



N O V E M B E R 2 0 1 1

# Newsletter

Theme **“Community”**

BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

## SUPPORT GROUPS ARE COMMUNITIES

Sitting at the table are people of different ages, interests, educational backgrounds, cultures. They listen attentively to each other and heads nod in recognition as situations are described. Tears are shed. Laughter shared. A community of care is created where it is safe to admit to the grief and fear and confusion and hope that are a part of loving someone with a mental illness. The participants understand what other group members have been through. They have experienced the judgment of others and have learned not to rush to conclusions, to assign blame or to look for signs of what makes these people different. People are kind to each other and encouraging. Sometimes group members disagree about how to approach a given situation and strongly held beliefs are vigorously debated. Discussions sometimes continue on the sidewalk after the meetings.

Many people, upon being invited to a support group, say they are uncomfortable in groups, simply are not “group people”. I would have described myself in this way before having the job of facilitating support groups at BCSS Victoria. Seeing how helpful they are for people who are supporting someone with a mental illness, I am a convert. They are a valuable way of helping people mobilize their strengths and understand that they are not alone.

At BCSS Victoria I facilitate three monthly support groups for family and friends of someone with a mental illness:

Family Support Group (second Thursday of the month; 7:00 to 8:30) for people with a loved one who has a mental illness

Strategies and Support (last Thursday of the month; 7:00 to 8:30) for people whose partner or spouse has a mental illness

Early Psychosis Family Support Group (third Saturday of the month; 11:30 to 1:30) for people supporting a young person experiencing early onset psychosis. - **By Dana Lewis, MSW, Family Counsellor**

Please join us.



Save the Date!

Call 250-384-4225 for details

**Jazz at Cafe Berlin**

**Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> 2012**

Held at the Victoria Edelweiss Club in James Bay.  
Volunteer, attend as a guest. Tickets sold.

**Bungy Event**

**Feb. 25,26 2012**

Volunteer, or make the leap! Held in Nanaimo BC at WildPlay Element Parks.

**On The Journey**

**April 2012**

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

## Community Spirit

Community is helping others in their time of need. It's how you give from your heart and from your soul to others. Expecting nothing back in return for helping someone else in need; having a feeling of purpose showing compassion for another person's well being; being aware of your resources around you in the community that you can assist in creating stronger communities... The more you give of yourself the more rewarded you feel that had made a difference. I know myself I wanted to be able to help more people than I was doing in my life. So I ended up taking a course in addictions for 10 months at CDI College in Victoria BC full time. I knew it wasn't going to be easy to do without hard work. I got thru it with a fulltime school and job. After I completed my schooling I had to follow with a practicum course. I decided to work in the mental health field of work. I had known someone with mental health issues who had schizophrenia. At one time I knew very little about this condition. And the triggers of the illness. I was feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope so I ended up moving on from this person being in my life. I do know now how some people view mental illness in the wrong light. They seem to label and judge others that are not perfect. They don't understand the illness that people can function with the right treatment and support just like everyone else in the general community. Viewing others for what they can do than not do with their lives. With treating others with respect and understanding can ...



...open your eyes to others that do things differently it can give you a whole new perspective way of looking at people. Working with the Schizophrenia Society I feel a part of the team positive energy to help others that need some hope and help. I have overcome my own person barriers and assist others in the community. I know in my heart I have chosen the right field of work that I can be proud of every single day. Knowing each day will bring new hope and strengths from people working in the mental health field that care about the people that live in their community; making the world we live in a better place to call home. - By Lori Walker





## Futureville: No Stigma Here

What makes a safe healthy community? It is a place where people are treated equally, with respect for their basic rights and where everybody gets a piece of the pie. It is a place where nobody has to fear that when they try to take hold of what they deserve and need, that their hand will be ignored, pushed away or slapped due to stigma and ignorance. When it comes to mental illness, that idyllic community seems light-years away. Prejudice and stigma about people in recovery corrodes our humanity and puts implacable roadblocks in the lives of people who just want to be like everyone else.

Villain number one is negative opportunistic media messaging. If we desire a compassionate community, then we need to change those community messages that demonize and dehumanize those with mental illnesses. This summer I took a step towards that goal. But that is not enough. We all need to do it - every second, every minute, and every day of our lives.

This summer, I read a newsletter published by a professional association that contained a brutal joke about people with mental illnesses, calling them demeaning and derogatory names. I was outraged and sickened. And as someone with lived experience, I felt hurt and persecuted...

Feeding my anger was the certainty that this would never have happened with other marginalized groups. We are not fair game, I thought. We don't have to tolerate this targeted attack on our souls and our minds.

I contacted the professional association and told them that the joke was offensive and that it was contemptible to skewer and ridicule people who are seriously ill. My concerns were taken to their Board Meeting and their Directors. The only appropriate response was a public apology, I insisted. But even more, I wanted to give my feedback into the final form of that apology. They agreed to everything.

Here is the major part of the formal apology given by the professional association in their next newsletter:

"We are sincerely sorry for printing a joke which referred unkindly to people living with mental illnesses. We understand it was viewed as inconsiderate and disrespectful to persons living with mental illnesses. We apologize sincerely to every person with a mental illness ... for that joke containing cruel references to mental illness that may have caused them hurt and injury. We applaud the courage and intelligence of every person who struggles every day with the ravages of mental illness. (My wording) ...Thank you to Doreen Marion Gee from Victoria B.C. who brought this matter to our attention...We will certainly be more diligent in the future in choosing content which does not offend our readers."

The revolution starts from within. Each one of us has the obligation to oppose negative messaging in our community about people with mental illness. Every time we see a newspaper article that equates our brothers with homicidal maniacs, we must phone that newsroom, and tell them to replace lies with the truth. Each time we hear someone use words like arrows to ridicule those that are ill, we must tell them to change their dialogue to one of respect. This is how we form a compassionate stigma-free community.

Every time we change the message, we change the world!

- By Doreen Marion Gee In Recovery

### NOTE:

**CHRISTMAS PARTY- Invitation only! RSVP to BCSS Victoria Office: Donations of cash/cheques and small spot dance prizes welcome to support this event! Thanks to volunteers and DND for making this event possible in brightening Christmas for our members!**



## Who's on Board?

It's a busy time at BCSS this month but then when is it not a busy time at BCSS? As your Board, we are gearing up for a year of fundraising and friend-raising, starting with the Antique, Retro and Collectibles Show at the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney this coming Sunday, November 20. Last year we raised \$1,000 through our table at the Sidney show, thanks to your donations of treasures. Maybe we can double that this year! Then, the Christmas dinner and dance is only two weeks later, December 3<sup>rd</sup> – always a highlight of the year for our members and families. Fundraising is a priority of the Board this year. In tight economic times, we need more \$\$\$ than we can raise through our usual granting agencies, to keep our programs and services going at the same level. We are so fortunate to have four new and enthusiastic members of the Board, ready and willing to help us realize our funding (and other) goals. Some of you may know at least one of these people but I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to everyone.

**Jan Evans**, A single mother for the past 28 years, she says that they have only recently become involved in programs at the Early Psychosis Centre and that she really appreciates the support she has received there and from the support group at BCSS.

She brings 35 years of experience working for the Ministry of Tourism, working her way up into Management through nine different jobs, including work in the Freedom of Information field, the Firearms Program and currently the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch. Her professional experience and her passion for tennis (playing it); chocolate (eating it); and dancing (just for the fun of it!) are valued assets for our Board, especially the chocolate (*That was my inside voice!*).

**Laurel Loxam**, a local mortgage broker and champion of our youth program, is eager to learn more about mental health issues and their impact on the community. Current Board members welcome her youthful outlook on our programs and services, as well as her previous involvement in volunteerism, most recently the Courtnall brothers Golf Tournament. Her focus on raising awareness about mental health issues and raising funds for the local community matches perfectly our fundraising, friend-raising goal for the year.

**Julia Oland**, is a health professional and family member on the Board. An occupational therapist at the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, she provides family centred care in multiple programs and settings. She offers a family perspective on the board as well, as she has a brother with a mental illness. A graduate of Dalhousie University and the University of King's College, she has previous experience on committees aimed at OT professional development and capacity building. Julia came from Halifax to Victoria four years ago; she loves sea kayaking and the West Coast lifestyle and is valiantly trying to perfect her French. Please feel free to say 'bonjour' when you cross her path!

**Dianne Stevenson's**, nursing career evolved into public health, and then into working and managing the tobacco control program for VIHA for the past twenty years. The program helps people stop smoking, enforces various pieces of tobacco legislation, and provides educational materials to the community. Her previous service as Public Education Chair of the National Board of the Canadian Cancer Society included helping volunteers and staff to create and/or improve resources for the public. She also brings her family experience of having two sons who have struggled with depression and addiction for 15 years. Dianne states that she wants to give back to the community some of the help, support, and learning that she says has been invaluable over the years to her family. Spanish is the language she is trying to master. I haven't asked her when she is planning trips to Spain and Mexico or whether she is taking other Board members (*Oops! The inside voice again*).

As well as welcoming our new members, I know that you will join me in thanking those who have rotated off the Board this year: Bill Buckle, John Gray, Josie Jones, Jonny Morris, and Barbara Reeve. Their dedication helped us build the BCSS that you know today. Making up the remainder of the Board are those who, like me, are staying on. You already know them: Nancy Pike (vice president), Jackie McMath (treasurer), Cam Millar (secretary), Elizabeth Cook, Monique Dull, and Ian Taggart. Please come and talk to us, when you see us at events like the Christmas Dinner, the Hans Fear Jazz Night, and others over the coming year. Finally, now that you know who's on board, you may want to know more about what the Board is doing. In future newsletters, I will report on various board issues and discussions. In the meantime, when you are in the BCSS office, you can read the most recent Board minutes, posted in the library. – **By Jane Milliken**

**BCSS Victoria**  
and the  
*Antique, Retro &*  
**COLLECTIBLES**  
**Christmas**  
**Show & Sale**  
**November 20,**  
**2011**  
**9:30 am - 4:00**  
**pm still only \$3.00**  
*'Early Birds' @ 8:30 am \$2.00*  
**Mary Winspear**  
**Centre, Sidney, BC**

**ANTIQUES/RETRO/COLLECTIBLES – FUNDRAISER**  
**Sunday November 20<sup>th</sup>, @ Mary Winspear, Sidney**

We are looking for high-end, quality items so dig out that piece of china; blow away the dust on the oil painting; go find that Chippendale chair in the basement and then speak with show organizers (details below). Cash Donations gratefully accepted as well!

The Antique, Retro and Collectible Show has been operating out of the Mary Winspear Centre for 17 years. Once again the organizers, Josie Jones and David Lock, have offered to partner with BCSS Victoria in an effort to raise funds for our Society.

What items are we looking for? The item should fit with the profile of the show and be an "Antique, Retro or Collectible" item: Jewelry, linen, china, Beatle memorabilia; a doll or teddy bear or antique toys will also be considered. A photo of your item, along with a written description of the item, should be sent to Josie at [Josiejones@shaw.ca](mailto:Josiejones@shaw.ca), or phone her or David on (250) 744-1807. Drop off at the office or better still, come to the show!

So get busy folks ..... Psst ..... Two-for-one entry with a copy of this Newsletter! **By- Josie Jones**

## Safe, Supportive Space: A Way to Fill Holes in Recovery

My road to recovery from bipolar and anxiety has been a long one. I've had both illnesses all of my life but managed on my own until I was 30 years old. At that time both 'blossomed' into forms that completely took over my life. I held on in every way I could but my life became so unbearable that I attempted suicide. Twice. After my second suicide attempt I was honestly shocked to realize that so many people DID care about me. I made up my mind: I could never put these people through such hurt ever again. So I decided to live. And if I had to stay alive then I needed to find a way to make my life enjoyable. So I began to live my life in a new way. Anything that made me happy and want to live would be in my life-anything that did not was out. Slowly, ever so slowly, my life began to improve, until the point when I actually began to wake up happy. Then I began to have enthusiasm: I wanted to do something with my life! All of this had taken about ten years (in total) and now that I was back to feeling like a human being I realized that I had no idea how to do that. I was a new person; alive, happy, but confused as to what to do with this new reality.

I went to counselling to explore this issue. I attempted many things. I began to notice that it was hard for me to accomplish anything productive unless I had a good amount of socializing each week. I had created a lovely network of friends and family and a good chat over the phone or coffee did wonders for my feelings of value and connectedness to life. But that still wasn't enough. I came to a place that I believe many people with mental illness eventually find: a deep understanding that certain environments perpetuate health and joy and a desire to create, help, and organize. Other environments destroy those desires. I do need time alone but too much is a recipe for depression and loss of hope. Where is the middle ground?

I believe that in order to become more productive and joyous beings that we need more Safe, Supportive Space. Places that have nurturing people in them, some healthy food if we are hungry, the option to do something fun (new or familiar), to chat, or even just sit and be quiet. I've spent a great deal of effort looking for places like this around town and there are some that please me a great deal. However, I don't think that there are enough. I know that I need more regular, dependable, fun places that demand little of my small income, energy level, and inability to make a definite commitment. I don't have the patience to wait around for someone else to fulfill this need I have, so, I am going to create it. Yes, that's what I said: I am going to learn how to organize finding spaces where we folks who need somewhere safe to socialize can do just that. This isn't the type of thing I'm good at so please be patient with my mistakes. But I want to learn how and I need this kind of fun in my life to keep me happy and moving forward. Anyone else who is interested: welcome aboard! Please feel free to contact me at: [jenifer\\_yaila@hotmail.com](mailto:jenifer_yaila@hotmail.com) **By Jenifer Wilson**



## Building an Informed and Connected Community!

BCSS Victoria and VIHA present **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Island-Wide Conference November 18<sup>th</sup> at Victoria Event Centre** with generous support from Pfizer. So this is the first time BCSS Victoria has led the conference and we are very excited about this year's line up of plenary speakers, the wide variety of workshops, Artists displays (some available for purchase directly from the artist), and ODIN Books (a specialty mental health book and resource mobile store) and a designated room for family and peers to gather and connect throughout the day. This is a CME accredited event for psychiatrists to maintain their education credits and GPs to learn about mental health issues.

Encourage them to attend, as well! Please register online as there are few spaces left!

<http://islandschizophreniaconference.webs.com/register.htm>

## MEMBERSHIP TIME! Please make mail/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](mailto:admin.bcsc@shaw.ca) Website: [www.bcscvictoria.ca](http://www.bcscvictoria.ca)

Please accept my tax-deductible **donation** of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (receipts given for over \$20)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check box:

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

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

- ☐ Programs & Services (includes children/youth/adult peer programs, advocacy and 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 -

**Do you know you can donate  
to BCSS Victoria Online?**

Just go to

[www.bcscvictoria.ca](http://www.bcscvictoria.ca)

**BC Provincial Government**

*Thrifty Foods and Smile card  
users: You funded our new  
website!*

*DND for your help with this  
year's Christmas Party!*

**Our Mission Statement:**  
To improve the quality of life for those affected  
by schizophrenia and psychosis through  
education, support programs, public policy,  
and research.