



North
Shore
Schizophrenia
Society

The Notepad

The NSSS Newsletter

PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENING

Trials of a Forensic Psychiatrist

Speaker:

Dr. Elisabeth Zoffmann

Date: Wednesday, November 24, 2010

**Location: Lions Gate Hospital
Auditorium
13th Street entrance**

Time: 7:30 p.m. . . . sharp

Family Support Centre

**Personal Support and Information on
Major Mental Illnesses—Schizophrenia,
Bipolar Disorder, Depression, and Anxiety Disorders**

205 - 1865 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, BC, V7V 1J7
Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, or by appointment.

Tel/Fax 604-926-0856; Sea to Sky 604-898-9372
www.northshoreschizophrenia.org
email: info@northshoreschizophrenia.org

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society is a
CRA Registered Charity: BN 89422 6935 RR0001

*Your generosity is appreciated.
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Vicki Perekinski (back row, left) participates in parades with her son, Bob (front row, second from right). See Volunteer Spotlight, page 2.

Support Groups

Come share your questions, concerns, and experiences with members of the North Shore Schizophrenia Society. Support Group meetings are held each month at the Family Support Centre and in Squamish, for family members and close friends of those afflicted with any serious mental illness.

Please call 604-926-0856 for more information, upcoming dates, or to register.

Volunteer Spotlight



Vicki Perekhinski

When Vicki Perekhinski thinks about our very first Christmas party, she says, "What chaos that was!"

Before we had grants, before we had charitable status, before we had a caterer for the event, there was Vicki.

For the first twelve years, she cooked the roast beef, which was generously donated by the Deering family, coordinated all the different volunteers who cooked side dishes and dessert at home and brought them to the church, made sure that everyone got their dishes and serving utensils back, and always managed to get dinner served on time. No small feat.

These days, Vicki has a seat reserved for her in our parade vehicles, where she gives the public the royal wave with a blue and yellow pom-pom and keeps the driver laughing throughout the West Vancouver Community Day Parade while her son Bob proudly marches, carrying the Family Support Centre banner.

**I would like to help the
NORTH SHORE
SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY
205 - 1865 Marine Drive
West Vancouver, BC V7V 1J7**

- with a donation to help keep the Family Support Centre operating
 Cheque enclosed
- I prefer to donate by monthly direct deposit
\$20__ \$30__ \$50__ Other __
- by making a contribution to the NSSS endowment fund, a gift that goes on forever
- by making a bequest to the North Shore Schizophrenia Society in my will; please contact me

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: _____

Trials of a Forensic Psychiatrist

Dr. Elisabeth Zoffman has seen a lot over the years working in forensic psychiatry. She will share some of her experiences, explain how forensic psychiatry works, and review a recent case in which she participated at our next Public Education Evening on Wednesday, November 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Lions Gate Hospital auditorium.

Whistler Welcome Week

Whistler is flooded with newcomers this time of year as many people flock to the mountain to work for the winter season. To help these new arrivals get their bearings, make friends and learn about the resources available to them, Whistler Community Services Society puts on an annual Welcome Week series of events.

In addition to the established Welcome Week events - the usual pancake breakfast, barbeques, and so on - this year NSSS will be presenting a performance of Stand Up for Mental Health on November 18 at the Rainbow Theatre at 6:00 p.m.

Stand Up for Mental Health is led by David Granirer, who teaches people with mental illnesses to do stand-up comedy in order to build confidence and fight prejudice and discrimination.

This performance will give NSSS an opportunity to connect with people new to the Whistler area, many of whom have no family or support system nearby.

Giving in Different Ways

Members and other donors who wish to donate company stock to NSSS can now do so, with our brokerage account at Credential Direct having recently been updated. When you donate shares to a registered charity like NSSS, you don't pay any capital gains tax, which you would otherwise be charged. It's a good way of optimizing your financial contribution to the Society and our many programs, with less cost to you.

For more information, please contact Cheryl at the Family Support Centre at 604-926-0856 or email cheryl@northshoreschizophrenia.org.

Mentally ill in the courts – NSSS provides support

Imagine your son is charged with threatening because he wields a large knife in front of you and you are so frightened you call the police to help get him to hospital. Before you know it, he's charged and in court – not what you expected.

Or your daughter who, in an acute phase of schizophrenia, hallucinating and paranoid, pushes over a police officer and tussles with a couple of others who try to restrain her. She's charged with assault and ends up in court.

The prospect of a trial, the grave hand of justice at work, a courtroom with all of the imposing players (judge, Crown counsel, defence counsel, police, other witnesses), your loved one being turned into a criminal – all this adds an enormous amount of stress and helpless feelings of shame on top of the stress you've long been dealing with, trying to cope with the illness itself. What do you do?

If you know of the Family Support Centre, you give us a call and we do everything we can to both help you deal with the situation and to ensure the best possible outcome.

First, we explain what's involved. At the heart of cases before the court is the question of whether the person should be punished for a criminal offence. For someone who, because of their illness, is "incapable of appreciating the nature and quality of the act...or knowing that it was wrong," in the words of the Criminal Code, a criminal sentence doesn't make sense. In these cases, a finding of "Not Criminally Responsible on Account of Mental Disorder," or NCRMD, is called for. We go over the particulars, including what happens if the NCRMD plea is successful – usually assignment to the Forensic Psychiatric Hospital, a treatment facility where the illness will be addressed.

For many, usually lesser offences, where the accused pleads guilty or is ultimately found guilty, but there's no NCRMD plea, the accused may be released with conditions, like having to report to a mental health team or the Forensic Outpatient Clinic. Often, by the time the court hearing occurs, the accused may be in relatively good shape because of treatment in hospital in the interim. A conditional release, consequently, fits the circumstances.

Just getting the lowdown from a fellow family member, a peer supporter who knows the ropes and calmly goes through the details, is of tremendous help in relieving your burden of stress and anguish and

pointing the way to the practical steps you may need to take in the process.

Our support coordinator, Marguerite Hardin, who is likely the person you will be working with, may chat with the Crown prosecutor and defence counsel to remind them of the NCRMD plea. She'll also help with any documentation and other background necessary to understand the seriousness of the illness, the pattern it takes, and how it may have preceded the alleged offence.

She and often a second family member will attend the trial with you. Just their presence is a great help. They can also provide you and defence counsel with their feedback. The feedback is particularly important if the trial is a complicated one, if you're from out of town, or if you can't attend all of the trial yourself.

Where there's an NCRMD plea, we'll also help you and defence counsel find an expert witness if necessary, to testify to the degree of illness of the accused. This was the case in a recent attempted murder trial where we referred the parents to Dr. Elisabeth Zoffmann, who will be our feature speaker at Lions Gate Hospital, November 24.

Usually Crown counsel understands the appropriateness of an NRCMD plea and doesn't contest it; will often make a joint presentation with defence counsel. Sometimes, however, the Crown will fight the plea even if family members and defence counsel know the history of the illness and what it means in terms of responsibility. The Crown will have one or more expert witnesses claiming the accused, although perhaps mentally ill, was not psychotic and was fully aware of their actions at the time, and therefore responsible. It's all the more important, then, that the defence has a strong expert witness, for example a forensic psychiatrist like Dr. Zoffmann, to ensure the court isn't misled.

Finally, when it's all over, there's nothing like having Marguerite around for a debriefing – or "decompression" might be a better word for it.

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Province of British Columbia; City of North Vancouver; District of North Vancouver; District of West Vancouver; Lynn Valley, Mt. Seymour, and Capilano Lions Clubs; Soroptimist International of North and West Vancouver; West Vancouver Community Foundation; Community Foundation of Whistler; Squamish Community Foundation, Lynn Valley Legion; North Shore Credit Union, and our many other generous donors.

Santa Claus is Coming To Town!

Come one, come all to the best Christmas party in town! The NSSS annual Christmas banquet will be held on Saturday, December 4 at St. David's United Church in West Vancouver. As always, the event is free for anyone with a mental illness as well as family members, but you **must RSVP by November 26** by calling the Family Support Centre at 604-926-0856 or emailing us at info@northshoreschizophrenia.org.



The evening wouldn't be complete without music by the West Vancouver Adult Pops Band and a visit from the jolliest elf of all, Santa Claus. After dinner, we'll also have a performance by singer Emma Postl, who will entertain us with a selection of jazz and traditional Christmas songs.

If you'd like to help out before, during or after the party, we need volunteers to drive people to and from the party, set up and decorate the room, serve dinner and clear tables, and clean up at the end of the night. Give us a call to let us know what you'd like to do.



Family-to-Family Spring Sessions

Family-to-Family continues to be one of our most valuable programs for family members. Registration is open for the next sessions, which start on January 25 in West Vancouver and early February in Squamish. Classes run one evening a week for 12 weeks from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Family-to-Family is open to anyone with a family member or close friend with a serious mental illness. The course covers everything from symptoms and medications to self-care and problem-solving.

The course curriculum is available at www.northshoreschizophrenia.org/education.htm and at the Family Support Centre.

Please call the Centre promptly at 604-926-0856 or email us at info@northshoreschizophrenia.org if you are interested in taking the course in either West Vancouver or Squamish.

Space is limited and pre-registration is required.

Weight Management and Medication



Being overweight dramatically increases the risk of developing diabetes and of having a heart attack or stroke, so meds-induced weight gain is a major concern for families coping with serious mental illness.

Tanya Leung, a Registered Dietitian with Providence Healthcare, discussed weight management strategies for those taking psychiatric medication, and how families can help keep them motivated and on track, at our most recent public education evening on September 29. She had lots of tips to share on making healthier choices and easing the transition from junk food.

Her PowerPoint presentation as well as a copy of the Glycemic Index is available on the Public Lectures page on our website.