

The Notepad



Supporting families dealing with serious mental illness

November 2014, No. 136

Public Education Lecture Series

Through the Mental Health System—A Personal Story



Recovery and Hope in Action: A Service Provider Shares Her Story of Living with Mental Illness

Debbie Sesula wears many hats in the peer-support community. She's program coordinator for North Shore Adult Community Mental Health Services Peer Support Group, education coordinator for the Pacific Bipolar Foundation and Canadian Mental Health Association, and a member of Peer Support Accreditation and Certification Canada's Certification Committee.

She has also received numerous awards along the way, including CMHA's Consumer Involvement Award, Coast Mental Health's Courage to Come Back Award, and the Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Resiliency Award.

But before she took on the rewarding challenge of peer support work, and before she was recognized for her contributions and personal resilience, she was part of the system in a different way. For years, she struggled to come to terms with her own illness—a devastating depression, psychosis, and persistent suicidal ideation, symptoms eventually diagnosed as bipolar disorder.

Her story is one of perseverance in the face of serious mental illness, with a unique insider's perspective of the system, as someone who has not only sought services, but who helps provide them. NSSS is pleased to welcome Debbie as the presenter of the next Public Education Lecture Series, Wednesday, November 26, 2014, at 7:30 p.m. in the Lions Gate Hospital Auditorium.

A short question-and-answer period will follow Debbie's presentation. This is a free event, no registration required. □

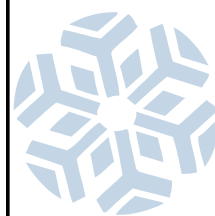
Featuring:

Debbie Sesula, MA

Peer Support Program Coordinator,
North Shore Adult Community Mental Health
Services

Wednesday, November 26, 2014
Lions Gate Hospital Auditorium
7:30 p.m.

Supported by



It's almost time for our
annual Christmas party,

Saturday, December 6!

See the back page for more
details, and register today!



Welcome

The North Shore Schizophrenia Society is one of many organizations and agencies on the North Shore and in the Lower Mainland working to improve the lives of those with mental illness. There is a broad range of ways to help, and there is a broad range within the spectrum of mental illness itself – from very serious mental illness all the way to issues

of mental health. It is important for a small organization such as ours to maintain our focus, which is on serious mental illness, and not spread ourselves too thin.

While maintaining that focus, however, it is becoming increasingly important for us to collaborate with others who are striving to achieve similar objectives. There is great value in synergy, as articulated by Bill Clinton in his quote, “I’ve long believed that building networks of creative cooperation among governments, the private sector and non-profits is the key to overcoming the challenges, both great and small, of our newly interdependent world”. We have been striving, particularly in the last year, to reach out to other agencies to build relationships, and in some cases, partner in common initiatives.

In so doing we have raised our own profile with other agencies, and this has opened up opportunities for us to work with others. For example, as I mentioned in the last *Notepad*, we have partnered with the New View Society in the Tri-Cities and Rain City Housing in Vancouver, to deliver the Family-to-Family education course to families in those communities.

Vancouver Coastal Health has moved in significant ways toward greater involvement of families in the treatment of the mentally ill. We have met with many of the staff of VCH, and given presentations to the social workers both at Lions Gate Hospital and in Squamish. Dr.

Apu Chakraborty has invited us to speak at the Breakfast Club series at Lions Gate Hospital in January. Dr. Chakraborty and Dr. Burgmann gave a very well-received presentation at our lecture in September. We hope to become involved in the programming of the Patient Resource Facility at the HOPE Center.

We have forged closer relationships with the Community Foundation of Whistler and the Resort Municipality of Whistler, and given presentations to Employee Assistance groups in Whistler. In Whistler, Squamish and on the North Shore we have been furthering our relationship with the RCMP and municipal police forces.

We have been reaching out to form closer relationships with various doctors, and we are exploring common objectives that we share with the many other service providers on the North Shore. Each organization has its own mission and mandate; however, we are all working toward the common goal of supporting those with serious mental illness and nurturing mental health.

The underlying belief in the amount of time and effort we put into forging relationships is that collaboration is the key to providing better support for both those with mental illness and their families. We believe that our small organization and the families we serve have much to offer. If we have a place at the table when it comes to policy and delivery of services, we can continue to have a profound impact on the welfare of our sons, daughters, and relatives.

I salute the energy and commitment of our Executive Director, our wonderful staff, members of the Board and many member volunteers who are contributing daily to further collaboration with the other agencies who are doing the same.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Cheryl Zipper".

Cheryl Zipper
NSSS President

Renew Your Membership and Stay Connected with NSSF



Membership remains the best way of keeping in touch with what's happening, and helps strengthen our work with families. We value our members and encourage anyone interested in our work and in helping to alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia and other serious mental illness to become a member and renew membership each year.

As a member, you receive *The Notepad* and *NSSF Advocacy Bulletin*, notices on current events, invitations to special events, and more. Membership also allows you to vote for the directors of the Society at its annual general meeting.

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.

We would like to thank you for your continued support. This year we have over 200 members, making us stronger than we've ever been! □



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 and membership are appreciated. Tax receipts will be issued for all contributions.

The Future of Mental Health on the North Shore: “We have to work together – it’s a no-brainer.”



Dr. Allan Burgmann takes questions from the audience on the new HOpe Centre, now open on the North Shore. Photo credit: *North Shore News*

An ambitious topic – the future of mental health on the North Shore – drew a standing-room-only crowd to the NSSS Public Education Lecture evening, Wednesday, September 24, at the Lions Gate Hospital Auditorium. Dr. Apu Chakraborty, North Shore Adult Community Mental Health, and Dr. Allan Burgmann, Acute Psychiatric Services, LGH, fielded questions from the audience and offered their perspectives on our current mental health services and what in direction they might be headed.

Discussion ranged from the design, function, and operation of the new \$62-million, multi-purpose HOpe Centre at Lions Gate Hospital, to a wish list of improvements in the community for those with serious mental illness, including urgent or assertive outreach, better and more stable housing, and comprehensive services for youth with concurrent disorders in their late teens and early 20s.

“We must forge dialogues,” Dr. Chakraborty said, if we are to build a continuum of support and continually address what is and isn’t working. He encouraged open conversations between families and the healthcare system, and between the system and the many agencies and organizations devoted to helping those with mental illness and their families.

Dr. Burgmann, as both a psychiatrist and a family member himself, reiterated this need for stronger communication, something he feels is reflected in the design of the HOpe Centre’s outpatient area, on the main floor.

“It’s a symbol of mental health,” he said. Large, inviting, and light-filled, its seamless layout creates opportunities

for people to come together and find more ways to speak freely about their individual situations.

“Mental health isn’t in hiding there,” Dr. Chakraborty said. “HOpe puts mental health right in the middle of the community we serve.”

The HOpe Centre unites many community services under one roof: the 26-bed inpatient psychiatric unit formerly housed in the Activation Building at Lions Gate Hospital (fourth floor), the Djavad Mowafaghian UBC Medical Education Centre, a clinical research trials unit (both second floor), North Shore Adult Community Mental Health Services, a resource centre on mental health, a café run entirely as supported employment for those with mental illness looking to re-enter the workforce (all main floor), and BC Ambulance services (basement).

Planners collaborated with local RCMP to ensure that acute care is a locked ward. Unlike the old system, where no single rooms existed and patients were often shuffled around, the room patients receive on admission



Dr. Burgmann and Dr. Apu Chakraborty

remains their own for the duration of their stay, with each room having its own bathroom. The floor’s layout is symmetrical with identical lounge and common areas, as well as areas allowing for light-level changes, for those with sensitivities.

While these changes can greatly improve a patient’s quality of life, the provincial government refused funding for additional beds, budgeting only for bed replacement. Drs. Chakraborty and Burgmann are hoping acute care will eventually expand onto the third floor, now allotted to social work and recreational use, creating beds for youth, and possibly an Early Psychosis Intervention program; older adults; or psychiatric assessments. The latter might one day eliminate the need for patients to wait in Emergency and instead go straight to HOpe.

But the new building is not just about delivering critical care. To consider the next generation of healthcare professionals, the second-floor medical training centre will educate students in all specialties, including an expanded residency program for GPs, something not seen on the North Shore in a decade. Dr. Chakraborty already sends his residents to Dr. Dean Brown's low-barrier Health Connections Clinic, in North Vancouver, to receive a broad education in health concerns facing those with mental illness and addiction.

"Many fundamental, searching questions come from medical students," Dr. Chakraborty said. "It keeps things fresh to have students around, thinking about how things can evolve and stopping cultures from becoming further entrenched in mental healthcare."

Speaking to the wish list of improvements, Dr. Burgmann has an urgent outreach service, a modest version

of Vancouver's Car 87 program, as a high priority. Dr. Chakraborty would like to see a shift to more patient-centred care, though a stronger acute home-based treatment or assertive community treatment program would need to be in place to ensure people don't fall through the cracks. Huge service gaps for teens and those in their early 20s with concurrent disorders also need addressing, with some good news in the form of two new youth psychiatrists set to begin work on the North Shore by January 2015.

As audience members stayed to talk and debate how best to approach these issues long after the presentation ended, it seems Dr. Chakraborty's philosophy is working: "Having frank conversations is how you keep advancing in mental healthcare." □

Notes from Sea to Sky



NSSS support coordinator Marguerite Hardin (centre) with Squamish Family-to-Family teachers Christine Kelly (left) and Laurice Martin (right, also a support group facilitator).

Monthly support groups underway in Squamish and Whistler: A supportive gathering of family members is at the heart of a peer organization, to share experiences, offer empathy, and provide practical advice and insights.

In Squamish, NSSS support group facilitators Laurice Martin, Susanne Mouris, and Sue Puchmayr are working with NSSS Outreach Coordinator Martina Page to bring families together on the second Wednesday of each month, at 7 p.m.

In Whistler, facilitator Lynn Spark, is working with NSSS Outreach Coordinator Chris Dickenson, for meetings held the third Wednesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m.

Facilitators are in close contact with Support Coordinator Marguerite Hardin, to ensure families have access to one-on-one support and other resources, if needed.

To register for either Sea to Sky support group, please call 1-888-681-1999.

Notes from the Family Support Centre



Share DDB event names NSSS as chosen charity:

The award-winning marketing firm DDB Canada named NSSS as their chosen charity for a fundraising event, *Share DDB*, November 19, held from 5 – 9 p.m. at Heritage Hall (3102 Main St.), in Vancouver. *Share DDB* is a

silent auction of art and other creative endeavors produced by DDB staff, clients, suppliers, family, and friends.

Half the proceeds from this year's auction will benefit NSSS. Up for grabs was a wide range of items, anything from large-scale photography and oil paintings, to mix tapes, to brownies and other baked goods.

Cheryl Zipper, NSSS president, spoke at the event. Laurice Martin, support group facilitator in Squamish, works for DDB.

More details will follow in the January issue of *The Notepad*.

Families Helping Families: Why Family-to-Family Makes a Difference for Those Coping with a Relative's Serious Mental Illness



The 2014 North Shore, Vancouver, and Tri-Cities Family-to-Family teachers

Halina Haboosheh credits the Family-to-Family education program with helping her through a devastating family crisis. She took the course seven years ago and was inspired to teach it soon after.

“The course is empowering,” Halina says. “The family finally gets much-needed information, presented to them by other family members—people no different from themselves. Becoming a teacher is a way to share this information *with* others, but also allows you to gain a lot of information and support *from* others.”

This year Halina and co-teacher Herschel Hardin are leading a class in Vancouver, the first time Family-to-Family has been available in that city. This is made possible by a grant from the Vancouver Foundation to expand the program into Vancouver and the Tri-Cities. NSSS also continues to offer it on the North Shore and Sea to Sky (see next page for 2015 start dates).

The high demand for the program in all locations speaks to the deep need families have for comprehensive information on all aspects of serious mental illness, from symptomology, crisis management, and advocacy, as well as the opportunity to connect meaningfully with other families in similar situations.

“The openness, sharing, and relationships that have emerged and evolved through this learning community has exceeded my expectations,” says Lynda, a Tri-Cities course participant. “You really feel supported and you realize you aren’t alone. You don’t have to go through it alone.”

Carol, a participant in the Vancouver class, was surprised to learn how many family members struggle daily with their loved ones.

“I saw I’m not the only one facing problems, and I’m interested in finding out about their experiences and the

resources they’ve found. I’m starting to better understand and accept my ill relative’s behavior, to not panic or blame anyone for what is happening.”

The growing sense of strength that many families feel is not uncommon as the course progresses. Tri-Cities teacher Lisa Stringle, working with co-teacher Nancy Ford, is always impressed by the changes she sees in participants as they move through the course.

“I see a positive shift in how participants talk about their situation at the beginning of the course versus the end,” she says. “There is much more confidence in their voice and actions.”

Lisa began teaching two years ago, after a family crisis prompted her to learn more about dealing with mental illness.

“The amount of information in the course is amazing. After taking the course, I knew I wanted to pass that information on to others,” she says. “Every time I go through the course as a teacher I pick up on different elements that continue to help my own family.”

As families know, navigating the landscape of serious mental illness is challenging. Dennis, a Vancouver course participant, says, “Experiencing a family member’s mental illness is a lot like learning a new language and dealing with different expectations and outcomes. I would encourage families to recognize they need new tools and better understanding of mental illness to help them cope.”

Family-to-Family pulls mental illness out of the closet. Taking the course can be a means of coming to terms with the illness; teaching it is a way to give back to others, to those who may not have known help is available, or realize yet that they, too, can make a difference.

“Families shouldn’t hesitate when it comes to the course,” says Carol. “Be part of it—the faster, the better.” □

“You feel supported and you realize you aren’t alone. You don’t have to go through it alone.”

- Lynda, participant

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; Seymour Golf and Country Club; Lynn Valley, Ambleside Tiddlycove, Mt. Seymour, and Capilano Lions Clubs; Vancouver Foundation; West Vancouver Community Foundation, Squamish Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Whistler; North Shore Rotary Clubs; Lynn Valley Legion; Jill Ackhurst Foundation; Fulmer Capital Partners; Margitta’s Flowers; Terra International Food; and our many other generous donors.



Family-to-Family Education Program Teacher Training

**Weekend of January 9—11, 2015
North Vancouver**

As a family member of someone with a mental illness, your experiences, understanding, and insights already make you an ideal teacher for other families going through similar situations.

By becoming a Family-to-Family teacher, you are helping to empower families to provide the best care for their ill relatives and themselves.

“If you’re ever intimidated by the thought of teaching,” says a new Family-to-Family teacher in Virginia, “Remember, 4,000 other teachers felt the same way too.”

We would love to have you join us for the upcoming teacher-training session.

For more information and to register, please contact Melanie at 604-926-0856 or melanie@northshoreschizophrenia.org.

Family-to-Family Education Program

Winter 2015 Course Available in Four Locations:

- **North Shore (North Vancouver)**
North Shore Disabilities Resource Centre
3158 Mountain Hwy
January 27—April 14
- **Vancouver**
RainCity Housing
5616 Fraser St. (at West 41st Ave.)
February 10—April 28
- **Tri-Cities (Port Coquitlam)**
New View Housing Society
2050 Mary Hill Rd.
February 10—April 28
- **Squamish**
Sea to Sky Community Services
38144 Second Ave.
February 10—April 28

Held every Tuesday for 12 consecutive weeks,
7-9:30 p.m.

Topics covered include:

- Symptoms of the illnesses (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder) and their biological causes
- Medications used to treat these brain disorders
- Problem solving and how to cope; communication with someone who is ill
- Advice on dealing with the system
- Looking after yourself as a caregiver

The course is taught by trained family members who themselves have ill relatives and many years’ experience dealing with the system. It will be of particular interest to families whose relatives have recently been diagnosed.

For information and to register, please call:
604-926-0856 | Course details:
www.northshoreschizophrenia.org/education.htm



**You are cordially
invited to the NSSS
Christmas Banquet**

Saturday, December 6, 2014

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


**Doors open at 5:30 p.m.
Dinner at 6 p.m.**

Enjoy a roast beef dinner with all the trimmings, seasonal musical entertainment, and a visit from a jolly old character with a sleigh full of gifts!

This is a **FREE EVENT** for people with any serious mental illness or family members.



Registration is required. To reserve your seat, please call 604-926-0856 or email info@northshoreschizophrenia.org by Monday, December 1, at 5 p.m.



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, contact Susanna at 604-926-0856 or susanna@northshoreschizophrenia.org.

