

# The Community Inquirer



Connecting Mental Health Consumers with their communities.

Issue 2 May/June 2008

## WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY INQUIRER

We are pleased to bring you the second issue of The Community Inquirer. Our aim is to be a valuable source of information for our readers on activities and services in the St. John's area and to rouse your interest in investigating some of them further. The newsletter is a pilot project of Community Connections, a mental health program of the Eastern Health. As editor and writer, I would like to thank the staff of Community Connections, Lindsay MacDonald, and Dawna Vivian for their encouragement and support, and the consumer community for their input and feedback.

## PLACES TO GO...WITHOUT A LOT OF DOUGH \$\$\$

### OPEN MIC at Gower St. United Church

The poster for Shared Space OPEN MIC enticed performers and spectators to come to "a celebration of songs, poetry and spirit" in "an OPEN MIC event like never before!" More than fifty people braved the cold rainy evening of April 30th to gather at the hall of Gower Street United Church. Approximately twenty individuals and groups got up on stage to perform in all different song styles and in various performance genres.

From a lip-sync version of "I will Survive" to Christian soft-rock to the metal anthem "You Give Love A Bad Name", no sound was out of bounds. The song chosen by some singers clearly had personal meaning for them- Whitney Houston's "The Greatest Love of All" talks about the importance of self-love and a song from the First World War expressed tragedy and loss. Several poets read from their work. Greg Vaughn's rhyming sentences about depression sounded to me like Rap without music. To the beat of his African drum, Daniel Murphy's poem invited the audience to live life and "beat your drum". The surprise performance of the evening was from Sean Silver and a trio of female dancers with a presentation of high-kicking and fast-stepping Irish Dance.

The Shared Space OPEN MIC event was organized through the joint efforts of Stella Burry Community Services and Community Connections.



The event ran smoothly- the sound system provided by Max Jacobs was great, the technicians did quick adjustments of microphones and music, and host Matthew Cave kept the mood fun and light.

Participants seemed relaxed with the OPEN MIC format and weren't shy about getting up in front of an audience. In fact, several people told me that the friendly atmosphere makes such events a good chance to get out and meet people. They said people can be themselves and don't have to worry about society's expectations. For one participant, getting up to perform is a way to "break barriers from inside."

## What's on the Go?

Interested in *FREE* or *LOW COST* things to do in your community or neighborhood?

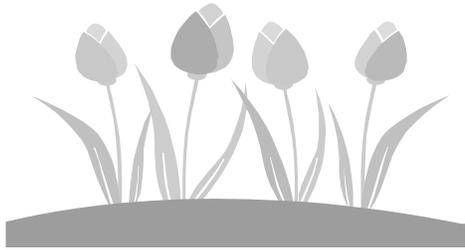
Join us for tea/coffee

**Where:** Community Connections at 22 Church Hill

**When:** Every Monday, 1:30-3:30

**Why:** For a weekly update of events, outings, activities, groups and so on... that won't break the bank!

Questions??? Call Kelly: 777-3657 or Cathey: 777-3689



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## HELPING HANDS IN THE CITY

### **CHANNAL-Bridging the Gulf of Understanding**

In the early 90's, CHANNAL had its offices on the top floor of an old building on the east end of Water Street. As many as thirty people regularly attended Saturday self-help meetings, all sitting around a long table as individuals did a "check in" and spoke about their difficulties and accomplishments during the week. Soon after CHANNAL moved with its parent organization, The Canadian Mental Health Association, to the post office building on Water Street, where it remained for almost a decade.

The fact that CHANNAL has maintained an office and offered its schedule of self-help meetings in St. John's over the long-term is a credit to the organization. This is a place in the city where people dealing with mental health problems are welcome to spend a couple of hours and where the only expectation is mutual respect. CHANNAL is run by and for mental health consumers/psychiatric survivors and discussion among peers is the norm. Getting involved in self-help can be challenging for persons dealing with mental health problems but social support from other consumers can help combat isolation and increase personal independence.

CHANNAL stands for Consumers Health Awareness Network of Newfoundland & Labrador. It is an independent non-profit organization administered by Executive Director Karon-Ann Parsons and a Board of Directors and has groups in seven regions of the province. St. John's Regional Coordinator Ed Sawdon works tirelessly and enthusiastically with volunteers to keep mental health self-help active in our provincial capital. CHANNAL St. John's regional office is located at 120 LeMarchant Road in the old Lawrence College building and is open weekday afternoons and for Self-Help groups on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. The phone number is 753-7710.

**Notable Quote: Past sufferings are only lessons in becoming oneself.  
Greg Vaughn -Poet**

Tony Cooke is writer and editor of The Community Inquirer.

Dawna Vivian provided editorial and technical assistance for this issue.