

Our Mission

We are committed to supporting individual recovery and promoting mental wellness with families and communities.

Our Vision

An inclusive community that promotes emotional well being, human dignity and social justice where people are valued and opportunities in all aspects of life are available to everyone.

We Value

A person centered approach to recovery

Open and transparent communication

Respect for individual rights

The important role of individuals and families living with mental illness

A holistic approach to the Individual

A collaborative, multi disciplinary approach

Quality services that are founded on evidence based practices

The contributions of staff and volunteers

Innovation and creativity

SUPPORTING RECOVERY

Issue 5

October 2011

Paddles Up!

Time stands still as you prepare for that first strong stroke. If you recognize this, then you've had your seat in a dragon boat. Once you've been there, you are rich in memories. Win or lose, you win and it's with pride I say "I hold the tin" ha ha.

On a more serious note I'd like to write about the wins. Of course the basic reason for the festival is to raise funds for 3 strong community organizations. I have to admit that this aspect seemed to take a back seat to the experience.

For myself, the wins went beyond the festival itself and allowed me to interact in ways I thought would never be possible. The first big hurdle was to overcome my fear of crowds coupled with difficulty dealing with strangers. Oh I knew some of the team which helped. Most of the "Champions for Mental Health" team were strangers to start.

As I stood waiting for my first race, I remember thinking this was a big mistake, I don't belong here". At this point if I wasn't waiting for a ritual "Mikes famous cappuccino" I might have slipped away and gone home. Before that could happen we were called to load our boat and the first race was on. Now if you've watched twenty some people climbing into one boat you already know it's there the shields start to drop and individuals become a group. The race was a close call with our boat coming in second. As we made our way back to the dock I came to a realization, "I'm part of something here". For the people that know me, you'll understand just how big a win that was. For the rest of the day I kept thinking "I can't believe I'm here and everything is okay. I've spoke to so many strangers and I'm even part of the crowd. Some of you may laugh but it was one of the most thought provoking realizations I had all year.

In one day I had disproved some of the major "can'ts" in my life. Win Win! I'm a starter. I'll jump into any idea, well almost any idea, but my usual M.O. is to drop out mid-point. On this day I went from start to finish. I did not quit! Win win.

At the end of the day the Champions for Mental Health took home a bronze medal and tin tin. Ha ha. I personally would like to thank everyone involved. The fundraisers, the spectators, the organizers and the paddlers, the drummers and the steerers.

So as I look back I think "I have the tin, a whole list of wins but most of all I have the memories". When February comes around I will pull them out to give me a cheer and make me smile until I hear "**PADDLES UP**" again next year. Ha Ha

Daniel

Editors note: Daniel is a member of the Skills Development Program at CMHA. He was part of a team made up of staff and volunteers, many of whom were individuals with lived experience of mental illness and their families. Daniel's participation in the Dragon Boat event demonstrates the power of inclusion and how it provides a sense of belonging in a community where those with a mental illness are often excluded. If you would like to be a part of our team next year contact CMHA at 345-5564.



Reaching for the Stars

Ninety-two members and staff from Skills Development Services gathered to celebrate their recovery successes in education and employment at the annual Reach for the Stars event on June 23, 2011.

Homelessness Initiative 10th Anniversary

The Homelessness Initiative Program (HIP II) celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Italian Hall. Partnering landlords received public thanks and a commemorative plaque at the event. HIP II is a CMHA partnership with Alpha Court and Brain Injury Services of Northern Ontario. By collaborating we are able to offer services to a diverse group of clients and build from the strengths of each partner agency. We work with both the private and public housing sector. HIP II provides rent supplements to private landlords to obtain safe, secure and affordable housing for clients who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. At any one time, we have 67 clients in HIP II housing. In the 10 years of our existence, the program has housed over 350 clients. The average length of tenancy is 3 years. Recovery is all about a house, a job, a friend. To assist clients in their recovery efforts, staff help clients obtain necessary financial, medical, psychiatric, and spiritual supports as well as a safe place to live.

Congratulations to Recipients of Fanny Rajala Education Scholarship

Psychosocial recovery practices strive to help individuals improve the quality of all aspects of their lives - including the educational aspects. Thanks to the establishment of the *Fanny Rajala Education Endowment Fund*, CMHA, Thunder Bay Branch, awarded four people scholarships to pursue formal study at recognized teaching institutions. The endowment gives scholarships to people with lived experience of mental illness. Two recipients are attending Lakehead University; one pursuing studies in the arts and the other specializing in geriatric care. Two are attending Confederation College, one with a goal of working as a certified tradesman, the other as a social worker.

CMHA congratulates the recipients of this scholarship and wishes them all the best in their future endeavours.

CMHA Research Corner Sept 2011

First Place's Dr. Cheng, Carole Lem and the research team are in the follow-up stages of an evaluation project "Psychosis 101". Launched in March 2011, the project has included a 2-day Early Psychosis Intervention workshop and questionnaires to evaluate knowledge retained from the workshop. Members of the research team recently conducted in-person focus groups with workshop participants in their home communities as part of the 6 month follow up. The project, funded by the Ontario Centre of Excellence (formerly the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO), aims to improve the capacity of frontline child and youth mental health workers in Northwestern Ontario to detect first episode psychosis and implement early intervention treatment.

Dr. Cheng was an invited presenter at the Ontario Psychiatric Outreach Program (OPOP) annual meeting this summer in Toronto, presenting on rural and remote specialized service delivery. We have also had opportunities to exchange ideas with different cultures/countries at two venues: at a presentation at the "Auf der Bult Centre for Children and Youth" in Hannover Germany, and at the European Congress on Schizophrenia. Dr. Cheng has also co-authored another successful publication with research colleague C.S. Dewa of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The article, "Lessons from a Canadian province: examining collaborations between the mental health and justice sectors" will appear in the *International Journal of Public Health* and is available electronically on the publisher's website.