

Current Activities in Mental Health and Disabilities Program of MCC Canada

This newsletter goes out to a wonderful and varied group of people, mostly within Canada and the U.S. Some of you are very closely connected to MCC Canada and its Mental Health and Disabilities Program. For others, even the name MCC has little significance but somehow you've become part of the network receiving this newsletter because of your interest in mental illness and/or disabilities.

All of you have probably noted that over the last few years there has been at least one newer topic in this newsletter and that is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). In many ways this program responds to needs within the church community, and during the last few years, many congregations have gained a new interest in FASD. Many people are realizing that they need a greater understanding of the issues around FASD so that they can do a better job of responding to and including people who are affected by FASD. While there is a lot of good material about FASD within the community, we have found very little that brings a faith or church perspective to this topic. Thus we are trying to fill a tiny bit of that niche.

I have searched and found some resources and some of you have been instrumental in this search. Many of these resources are on our web site at www.mcc.org/fasd. They can also be purchased in hard copy from your provincial MCC offices. (The resource lists in the packet are very Canadian so most of the American MCC offices may not have them.)

You are probably aware of the brochure *Come Walk with Me: A Christian Response to Fetal Alcohol-Related Disabilities* that we put out two years ago. These, too, are available through your local or regional MCC offices or you can order them through our web site.

Currently we are in the process of producing a video/DVD on the church and FASD. It will give a brief description of how FASD affects individuals and focus on how congregations can respond in appropriate ways. The videotaping has begun but we are not yet sure about a release date. We are expecting that it will come with a discussion guide so that it can be used for Sunday schools or other groups. More specific information should be available in the next issue!

The search for materials

has also led to stories
written by people affected
by FASD and their family
members. In this issue we
feature a story by
someone affected by
FASD, a piece of art
work from another and
a poem by a third. I
think you will enjoy
them!

- A newsletter from the Mental Health and Disabilities Program
of Mennonite Central Committee Canada
- December 2004

Mental Health & Disability Notes

Contributions from several
people living with FASD

A.S.A.P.

Ever wonder about the abbreviation
A.S.A.P.? Generally we think of it in terms
of even more hurry and stress in our lives
(As Soon As Possible). If we think of this
abbreviation in a different manner, we
may begin to find a new way to deal with
our rough times.

A. S. A. P.

Always Say A Prayer!!!

There's work to do, deadlines to meet.

You have no time to spare.

But as you hurry and scurry...

Always Say A Prayer.

In the midst of family chaos,

"quality time" is rare.

Do your best; let God do the rest.

Always Say A Prayer.

It may seem like your worries

are more than you can bear.

Slow down and take a breather...

Always Say A Prayer.

God knows how stressful life can be,

and he wants to ease your cares.

He'll respond to all your needs...

Always Say A Prayer.

Today I'm saying a little prayer

that God will send a smile to you

and send you special blessings

through everything you do.

—Stephen Neafcy

Used by permission.

Russ's Story

I am 27 years old. I live with FASD. In my early teens, I discovered
that life for me would be difficult. I have constantly struggled

in the areas of impulsivity, money management, work and life skills. I find it hard to think something through. I don't understand the concept of what money can be used for. I find it hard to get to work on my own, and living on my own is difficult as well. Because of my disability, I have spent the last 10 years of my life in and out of jail, groups homes and programs. In the 1st year I have discovered a real passion to share my story with people who are willing to listen. I want to tell them about my struggles and what helps. You can help by understanding my needs, reminding me daily to stay on the Red Road (living a spiritual lifestyle) and encouraging me.

—Russ H.

Used by permission.

Used by permission.

Canadian Mennonite

Health Assembly

Every year, health and housing providers from Mennonite institutions across Canada gather to exchange information and ideas, to meet others with similar concerns, and for spiritual encouragement. Participants typically include staff, board members and individuals. Assembly 2004 was held at Shekinah Retreat Centre from September 30 - October 2, in conjunction with MCC Canada Mental Health and Disabilities Program. *Balanced Living* was the theme.

Saskatoon Mennonite Care Services has participated in CMHA for many years and was part of the planning committee for this year's assembly. Keynote speakers included Dr. Lynda Haverstock - Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, Dr. Nettie Wiebe, and Lloyd Ratzlaff. Worship sessions were provided by Barb and Wilmer Froese from Laird Mennonite Church; six workshops on a variety of topics were offered. A whole hog barbecue, with entertainment by the Beulahland Boys and western poetry by Rudy Froese, took place on Friday evening. Bethany residents Anna Wiebe and Jack Driedger read several of their stories as part of Lloyd Ratzlaff's session on the importance of story telling. Many favorable comments were made regarding the Timberlodge facilities, the beauty of the natural setting, and the strong Saskatchewan flavor throughout the conference. Next year we meet in B.C.!

From the Saskatoon Mennonite Care Services Inc. Newsletter. *Used by permission.*

Resources on Suicide

Talk About It: Youth and Suicide

This is a brochure produced by MCC on the topic of youth and suicide. To order, contact us at

www.mcc.org/suicide/brochure
or call your provincial or
regional MCC office.

Fierce Good-bye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide

This 44-minute video is a good resource for congregations,
friends and families that
are dealing with suicide. It
includes family stories, and
healthy ways of grieving as well
as helpful ways of thinking
about suicide. It comes with a
study guide and could be used
for four sessions in an adult
Sunday school class setting.

Produced by Mennonite
Media. It can be borrowed in
DVD or video from the
MCC Resource Library in the Winnipeg
office. Please call Stella at (204) 261-6381 or e-mail
her at stt@mennonitecc.ca. It may also be available
from resources centres in your denominational
offices.

There are some other resources on suicide available
through MCC. Check www.mcc.org/suicide or call
Irma at (204) 261-6381.

Thoughts Late at Night

Spinning its web around me,
I felt the thought of death
consume my logic
and throw it away.
Decisions. Decisions. Decisions.
Have you chosen
to whom you belong?
I am wondering if I can even
think straight,
or not,
Or no longer.
Have all those pills pushed
me over the edge?
Or has my brain begun to leak
its intelligence into
no matter
what the outcome may be?
I am wondering that,
and now I'm really frightened.
To doubt?
That may be the ultimate confession
of holding any more
hope.
Or does one only
need to rely upon the
Me?

No jury is left.
Only judges come around,
and then the
eerie blackness.

—Gail Kroll

Used by permission from the author.

**Mennonite Central Committee Canada
Mental Health & Disability Program**

134 Plaza Drive

Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9

www.mcc.org/canada/health

Please contact Irma Janzen for further information at (204) 261-6381 or toll free 1-888-622-6337 or email at ikj@mennonitecc.ca. If you know of others who would like to receive *Mental Health & Disability Notes* please encourage them to contact MCC with their address. If you would prefer to receive this electronically, please send MCC your e-mail address. If you would like to unsubscribe to Notes please contact us. You can also read our privacy policy at www.mcc.org/about/privacy.html or contact us for a hard copy.