

Linda Stewardson's Courage to Come Back

By: Annie Jollymore, MA

Unedited from 'Change of Mind'

CMHA Thunder Bay Branch newsletter, Summer 2003

When your total focus is on day-to-day survival, it's impossible to have a life. For Linda Stewardson, a childhood of abuse and trauma led to a life without hope, without dreams, without goals. In her words, "Every day of my life when I was ill was focused on wanting to die that I never really thought about being alive."

Physically ravaged by the effects of alcohol, drugs, a life threatening eating disorder, and with numerous suicide attempts on record, Linda's psychiatrist urged her to enter a recovery program before she became another statistic. Although Linda felt she had little to live for, she knew she had nothing to lose by trying to turn her life around.

Linda's hometown of Toronto was a nightmare of memories. Abandoned at the age of 14 by her family, and having emotionally drained any real friends who might have tried to help her, Linda realized her ties to the city of her birth would only pull her down. To succeed in a recovery program she needed a good, reliable support system, and she needed to start anew somewhere far away.

In 1998, Linda moved north to Thunder Bay, Ontario, and entered an addictions recovery program at the Crossroads Centre for alcohol and substance abuse. It took extraordinary courage and determination to cut all ties to her past and settle in a community where she knew nobody. But, as she says, her only other choice was to die.

Most of us know how hard it is to enter a room full of strangers and say, *Here I am. I'm going to be part of your group.* But that was pretty much what Linda had to do. A support system was "not going to come to me. I was going to have to find it."

Linda's new network of support started with a physician and a therapist specializing in Traumatic Stress Disorders, and grew to include a dietician and counsellors from a hospital based eating disorders program, church volunteers who visited and provided telephone support.

She became a member of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Rehabilitation Action Program (RAP), attended AA, and meetings of a healing circle. *And* shortly after arriving in Thunder Bay, Linda met the man who recently became her husband.

Linda attributes her rapid, successful recovery to setting goals realistically and making recovery her full time job. After 8 months of sobriety, she began to address issues of weight and body image.

One of Linda's goals was to *focus on success.* Like anyone on a healing journey, Linda suffered seemingly insurmountable setbacks. But the people around her kept her from despair with reminders of her accomplishments. She also kept a 'Thankful Journal'. Every night before bed, no matter how bleak life seemed, she wrote down something she was grateful for. When stress or depression threatened, she could turn to her journal and say, "Yeah, this is happening. This is depressing. But look what happened yesterday and the day before. I know I want to live for these reasons."

Linda's story enables people to see there is a human being behind the mask of "junkie" or tottering "drunk" - recognition essential to conquering the stigma and stereotyping of mental illness and addiction.

“All my life I wanted to be someone else,” she says, “and now people want to emulate me. It’s ironic.” When people thank her saying *you moved me with your story* and *you’re an inspiration* to me, Linda feels a “positive pressure”. It’s as if she’s a different person today. “I’m a role model now,” she says, and feels as if she “has been born again.”

Many thanks to Annie Jollymore and Joanne Books (CMHA) for allowing us to use this article from the CMHA “Change of Mind”.

Volunteer of the Month Award Winners for April, May & June, 2003

Established by the Board of Directors of P.A.C.E., a member is chosen by the Social Recreation Committee as the:

“Volunteer of the Month”.

Winners receive a certificate, \$5.00 in cash and mention in the newsletter.

The following members won this award over the past three months:

April 2003 Winner: David Kitchemakaman who has been so a great handyman around the P.A.C.E. house. David was also a great help with our Easter dinner.

May 2003 Winner: Stan Treichler. Have you noticed all those dining room chairs have no more stains on them and the couches are nice and clean? Well, that was thanks to Stan and all his hard work.

June 2003 Winner is Lynn Moss -Sharmon. For one thing, Lynn made curtains for the second floor bathroom. They certainly brighten up the room and make the P.A.C.E. house more homey. In addition, Lynn has been very busy working on the files upstairs and helping Kathleen with the membership resource library.

*Thanks to each of you
and Congratulations!*

[Editor’s Note: Thanks also to staff for the addition of curtains in the offices, which has made our ‘home’ just a little bit nicer.]

P.A.C.E. and ALTERNATIVE BUSINESSES

P.A.C.E. NOW HAS A WORKER WHO CAN ASSIST
CONSUMER/SURVIVORS TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN BUSINESSES

What is an Alternative Business?

It is a business owned by and employed by consumer/survivors.

- *You* decide what the business will be

- *You* develop the business plan
- *You* find and obtain the start-up money
- *You* run the business'
- *You* decide what work you want to do
- *You* decide the hours, days and times that you work
- *You* pay yourselves
- *You* hire out for experts when you need them.

It's all in *your* hands.

The idea is not new but the opportunity is new to Thunder Bay and to P.A.C.E. There are many success stories of alternative businesses throughout Ontario and there is a lot of experience with these types of businesses. That means help along the way!

And we have a person who will assist you.

Who is that person?

He is **Donald Upton** (Community Development Worker). Don can be reached at P.A.C.E. AT 343-4760 or in person every day during the week.

Maybe you have a business idea but you don't now if it will take off or it might be too much work for yourself alone to investigate and get it going. Maybe you want to join in on a business idea that interest you. Don will develop focus groups of interested people who are willing to work together to reach their goal of employment that suits *their* needs.

So, if you or someone you know wants to have a say I what, where, when and how you work, drop by P.A.C.E. or give Don a call. SOON!!

There is 'work' to be done and we can get started NOW!

P.A.C.E gratefully acknowledges funding for this program by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program—Employment Supports, Innovative Funds

ADVOCACY IS:

- Helping people help themselves
- Building confidence so people are able to help themselves
- Supporting efforts towards independence.
- Providing necessary tools for appropriate decisions and appropriate action.
- Informing and helping people obtain their rights.

- Analyzing a problem and pinpointing areas of responsibility and stating options available to resolve a problem.
- Providing technical assistance and assistance in locating appropriate services.
- Organizing for change.
- Advocating on behalf of people only when they are unable to help themselves.
- Partnership with people, with mutual sharing of information, tasks and action.

ADVOCACY IS NOT:

- Taking over a person's problem and making all their decisions and stopping their own self-help.
- Reinforcing feelings of helplessness and dependence.
- Keeping people uninformed about their rights so they will have to rely on the advocate for everything.
- Discouraging people from becoming activists.
- Making decisions for people.
- Controlling people.
- Closing the door to people because "there is nothing I can do to help."
- Seeking individual solutions to group problems.
- Accepting unavailability and inadequacy of services.
- Denying existence of problems reported.

[Source: Internet]

Advocate's Advice

If you are collecting Ontario Works or ODSP benefits, you do **NOT** have to pay for ambulances. If you receive an ambulance bill, you must show the hospital office staff proof that you are collecting benefits. Take your cheque stub and the ambulance bill to the hospital that issued the bill.

[P.A.C.E. members can fax the information to the hospital from P.A.C.E. house.]

Sylvia Helfrich, System Advocate

Some words of wisdom from our advocate:

~ "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."

Aesop (620BC—560 BC)

~ The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word, "crisis". One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger—but recognize the opportunity. (This could be an opportunity for change, improvement, growth etc.)

Sylvia Helfrich, System Advocate

P.A.C.E.

Is offering members an Opportunity to release your hidden talents.

Do you have some hidden talent or desire to become an actor/actress?

Do you have drama club experience?

Have you ever dreamed about becoming an actor/actress?

Do you know people that are involved with Magnus Theatre?

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE

Volunteers needed to develop a Theatre Group of P.A.C.E. members. Your commitment involves a willingness for you to have fun, work hard, and work together on a committee to make your desires REAL.

Please sign up

Submit your name by **August 29, 2003**

For further information, please contact Kathleen @ 343-4760

System Advocate's Report

Sylvia, our System Advocate, has been busy with the Advocacy Committee developing the Self-Advocacy packages for the membership. The packages include the new "Hard Times Handbook" and are available from Sylvia for a small fee of \$2.00 to help cover some of the costs. The Advocacy Committee made it through all the red tape and are beginning their fundraising with Regal in July.

Sylvia attended a 2-day workshop on 'Understanding and Treating a Person with Borderline Personality Disorder who Self Harms'. She also received training in facilitating a SAFE group for people who self-harm and has received permission from the Centre for Mental Health and Addiction to run such a group. If there is enough interest at P.A.C.E. we could start a SAFE group. For now, more research needs to be done for this to take place.

[Note: If members want more detail regarding the Self-Advocacy packages or fundraising, they are welcome to attend P.A.C.E.'s monthly committee meetings or sit in on the Advocacy Committee meetings.]

Recovery and Medications

This quote is taken from: The National Empowerment Centre. It tells us that for recovery to be possible, pills alone are not enough.

"There are no magic bullets. Recovery is hard work. No pill (alone) can do the work of recovery for you. If you sit back and wait for a pill to make you better, you will not get better. Recovery means taking an active stance towards the problems and challenges you face. Medications are only a tool. Psychiatric medications are one tool among many other tools that you can use to recover. Physical exercise, eating well, avoiding alcohol and street drugs, love, solitude, art, nature, prayer, work and a variety of coping strategies are equally important to your recovery.

It is important to think:

"You have a future—you are the driver."

P.A.C.E. Staff Updates

Public Education Worker Report

. The Community Mental Health Fair on May 6 at Intercity Mall was a success. The Road to Recovery was also another success in the month of May. Evaluations showed that participants found the day very informative and offered suggestions for future workshops and seminars leading up to the Recovery Conference in 2004. Dr Farcus , (Co-Principle Investigator-Rehabilitation Research and Training Centre, Director – World Health Organization) offered to do a video conference with consumers and family for free. It is presently in the planning stages.

In June I was in Sudbury for another Recovery Conference and gained some knowledge and met some wonderful people. The whole focus was about recovery. *Acknowledging our strengths and focusing on them* encourages individuals to join together and make it work. I gained some information to take to the Psychosocial Planning Committee who is responsible for the Recovery Conference in the planning stages for Thunder Bay next year.

P.A.C.E. Public Education Committee needs volunteers to participate in developing a Theatre Group. This is a fun and exciting challenge and we hope to have a great response. Please sign up if interested.

I would also like to encourage members to bring to my attention any negative media attention toward mental illness. This will give the committee some guidance on preparing media responses on a positive recovery basis, with the goal of lessening the fear of those that do not fully understand the concept of surviving with a mental illness.

Have a peaceful journey to wellness.

Kathleen Morrison, Public Education Worker

Information to help you When a patient in LPH

Should you happen to be a patient in LPH, (or not a patient), these are some things you should know about that are available to you from the Patient's Council.

- Patient's Council office is open Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- The office is located in the main hall next to the LPH library.
- It is a drop-in centre where there is always coffee available to those who drop in.

Activities at Patient's Council Office:

- Mondays—12—4 p.m. ~ Art Classes (on hold)
- Tuesdays/Thursdays ~ Computer Classes (Regina)
- Wednesdays 1-3 p.m. ~ Crochet (Janice) (on hold until September)
- Fridays ~ Making models with Blaine
- Saturdays 1 p.m. Movie
- More activities are pending approval of the Board

In patients may call for a friendly visitor and/or visit the office personally to help pass the time.

**NORTH EAST ONTARIO
CONSUMER/SURVIVOR NETWORK
[NEON]**

In attending the Recovery conference in Sudbury in June, Kathleen Morrison made contact with NEON, a consumer/survivor networking body linking Northeast Mental Health c/s organizations. They will be holding a conference some time in the future and are looking to networking with agencies in the Northwest. P.A.C.E. members will have the opportunity to attend this conference. More detail is pending.

NEON's purpose is to link with other mental health agencies. Their goal is to ease the geographic and social isolation throughout the north. They achieve this by demystifying and sharing their common experiences. They provide a comprehensive framework for communication as well as a consumer/survivor voice at all levels of government. It is supported and encouraged by The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

They have a number of consumer/survivor initiatives in the north east in Elliot Lake, Wawa, Muskoka/Parry Sound, Burk's Falls Gravenhurst only to mention a few.

IS THE LPH CLOSING SOON?

NO

SO, WHAT IS ACTUALLY GOING ON?

THERE WILL BE A CHANGE IN WHO RUNS THE LPH.

ALL THAT MEANS IS THAT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG TERM CARE WILL NOT BE THE DIRECT EMPLOYER OF THE LPH.

INSTEAD, THE EMPLOYER WILL BE **ST. JOSEPH'S CARE GROUP.**

IT IS CALLED A 'CHANGE IN GOVERNANCE'.

NOTHING ELSE WILL CHANGE.

THIS HAPPENED AS OF JUNE 1st.

THE LPH WILL BE OPEN AND STAY OPEN FOR BUSINESS, AS USUAL.

BUT WHAT ABOUT CLOSING THE LPH?

IT MAY TAKE UP TO THREE YEARS OR MORE BEFORE THE LPH ACTUALLY CLOSES ITS DOORS.

REMEMBER, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG TERM CARE HAS PROMISED THAT ALL THE NECESSARY COMMUNITY SERVICES WILL BE IN PLACE **BEFORE** THE LPH CLOSES ITS DOORS FOR GOOD.

(Please refer to page 4 of P.A.C.E. In-House News June/2003 for further information about the LPH)

LPH MEDICAL FILES

Patient files that were used at the LPH are now the property of St. Joseph's Care Group. St. Joseph's Care Group will continue to use the same patient files that the LPH started. If someone is going to be transferred to the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, then their file will go to the Regional Hospital [error] as well. The same rules of confidentiality still apply no matter where your medical file is held.

What is a Wellness Recovery Plan?

The 'WRAP' (Wellness Recovery Plan) goals are:

To teach participants recovery and self-management skills and strategies for dealing with psychiatric symptoms so as to:

- Promote higher levels of wellness, stability and quality of life
- Decrease the need for costly, invasive therapies
- Decrease the incidence of severe symptoms
- Decrease traumatic life events caused by severe symptoms
- Increase understanding of these illnesses and decrease stigma
- Raise participants' level of hope and encourage their actively working toward wellness, as outlined in the model developed by Mary Ellen Copeland in coordination with other people who have experienced psychiatric symptoms, health care professionals and several mental health organizations.
- Increase participants' sense of personal responsibility and empowerment.

Kathleen attended the recovery conference in Sudbury last month and we are very fortunate to benefit from what she learned.

Please attend this workshop on Sept. 3rd if you, too wish to move forward in your life to a life of wellness.

Meat **M**idnight **B**lue, a crow raised and released this summer by Veronica Hillyard. 'Blue' got his name because of his beautiful sky blue eyes. He was welcomed back by his parents and siblings and when he took his first flight, dozens of other crows joined in and dozens of other crows joined in and celebrated. Blue still comes to visit when his "bell, bell" is rung.

Veronica is also raising an orphan skunk.



Veronica Hillyard

With Midnight Blue

Calendar of Upcoming Events at P.A.C.E.

JULY

16 (Wed.) Recovery Story [Linda Stewardson]
3:00 p.m.

19 (Sat.) P.A.C.E. Annual General Mtg.

Meeting: 3:30 p.m.

Location: Italian Cultural Centre

Dinner: 6:30 p.m.

Entertainment: 8—1 a.m.

AUGUST

6 (Wed.) Video Afternoon
3:00 p.m.

18 (Mon.) Dietician: 'Diabetes Health'

3:00 p.m.

Pam Kirkland, Dietician

20 (Wed.) Video Afternoon
3:00 p.m.

23 (Sat.) Membership Gen. Meeting

1:00 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

3 (Wed.) WRAP (Wellness Action Plan)

3:00 p.m.

Workshop

10:00 p.m.

Facilitated by: Kathleen Morrison

[See below for more details]

3 (Wed.) Video Afternoon

3:00 p.m.

20 (Sat.) Membership Gen. Meeting

1:00 p.m.

22 (Mon.) Self-Advocacy Workshop (S.A.A.C.)

2:00 p.m.

27.28 (Sat/Sun) CAN HELP Conference

Location: Dryden

[Notice to be posted in August]

Five P.A.C.E. members will be chosen to attend

Please see staff if interested.

Each Tuesday and Thursday of the month: Stretching with Inez

Each Wednesday and Friday (weather permitting): Walking or Baseball

Wellness Recovery Action Planning [WRAP] Workshop

Kathleen Morrison, Public Education Worker here at P.A.C.E. will be holding a "WRAP" workshop on Wednesday, September 3rd at P.A.C.E.

Topics for the workshop will include:

- Empowerment
- The Importance of Education
- Developing a 'Wellness Recovery' Early
- Diet, Light Exercises
- Changing negative thoughts to positive ones
- Peer Counselling
- Preventing Suicide
- Taking Responsibility for Wellness
- Stress Reduction and Relaxation
- Building Self-Esteem & Self Confidence
- Developing and keeping a Support System

REGISTRATION: Contact Kathleen Morrison @ 343-4760 or email to:
pacepew@shaw.ca

Please contact by August 25, 2003