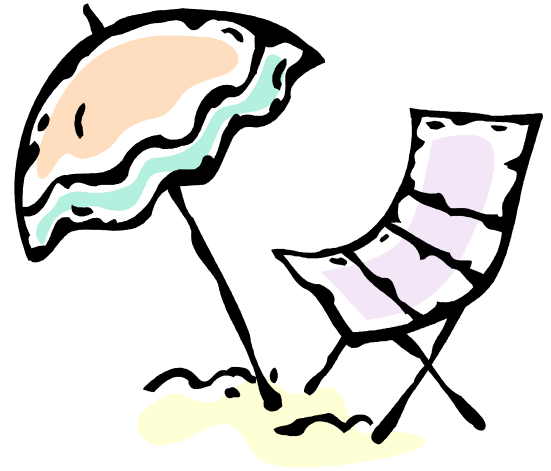
If it is too hot to handle outside you are welcome to visit MHRC and cool down at 678 Main St. E. from 11-4 on week-

days. Water provided by [Hamilton Public Health](#) on hot days

Summer Time

BY Pam Mitchell

**HI! SUMMER TIME..... AH
SUMMER LEMON AID, FLOWERS in
the garden so beautiful peace all
around. Sitting on my Deck
chair ,Summer is in the air, Birds
singing a happy
song. Summer ! Summer ! is here now. I
Wish Summer would never Be
Gone. The Sun is Setting
Now Summer Fun Tomorrow will
Begin, SUMMER TIME!!!!**



An Idea I had

This section appears periodically in the Rights Stuff and is the work of members at the Mental Health Rights Coalition. The poetry and prose are the opinions of the authors and may not reflect the opinion of the Mental Health Rights Coalition. The Editor reserves the right to edit as seen fit, any material submitted for this column. Submissions from members are encouraged. They should be original material and include the name of the author. Names may be withheld from the readership if requested.

Poverty Discussion Continues

(Continued from page 1)

Dingman pointed out people live with a personal needs allowance of only \$122 per month which amounts to about \$4 per day. Purchasing clothing and personal care items is difficult on this amount but for many who smoke the additional cost of cigarettes at about \$65 per carton (8 cigarettes a day for a month) is a priority and other things fall by the wayside.

"The province must clearly develop a strategy for these ignored people," says Dingman. He suggested an immediate increase in the monthly allowance to \$180 and an annual cost of living increase.

Other discussion included the recent claw backs in the child tax benefits and the influx of well educated immigrants who are working part time in lower paying jobs. It was pointed out this group could be of great benefit to the tax base as the baby boomers retire but they are now forced to live in poverty.

People, like the high number of aboriginals and single parents, who also live on assistance often have to make decisions about whether to pay bills or buy food.

Another group represented were those who receive workers compensation and may be living in poverty. It was said this group need more money for proper retraining or vocational rehabilitation.

Hamilton's poverty rate of 18.1% is well above the provincial average of 10.3%. As consumers we have a voice and there are things we can contribute to this ongoing discussion. Attending meetings like this one which was sponsored by the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and reading other information available on the issue of poverty, including petitions, and taking opportunity to let views be known are important to those who live in poverty and to our community.

The discussion on poverty continues with MHRC web site and Pat Capponi

Information and links to this community and provincial discussion on poverty are available on the Mental Health Rights web site at

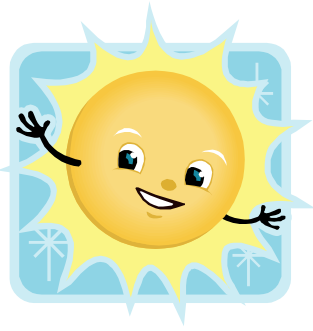
www.mentalhealthrights.ca (visit the Newsletter page for current news). Of particular interest to mental health consumers is an article in the Toronto Star by Pat Capponi, long time mental health and poverty advocate.

<http://www.thestar.com/article/461785>

FOR SUPPORT....
























Give Us A Call! A Peer Support Worker is available Monday to Friday, 11a.m.-4p.m. 905-545-2525



August 2008



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>Activities are scheduled for 1 p.m. unless otherwise indicated</p> <p>HPS trips are offered to MHRC members when possible. Regularly attending members will be given priority for trips.</p> <p>Note the new coffee walk each month. You will go with staff for a little exercise and then get a coffee and donut. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes.</p>					<p>1</p> <p>Air Hockey</p> 	2
3	<p>4</p> <p>Civic Holiday Closed</p>	<p>5</p> <p>1 Ice Cream </p> <p>Day</p> <p>1 Card games </p>	<p>6</p> <p>1 PS Training-Craft—Greeting cards</p> <p>1 p.m. HPS Trip</p> <p>Talent Show at Little Theatre Inc. 1p.m. Free—Sign up on August 1 at MHRC</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Movie </p>	<p>8</p> <p>Karaoke </p>	9
10	<p>11</p> <p>Card games </p>	<p>12</p> <p>Karaoke </p>	<p>13</p> <p>Skip Bo tournament</p> <p>1 PS Training </p> <p>1:30 Voices meeting</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Thanks</p> <p>1-3 Farewell event for Amy Rogers </p>	<p>15</p> <p>Movie </p>	16
17	<p>18</p> <p>Karaoke </p>	<p>19</p> <p>Craft </p>	<p>20</p> <p>Backgammon </p>	<p>21</p> <p>Karaoke </p>	<p>22</p> <p>Watercolours </p>	23
24	<p>25</p> <p>Movie </p>	<p>26</p> <p>Bingo </p>	<p>27</p> <p>1 Birthday Club </p> <p>1:15 Karaoke concert </p>	<p>28</p> <p>Air Hockey </p>	<p>29</p> <p>Coffee Walk </p>	30
31	<p>1—Labour Day</p>					