



# THE SHARING TREE

*For men and women living with mental illness*

**“Recovery is the awakening of hopes and dreams. The recovery process involves gaining the knowledge to reclaim one’s power and achieve one’s desires by learning to make choices that bring strength rather than harm. Recovery involves living a meaningful life with the capacity to love and be loved.”-Telecare Corp**

Issue 1, July August 2011

Editor: Jo-Ann Paley

*The New Newsletter is available on the MSS Website at [www.mss.mb.ca](http://www.mss.mb.ca)*

## **A Reason to Hope, the Means to Cope**

By Jo-Ann Paley, Editor

It is time for a change. This tag line says it best. We are going into a new era of mental health in the world as the Internet brings us closer together. What with the new, and now operational mental health courts, and the new hospital emergency wards just for people with mental health issues, mental fitness seems to be the new buzz words. As well, this tag line “A Reason to Hope, The Means to Cope” explains best our theme of launching a new newsletter and the purpose it is involved in. Amazingly more people are in recovery today than ever before.

I would like to introduce you to our new newsletter called “*The Sharing Tree*.” It took a lot of suggestions and thought to choose this name. The name for the new newsletter was inspired by Debora Haliburton’s suggestions. The new focus which is totally different from our previous newsletter, “*The Sensitive Scoop*”, is not only for women but for men as well. I am so excited to see it begin. This newsletter gives more isolated people a second chance at relationships and a way to express their thoughts so that they can grow and heal. You, the readers, can read and then respond, anonymously perhaps, with your opinion

about the information in this newsletter, as often as you want to or perhaps you’d like to share a similar experience. Sharing personal stories is the key, hence the name “The Sharing Tree.”

Mental health recovery is for everyone. We all need a chance to respond so we can help each other grow. It’s your time to assert yourself, express your feelings and thoughts and begin to feel stronger. Every story has a positive side and positive thoughts are much more helpful than negative ones. However, true stories can help in amazing ways we may not be used to or expect.

Submissions we receive from you will speak for themselves in that the self respect you will gain having your story heard will give a new meaning to your life. You may want to share different sides of your experiences with us a number of times. This can initiate personal focusing which could help to promote your personal healing by explaining it better to yourself so you can understand more clearly exactly what you are going through. A discovery of your natural writing talents, that you may never have realized you had, could also make you happier. Writing about deeply personal feelings, hurts or whatever experiences you chose

to explore could help you in your personal recovery process whether you submit something or not. Perhaps it will also help you to start your own personal healing journal.

The newsletter shape that is occurring will be as unique and individual as the writers who contribute to it. Thanks to Debora Haliburton and Danny Van Koughnet for their contributions to this first issue of “*The Sharing Tree*.” Danny’s story has helped me to begin healing in a way no one else has. This can happen to you too. Or, just share with us as we launch our new newsletter, with anything your heart desires, related to mental health and illness issues. We look forward to the creativity that will be happening. So I encourage you to be a part of it.

Submissions can be relayed first hand or anonymously. We accept poems, personal stories, opinion pieces, photography or artwork. Mental fitness – coping and hoping! Sharing and caring! It is not necessary to have a mental illness to submit. If you are a family member, a worker, or someone with firsthand experience, we would like to hear from you.

Suggested topics include: parenting, adolescence, childhood, and etcetera, or if one author’s viewpoint makes for a good read I may do a brief review of it and ask for your views on the topic. If space allows we will endeavour to print what is sent to us. We reserve the right to edit all entries but we will not change the meaning of material received. Please keep sending in your articles. This will keep our newsletters happening!

Our newsletter’s new look begins with people responding by sharing new experiences. If we don’t receive submissions, we may choose a topic for the next issue. Please assist us as we endeavor to find what process will work best for our readers and ourselves.

Perhaps you would like to write a response about the submissions in the previous newsletter. Please give us your feedback about these ideas. Do they work for you? We would like to know if you are presently involved in a program or group. We need your assistance in this awesome opportunity of transition. Learning to express yourselves and developing your writing skills may help to speed your recovery. This process includes improvement in mental fitness as you become frequent editors of your own work.

Mental illness can affect anyone and appears in many different ways. Be open to new ideas and focus on what works best for you. Sending replies to someone’s story or making up a

new article can both work. You may become a mentor or make many new friends along the way. We look forward to the creativity that will be happening. So, be a part of it, and make history.

I’m looking forward to hearing from you. Please email your submission to [Karen@mss.mb.ca](mailto:Karen@mss.mb.ca) or send it to the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society, 100-4 Fort Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3C 1C4. Attention: Jo-Ann Paley, Editor.

### **My Woven Stool**

There is a stool that I have come to love and I’m glad I kept it. I made it over 30 years ago in Day Treatment at the Health Sciences Centre after my first psychotic episode. That was the darkest period of my life as I fell into the deepest depression I had ever experienced or thought possible. So I have had conflicting feelings when gazing at this stool over the years but just recently I became pleasantly conscious of something I hadn’t noticed before: how simplistically elegant, sturdy, and well-made it is.

I built it by weaving strong rope onto a solid wood frame, creating a symmetrical pattern of small squares and after three decades none of the ropes have broken; the wood is still good. It is as if I was slowly and numbingly weaving in place a foundation for my life that would last, despite my internal chaos.

It is no coincidence that this piece of furniture I constructed is a “foot” stool because unbeknownst to me then, metaphysically the feet represent “understanding”. Raw pain forced me to let go of old beliefs that were keeping me in bondage, replacing them with a more transcendent, spiritual understanding of the universe and when I occasionally fall back into thinking I should be accomplishing more, that stool reminds me of where I came from, what I have overcome and that I am *enough*.

**By Debora Ann Haliburton**

### **My Story – Part I**

“I write a story about my life”, says Danny Van Koughnet.

I live in Dryden, Ontario in a rundown apartment block in the slum part of Dryden. The apartment block is a dirty, filthy, rundown pig pen of a place. There is garbage lying all over the place. I have schizophrenia. I may be schizophrenic but not

stupid. People have no respect for me to listen to anything I have to say. People called me down so much that I have little respect for myself in many ways, but in many ways I have a lot of respect for myself because I did not have to break the laws to make a living for myself. I didn't steal or lie like some people did. Many times I did a hard day's work with a hand saw and axe on a woodpile or put in a hard day in the dirt, heat and hot sun driving mules on road repair work. Other people wouldn't work on a wood pile and I stayed out of trouble all my life. The law never came after me for doing something wrong. I was born in a log shack far back in the backwoods in a big swamp in northern Ontario. We had kind of a farm. We had a big vegetable garden and grew most of what we ate, also we had a wood pile of big logs we used for stove wood and four black coloured plow mules to pull. I used to plow the field and garden with a mule. When breaking new ground I used a large single mule and a walking plough. I walked behind a mule from sunup to sundown seven days a week. When I got older we moved to a small town, had a big vegetable garden and stove with a woodpile of wood. I cut all the wood with a crosscut saw, axe and bucksaw. I had to work very hard in my life, in fact most of my life. One day my father died and my mother went away. The house was sold and I moved on.

I was 12 years old. I went to live with an old hermit who lived far back in the forest in a lean to shack built out of logs and sticks with a dirt floor. He had a wood burning cook stove inside the log shack. Over the years I met many hermits in the woods. The hermit survived by hunting, trapping and picking berries. I helped him trap animals, skin the animals and prepare the hides and pick berries. He sold the hides for money. One day the hermit died and I moved on.

I moved in with a beggar who lived in a tar paper shack and did odd jobs like mowing lawns, garden work, fixed tables, chairs, cut stove wood with a handsaw and axe. Many times we had almost nothing to eat and had no electricity, plumbing, gas furnace heat and no beds to sleep on, just the ground. Many people would not pay us anything and the beggar said we were in serious trouble. Soon the beggar starved to death and I moved on the third time. I went to the city and found a little work. When someone was putting a new roof on a

house I put all the old shingles in the back of a truck and cleaned up all the mess to earn five dollars (\$5.00).

I moved on again to Kentucky and found work plowing fields with a mule and walking plow for people who lived way back in the mountains. I pulled stumps in a field with a stump puller and mule and pulled logs out of the woods with a mule.



One time I planted a whole crop for a man with nothing but mules, no motor powered machinery, looked after the crop all summer and took the crop off the field with mules, and never got paid a cent. I worked for a rich rude American who was no damn good. I moved on again to the swamps in the Southern United States and started trapping animals for their hides to sell for cash. When I was in the swamp I met an old swamp hermit. I moved on again several more times. By that time I had moved on 14 times because of rude no good people. In 1982 I returned to Canada and started trapping in northern Ontario. I went back into the woods, built a lean to shack out of logs and sticks and used only the axe, cross cut saw, hammer, and a few nails to build the shack. I had several windows with glass and screens and a wood burning cook stove inside. I bought several hundred traps and fixed them myself. I made some snares, got a rifle and an old farm truck. I looked after myself with no help and kept everything in repair myself, did all my own cooking, kept the shack clean, cut all my stove wood with the axe and cross cut saw. I set all my traps, did my own skinning and prepared all my hides with no help. I repaired my own snowshoes. I depended on no one for help. I became a real hermit and spent years in the woods until 2008. Then I moved to Dryden Ontario and the rundown apartment block where I now live. A few times I went to Kentucky to work on road repair driving mules, or pulling wagons. Sometimes I put in some hot days in the sun, dirt and heat. In my life I met good people and some who were just no damn good. I never went to school and had no home schooling. This story is written by Danny Van Koughnet, a schizophrenic but not stupid.

## NAME THAT FEELING



A support group for children who have a family member with a mental illness.

For more information and to register call Jane at 786-1616

### Journey of Hope Walk for Schizophrenia

September 17, 2011  
At The Forks canopy Plaza

Sign up to be a canvasser TODAY!

Call 786-1616 or email [info@mss.mb.ca](mailto:info@mss.mb.ca)  
Downloadable pledge forms available at  
[www.mss.mb.ca](http://www.mss.mb.ca)



*Like The Journey of Hope  
Walk for Schizophrenia  
on Facebook*

### Manitoba Schizophrenia Society Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, August 23, 2011

At 12 Noon

St. Boniface Hospital Research  
Centre

Samuel N. Cohen Auditorium  
351 Tache Avenue  
Winnipeg

Keynote Speaker: Marg Synyshyn  
Program Director WRHA Child &  
Adolescent Mental Health

Registration \$5.00

Complimentary Lunch included  
RSVP before Aug 12

The Mental Health Education Resource Centre is now open. The Mental Health Education Resource Centre contains a large lending library with many reading materials, videos, training kits, newsletters, brochures and fact sheets on mental health and related issues. Two research computers are available for searching the MHERC library and internet. Donna Hornick is the new coordinator. Stop by and see Donna at 4 Fort Street on the corner of Fort and Assiniboine Avenue. The phone number is 204-942-6568

## PEER SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND WORKING ADULTS

Are you a **working or career professional** looking for a safe place to discuss the implications of **living with schizophrenia**? Come join us! Meet new people and share your experiences. **Receive support from those who understand.**

Next Meeting: September 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm

Venue: FACES, 4 Fort Street, Winnipeg (ROOM A)

Contact at **204-786-1616** for more information.

**Manitoba Schizophrenia Society**  
4 Fort Street  
Winnipeg, MB  
Phone: 786-1616  
**Peer Support Group Schedule**  
**July/August 2011**  
**Meeting Time: Wednesday, 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM**

*(Occasionally group start time may vary according to the program of the day.)*

**“Need to talk to someone about your life with schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder?”**

**Then consider attending the**

**MSS PEER SUPPORT GROUP**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Activity</u></b>
<b><u>July</u></b>	
6	Movie Day – Group to begin at 12:45 pm (to allow time to watch the whole movie.)
13	Schizophrenia – “The different types”
20	Walk to The Forks – (Rain plan – Stay at FACES)
27	“Healing Self-Stigma” from Pathways to Recovery
<b><u>August</u></b>	
3	Planning and Discussion
10	BBQ at Bonnie Castle Park – (Rain Plan – Potluck Lunch) At FACES – <u>Group starts at 12:30 pm for this occasion.</u> <i>Please call Karen to register at 786-1616.</i>
17	“Recognizing Your Strengths”
24	Bowling – Location to be announced – Meet at FACES At 12:45 pm.
31	Suicide Prevention – Lyndsay Hersikorn, <i>Speaker from Klinik</i>

## Women's Program Schedule July/August 2011

*Meetings are held on Thursday afternoon from 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM at 4 Fort Street (FACES) although sometimes we go on outings. Any women living with a mental illness are welcome to attend. Occasionally we are out of the office for an activity so please call to confirm your attendance at 786-1616.*

### July

- 7 Walk in the Park – Rain plan – Walk in the Mall
- 14 Writers' Group and Planning
- 21 Aroma Therapy with Debora Haliburton
- 28 BBQ at Bonnie Castle Park  
Rain Plan – Games, Music and Pizza indoors

### *Congratulations*

To

**Debora Haliburton**

for your contribution to the new title of this newsletter, "The Sharing Tree".

A big Thank You to everyone who participated by sending in entries.

# Have a Happy Summer

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### August

- 4 Writers' Group in Bonnie Castle Park or at FACES
- 11 Walk to The Forks or in the FACES mall if it rains.
- 18 DAY LONG Outing - to Assiniboine Park – leaving MSS at 10:30 am by City Transit  
Please call Karen at 786-1616 for details and to register.
- 25 Pot Luck Picnic lunch – inside or out depending on the weather



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A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.  
MANITOBA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY  
SOCIÉTÉ MANITOBAINE DE LA SCHIZOPHRÉNIE  
UNE SOURCE D'ESPOIR, DE SOUTIEN ET D'ENTRAIDE