

Dear members and friends,

We'd like to share an article with you that appeared in the Friday, January 8 issue of the *North Shore News*. The man interviewed in the article, Chris Watt, is the son of Steve Watt and brother-in-law of Joanna Watt, both board members of the North Shore Schizophrenia Society. We thought you would like to hear about Chris's recovery and clothing initiative for patients at the HOpe Centre, North Vancouver.

## **Former patient pays it forward to HOpe Centre**

*Dignity for those facing despair*

Brent Richter / *North Shore News* (reprinted with permission)  
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*Chris Watt shows on his phone the stacks of new pyjamas and toiletries he collected and recently dropped off for HOpe Centre patients with the support of his family including baby Logan, Morgan, Joanna, mom Liz, and dad Steve.*

Photo: Mike Wakefield, *North Shore News*

In a time of crisis, a little comfort can go a long way.

That's the spirit behind a series of donations being made to the HOpe Centre by a North Vancouver man who once had to contend with being committed to the psychiatric ward without so much as clothes that fit him.

Chris Watt recently dropped off more than \$1,400 of donated toiletries and pyjamas for patients who often find themselves left with neither when they were booked in.

"I had some mixed emotions dropping that stuff off just because of the memories of what I had to go through," he said.

Watt was a patient at the psych unit of Lions Gate before construction of the HOpe Centre began.

But at six-foot-five and 240 pounds, the hospital couldn't provide anything for Watt to wear as he began his treatment for bipolar disorder.

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“Bipolar people like to look very good. They like to dress well. They said, ‘Take off your clothes, you have to stay.’ I refused to put on the pyjamas because they were too small. They were like Capri shorts,” he said. “I got stuck with a needle. I woke up and cried putting on the pyjamas.”

Another of the patients in care at the time was an 18-year-old who stood six-foot-eight.

“You come to. After a week or maybe 10 days of treatment you’re walking around thinking ‘What the hell am I wearing? I’m freezing and it just doesn’t fit,’” Watt said.

With treatment and the support of his family, Watt has since righted his ship, becoming a top sales rep in his career and establishing a relationship and home in Lower Lonsdale.

He continues to collect donations for the folks who are dealing with mental illness without the supports that he had.

The plan is to make quarterly donations to make sure there’s always a supply available as new patients start their treatment.

“What I’d really love to get is shoes. I’d love to get new jeans and T-shirts,” said Watt.

“Some people are in there for 30 days or two months. They’re homeless. They don’t have family members. They’re given clothes that don’t fit them,” he said. “They need to look good. They need to feel good about themselves. That’s half the battle once you get out. There’s a lot of shame when you come out of there.”

More than offering some comfort and confidence back to people in treatment, Watt said he hopes his story will inspire others who face despair while facing mental illness.

“You have to eat. You have to sleep and you have to take your medication. If you do that, you’re going to be OK. There is a road you have to travel,” he said. “You can succeed with a mental disorder. You can do it. You just need to work hard and find support and have some goals.”

Donations of new clothes can be made by contacting Watt at [chris.watt@localsphere.com](mailto:chris.watt@localsphere.com).

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