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Newsletter

BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

HOPE

REASONS TO HOPE

in CRD and beyond!! -Hazel Meredith

At BCSS Victoria we realize that the steps toward tomorrow need to be fueled. Here are some reasons for Hope! As always, I welcome comments and feedback!



Show
Us
Your...



SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARENESS DAY - MAY 24

✚ People care about our cause and those affected by schizophrenia and psychosis!

FIRST ANNUAL Iris Luncheon presented by the board! May 24th at the Union Club. Tickets are selling fast and we hope you can attend. A big thank you to our sponsors!

MC: David Dickson, CFA Speaker: Hazel Meredith, Executive Director; BCSS Victoria

Keynote: Chief Constable Jamie Graham : How Policing is Helping our Community, new training initiative

✚ Being informed helps us feel stronger, make better decisions and be more hopeful!

ANNUAL AGM June 18th 2012 Monday 7pm-9pm Keynote Speaker and Business Meeting to follow.

By popular request: Keynote: Dr Bayla Schechter on Youth, Drugs/Alcohol and Psychosis .

✚ Being involved is EMPOWERING!

Be a BOARD MEMBER! Once per month meetings to help us ensure people affected by mental illnesses with or without addictions have reasons to hope, the means to cope and a community that cares. Contact Hazel or Board President for details

Be on a COMMITTEE: Help provide hope and help to CRD! We have various events and committees you or someone you know to be involved, give back or gain skills! Contact Tara, Admin Coordinator for details.

✚ We are all included! National Movement brings Canadians together for mental health/illness

We now have a Mental Health Strategy! Canada's first Mental Health Strategy was launched May 8th 2012 by the Mental Health Commission of Canada built from the voices of consultation across Canada. We were the only G8 country without one! Successful movements such as heart disease and cancer created change, promoted services and research. We can do it too!

We need to be shoulder to shoulder to be part of the solution...speak up to what you want and need. We are no longer in the shadows Accessing services, housing, employment are social justice issues...NOW IS OUR TIME!

✚ Healthy Minds, Healthy Families is our goal at BCSS Victoria!

It is also a policy report that will impact all of us in BC. For effective advocacy we can be informed and read a summary on page 3.

THANKYOU TO OUR IRIS LUNCHEON SPONSORS:

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Jump On the Wild Side

–By Tara Timmers

We would like to thank WildPlay, Thrifty Foods at Terminal Ave in Nanaimo, our photography team Pauline Karch and Paul Austin and all the many other volunteers that made this event a success.

This year we made \$779.50 on t-shirt and food sales. There were 33 spectators this year. Our jump total after expenses was \$3, 538.30. Thanks to our fabulous pledge team.

This event will be held again in February of 2013. We hope you will consider volunteering or donating. Areas that could use your support are: T-shirt production costs and pledging as we may have an anonymous matching donor for your pledge amounts.

Jazz in the 40's

-by Tara Timmers

Maureen Washington, Cold Cut Combo and the Bill Mulley Quartet were fabulous. The costumes worn by guests to represent the 1940's were amazing as well. Thank you and much gratitude for everyone who performed, volunteered and made the night a huge success. We raised over \$4000!

I'd like to honor our silent auction donors.. It is with the help of these community-minded businesses that our fundraising efforts are rewarded. If you have a business, this is a great way promote your services. Tax receipts are available for donations with a value of \$20 or over.

Thanks to John Fear for being a wonderful co-organizer. Your dedication shows so much love for your son Hans. You also help build awareness of mental illness and recovery.

Mark your calendar now for Jazz at the Café Berlin on February 16th 2013!



News

Margarita Heroes! Saturday, April 28th was the Eves of Destruction roller derby opener the Margarita Villains against the Anarchy Angels. A sold out crowd at the Archie Browning Arena in Esquimalt enjoyed an evening of fishnet stockings and hard hits on the oval track. A portion of the proceeds from ticket sales were generously donated to BCSS Victoria. To learn more about the roller derby in Victoria, see the Eves of Destruction website at

www.evesofdestruction.com

Bungy Jump Photo Receives Honorable

Mention: A photograph taken by Pauline Karch at the Naked Bungy Jump for Schizophrenia event at WildPlay Nanaimo in February has won an honorable mention in the National Volunteer Week 2012 Photo Contest. Click on the link below to see the winning photographs:

<http://volunteerphotocontest.tumblr.com/winners#close>

Family Information Housing Forum: May 28th 7pm-8:30pm at CDI College 950 Kings Road. Come out and learn about housing options for people with lived experience of mental illness in Victoria. Our panel will present information about group homes, BC Housing, Pacifica Housing, Capital Mental Health Association and Cool Aid Society. RSVP 250-384-4225. Admission by donation.

The Tao of Hope- By Doreen Marion Gee

In 1985, I was at rock bottom. Barely standing upright in the bitter rubble of a fifteen-year marriage, I teetered on the edge of a complete meltdown. A chronic anxiety disorder had taken my frenzied mind hostage. It was relentless, showing no mercy. Every waking second, I was tormented by obsessions and thoughts that stung like burning needles dancing in my head. My life was out of control. I was out of control. Hope was a dream for other people. There was no sunlight in my black, muck-filled tunnel.

But after returning to Victoria, the impossible became possible again. With effective treatment, smart, dedicated doctors, and a supportive family, my bruised psyche started to heal. Amazingly, I got a handle on those monkeys in my head. After two unhealthy marriages, I finally concluded that real love starts from within. By learning how to care about myself, other loves would follow. It has been a thirty-year mission to build up my battered self-esteem brick by brick.

My biggest ally is my son, Stephen. Out of a stark marriage came something uniquely beautiful. Along the way, I have learned the value of people. My friends are my panacea, my oasis when life is too sour to swallow. I am lucky to have so many extraordinary people in my life. Going back to university and finishing my degree program was the best therapy I ever had. Those huge successes at UVIC helped me to rise above a dumping ground of fractured relationships.

Nowadays, I love to walk around James Bay. It brings back enchanted memories of hedonistic childhood oblivion. Once again, I am racing along a Dallas Road beach with the sizzling sun on my back. Or laughing and splashing around with my brothers in the pee-filled pool at Beacon Hill Park. At this stage of my life, I am firmly convinced of one thing: the steel in my veins that has helped me survive many hells comes from that solid loving family that made me feel like I was important.

In the end, writing was my redemption. Wallowing in one of my black holes, I pushed myself to go volunteer at the *Beacon* - definitely one of the best decisions of my life. It has been a slice, dear readers, interviewing bigwigs and smaller wigs and putting it all on paper.

My Beacon experience paved the way for a paid gig at a spectacular magazine, *The Seaside Times*. That accomplishment gave me the wings to get work at the Victoria Branch of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society. I love giving talks in the community as a BCSS presenter, being a sensitive ear for my peers, and working with youth in recovery. And the Seaside angels designated me as their new social media website guru.

At age sixty, my life has never been better. My personal zenith was being nominated for a Victoria Leadership Award for my hard work in promoting respect, inclusion and understanding towards people with mental illnesses.

The stars have finally aligned. My horizons are glowing silver, gold and vermillion. Why? Because somewhere along the path, hope became an option again. And hope can move mountains.

Read my blogs & articles at www.seasidetimes.ca. Check out the progressive work of BCSS Victoria at www.bcsvgictoria.ca.

Winner at Heart! On Monday, April 30, 2012, BCSS Victoria Executive Director Hazel Meredith won the Peninsula Co-op's Giving Back Award. Each week one deserving person is recognized for the outstanding contribution they have made to their community, neighborhood or workplace. Hazel was nominated by Peer Support Worker Doreen Gee who had this to say about her nomination: "Hazel is a rare and remarkable human being...she works tirelessly to help, support and embrace people with serious mental illnesses...Hazel Meredith has raised the bar in this community when it comes to compassionate selfless service to others." Follow the link to learn more about the award and see photos:

http://www.ocean985.com/contests/more.jsp?content+20120328_151511_100096

A BC Report that has impact on you...-Hazel Meredith

Healthy Minds Healthy Families......what is it? ? If you said 10 Year Plan Policy Paper guiding BC ...you are right! What does this mean to our members and readership? You can view the 2010 report in its entirety at this link: http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2010/healthy_minds_healthy_people.pdf

In brief, it seeks to address mental health from a population health perspective with a functional approach to determining need. It seeks to protect services for the people who need basic mental health support to see their GP. See the report for more information on how they are prioritizing actions and datelines for completion. Would you like to know more about a certain area? Housing? Addictions? Employment (BC has now decreased specialized services for people with mental illness and other groups. How is this impacting you or your loved one?) **Please let us know what you think by email, letter or attend our information sessions or AGM.**

Did you know that GPs in BC now have a different fee structure and can actually bill for longer appointments that deal with mental health concerns? Referred to in the Healthy Minds report, collaborative care seeks to save specialized services for those who really need it, especially important in our economic times. The good news is that people can seek assistance directly from their own GP, or at minimum seek support from a walk in GP. There has long been the fear by many that their concerns about mental health issues will be met with a prescription rather than a listening ear. Now, we have more GPs being trained in mental health care and strategies to help, which may or may not include medication, and bill for the additional time that this new service/extra time allows. There will be bumps in the road, as there always is with transition. However, at BCSS Victoria we seek to bring concerns we see early to the systems that be, to help ensure the voices of those we serve receive help or gain assistance to know how to seek services. **From a grassroots perspective...please ensure your GP is familiar with the C-BIS Cognitive Behavioural Interpersonal Skills manual and billing change. Both you and the doctor can view the tool at this link:** http://www.gpsc.bc.ca/system/files/MH_CBIS_manual.pdf

From a BCSS Victoria perspective, we have found that the over 600 families seen by our Family Counsellor (thanks to Dana through our VIHA contract) has been a vital link to help families learn about the systems impacting their situation, help strategize to take helpful actions, build on personal strengths and family resilience, while promoting the recovery of the loved one with illness, despite age or position in family (child/youth/adult—son, daughter, spouse, parent, grandparent etc). Attendance has been great at our families early psychosis, families, and spouse support groups. Strengthening Families Together course has been an incredible asset to families seeking to cope, regain strength, learn and strategize to help loved ones. Nestled in our other programs...we are certainly seeing healthier minds and healthier families...especially together!

First Annual Iris Luncheon

We are very excited about our upcoming Iris Luncheon to be held at the Union Club on May 24th. A brainchild of the board, this event will offer insights to the business community and public about issues our community faces and what helps! It will feature Chief Constable Jamie Graham, who championed the development of the Lost in Transition report. The report was the first of its kind that quantified mental health related calls received by police.

BCSS Victoria has been involved in presentations to the Saanich and Victoria Police Departments to assist them in their development to address needs of our communities, post Braidwood Inquiry Report. Families and people with mental illness are expressing relief and hope to hear about the training and expressed feeling more comfortable to call them if needed. Another reason to hope...

Community Update: WorkBC Employment Services Centres

On April 2nd 2012, the Provincial government launched a new system of employment programs for British Columbians. Under this model, all employment services have been centralized and consolidated into WorkBC Employment Services Centers, which are operated by various organizations.

There is concern in the community that people with disabilities will find the new system less accessible and useful because the Service Centers are not specialized but rather provide assistance to all types of job seekers.

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities would like your feedback on how the new service is working. Please share your experience with the new system by emailing feedback@bccpd.bc.ca.

For more information on the changes and how to access an Employment Service Centre, please visit their website at: <http://www.bccpd.bc.ca/>

In the News!

Peer Support Worker Doreen Gee had a letter to the editor published in the March 7, 2012 edition of the Victoria News. Gee's letter appears below:

"The Victoria Leadership Awards ceremony was a momentous event. I was very honored to be a finalist in the United Way category for my work in promoting respect and understanding towards people with mental illnesses.

"By raising the profile of mental health and the progressive work of the BC Schizophrenia Society here in Victoria, I feel that I scored a victory even though the final award went to another worthy recipient.

"I envision a community where people with mental illnesses are valued and perceived as whole people first, with all of their talents and smarts that they bring to the table. From my personal observation, people with mental illnesses are the most gifted, intelligent and intuitive people that I have ever known.

"Not only is that stigma about mental illness destructive to the people affected, it is destructive to our community.

The stigma is a double-edged sword. People with mental illnesses are denied opportunities, but there is another equally disturbing outcome: employers, organizations and businesses never access a tremendous reservoir of skill and mental ability. As a community, we cannot afford to lose that wealth of pure talent.

"We all have to work hard to eradicate that stigma that robs people of proper health care and treatment and their right to contribute and be involved in our community.

Equally disturbing, it robs our community of their significant gifts. In a stigma-free society, everybody wins."

Great letter, Doreen!

On the Journey: Art from the Heart Coordinator Featured in Oak Bay News

Devorah Stone, coordinator of BCSS Victoria's creative arts event *On the Journey: Art from the Heart*, held April 19th, was featured in the March 13, 2012 edition of the Oak Bay News! Stone is the vice-president of the volunteer board of the Pandora Arts Collective. The Pandora Arts Collective is facing difficulties because it has no secure, on-going funding. Check out the full story:

<http://www.oakbaynews.com/entertainment/142540375.html>

We'd like to thank all the performers, Solstice Café the venue, Artworld, Opus, and every one involved in making this event a success. We had over 30 guests for the show, thanks to each of them for coming out to enjoy the performances. You can still see the artwork on display until May 16th, 2012.

You can purchase blank art cards created by the On the Journey artists, at the BCSS Victoria office for \$3 each. If you have a birthday, celebration or need to thank someone ...come and check out the beautiful cards and support our agency through your purchase!



Genetic Counselling Available

Do you or one of your family members have a mental illness? Are you concerned about potential risks for your children or other family members? Genetic counsellors can help. Genetic counsellors are health care professionals with specialized training and experience in the areas of medical genetics and counselling. Genetic counsellors can tell you what is currently known about the causes of mental illness, and can help you to apply this information to your own family. The service is available for free to interested men and women who live in British Columbia. You do not require a referral from your family doctor. To schedule an appointment, call Angela Inglis at 1-604-875-2000, extension 4733 or e-mail angela.inglis@ubc.ca.

Appointments take place in person at the department of medical genetics at BC Women's and Children's Hospital in Vancouver or may be done by phone. Prior to the appointment, the genetic counsellor will phone you to do a family history.

This takes approximately 30 minutes. The genetic counselling appointments are about an hour in length. The genetic counsellor will try to answer any questions that you have about the causes of your or your family members' mental illness.

Please note that genetic testing is **not** offered. Your information will remain confidential.

MARK YOUR 2012 CALENDARS!

- May 24 1st Annual Iris Luncheon and National Schizophrenia Awareness Day (**wear purple!**)
 - May 28 Public Info Forums: Housing Options in Capital Regional District (pg 2 more info)
 - June 18 Annual AGM: Dr Schechter Youth, Drugs/Alcohol & Psychosis
 - July 7 Picnic in the Park August Peer Program Alumni Picnic
 - October 7 GoodLife Marathon—Walk/Run for BCSS Victoria team! Pledge!
 - November 16 Annual Schizophrenia Conference
- See our new website calendar for events and information forums!*

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.bcsc@shaw.ca Website: www.bcscvictoria.ca

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

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Address _____ City _____ Province _____

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- 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 (undesignated 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
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