

REASONS FOR HOPE



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MANITOBA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Editor's note: This year's Journey of Hope Walk was another rousing success. While so many people must be congratulated for their fund raising efforts, we would like to pay special tribute to one – Tracy Stople, who, along with her Mother and family, raised a whopping \$4,460! Tracy has been a family care giver for many years – her Mother, Jean Stople, lives with Schizo-affective Disorder – and she wanted to share her story with readers of our Newsletter. Here it is, in her own words...

A Labour of Love – Tracy Stople Raises Over \$4,660 in Honour of Her Mother

A long time ago, when I was nine years old, my Mother came into my bedroom and quite calmly informed me that there were people in my closet and we couldn't let them out. I didn't know at the time that she was having her first psychotic episode. Now, 36 years later, my mother, Jean Stople, is enjoying her life and participating in such activities as the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society (MSS) Woman's Group which meets every Thursday afternoon.

Having Schizo-affective Disorder, my Mother has had to endure major struggles and hardships most of her life. As a daughter, I have witnessed the effects of this disease on her relationships, not only within our immediate family but with all the people she has contact with.

This year, my mother turned 80 years old and I wanted to do something special to honour her. She has amazing inner strength, is exceptionally intelligent, and loves her family deeply. However, due to her illness, it has been difficult for her to socially connect, however she loves to be around people. So I decided to organize an 80th birthday "bash" for her and my Dad, who also turns 80 this year.

I also decided to participate in the MSS Journey of Hope Walk on September 13. In so doing, I made up my mind to set another goal - to be the top canvasser this year at the Walk so that my Mom's picture could be in the newsletter. I wanted to show the whole world how proud I was of her.

As anyone who has a family member with a major mental disorder can attest, life can be quite a roller coaster ride. To this day, my father is still emotionally distraught over my mother's illness. As it is very painful for him, he prefers not to acknowledge it. However, he has been next to her side the whole time and that in itself speaks volumes. They are practically inseparable and he will do anything for her. He has provided her with a safe home and has never abandoned her. He is truly a hero and I am also very proud of him.

As for myself, the hardships I have had to endure with my mother's illness have taught me many valuable skills such as compassion, resilience, patience, and independence. I have



Tracy Stople (centre), this year's Journey of Hope Walk top fundraiser with her Mom Jean and Dad Gerald

developed a real understanding of what people with a mental illness have to face everyday. Stigma is a challenge for both the consumer and family members and hopefully one day stigma can be eradicated from society. All individuals, especially ones with a mental illness, should be treated fairly and with respect. My mother contributes to society in her own way each and every day.

I never realized what a challenge it would be to raise money for the Schizophrenia Journey of Hope Walk. I knew I would have to probably organize a few fund raisers but I was not prepared for the results. My first fund raiser was a Magic Show. I thought I had all the bases covered. I was convinced that with all the advertising I did, I would fill the Community Centre with over 200 people. A big oops – only 50 people came.

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Recovery Through Art

Editor's Note: Laurie Green is a local artist who has been actively involved with Winnipeg-based Artbeat Studio a mental health consumer initiated, peer directed, and recovery oriented program. Here is her story...

I only have praise for Artbeat Studio and the Bart family who work tirelessly to ensure Artbeat's continued success. I was fortunate to have been chosen as a member of the fourth group that started August, 2006.

There was exceptional support and encouragement from Nigel Bart, the Studio Facilitator; Lucille Bart, the Director; and the eight other artists who were part of my cohort. We worked cooperatively and shared our ideas and areas of artistic expertise with each other. In addition to having a creative aptitude that artists like to explore, one of the additional criteria for being selected to Artbeat is that applicants must be living with some form of mental illness.

As we progressed through our term, it seemed we began to identify ourselves more as artists than as a group of mentally ill individuals. Our self-esteem increased as our strengths were validated and encouraged.

Physically leaving the studio at 62 Albert St. did not mean the end of our artistic growth. It had just been our introduction! For me and other alumni it gave us the confidence to pursue other artistic endeavours.

In March, 2008 we had our first alumni show at cre8ery. Twenty five alumni participated with over 100 pieces for show and sale. Last fall, a few alumni were able to secure shared studio space at 444 Kennedy in exchange for giving workshops to the tenants of the apartment building. Also, a few other alumni began working at "the Edge" at 611 Main St. Two other alumni artists recently moved into studio space at cre8ery on Adelaide Street. A few other alumni and I began taking part in activities at Art from the Heart. No matter where we end up, we have a common bond as alumni of Artbeat Studio. Many of us return to visit or volunteer because we believe in the philosophy of "recovery through creative endeavor."



Bradley is performing at his group's show July, 2008. It took him 20 minutes to paint Jimi Hendrix while listening to his music.

About Artbeat Studio

Artbeat Studio is a mental health consumer initiated, peer directed, and recovery oriented program. This community-based studio accommodates artists whose mental health, social connection, and income make it impracticable for them, individually, to acquire a workspace where they might advance their artistic technique safely and securely. The artists are supported and mentored in managing their own workplace, production, and marketing within the operating parameters of the studio.



Artbeat Studio founders Lucille and Nigel Bart

Artbeat Studio accommodates a group of nine artist applicants per six-month period. Visit Artbeat at www.artbeatstudio.ca . ■

Lilly

*Moving Lives
Forward Scholarship*

The Manitoba Schizophrenia Society was pleased to partner once again with Eli Lilly Canada Inc. to offer the "Lilly Moving Lives Forward Scholarship" in Manitoba. The purpose of the Scholarship is to provide financial assistance to persons with severe and persistent mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder enabling them to participate in a range of eligible educational programs. The Scholarship is intended to help such individuals acquire the educational and vocational skills they need to move their lives forward and realize their full potential.

The following are recipients of this year's scholarship fund. Congratulations to: Barbara Chatelain, Grant Funk, Chris Gauthier, Chris Nethery, Tannis Olson, Tyrone Otte, Brandi Randell, and three individuals who wish to remain anonymous.