



F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 2

Newsletter

Year of the Peer

BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

The 6th Annual Naked Bungy for BCSS

Over 200 jumpers are expected to take a 150 foot plunge into the Nanaimo River Canyon in support of BCSS Victoria on the weekend of February 25th and 26th. Jumpers are encouraged to collect pledges from friends, family and co-workers for their jump. All pledges will be matched by an anonymous donor, up to a maximum of \$15,000. Last year over \$15,000 was raised to help BCSS Victoria deliver programs.

WildPlay Element Park Nanaimo is involved, according to its spokesperson because, "Like many things that are considered to be obstacles in life, schizophrenia isn't something people readily discuss... On a regular basis, our aerial adventure elements push people from their comfort zone just enough to get them speaking out loud about their personal boundaries. Naked Bungy for BCSS takes that idea to the extreme. Our goal is to bring widespread awareness to the subject of mental illness so that people aren't afraid to talk about it."

Info and pledge forms: www.bcssvictoria.ca
or call 250-384-4225.

Event webpage: <http://bit.ly/GONakedBungy>

Facebook event: <http://on.fb.me/NakedBungy2012>

BCSS Twitter handle: @BCSSVICTORIA

WildPlay Twitter handle: @WildPlayParks

Jazz @ Café Berlin 10th Hans Fear Memorial – 108 Niagara- Edelweiss Club

This cabaret-style evening of music, art, food and drink will be held on **Saturday, Feb 18th, 2012**. The event is a collaboration between John Fear and BCSS Victoria and is a memorial to John's son who died in 2001 at the age of 31 after a long struggle with mental illness. (doors open at 6pm). Hans was an enormously talented artist whose life and work touched many people. Proceeds of this event will benefit the Memorial Fund of BCSS Victoria which provides grants to people with schizophrenia and other mental illness and their family members for educational, physical fitness, recreational and artistic pursuits that will improve the quality of their lives

This year's Jazz @ Café Berlin has a 1940's costume theme. The lineup includes Maureen Washington, Cold Cut Combo and Bill Mulley Quartet. Artists in Recovery Art Show & Sale. Silent Auction. Cash Bar and Kitchen. 19+. Tix \$25 at the door; \$22 in advance at Long & McQuade, Munro's Books, Tanners Books in Sidney and Bristol Town Hair Fashions. Follow us on Twitter: @cafeberlinjazz

THANK YOU TO

Ben Driver, Commucore Consulting, for his expertise and patience developing our new website. Check it out at www.bcssvictoria.ca

Department of National Defence volunteers
for making Christmas Dinner fantastic

WildPlay Element Park, Nanaimo for hosting Naked Bungy for BCSS Victoria.

Save the Date!

On The Journey

April 19th 2012

Perform, volunteer or attend! A great night of music, poetry and art. Held at Solstice Café.

Champions 4 Hope!

BCSS Victoria will be one of twenty charities participating in the 2012 Times Colonist Charity Pledge Program in the GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon.

Charities raise awareness and funds by encouraging individuals to run or walk for their individual causes and by collecting pledges.

“Each and every charity involved in the 2012 Charity Pledge Program has been selected based on the work that they do, and the commitment that they have to each and every participant that raises much needed funds locally, provincially and nationally,” says Cathy Noel, General Manager of GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon.

BCSS Victoria was one of 22 charities raising money through the marathon last year. The approximately \$7,000 raised was divided between the Peer Support Program and the Memorial Fund.

The 33rd Annual GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon will take place Sunday, October 7th, 2012. In addition to the Marathon there is a Half Marathon, 8K Road Race and Thrifty Foods Kids Run & Marathon. For more details visit www.runvictoriamarathon.com.

To join the Champions 4 Hope team, to volunteer at the event or to sponsor a participant call 250-384-4225.

BCSS Victoria Christmas Dinner a Success!

The 27th Annual BCSS Victoria Christmas Dinner and Dance, held on Saturday, December 3rd was a memorable evening. A record number of guests feasted on roast turkey, succulent ham and all the trimmings. The buffet table was flanked by glistening ice sculptures, one of a swan and the other of an orca.

Heartfelt thanks go out to a crack team of volunteers from DND who planned, prepared and served the dinner. A corps of dedicated BCSS Victoria volunteers assisted with every aspect of the evening. Honorary Board Member Bill Buckle was the master of ceremonies for the evening. Even Santa Claus (Kees!) dropped in for a visit. Entertainment was provided by Friends of Music. Following dinner, those not too stuffed to move danced.



UPCOMING FORUMS

Estate Planning: Is it time to think about your will, trusts and your loved one's care? Concerned about providing financial help that won't interfere with income assistance benefits? Interested in charitable bequests? Get the answers you need to proceed with planning your estate.

Budgeting and Finance-from the technical to the emotional: Do you or your loved one struggle to manage money? Is money spent on impulse? Are you aware of the Registered Disability Savings Plan and Disability Tax Credit? Join us for an opportunity to explore budgeting and financial planning for people in recovery.

Addictions Q & A - How to help a loved one who has addictions. Do addictions interfere with your loved one's life? Have you heard of DRA, AA or Umbrella Society? Come ask questions and learn about resources in the community to assist people with addictions and their family members.

Dates, times and locations to be announced. Check bcssvictoria.ca or call 250-384-4225 for information.

Peer Support Training

“My experience with peer support has been very positive and helpful. I feel supported in the resources that are available for me that I previously did not know about. My peer support worker, Patty has been a tremendous resource and I appreciate my visits with her. I am looking forward to becoming a peer support worker myself and continuing to be involved with BCSS” - **Robyn Smith**

“I would rather be doing this work than anything else”, says Wendy Mishkin of her role as lead curriculum developer of Peer Training for the Peer Project of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Even though her work will take her to frigid Winnipeg at the end of February for the first pilot of the training program, the enthusiasm is evident in her voice. Mishkin, the Coordinator of BCSS Victoria’s Peer Support Program, on leave to pursue her master’s degree, was able to build this exciting project into her program. The training that Mishkin is developing addresses the knowledge needs of peer workers as determined by a group of peer support advisors from across Canada. The curriculum can be used for an organization’s peer worker training or as a guide to ensure that an organization’s own training covers the essentials.

Those essentials are addressed in modules like “Introduction to Peer Support” which covers the two key concepts of peer work: recovery and self-determination; “What are we recovering from?” which in addition to mental health conditions and addictions addresses trauma and social justice issues; and “Pathways to Recovery and Wellness” which emphasizes the individuality of each person’s journey. The 35 hours of training have been organized into ten 3.5 hour modules which include written materials, videos, slides and trainees working in groups and dyads. Mishkin is currently testing the curriculum with 13 members of the BCSS Victoria Peer Support Program. “Our Peer Support Workers play a vital role in the development process through their participation and feedback,” according to Mishkin. “It’s great!” says Peer Support Worker and trainee Patty Milne. “I’ve learned new ways to support people and I like the chance to reflect on my own experience of recovery.”

The Peer Project of The Mental Health Commission of Canada is developing national practice standards for peer workers in order to enhance the utilization of peer support services throughout Canada, while preserving the authentic, grass-roots nature of peer support. Eventually a national certification body will oversee the voluntary certification of peer workers. Funded by Health Canada, The Mental Health Commission of Canada was incorporated in March 2007. Its mission is “to promote mental health in Canada, work with stakeholders to change the attitudes of Canadians toward mental health problems, and to improve services and support.”

STUDENTS CORNER

Good Luck Lori- Congratulations to Lori Walker a student in the Mental Health and Addictions Worker program at Career Development Institute who recently completed her practicum at BCSS Victoria. She was a kind and cheerful presence in the office, greeting visitors, answering the phones and working on special projects. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

“The BC Schizophrenia Society Victoria is a place where strangers become friends.” Lori Walker

New Practicum Students Michelle Dowling and Ineke Rhebergen in their third year of the nursing program at the University of Victoria will be gaining some valuable experience at BCSS Victoria during the next few months. As part of their practicum experience they are co-facilitating the current offering of Strengthening Families Together and helping at the Bungy Event.

Jessie Leung-Cottrell came to BCSS Victoria in 2011 as a student of the Child and Youth Program at the University of Victoria. As part of her experience here she co-facilitated the Kids in Control Group. In January 2012 she joined our staff as our first Child and Youth Program Coordinator. This February she will be facilitating the Free to Be Me group (formerly Kids in Control). Welcome Jessie!

Home is Where the Heart Is - by Elizabeth Bogod

“Home is where the heart is”, the well known expression goes. This is definitely true for me and it has been no easy journey to find my home. While most people (especially those without mental illness) take a home for granted, I am thankful for mine every day. For me a home is not just having shelter over my head and a warm place to return to, but also a place I can truly make my own. I now live comfortably and happily, but this was not always the case and it is this journey I wish to share with you.

I have always had “shelter” over my head, but not always a “home”- technically, I am told, this counts as homelessness. As a person with the mental illness, Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) I have been to the depth of hell and back again. Severe depression that would rapidly turn into anger, dissociation, or for short periods of time low-grade depression has plagued me for most of my life. I used to engage in impulsive behaviors including self-harm and suicide attempts. As such, I was very hard to live with. Seeking treatment (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) I went to Toronto to live with my sister. Unfortunately, the mental illness was so hard on our relationship that we could not live together.

I soon found myself in and out of the hospital and then homeless living in shelters and boarding homes. These places left me feeling even more miserable than having the mental illness alone. They were both depressing and had highly unpleasant conditions. The boarding home was a dirty place where residents (mostly mentally ill men) were allowed to smoke in the building. As a person who is highly allergic to second hand smoke, it was very difficult to live in an environment that was constantly making me feel sick. The shelter, although clean, was institutional-like and the food was fattening with no nutritional value. The worst part of living in these places, however, was the loneliness. I remember each night crying myself to sleep wishing for only one thing – a home I could call my own. I was stuck in a dead end cycle of homelessness. Everything to do with recovery was no longer possible to achieve, because until I found a home I could not move forward. Even with DBT (I was still on a waiting list) how would I ever get well without a stable place to live? It was not possible.

Eventually, my parents realizing that Toronto was a failure had me come home to live with them. My problems had not gone away. I was still ill, but as I said so often during the first few months of returning “I’m so glad to be home”. In fact, this became like a mantra! Now, I could get back to the business of getting well. During the first few years I struggled to find the right medication, was hospitalized once again and went through intense psychotherapy. Finally, however, I made it to a point of being ready to live on my own. My case manager, at the time, helped me find housing and I moved into my first apartment. I loved the experience of being independent and for the most part was happy there. When I moved in, I couldn’t wait to decorate and personalize my environment to make it my own. Still, even after decorating (putting up pictures, etc.) something was missing. It was an apartment – clean, well managed and private, but it had no personality. I did not feel any pride in it and something else was missing. I had always had pets growing up. I love animals and dearly wanted a cat for company. Unfortunately, my landlord had a strict no pet policy.

Two years later, an opportunity came up to rent a two bedroom house with a roommate at a very low rent. I immediately fell in love with the place. The suite was on the ground floor of a large 1912 character home and had its own separate entrance way. I now had a full size kitchen, living room and bedroom. I immediately became “house proud” decorating my new home with enthusiasm and inviting friends over to see the wonderfully old-fashioned oak beams in the living room.

Another important part of the picture is the close proximity of my home to my parent’s house and the BC Schizophrenia Society –Victoria Branch where I work as a Peer Support Worker and for, all intents and purposes, consider my second home!

Now to complete this picture, of course, there was still one thing missing. Charlie (my cat) and I are best friends. He sits on my lap and follows me around the house. I never want to leave this place. As I have already said, home is where the heart is and now I can honestly say this is where my heart is – I’m finally home!

This article is written to share the importance of the “housing first” philosophy, the need for psychiatric service pets and to provide hope to those struggling with a mental illness and housing issues.

Peer Support for Families

At BCSS Victoria we know the value of peer support to meet the needs of family members of people with mental illness. Family members often benefit by spending time with others in similar situations to their own, people who share their concerns and understand what they are going through. We provide peer support to family members through the Family Peer Support Program and through support groups.

The Family Peer Support Program offers one-to-one contact with someone who has supported a family member with a mental illness. A trained and knowledgeable worker can provide practical suggestions and ideas, hope, empathy and support, and information about mental illness and recovery. The emphasis is on self-care, stress management and personal awareness.

Participants are matched with a Family Peer Support Worker who can meet with them up to 10 times, at a mutually agreed upon time and place, or by telephone. The service is confidential and can be tailored to suit your needs. Ongoing monthly support groups are held at our office for family members of people with mental illness, for partners and for families of young people with psychotic illness. These facilitated groups are offered free of charge on a drop-in basis with no registration required. The groups range in size from six to twenty participants. A support group for children and one for teens and an educational group for adults are offered twice yearly. Although they are free, registration is required for these groups.

Please consider joining the BCSS Victoria team as a volunteer Family Peer Support Worker or as a support group co-facilitator. It's a way to share the insights you developed as a family member of someone with a mental illness. Call our office at [250-384-4225](tel:250-384-4225) or visit bcssvictoria.ca to find out more or to get involved. **Please contact Hazel if you are interested in being a family peer---We need family members now to inspire others!**

INCOME TAX FILING HELP

FREE Income Tax preparation for low income individuals, seniors and people with disabilities is offered at Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS). Volunteer tax preparers are available on a drop in, first come first served, basis every Thursday 9:00am to 11 am and 1:30-4:00pm. Accessible Downtown Victoria location: TAPS OFFICE #302, 895 Fort St. Victoria BC. TAPS is approved by the Canada Revenue Agency to provide this service.

Check out the H&R Block "Block Builders Program" at http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Income_Taxes/Personal_Income_tax/contact.asp for information on filing a tax return.

The Canada Revenue Agency's Tax Payer information line can be reached at 1-877-387-3332

In 2012 we will be distributing our newsletter electronically in an effort to save mailing costs and paper (trees!). An electronic newsletter is also easier to share with friends and family. Current and past issues of the newsletter are available on our website to read or download.

Check out our **new** website at www.bcsvgictoria.ca.

Join us on Twitter @BCSSVictoria

Like us On Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/BCSS-Victoria/183531411694074>

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

Please make cheques payable to:

British Columbia Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch (BCSS Victoria)

941 King's Road, Victoria, BC, V8T 1W7 Phone: 384-4225; fax: 388-4391

E-mail: admin.bcsvgictoria@shaw.ca Website: www.bcsvgictoria.ca

Please accept my tax-deductible donation of: \$ _____ (receipts issued for gifts of \$20 and over)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____ Email _____

- I wish to become a member of BCSS Victoria. (\$25 individual membership)
- I wish to become a member of BCSS, Provincial office (free with BCSS Victoria membership)
- I wish to become a member of Schizophrenia Society of Canada (free with BCSS Victoria membership)
- I want BCSS Victoria online newsletter (be informed, save a tree, help us save \$! Share with you network!)
- E-mail me information about local events and news pertinent to our community! (unsubscribe anytime)

Designation (undesigned donations will be put towards supporting BCSS Victoria Programs and Services):

- Programs & Services (includes children/youth/adult peer programs, advocacy, consultation and more)
- Memorial Fund (supports education, arts and other goal support)
- Endowment Fund

Thank you for your contribution!!

Please consider giving throughout the year with payroll deductions programs (ie BC government employee payroll deduction program), charitable Christmas or gift giving in another's name or consider a legacy gift to help others who need us. Thank you!



United Way of Greater Victoria

Thank you everyone for supporting United Way agencies



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

- Victoria Branch -