



A P R I L 2 0 1 6

Newsletter

BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

“Renewal”

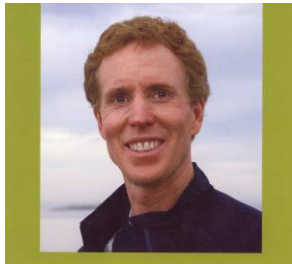
For info or self referral: visit www.bcssvictoria.ca or call 250-384-4225 email: admin.bcss@shaw.ca



Please join us for the
5th Annual Iris Luncheon Fundraiser for
BCSS Victoria

With Major Sponsor Investors Group Downtown

Featuring local business owner and philanthropist Rob Reid and the inspirational words of John Lamont.



May 20, 2016 11:30-1:00 pm

Union Club 805 Gordon St.

Tickets \$65.00 with a \$30 tax receipt

Come out to enjoy a lunch and help others who are facing mental illness and seeking recovery. Tickets available now for this inspiring fundraiser.

Help make a difference in your local community! Invite a friend 😊

The Iris Luncheon will be held on May 20th in support of the BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch. Champions for mental health can join us for this meaningful event to raise funds through sponsorship, donation of silent auction items, and attendance at the Iris Luncheon Fundraiser. Help us make a difference in our Capital Region for those facing serious mental illness. Major sponsors, Investors Group, partner with the BC Schizophrenia Society Victoria Branch to raise awareness and funds during the 5th Annual Iris Luncheon. “We are so very pleased to partner with community leaders to show support for those facing the stigma and other challenges of schizophrenia and psychosis. We have witnessed that recovery is possible. And, we can be there for those who need hope and help!” stated Hazel Meredith, BCSS Victoria, Executive Director. Tickets are now available at the BCSS Victoria Office 941 Kings Avenue.

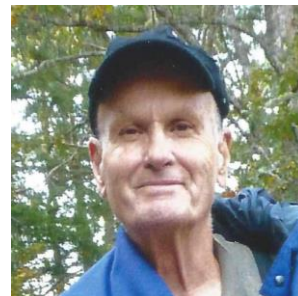


A Season Of Renewal

By Random Meridyan

Spring is here and with it comes its wonders. The flower count is on, the cherry blossoms are blooming and a sense of renewal fills the air. For many of us who have struggled throughout our lives with mental illness this spring renewal may reflect the recovery we may have found in our own lives. Many of us have spent months, even years under the boot of mental illness – deprived of our passion, not able to feel happy about anything and feeling useless to the community at large. In my own experience I have spent months in despair so heavy and thick I have not even been able to go to bed in the morning. I felt despair and hopelessness so profound that I believed I was a useless human being who would never have anything to offer the community. I felt so useless that I thought about committing suicide a lot. But now things are different, I have found recovery and am contributing to the community; I am an artist in the Pandora Arts collective, on the board of directors of said collective and Managing Editor of their newsletter, I am facilitating my own writing group and participating in another, I am bartering my skills as a Level III Reiki practitioner for services from others, and I am using my writing skills to write this article which I hope will inspire others. A year ago I thought I had nothing to give and nothing to live for but now I am back to doing things I love and am an active, contributing member of the community. So to those of us who still live in despair I offer hope – things can get better. Recovery is possible and as surely as spring brings new life after winter, the worst suffering of mental illness will pass and meaning and joy can return to a seemingly devastated soul.

In Memorium
Norman Eyres
April 26, 1939-January 14, 2016



Norman Allen Eyres died suddenly in his home in Gordon Head, on January 14, 2016. As the members of the Victoria Branch know, Norman and Sherrill Eyres were strong supporters of our group and we will miss his helping hand at our functions. Norm taught in high school and Camosun College for 35 years, and spent his retirement at his favorite hobby: building things around home, for self and neighbors, from rock walls to flooring. Price was whatever you could pay and nothing if you were in need. As of late this turned more to sculpturing in metal and ceramics for which he had an interest and enthusiasm that belied his 76 years of age. Norm leaves his loving wife Sherrill and sons Darcy and Pro, and Darcy's wife Wendy and three Grand Children.

By Murray Galbraith

We will all miss Norm at BCSS Victoria. Norm was always there with a helping hand, a kind smile and words of encouragement. Please join us in remembering him as we offer our deepest condolences to Sherrill and family.



10TH "Annual Naked Bungy for BCSS": a Record Breaking Year!!!

This year's Naked Bungy Jump for BCSS was a great success for BCSS Victoria! With over 250 people attending, wonderful volunteers, chilly but good weather and of course hot dogs and smores, we couldn't have had a better time! One of our office volunteers Andrea Bennington, jumped for her first time and she did a fabulous job with her television interview speaking about mental illness and stigma. We raised over \$34,000.00 which will go a long way towards being able to continue to provide support and services to people living with mental illness and family members. Many thanks to everyone who contributed towards making this event a successful one especially to all the folks at WildPlay Element Parks.



Thank you to all of our generous corporate donors:



Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers: David Axon, Kevin Pryer, Michaela Iacob, Jenna Grant, Anoop, Joan Appleton, Kees Bastiaans, Bruce Saunders, Mark, Katie Munro, Matt, Emma de Vynck, Rebecca Biffard, John Lamont, Gerry Beisbrech and everyone who else who helped make this event so successful!

Thank you to all of the members of the camera crew: Kara Udell, Jessi, Dusty and Kayle Spiller, Lindsay Michelle, and Shawn Eddie. Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication

Renewal and the Transformative Power of Recovery by John L.



I'm thirty-six years old and have played tennis since the age of six. Tennis has always been a major part of my life and I played for UVIC and was nationally ranked despite experiencing minor delusions while attending college. After I graduated the positive symptoms of schizophrenia affected functioning in every area of life for seven years from until I was thirty. I was too unwell to play or even think about tennis.

When I was thirty I had a medication change and felt better immediately. Miraculously I was well enough to play tennis again and had a deep desire to rush back on court. Little did I know how significant tennis would be in my recovery journey.

I've been in recovery for six years now and tennis is more enjoyable and plays a bigger part in my life than it did before my mental health challenges. Early in my recovery journey tennis provided me with friends, social connections, sense of belonging and community, meaning and purpose, exercise, competition, sense of accomplishment, self-worth and a chance to be outdoors in nature.

I've achieved optimal wellness during times when I played tennis the most frequently. I notice that when I don't play as much my quality of life goes down. One year into my recovery I became passionate about tennis since I always felt good after playing. When I was ill I never imagined playing tennis again. Now when I play it provides me with 1-2 hours in my day to forget everything and just be in the moment. Recovery has allowed renewal and transformed my tennis journey.



A few words from our star bungy jumper Andrea Bennington...

On February 20th, 2016 I did something I have never done before. I jumped totally nude for a fundraiser for BCSS Victoria, raising \$2150.00 on my own which with our anonymous donor matching became \$4300.00 and a good chunk of the \$37,000 raised over the weekend by our crew of jumpers and supporters.

It was such an amazingly simple thing to do which brought about a sizeable chunk of the operating capital needed to run the amazing programs that BCSS runs here in Victoria continuing to provide help and support for mental health. I was also given the chance to jump a second time and interviewed about my reasons for jumping with Chek News in Nanaimo that was such a liberating and moving thing to speak about.

Personally I was able to speak about the need to acknowledge our overall humanity and the mixed bag that is genetics, the need to open up safe spaces to openly discuss and promote mental wellness with education and programs to assist coping and management strategies for the mental health conditions we face as a society whether they are schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder or any of the host of other diagnoses.

I felt like a rock star being able to act as an ambassador for the cause and the organization. The support I received in undertaking this jump and the kind words and financial contributions of family and friends exceeded my imagination for what I had hoped to accomplish. Little did I know that people would rally around my cause in such an open and personal way. This wild little event brought complete strangers out to share and talk about mental health.

I had the opportunity to speak with one young woman whose recent diagnosis of bipolar disorder had her facing a decision of whether or not to openly discuss her mother's diagnosis of bipolar which was something that had largely been shielded from her during her childhood in terms of witnessing the illness or talking openly about it. Now that this young woman is of an age where first episodes and psychotic breaks are a real possibility talking to someone who has lived through that was helpful to her. She told me that it helped to give her the courage to discuss mental health and bipolar disorder with her family. It was a great moment for me, and it came about because of the jump and a bunch of people who stood together and brought topics that previously went unspoken about into the light. While we all shed our facades, and our clothes to expose a deeper humanity. That underneath it all, we are humans and we have much more in common than any of the things that divide that.

The whole weekend focused on stories of coming back from scary and debilitating bouts of illness. In jumping for ourselves, for our friends and our loved ones. The crazy thing was that the nakedness in the end had little to do with exposure and so much more to do with freedom, liberation and the letting go of shame.

The only truly frightening moment for me was standing at the edge with my toes on the line, my arms above my head as I was told to swan dive into nothingness; I essentially did a prone fall out over the Nanaimo River Gorge, eyes wide open. It was there that came a moment where you are nearly parallel to the ground before the free-fall. It is in that moment that I was weightless and I felt everything drop away. You surrender to things over which you have no control. It is blissful, to be fully present in the moment -just you, the heavens and the earth. In a split second you can acknowledge your humanity and very mortal soul while touching, for a moment, something intangible about the human experience. Sounds flowery, I suppose but it wasn't. It felt like a rebirth and a chance to acknowledge all that your body and your illness may have put you through, knowing you have overcome it again and again.

When I untied and started walking up those stairs with all the adrenaline coursing through my body, my legs shook and I felt dizzy. It reminded me a little of the crash you feel after mania, a feeling I was never very comfortable with. Yet somehow oddly appropriate in the way coming back to earth can feel and the fact that those crashes and that feeling of the crash can also be overcome.

Kind Regards, Andrea

Trusting the Process

by Rebecca Biffard, BSW Social Work Student

Spring is a time of change and renewal; a season that feels like an appropriate time for transition. In my case it is a transition out of full-time education and into the unknown. I have been lucky to have a four-month practicum at BCSS Victoria that had me involved with many aspects of the programs that are offered here. As a student I have not only had a rich learning experience, but also an uplifting look into a supportive community that promotes and sustains wellness. People have graciously shared their own experiences and journeys with me, and for this I am grateful. Having the opportunity to understand someone's experience from their perspective is invaluable. This is the perspective that I find most important in all wellness and health care, and I hope to carry it with me into my future career. Thank you to all of BCSS Victoria for being an open and sharing community; this truly does renew the spirit and make everything we are all carrying a bit lighter.

Moving through this season of renewal we notice how the buds, flowers and leaves bloom exuberantly and with hope. This season, and the qualities it embodies are celebrated for good reason, but I also like to remember how the glory of spring is really rooted in the restoration that occurs over winter. So too, do we experience times of exuberance and also rest. There are times when we pull our resources close and feel less inclined to extroversion. I offer that we celebrate the whole cycle of renewal, and not just fruits, or buds, or flowers. There is worth and hope at every stage.



*And don't think the garden
loses its ecstasy in winter.
it's quiet, but
the roots are down there
riotous.
- Rumi*



In Memorium

Shirley Stiles

The passing of Shirley Stiles on November 17 of last year left her many friends in the Victoria Branch deeply saddened. She and her husband Bill, who predeceased her, were active members, she in the Family Support groups, he as a board member for BCSS Victoria, and both of them volunteered at our annual Christmas Dinner and Picnic. Originally from Wolverhampton, England, she studied teaching there before coming to Ottawa, where she met Bill and where they raised daughters Fiona and Penny. Shirley and Bill retired to Victoria and it was here that she invested her time in volunteering with our Society and the painting of portraits, at which she had a wonderful talent. She was a loving and gentle person, and we are fortunate to have had her as a friend.

On behalf of all of us at BCSS Victoria, we thank both Shirley and Bill Stiles for their tireless contribution to the BCSS Victoria Branch. You helped make us what we are today. You will be missed.

"Deep breathing"



Pockets of Renewal

by Emma de Vynck, BSW student

"Take a first walk"



"Go for a walk"

My 350 hours of practicum at BCSS Victoria are coming to a quiet close...and with the close of this practicum experience comes the close of my social work degree.

BCSS has been home to the final stage of my Bachelor of Social Work degree. Now, something new comes. But this "something new" will hold the wisdom and joys of being at 941 Kings Road for the past several months.

Pondering the complexity of mental health during my practicum has beckoned me to consider renewal—a sort of renewal that helps us keep going although things can feel heavy in our hearts, bodies, and environments. And a sort of renewal that is present as we move into the unknown—the "something new".

Our bodies are a profound source of renewal. With this in mind, I asked people at BCSS how they calm and renew their bodies as a means of renewing their wellness. People shared about petting their animals, taking walks, dancing, and breathing deeply, among other practices. Neurobiology is affirming what we already intuit—by renewing our bodies, even briefly ways, we can bring moments of calm to our minds.

Renewal speaks to a process. It challenges stagnancy. And it shows up continuously in a multitude of forms. Renewal acknowledges the tender, painful pieces of life, and allows for movement and transformation, in both small and big ways. My experience with the bright souls at BCSS has encouraged me to acknowledge the many pockets of renewal all around me.

Until we meet again, Much Love,
Emma De Vynck