

## Camosun class aided!

Four Camosun College students approached BCSS Victoria to assist in research for a project for Social Issues in Psychology class. They chose schizophrenia as a topic as it seemed to be a misunderstood illness and they wished to learn more. We were pleased to assist Catherine, Whitney, Junko and Chelsea in their research, a first person presentation by Tara Timmers and planning for a voice hearing experiential exercise. Auditory hallucinations, or "hearing voices" is one of the most common symptoms experienced by people with schizophrenia or psychosis. The exercise provided students with an understanding that as a person hearing voices, it can be challenging to focus on what is being said to them and to concentrate on providing a response. Students who had the brief simulation experience as a voice hearer described hearing voices as stressful. "It made it hard to concentrate and focus." "I can only imagine now how challenging it must be to hear voices all day". At BCSS Victoria, we are thrilled that these four students provided such an excellent presentation to their fellow learners. It will help to dispel myths and provide insight into the experience of people affected by psychosis. While medication cannot always alleviate the hearing of voices symptom, there are some helpful self management techniques, most notably stress-management through deep breathing/relaxation exercises, managing ones own "self talk" (use positive versus negative language internally) and getting to know the voices and keeping a journal of when they tend to come on and what might tend to trigger them. There are many people who embrace many of life's roles such as volunteering, employment and loving relationships, even while continuing to hear voices. If you are interested in a hearing voices simulation workshop or know someone who may be interested, please call BCSS Victoria at (250) 384-4225 or email admin.bcss@shaw.ca



# Newsletter

Victoria Branch, B.C. Schizophrenia Society  
VOL. 24, No. 4  
NOVEMBER, 2008

## Hazel Meredith awarded National Outstanding Staff Award

Hazel Meredith, Executive Director, BCSS Victoria, has been awarded the National Outstanding Staff Award. Hazel travelled to Ottawa last month to be presented with her award.

On behalf of everyone associated with BCSS Victoria I would like to say a big congratulation to Hazel! This award is established to recognize the outstanding contribution made by a staff member through his or her work towards our mission, at the provincial and/or local levels.

Schizophrenia Societies across Canada depend upon the perseverance, skill and devotion of dedicated volunteers, practitioners and staff members who help to achieve our mission of *promoting a quality of life for those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis*. Without their dedicated efforts, we would be missing the leadership and direction essential for our organization.

On behalf of everyone associated with BCSS Victoria, thank you Hazel for all that you do, and the way you do it.

—Josie Jones, President



Joan Skillings and Paddy Miller reach their goal

## Cyclists complete cross-Canada ride

Joan Skillings and I have now completed our cross-Canada bike trip. Our ride was in memory of my dear son Mike who died in August, 2000, after a long and very private battle with bipolar disease.

Mike was a sensitive, intelligent fellow with a wry sense of humor. He was well liked by his friends and work mates and had many successes in his life. However, his disease finally robbed him of his self-esteem and mired him in despair so deep that suicide was the tragic outcome.

Since 2002, Joan and I have cycled for two to three weeks each September and have now crossed the country from Victoria to St. John's, Newfoundland. The journey has been a healing one, an attempt to come to grips with grief and to raise some awareness about mental illness. As we traveled across the country we found our own awareness was raised. Almost everyone we talked to had a story, either of their own or a relative's struggle with mental illness. It appears that mental health issues are coming "out of the closet". We are heartened to see that silence around mental illness is changing and hope that the stigma is being lifted.

Donations that are a result of our ride have been directed toward psychiatric services in Victoria. We are pleased to support the Schizophrenia Society again this year. Agencies like BCSS with direct services and programs for patients and their families deserve much more recognition, acclaim and support.

—Paddy Miller



941 Kings Rd.,  
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## Aboriginal Agency Fair held

On Songhees and Esquimalt territory, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services hosted an Aboriginal Agency Fair on October 22, 2008. Agencies and programs known to service Aboriginal children and families across the island were welcomed to set up booths at the fair. An estimated 260 people attended the information booths, presentations, Aboriginal artist market, massage, Reiki, and acupuncture exhibits. The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society Victoria Branch booth was hosted by Respite Program worker, Mihaela Iacob. Our message of hope, support and recovery for children, youth, adults and seniors with serious mental illness with/ without addictions was imparted to the many attendees of the fair. There was much energy and buzz in the large room at the Leonardo Da Vinci Centre. We look forward to continued partnerships with the Aboriginal community to assist those with serious mental illness with or without addictions. Please see more about Surrounded By Cedar Child and Family Services at [www.surroundedbycedar.com](http://www.surroundedbycedar.com)



## Progressive Recovery Group Event

A collaboration of like-minded mental health and addiction community services (PRG) organized its second event this year on October 7th aiming to strengthen agency collaboration, in turn enhancing help to those we serve. A film was shown called "Out of the Shadow" by Susan Smiley. This was followed by featured speaker Judy Graves (producer of "The Devil Plays Hardball"), and panelists Rev. Al Tysick, Phil Ward, Kristin Dun-



This panel participated in the event

can and John Mitchell who provided insights into the serious issue of homelessness and the people who also struggle with mental illness and addictions. Approximately 140 people attended the event and learned about local services at community agency booths. A big thanks to CBC Broadcaster Joanne Roberts who promoted the event with an interview on CBC with Bruce Saunders and myself. Joanne Roberts moderated the event and excerpts will be aired on CBC. Please read more about this event on the Movie Monday website: [www.movie monday.ca](http://www.movie monday.ca)

## Provincial Office changes

A number of changes have occurred at the BCSS provincial office recently. Executive Director Gary Glakken has resigned to undertake new pursuits. Jane Duval has assumed the role of acting executive director of BCSS Provincial. Also leaving is Greg Dallimore, Administrative Coordinator.

We wish them well and provide thanks for their years of service.

This newsletter, which is published four times a year, is a publication of:



The Victoria Branch  
BC Schizophrenia Society  
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## SMILE CARDS NOW AVAILABLE

Participate in this fundraiser and 5% of your Thrifty Foods grocery bill goes toward our new telephone system! The new system has voice mailboxes to help with improved services. Please pick up your smile cards at BCSS today!  
Or call 250-384-4225 for more information.



## Spouse providing care in need of support

By Dana Lewis, MSW

Nearly one quarter of the Canadians providing care to someone with a psychiatric condition is his or her spouse.<sup>1</sup> According to studies, approximately 20 to 30% of people with schizophrenia live in a stable partnership.<sup>2</sup> Marriage rates for people with bipolar disorder and depression are closer to that of the general population. Although difficulties are not inevitable, higher rates of relationship problems and divorce have been reported for people with severe psychiatric disorders.<sup>3</sup> Just like there are no "typical parents" of people with a psychiatric condition, there are no "typical partners" or illness-specific relationship patterns.<sup>4</sup> There are, however, common experiences as couples grapple with the multiple challenges of living with a psychiatric condition.

The burdens experienced by spouses are different from those experienced by parents in significant ways. Onset or relapse of a psychiatric condition can alter the way a couple cares for children, divides household tasks and experiences emotional and sexual intimacy. While the relationship between parents and children is usually seen as an unbreakable lifelong bond, marriage or partnership is perceived as a relationship based on certain conditions and expectations that can, under some circumstances be ended.<sup>5</sup>

When partners seek help, it can be difficult to find. In my work as a family counsellor I have met with partners together and individually when one or both are experiencing a psychiatric condition. Couples have often reported dissatisfaction with generic couples counseling because their difficulties may relate more to the illness than to relationship skills. Likewise, family support groups tend to address the

needs of parent care-givers and provide limited opportunities to discuss parenting, developmental risks for children, sexuality, separation and divorce.<sup>6</sup> According to the ex-wife of a man with schizophrenia, "I am convinced that if someone had helped me understand my husband's illness without my having to go through the long, painful process of learning step by step...much pain could have been avoided".<sup>7</sup>

If you are interested in being part of a support circle for spouses of people with a psychiatric condition, BCSS would welcome your call or e-mail. Appointments for brief, solution-focused counselling are available for individuals and couples. Self referrals are welcome. Confidential services include pre-relationship counselling, treatment contracts, Ulysses Agreements, crisis planning, problem solving support, information and referral. Day and evening appointments are available at no cost.

<sup>1</sup>Decima Research, Informal/Family Caregivers in Canada Caring for Someone with a Mental Illness, Health Canada, May 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Schulze Monkling et al. 1996; Salokangas 1997; Hagner and ander Heiden 1997 in Jungbauer et al, The Disregarded Caregivers: Subjective Burden in Spouses of Schizophrenia Patients, Schizophrenia Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>Halford, B., *Brief Therapy for Couples*, 2001.

<sup>4</sup>Hell, 1982 in Jungbauer et al.

<sup>5</sup>Jungbauer et al.

<sup>6</sup>Jungbauer et al.

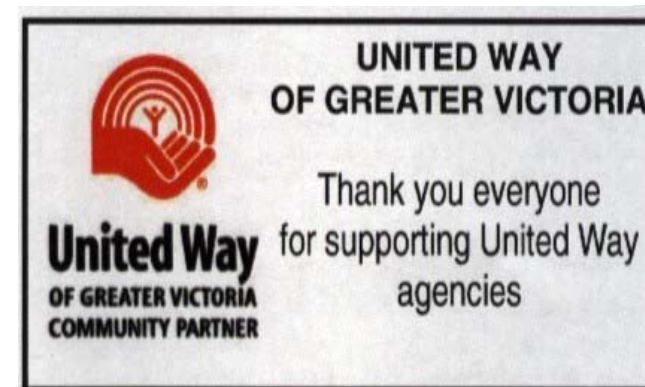
## Families with Hope



A mother/daughter team welcome you to join our family support group held 2nd & 4th Thursday nights from 7pm-8:30pm. We care and understand and would like you to participate in our confidential group meeting for families and their loved ones in recovery. You will hear from families who are coping with similar situations and be able to share your story with others who will listen. Come and learn about resources, gain insight and get connected to those who are living with similar circumstances. Facilitated by Sandra Tice and Tara Timmers, a family who understands.

Please call the BCSS, Victoria office to find out more 250-384-4225.

Location: 941 Kings Road.





SANDY

**FAMILIES WITH HOPE**

**Mother/daughter team sharing experiences**



TARA

We are a mother/daughter team that wants to share our own personal experience with mental illness and we invite you to come and share your experience in a confidential, safe and friendly environment. My daughter and I are compassionate, caring and understanding people. We know that when a family member has a mental illness it can be devastating to all family members. You are not alone, we will offer you emotional comfort and moral support. Our support group can be a long term source of relief and resource for you during difficult times.

Please come and join us. We welcome you to our meetings the 2nd and 4th Thursday evening of the month starting at 7 p.m. and continuing to 8:30 at the BCSS office, 941 Kings Road.

I remember the day Tara came to me and told me she thought that she had schizophrenia. She said she was hearing voices and seeing things. I knew that it was serious. I didn't know anything about schizophrenia. I was very concerned and worried so I set up an appointment with our doctor right away. Tara was put on antipsychotic medication (Stelazine). I was devastated and cried a lot and felt helpless at first.

I heard through a friend about the BCSS Victoria Branch. So I went to the office on Kings Road and was given lots of information to read. I met a very kind and caring staff member who seemed to know what I was going through and was very sympathetic. I left that office feeling a little more relieved to know that there are others who are going through the same thing as myself.

I found that the more I read about schizophrenia, the more I understood what she was going through and this also helped our relationship.

I am very proud of my daughter and her accomplishments over the years. We have always been really close. Tara has her symptoms under good

control, and is effectively managing her illness. I feel that it is critical for family members to be involved and to keep an open dialogue with the doctors and mental health workers. As a parent all you can do is do your best. NEVER GIVE UP HOPE.

My strategies for coping are being active, attending a support group that you can safely vent and share coping skills. Finally, find ways to laugh as this is good for you. Educate yourself and your family -- a greater understanding can help alleviate fears and make day to day coping much easier. Build a support network with other families with similar experiences.

**MEMORIAL FUND DONATIONS**

The Memorial Fund accumulates through "in memory" donations, endowments, bequests and other donations made to the Victoria Branch of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society.

Donating to the Memorial Fund:

**By Cheque:** Mail to 941 Kings Rd. Victoria, B.C., V8T 1W7 (write "Memorial Fund" on memo line.)

**By Credit Card:** Make secure online donations through CanadaHelps. Just go to our website at [www.bcssvictoria.ca](http://www.bcssvictoria.ca), click to enter site, then click on the CanadaHelps logo.

**PLAYTIME BINGO VICTORIA**  
3400 Tillicum Rd and  
the Province of British Columbia support the programs and services of the  
**B.C. Schizophrenia Society**  
Victoria Branch

**Our EPI DVD on SHAW TV**

A big thanks to SHAW TV! We are pleased to announce that our "Psychosis, Early Intervention, and Recovery" DVD will be aired on Channels 11 and 4 Shaw TV. Channel 11 will reach Greater Victoria, the Saanich Peninsula, West Shore,

Sidney, Malahat and Salt Spring Island. Channel 4 will reach Cowichan Valley, Duncan, Mill Bay, Shawnigan Lake, Cobble Hill, Chemainus, Crofton, Maple Bay, Lake Cowichan and Youbou. Showtimes will be: Saturday Nov. 8 at 11 a.m.; Sunday, Nov. 9

at 1p.m.; Saturday, Nov 29 9:15 p.m. Sunday Nov 30 11am. The entire four short film compilation will be shown. It is the hope of filmmaker/producer Pauline Karch, BCSS Victoria, our funding partner VIHA, and all involved that people will recognize the early warning signs of psychosis and benefits of early intervention and

treatment. The prognosis for recovery is greatly enhanced through early intervention. As we learn more about the recovery process and its uniqueness to each individual, with hope, recovery is possible. As always, we are here to help and hope.



**How you can help at Christmas dinner**

This years Christmas Dinner and Dance is to be held on Saturday, Dec. 6th. We are hoping that you would like to volunteer this year and there are a number of roles you could play. Prep cooking will be on Dec 6th from 1 pm to 4 p.m, so we would like to have about 8 people to help. On the day of the dinner we need helpers to decorate the Hall from 10am-4pm and during the dinner bus tables, serve food ) greet guests, clean-up, provide security at the back doors, prepare the food, cook turkeys and hams in their homes and bring to the church pre-cut in containers. We need 15 turkeys and eight hams. We also need desserts. Please call or email the BCSS office to let

us know how you would like to contribute to this festive night. it should be a lot of fun. —Tara Timmers

**Movie Monday Guest**

Cracked Not Broken will be the feature film on **November 24th, 2008** Dr Gabor Maté will be the Movie Monday guest to talk about his book on addiction, "In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts," and to share thoughts on this film.



**24th Annual BCSS Victoria Branch Christmas Dinner & Dance 2008**  
Sat., Dec. 6th, 2008,  
5:30 pm  
First Metropolitan United Church

We will be asking for donations of turkeys and hams cooked in volunteers' homes this year and brought to the Church pre-cut.

If you are interested in volunteering for this or other duties please call the office.

Please bring your invitation to the door, and RSVP to let us know you are coming (and the names of the people who will be coming with you.) Call 250-384-4225 or email: [admin.bcsc@shaw.ca](mailto:admin.bcsc@shaw.ca)

## Volunteering at BCSS Victoria Office

By Wendy Mishkin

Volunteering with BCSS was my first foray into the world after 14 years of a mental illness that devastated my life and eventually left me isolated and house-bound. When I became ill at the age of 41, I was completing requirements for a master's degree. I had a successful career, an exciting job, a partner, good friends and my own home.

After losing it all and struggling for 14 years, first just to stay alive, and finally, to get my life back on track, I ventured into the BCSS office one afternoon looking for volunteer work. It's a good thing I did.

I started doing a once-weekly shift in the BCSS Victoria office in the fall of 2004.

From there it seems as though my recovery progressed at lightening speed: the next year I took training in peer support, successfully applied for the position of peer support worker and a month later as coordinator of the peer support team. After three years of doing this work, learning and applying the principles of recovery in my life, my confidence and self-esteem have improved to the point where I see much more growth and opportunity ahead. Most recently, I have even been working on getting back into my master's program.

I have the amazing and wonderful people of the BCSS Victoria branch to thank for all this: for bringing the concept of recovery alive into my life, for seeing who I really am and all I can accomplish, and for encouraging and supporting me in all my endeavours. And to think it all started four years ago with a three-hour volunteer shift once a week.

Other than the concept and work of recovery itself, I cannot recommend anything better than involvement with BCSS Victoria in whatever capacity to begin to rebuild lives devastated by mental illness.

STAND UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH  
www.standupformentalhealth.com

SMH

### Standing Up For Mental Health- Changing Hearts and Minds One Laugh at a Time

People with mental illness are always being told what they can't do. In Stand Up For Mental Health (SMH) they get to prove what they can do. Since 2004, SMH has been teaching stand-up comedy to people with mental illness, as a way of building their confidence and fighting public prejudice, stigma and discrimination. SMH has performed over 200 shows, and generated much positive national media coverage for people with mental illness. It was featured in the CBC TV documentary *Cracking Up*. SMH was founded and is led by Vancouver counselor, stand-up comic, and author of *The Happy Neurotic: How Fear and Angst Can Lead to Happiness and Success*, David Granirer, who himself suffers from depression. David helps his groups of 8-10 students create original material about their mental health journeys. He teaches them the fundamentals of standup comedy; technique, presentation, delivery and timing. Students then perform before a variety of audiences, including mental healthcare organizations, corporations, government agencies and most importantly, the general public.

Doing stand-up comedy about their mental health journeys has an amazing effect. Often for the first time in their lives, students embrace the word *crazy*, and learn to laugh at their mental illness – and their audiences are laughing right along with them. They have discovered a talent they never dreamt they had.

SMH is a unique and cost-effective method of encouraging a critical open, frank, compassionate and humorous national discussion about Mental Illness. Stand Up For Mental Health is excited about starting a new SMH program in Victoria in 2009, in partnership with The BC Schizophrenia Society. Stay tuned!

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## E-MAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED

If you have an email address and would like to be on our distribution list, please call the BCSS, Victoria office and let us know what it is:  
250-384-4225

## Helpful books available in our library

By Jean Forrest

Help for families is an important part of our library and if you are looking for books to help you understand and come to terms with mental illness our library can help you.

One of our most popular books is “**Grieving Mental Illness, a Guide for Patients and Their Caregivers**”, by Virginia Lafond. Lafond has experience both as a professional caregiver and as a psychiatric patient and her book is addressed to both those who suffer illness first hand and to those who experience it ‘secondarily’ as a caregiver, family member or friend. “Grief, with its attendant feelings of doubt, sadness, anger, guilt, fear, and shame, is an inevitable partner to mental illness,” she says. In seven short chapters she outlines different stages of the grieving process and shows how we can become “active players in our own recovery.”

Another book, particularly helpful for families new to the diagnosis of mental illness is “**The Family Intervention Guide to Mental Illness: Recognizing Symptoms and Getting Treatment**” by Bodie Morey and Kim Mueser. Their book is addressed directly to families and is divided into three “phases.”

**Phase 1** is “Finding out what is wrong” and deals with recognizing the signs of mental illness, discussing the situation with your family, and describing different types of mental disorder.

**Phase 2** discusses how to go about getting a correct diagnosis, medications and how to deal with them, therapy and rehabilitation programs.

**Phase 3** outlines long-term strategies for maintaining wellness. This is a straightforward, easy-to-read book, with useful ‘good steps’ and ‘missteps’ summaries at the end of each chapter.

“**The Complete Family Guide to Schizophrenia: Helping Your Loved One Get the Most Out of Life**” by Kim Mueser and Susan Gingerich aims to be “a complete family guide for managing schizophrenia and helping a relative pursue personal recovery goals” and is divided into 6 parts.

**Part 1**, an overview of schizophrenia discusses symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

**Part 2** is called ‘Special issues for family members’ and has chapters addressed to parents, to siblings, to



spouses and partners and to parents who have schizophrenia.

**Part 3**, about preventing relapse, discusses medication, stress, developing a relapse prevention plan, and responding to crises.

**Part 4**, ‘creating a supportive environment’ is about daily living.

**Part 5** is about coping with specific problems, such as anxiety, depression, anger, violence and psychotic symptoms.

**Part 6** discusses improving quality of life. This is a big book, full of resources, a reference to refer to again and again, worth having your own copy.

**I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help!**, by Xavier Amador, is subtitled ‘Helping the seriously mentally ill accept treatment. Dr. Amador begins by discussing denial, or poor insight into illness. He explains that a deficit in self-awareness is caused by brain dysfunction, is a symptom of the illness, and nothing to do with being defensive or stubborn. In subsequent chapters he outlines a four-step program to get a severely ill person to accept treatment. The steps are ‘listen’, empathize’, ‘agree’ and ‘partnership’. Each step is discussed, using his personal experiences to illustrate how a family can convince their loved one to accept help. There is also a chapter discussing commitment - how to decide, what steps to take, how to deal with feelings of betrayal. Dr. Amador stresses the importance of early treatment and says “we must address the twin problems of poor insight and medication refusal if we want our loved one to have the best possible chance of recovery” and he provides practical and sensitive strategies for families and professionals.

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then click on Canada Helps button



Local fundraising for local services