



British Columbia
Schizophrenia Society

The Notepad

North Shore Branch Newsletter

ANNOUNCEMENT: ATTENTION MEMBERS! THIS IS YOUR OFFICIAL NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE NORTH SHORE BRANCH.

Annual General Meeting

Date: Wednesday, June 1, 2005

**Location: Lions Gate Hospital
Downstairs Auditorium**

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

❖ Please note date change.

Family Support Centre & BCSS, North Shore Branch

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

Tel/Fax (604) 926-0856
www.bcssnorthshore.org
email: bcssnsh@vcn.bc.ca

The B.C. Schizophrenia Society, North Shore Branch is an Incorporated Branch Society and Registered Charity, BN 89422 6935 RR0001

**Your generosity is appreciated.
Receipts will be issued for income tax purposes.**

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Paul Avery and Marguerite Hardin at the Open House

Support Groups

Families and friends, come and share your concerns, questions, experiences and needs with others who understand.

We hold monthly meetings for family members and close friends of those afflicted with serious mental illness (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression).

Special groups (i.e. siblings, survivors of suicide) will be arranged as needed.

For more information on Support Groups please call (604) 926-0856.

FSC WIRED AT LAST

The Family Support Centre has embraced the joys and challenges of the technological age! Our branch website has been up for some time, and we have had useable email via a member's home, but the Centre itself is now online, giving us instant email capability and access to the Web. Anyone who hasn't looked at our site should check it out at www.bcsshore.org. If you do not have a computer, you can drop by the Centre and view it here.

We have three computer workstations now, which will soon be networked; a new database, specially designed for our needs, will be in place before too long. Many hours volunteered by skilled professionals have made these changes possible.

Many of you were pleased to get the last issue of The Notepad electronically. We, do, however, need to hear from you via email that you would *rather* receive The Notepad this way before we remove your name from the regular mailing list. Previous responses have been noted. If you prefer to receive a hard copy, or even both, that is perfectly OK. Let us know.

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WEST VANCOUVER COMMUNITY DAY PARADE

The North Shore Branch will be participating in this popular annual event for the ninth consecutive year. We hope you will put in an order for fine weather and join our contingent under the banner June 4, assembling north of the Community Centre about 9:30 a.m.

One or two seats may be available in our accompanying vehicle for those who would like to participate but would have trouble walking the whole distance.

Can you lend a hand to assist us with preparations, such as decorating the car and arranging ID for the marchers? T-shirts are a possibility. Call or email us your ideas, please.

WALK the WORLD for SCHIZOPHRENIA

June 26 – To finish the pre-summer season with a flourish, our 14th annual “Walk the World for Schizophrenia” will take place as usual on the scenic West Van Seawall. We assemble at 10 a.m. at John Lawson Park and walk to Dundarave and back with posters, brochures and balloons, to the accompaniment of the West Vancouver Adults Pop Band.

We hope you'll join us, and bring any friends or family you can round up. The setting lends itself to a follow-up picnic, or hot chocolate back at the office if the day is unusually cool.

FAMILY to FAMILY

The next Family to Family course will start on Tuesday, September 13, 2005. Spaces are limited, so register soon if you are interested.

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

- with a donation to help keep the Family Support Centre open
 - Cheque enclosed*
- by making a contribution to help the Branch build its endowment -- a gift that goes on forever
- by making a bequest to the North Shore Branch in my will
 - I would like some suggestions for appropriate wording*
 - Please call me with information*

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postal Code: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

*Telling Our Stories***PIECES OF THE PUZZLE**

We are divorced parents of a mentally ill child and live on opposite sides of Vancouver. For the first year after the diagnosis, our son continued to live on his own by choice. We monitored his behaviour and condition on a daily basis but the recovery progress was slow.

Today our son is attending college full time, earning an A minus average. He has friends, a social life and ambitions for the future. Three years ago who would have thought this possible when he was diagnosed with Schizo-Affective Disorder?

He has been stable for a year now and we write this article to give hope to other families. Attaining recovery is like a puzzle where the pieces have to fit correctly. You can't jam a piece into place hoping it will match – you must keep searching for the right fit.

In our case, the first piece that fit well was working with a good medical team. Mental illness is manageable with the proper medication and dose that suits the patient. It takes time and patience living through the trial and error process to find the right mix. It is important for the caregiver to liaise with the psychiatrist and provide feedback on a regular basis because the doctor only sees the condition in the office setting. Doctors prefer to look at the medical facts, so leave out your emotional responses. They appreciate the feedback, and a couple of times another “break” was averted by us watching for the signs at home and alerting the team before things went too far. Everyone manages the situation better when it is not at the crisis point.

The second piece of the puzzle is for caregivers to learn about the illness and how to respond to your family member in a new way. By doing this we are being trained to become psychologists – learning how to ask questions in a new way, reading emotional signs, and creating new

habits for daily interaction. We recommend taking the BCSS Family to Family Education Course that turned our outlook around and gave us a sense of our own power to do something.

Time and money are two important pieces of the puzzle of recovery. A self-contained suite in the home where I live became available and our son moved in. His father contributed financially, lessening that stressful burden, and I was immediately available for emotional support. Within six months our son started moving forward. In my view, it is important to bring life's challenges way down to a manageable level so the recovering patient can rebuild their stamina. Then, allow them plenty of time to take each step forward at their own comfort level.

We cannot begin to imagine how they feel. Give lots and lots of love and understanding without expectations. Lift the financial burdens that even we find difficult to meet. Create an environment where they can rest when needed, eat healthy food, diffuse stress at a moment's notice, and allow them the space to accept responsibility when they are ready. We have been fortunate to be able to create that environment for our son, who is a brave and amazing person. He made choices for his future and rose to each challenge along the way. Now it is time to create some physical distance to nudge the independence aspect while maintaining the financial support. We are hopeful for the future and grateful to the doctors and BCSS North Shore for their guidance.

S. Peters

The North Shore Branch is an Incorporated Branch Society, and financially independent of the provincial society. Donations sent to the provincial office in Richmond are not shared with us. We need to receive your help directly.

Please send your contributions to:

205 – 1865 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, V7V 1J7

Receipts will be issued for Income Tax purposes

Thanks!

The progress we have made in strengthening the Branch, ensuring the continuation of the Family Support Centre, and building capacity for expansion of our programs in the future has been largely due to the varied contributions of many volunteers.

More than 100 individuals sent us financial donations, large and small, in the last fiscal year, including a \$10,000 gift to help build our endowment base. (We hope that will start a trend.)

The Lynn Valley Lions were an enormous help last spring, when things were still rather bleak. The entire proceeds of the John Gardiner Memorial Dinner (and more) were dedicated to the North Shore Branch, and they have recently sent another generous amount to help with the coming year.

We are also grateful to the West Van Legion, the Kiwanis Club of North Vancouver, Ambleside and Tiddleycove Lions, Empire Grain Stevedoring, and Seaspan International for their contributions.

Our fundraising Chair set to work last summer and secured a grant from the Gaming Branch, which was recently topped up at their FYE review. We are pleased to acknowledge this support from the Province of British Columbia, and hope that it will be available in future years.

Many individuals have contributed their time and talents over the years to keep the North Shore Branch moving forward. This year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Family Support Centre with an Open House April 1, attended by more than 60 friends, old and new.

Particularly, in the past year or so, we appreciate the help received from: Anita (our star office volunteer); Janet, for fine Partnership Presentations and elf duty; Jim for his ongoing appreciation of the work that we do; the two Bobs, Linda and Doug for helping us celebrate and turning up at events; Tom for bringing his friends (all of whom individually deserve thanks, of course) from the West Van Adult Pops Band to enliven those events; Mike for mobilizing our presence in the WV Parade; and Paula for her enduring efforts with the Homelessness Task Group and for contributions to our clipping files.

Others alert us from time to time about news coverage of interest. Our poster crew - Sylvia, Ida, Rose, Peter, Catherine, June and Elizabeth M. - alert the

whole North Shore to our upcoming events, including our Public Education Evenings. The Telephone Tree - Ida, Marg, Joyce, Liesel, Georgina, Paula, Pearl, Susie and Cheryl - provides reminders and bulletins when needed.

A roster of distinguished speakers shared their expertise with us this past year: Dianne Allan, dietician; Jehannine Austin, genetic counsellor; Bill Honer, psychiatrist and researcher; and lawyer Nicole Garton were all much appreciated.

Generous donations of professional expertise have helped in different ways: for technical improvements at the office, David, Trung, Michael and Dave have followed Mahmoud's lead. John negotiated a new lease. Dennis did our audit *pro bono* last year. Linda sends us her nursing students to learn about the family experience; many high school teachers and Cap college instructors request our Partnership team to help educate their students about the realities of serious mental illness.

Community Day Parade and Walk the World participants proudly identified themselves as BCSS members or supporters, helping to bring the big "S" word out of the closet, and alerting thousands of people each year to the existence of the North Shore Branch, an invaluable contribution.

Contributions *in kind* were received from Sasha, Judy, Sylvia, Russ, Margitta, Nana and Michel and several local food stores. CPS provided use of their copier when ours broke down. Coast Foundation and the North Shore Crisis Services Society gave us helpful advice. Family to Family teachers Sylvia, Rebecca and Herschel provided two complete course sessions and BJ facilitated Friday Friends. A great volunteer crew prepared and served the Christmas dinner.

The Board of Directors, Judy Towill, Karen Lees, Shari Laszlo, Marguerite Hardin, Sylvia Shaw and Marti Sevier, steered all this activity. We thank the board; they thank everyone mentioned here, all members for their continuing support, and our staff people, Shelley and Jan. They also encourage all members to make an effort to attend the branch AGM on June 1, mentioning a celebratory cake!

BCSS North Shore Branch acknowledges the support of the Province of British Columbia, and our many generous donors.