



Public Education Evening Supported Employment



**Featuring Gill Walker, MSc.
Occupational Therapist,
North Shore Adult Community
Mental Health**

**Wednesday, November 27, 7:30 p.m.
Lions Gate Hospital Auditorium**

Individual Placement and Support on the North Shore

When individuals with a serious mental illness reach a point in their recovery where they're able to return to work, and choose to do so, where can they receive help in making the transition into the workforce?

At the next Public Education Evening, November 27, Gill Walker, an occupational therapist at North Shore Adult Mental Health, will discuss Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an established model of supported employment. This program focuses on the ill person's strengths and allows them to learn social and employment skills and earn a regular pay cheque while continuing to access mental health supports.

Gill has a keen interest in peer support programming, social enterprise, and employment. In 2009, she completed her MSc in Occupational Therapy at Brunel University in the UK. Since March 2013, she has been working in her new position as vocational counselor. For this presentation, Gill will review the IPS mode, as well as highlight her role in job development on the North Shore.



It's almost time for our
Christmas party,
Saturday, December 7!

See the back page for more
details and register today.

Letter from the President



The last time Herschel Hardin was on top of Grouse Mountain was fifty-plus years ago, when he was courting his wife, Marguerite. A lot has changed since then, but definitely not the height or grade of the mountain. Several months ago, when Herschel asked me if I would do the Grind with him (he for the first time), I expressed some reservation. "You know, Herschel, there is a reason why they call it the Grind". He said good-naturedly, "Oh, I'm *going* to do it. Not to worry." *Determination.*

This reminded me of my father, a long, lean farmer from Saskatchewan who, at the age of 72, tried downhill skiing for the first time. Now, at an older age than that, Herschel was about to do the Grind. *Courage.*

So off we set, on a fine morning in October. My philosophy for doing the Grind is that a slow start makes for a good finish. Several times I heard a voice behind me, "You can go a bit faster, Cheryl." Herschel cared about his time. *Spirited.*

As we passed the halfway mark (the worst was yet to come), I heard some pretty heavy breathing behind me. I will admit that I had some concerns. But we only stopped for very brief periods; we were going to make it to the top. *Perseverance.*

There was great satisfaction when we reached the top, but no bravado. This was just something that he had wanted to do. *Quiet resolve.*

I take my hat off to Herschel. And to Marguerite. These are the very same values that they drew upon when they joined the fledgling North Shore Schizophrenia Society in the early 1980s, and particularly when Marguerite established the Family Support Centre in 1995.

I'm reminded, too, that those qualities of resolve, determination, and courage are also the qualities family members draw on to help their ill loved ones through the trauma of falling ill and the anguished times that often go with it. My hat is off to all of you.

It has been a very busy time at the Family Support Centre over the last two months. At the end of September we bid farewell to our executive director, Cheryl Archer. Cheryl served the society well for over six years. We were sad to see her go and we wish her all the very best.

We have recently hired a new executive director, Nancy Ford. Nancy has an extensive background in the not-for-profit disability sector. She brings many strengths that will help us remain strong and relevant as we move forward.

There was a gap to fill before Nancy came on board, and Herschel stepped in to fill it. As acting executive director, he has worked incredibly hard over the last two months to steer the ship and keep the fires burning. The same determination and perseverance that got him to the top of the Grind has carried him, and

us, through the last couple of months.

Values are as important to us collectively as they are to individuals. The board and staff gathered at the beginning of November for a very worthwhile strategic planning session. Under the guidance of a dynamic facilitator, we discussed our mission and values, among other things.

We came up with a set of values over and above the ones I've already mentioned, things like compassion, empathy, and understanding. Those values, too, help us get to where we want to be. They will be up on our website in January. I invite you to have a look.



Membership Renewal



The end of the year is fast approaching, and once again it's time to renew your membership.

If you received a yellow slip with your printed copy of *The Notepad* or a renewal slip in PDF format with your email version, please fill out and return it to the Family Support Centre with your membership dues, still just \$20 per year.

Couples are encouraged to maintain two separate memberships, especially if you are already planning to include a donation of \$20 or more with your renewal. We have over 200 members this year, the most we've ever had, making us stronger than we have ever been before!

Holiday season office closures

Please note the Family Support Centre will be closed on **Tuesday, December 24** and **Wednesday, December 25** for Christmas, and on **Wednesday, January 1** for New Year's Day.

December Support Group special meeting date

Please note that the December meeting of the Family Support Group will be on the **second Wednesday** of the month, **December 11**. Meetings will resume on the third Wednesday of each month, following the regular schedule, in 2014.

Living in the “Little Pink House of Secrets”: Debbie Palmer, on Growing Up with a Mother With a Serious Mental Illness

“I’m here to tell you . . . and my mom wants to tell you.”

With these words, Debbie Palmer broke the silence surrounding mental illness in her family and launched NSSS’s first Public Education Evening of the fall, “Tin Gods and a Box of Q&A,” held September 25, at the Lions Gate Hospital Auditorium.

Debbie’s touching account of growing up with a mother with a serious mental illness was inspired by her discovery, following her mother’s death, of 30 years’ worth of her mother’s journals. Debbie’s mother wrote obsessively, describing the terrors of her inner life. She was particularly fixated on the “Tin Gods” – her name for the entities she believed were spying on her every move, tormenting her, and trying to ruin her life.

In the presentation, Debbie refers to her childhood home as the “little pink house of secrets.” Her mother raised three children almost entirely on her own, worked multiple jobs, and later put herself through nursing school and began a new career.

Nobody ever spoke of the larger truth, of her mother’s debilitating mood swings, when she’d lock herself in her bedroom, crying, or run off for hours or days, leaving her young children by themselves. She became angry easily and was frequently paranoid and delusional. In her mind, the Tin Gods were always following her, keeping her down.

Debbie recalls being 10 years old when she first realized she couldn’t rely on her mother to tell the truth. Her mother had never liked Debbie, for no reason Debbie could understand. When her mother entrusted her with a secret that Debbie later discovered was based on delusions and not reality, she understood something was very wrong.

As the years passed, her mother was hospitalized as many as a dozen times. During one stay, she was given a diagnosis of schizophrenia.



By searching through the many boxes of writing her mother left behind, Debbie had initially hoped to find more answers about her mother’s illness. Instead, she found something else – compassion for her mother, whom she feels she understands now a lot more clearly.

Despite the severity of her mother’s illness and the pain it had caused her, and by extension, those around her, her mother nevertheless managed to accomplish much in her lifetime.

“I always thought she was a horror,” says Debbie, “but she was a hero.”



We’d love to hear your suggestions

Do you have ideas for speakers or presentations you would like to see at upcoming Public Education evenings? If so, you have three ways to let us know! You can place your ideas in our Suggestion Box at the next Public Education Evening on November 27, call us at 604-926-0856, or email your suggestions to info@northshoreschizophrenia.org.

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; Resort Municipality of Whistler; Lynn Valley, Ambleside Tiddlycove, Mt. Seymour, and Capilano Lions Clubs; North Shore Rotary Clubs; Canada Post Foundation for Mental Illness and Mental Health; West Vancouver, Squamish, and Whistler Community Foundations; Lynn Valley Legion; Seymour Golf & Country Club; Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP; and our many other generous donors.

Notes from the Sea to Sky

NSSS partnership and awareness activities

Sea-to-Sky coordinator Christine Buttkus met with School District 48 counsellors and psychologists, and continues to host monthly meetings with the Mental Health Partnership Table and School Community Partnership. Christine also volunteers her time on the Suicide Awareness and Prevention Working Group, Squamish.

Events at Mental Illness Awareness Week

In October, Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) included a proclamation by Squamish mayor and city council. NSSS and community partners facilitated presentations to nearly 700 secondary school students in Whistler and Pemberton. NSSS's Partnership Panel gave two classroom presentations at Whistler Secondary School and a presentation on depression with Amanda Shipeley. NSSS partners were Communities That Care (C6), Howe Sound Women's Centre, Lil'wat Nation, MCFD, RCMP, School District 48, Vancouver Coastal Health Public Health Nursing, Sea to Sky Community Services Society, Whistler Community Services Society, Young Life, and Dr. Kathryn Wynn. Special thanks to the Whistler Public Library and Canada Post for hosting our display; to Amanda Schell, Dave Anderson, Sharon Shrul, and to all families who help throughout the year.

Public education session

In October, NSSS partnered with Squamish Public Library for a public education session, *Mental Illness: Recovery and Treatment*, with Squamish residents Carole Caddey and Amanda Schell, who shared their experiences living with serious mental illness as a family member and a person with an illness respectively, and with regional psychiatrist Dr. Apu Chakraborty.

Upcoming presentations

November 19: NSSS will take part in a presentation for parents, *Issues in Adolescence*, at Don Ross Middle School, on serious mental illness and family involvement.



November 20: NSSS will co-host the comedy troupe *Stand Up for Mental Health*, at the Whistler Conference Centre.

Thanks to the Resort Municipality of Whistler and Whistler Community Services Society for their support.

November 21: An NSSS exhibit will be up at the annual Jill Ackhurst Welcome Dinner, Whistler, that sees almost 800 attendees each year.

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.
or by appointment

North Shore/Lower Mainland: 604-926-0856
Sea to Sky: 604-849-2252

www.northshoreschizophrenia.org

info@northshoreschizophrenia.org

Facebook: [northshore.schizophrenia](https://www.facebook.com/northshore.schizophrenia)

Twitter: @NSSSoc

Monthly Support Meetings

Come share your questions, concerns, and experiences with family members.

Support group meetings are held each month in West Vancouver and Squamish for family members and close friends of people who have serious mental illnesses.

For information on the West Vancouver group, call 604-926-0856. For Squamish, email seatosky@northshoreschizophrenia.org.

Families Helping Families

Thank you to our many friends and supporters. Your donations are appreciated.

Tax receipts will be issued for all contributions.

Notes from the Family Support Centre

NSSS hires new executive director

As we go to press, NSSS has hired Nancy Ford as its new executive director. Nancy has worked with non-profits for many years. More about her will be featured in January's issue of the *Notepad*. Her first day at the Family Support Centre was Wednesday, November 13. Welcome, Nancy!

Support for Laura's Law in California

At the request of a family member, Candy DeWitt, in Alameda County, northern California, Herschel Hardin, NSSS vice president, has written a letter to the county's Board of Supervisors concerning mental health legislation. Candy is currently leading a campaign for the implementation of Laura's Law, a provision allowing for community treatment orders (mandatory treatment plans) for the very seriously ill who lack insight into their illness.

The enabling law was already passed by the state government, but requires county-by-county approval to be put into practice. Candy contacted Herschel to ask for a letter of support after reading his 1993 article "Uncivil Liberties," making the case for involuntary admission where needed.

Although it was written 20 years ago, "Uncivil Liberties" remains just as relevant today, and has been reprinted and cited widely in Canada and the U.S. To find it on the NSSS website, please go to the "Legislative and Government" page and scroll down for the link.

Reps attend VCH privacy workshop

NSSS board members Janet Blue and Lisa Stringle were among approximately 100 attendees at a VCH workshop and panel discussion September 23, on privacy and confidentiality. VCH unveiled two new policies: Family Involvement with Mental Health and Addictions Services, and Release of Information to Law Enforcement. The new VCH policy implicitly states that family members are to be included as part of the treatment team to ensure continuity of care, with the information sharing that goes with it.

Training sessions held for new support team

Under the guidance of support coordinator Marguerite Hardin, a new team of support workers has started training to assist with support case work. Two day-long sessions facilitated by Herschel Hardin were held in September and October, covering the basics of support work, including crisis management, the Mental Health Act, and issues around

confidentiality. The trainees are Karen Brown, Genevieve Smith, Lisa Stringle, Connie Chung, and Janet Blue.

Board and staff holds strategic planning session

NSSS board and staff held a strategic planning session on November 2, facilitated by Karen Harrison, to review the environment in which the Family Support Centre operates and determine priorities. This is a regular session held every two years.



Upcoming Family-to-Family classes for North Shore and Sea to Sky

The next session of NSSS's 12-week flagship education course covering all aspects of serious mental illness will begin Tuesday, January 21, 2014, on the North Shore, and in early February in Squamish (exact date to be decided). If you or a family member you know would like to take the course, please contact the Family Support Centre for more information or to register.

Research Brief

New treatment creates virtual representation of

internal voices: Researchers at the King's College London Institute of Psychiatry are testing a new treatment called Avatar Therapy, which gives patients with schizophrenia an opportunity to control the voices of their hallucinations as a means of combating them.

Researchers presented 16 patients with a computer-generated avatar that represents a distressing face. The patient customized the face, hair, and pitch of its voice. In another room, a doctor then brought the avatar to life on-screen, replicating the frightening things the patients regularly hear from the voices. Patients were encouraged to talk back to their virtual tormenters, to tell the face they don't believe what it's saying, or that it holds no power over them.

After up to seven 30-minute sessions each, most of the study's participants said they heard voices less frequently or felt less distress when they did. Further studies are underway, involving 142 patients.

Source: Wellcome Trust, May 2013

NSSS hosts a farewell party for Cheryl Archer



All good things must come to an end, and so with friends, cake, and flowers on hand, NSSS bid a fond farewell, on September 27, to Cheryl Archer, who has held the position of NSSS executive director for the past six years.

During her time at NSSS, Cheryl oversaw the day-to-day management of the Centre, its staff, and volunteers, and has represented NSSS and the families it serves at a wide variety of community events and fundraisers.

From ensuring all aspects of daily business were taken care of, to driving the car in the Canada Day parade, to advocating in the media on behalf of family members of those with serious mental illness, Cheryl has represented NSSS in many ways, with great dedication and professionalism.

We wish Cheryl the best in her future endeavors, and thank her again for a job well done.

Above: Cheryl with members Marti Sevier (far left), John Nixon, and Joyce Robinson (right)

Below: Cheryl Zipper, NSSS president, presents Cheryl with a gorgeous bouquet of flowers as appreciation for her hard work over the years



You are cordially invited to the NSSS Christmas Banquet

Saturday, December 7, 2013

St. David's United Church
1525 Taylor Way, West Vancouver

Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6 p.m.

**To reserve your seat, please call 604-926-0856 or email info@northshoreschizophrenia.org
by 5 p.m. Monday, December 2**



Guests will enjoy a roast beef dinner with all the trimmings, musical entertainment by mezzo-soprano Christina Kent, and a visit from a jolly old character with a sleigh full of gifts!

There is no charge to attend for people with any serious mental illness or family members.

Registration is required, so please make sure to RSVP by **5 p.m., Monday, December 2.**

Many volunteers are needed to make this event a success—drivers, servers, helpers to set up and tear down, shoppers, and gift wrappers!

If you are interested in helping out, please get in touch with Susanna at the Centre, 604-926-0856 or by email at susanna@northshoreschizophrenia.org.