

Break

through

News About the
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
for Clients, Patients and Families

Winter 2006/2007

CAMH's Redevelopment Project Breaks Ground

On October 5, 2006 CAMH took a major step in its long journey to amend outdated ideas and myths about addiction and mental illness.

In a momentous show of hands and miniature shovels, hundreds of people gathered for CAMH's mass groundbreaking. Staff, clients, volunteers, community partners and donors showed their commitment to the goal of creating an integrated, holistic, innovative healthcare facility that is woven into the fabric of the community and designed to bring dignity and healing to those who live with mental illness and addiction.

"Our dream has been nothing short of total transformation," said Dr. Paul Garfinkel, CAMH's CEO and President. "It has taken us many years and the work of many people to bring us to this moment but I am proud to



A mass show of hands and shovels as CAMH staff, clients, and supporters break ground on Phase 1A of the CAMH Redevelopment.

say that our dream – your dream and mine – is primed to become reality today."

The event began with the arrival of buses of CAMH clients and staff from our other sites. But when the children

from the Queen Street Child Care Centre, operated by the City College George Brown, arrived wearing miniature hard hats and fluorescent vests, the event really began to take off.

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Transforming Lives – One Client at a Time: Stephen's Story

Among the dignitaries, politicians and celebrities in attendance at CAMH's groundbreaking, one person stood out whose message was simple and effective: to let people know what CAMH means to him.

Stephen Crawford, a client with CAMH's Mood and Anxiety Program, addressed the crowd for a few moments to say what was in his heart.

"I have struggled with bipolar disorder since my early adolescence and it has had a profound negative impact on my life. In fact, I feel that my ability to function as a member of the community has been impaired," said Stephen. He attributes the latter to his own reluctance to seek appropriate help because of the stigma associated with mental illness.

Before his treatment at CAMH, Stephen did not have much insight into the symptoms of his illness. The care he received at CAMH placed emphasis on education and community participation. Stephen noted that as a result he experienced a better quality of care than he had previously received anywhere else.

"I have been an inpatient resident at Queen Street on three separate occasions. Each time I have returned to the Mood and Anxiety Inpatient Unit, I have noticed a continued effort to improve the environment."

Recognizing the importance of having safe surroundings as a fundamental aspect of recovery, Stephen relayed the appreciation he felt for the staff and facilities management who demonstrated an ongoing commitment to constructing a more home-like setting.

Says Stephen, "I have been presented with barriers due to the design at the old site, such as narrow doorways on the unit. The redevelopment will eliminate such barriers. This also means that people like me will experience a greater sense of dignity – feeling more at home, while in treatment."

For Stephen, the redevelopment also means that the stigma surrounding the treatment of mental illness will be addressed. "Not only does the current campus-style model



Stephen Crawford (front) with dignitaries of the health care field.

geographically separate the Queen Street site from the rest of the community, it also serves to separate those with mental illness from the public consciousness."

Indeed, with the transformation of CAMH, the new urban village model will encourage an even greater level of community integration through a more open environment filled with parks, apartment-style housing and retail space. "I look forward to a time when people will begin to see those with mental illness differently through more face-to-face integration. I hope people will recognize that mental illness is no different than any other medical condition."

To this end, Stephen cited a comparison between how society treats those who experience physical illnesses like low functioning kidneys, livers or hearts and those who have mental illness. "People should be aware that the brain is also an organ – and it too can malfunction. That is no one's fault."

Through his own observation, most people are resistant to welcome those coping with mental illness into their community. However, through his own experience, Stephen knows this much is true: "I think that if people became aware of the great work accomplished at this hospital, they would be proud to have it in their community." ☞

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Mission & Vision

CAMH Mission

Improving the lives of those affected by addiction and mental health problems and promoting the health of people in Ontario and beyond.

CAMH Vision

Strong and healthy communities, in which people with addiction and mental health problems can access appropriate and effective services and live as full participants.

How to Reach Us...

CAMH's Main Number
416 535-8501

Toll-free: 1 800 463-6273

Emergency (College St. site):
416 535-8501 ext. 6885

R. Samuel McLaughlin
Addiction and Mental Health Information
Centre and telephone support line:
416 595-6111 or 1 800 463-6273

**For General Assessment
Appointments, Call:**

Addiction: 416 535-8501 ext. 6128

Mental Health: 416 535-8501 ext. 6878



Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale

A Pan American Health Organization /
World Health Organization Collaborating Centre
Affiliated with the University of Toronto

Picture This: 'The Working Life'

On Thursday, December 7, the Queen Street West community, CAMH staff and clients attended the festive opening reception for *The Working Life* photo exhibit at the Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts.



Dr. Paul Garfinkel and Hesther Tims encouraged everyone to see the exhibit before it closed.

The pictures on the wall were the product of the Photo ID project, an initiative first launched in 2004 by the Integrated Rehabilitation Unit (IRU) and brought to life by Hesther Tims, project organizer and social worker in the IRU.



Former CAMH resident Vincent Welcome poses by his photographs.

This year's theme for the Photo ID project was 'work'. Armed with 40 disposable cameras, clients of the IRU, hospital staff, and neighbours working in the Queen Street West area set out to

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One From the Heart – CAMH's Speaker Series

Michael Flaxman, Chair of the *From the Heart* volunteer program at CAMH, opened the evening of testimonials held at CAMH's Brentcliffe site on October 23 by identifying himself as an ex-heroin addict. Before telling his own story, Michael introduced two 'alumni' – people who have recovered from drug or alcohol addictions at CAMH's Brentcliffe site (formerly the Donwood Institute) and returned to share their stories with the current residents as part of the *From the Heart* Speaker Series.

The line-up of speakers illustrated how people with addictions come from all backgrounds and walks of life: Michael, of Native heritage, came from a troubled home to eventually rob banks to support his drug habit; Laura Snazel was a shy, divorced mother who used

was caught, charged with 13 counts of bank robbery and sentenced to 7 years in prison. A year later he overdosed in his cell in Joyceville Penitentiary.

"I was 35 years old and realized that something had gone very wrong with my life. I wanted to make a change. The last drug I ever took was in November, 1996."

The routine in prison was important to his recovery, and even now "I know what I'm going to do every day. Nutrition is important. The supportive love of my mother and wife. And my volunteerism."

"I have to work at it still. If I hadn't been incarcerated I would have been dead."

When he got out of prison, Michael volunteered with a Native street patrol before taking 8 weeks of training to



Doug Millstone and Laura Snazel joined Michael Flaxman (centre) at the podium to tell their stories of recovery.

drinking as a social lubricant; and Doug Millstone was a high-achieving lawyer from a Jewish family who became an alcoholic. All three shared their experiences of addiction and recovery.

"*From the Heart* helps alumni stay connected. It helps to de-stigmatize addiction. Its positive stories of recovery and hope show that addiction can be overcome," Michael explained. "We were honoured to appear before the Kirby Commission (of the Senate) in January of 2005, and have taken our stories to a number of community agencies serving people with addictions."

Michael Flaxman

Michael told the audience the story of how he began drinking at age 12. "Right away, I began to abuse alcohol in order to escape. That was my pattern. As soon as I discovered a new drug I would abuse it – cannabis, speed, LSD, THC."

In 1977 he discovered cocaine and soon began dealing. He was using drugs every day, and his world was spinning wildly out of control. "It was like that movie 'Groundhog Day', where every day is the same and it's the worst day of your life."

For 18 years Michael ran what he now jokingly calls his "little drug empire" out of the bar where he worked. In the late 1980's he had begun using heroin and got caught by the police. He spent time in the Don Jail, even 'got clean', but it didn't last.

"I was nickel- and dime-[bag]ing myself through my very expensive habit. The fear of not having drugs the next day caused me enormous stress – I was manic."

"In 1995 I robbed my first bank. I robbed 36 banks in 100 days." Michael

became an addiction facilitator at Brentcliffe, where he's volunteered ever since. "If I don't embrace my past I know it's going to come back to haunt me. I get as much out of this as you do," he told the audience.

"I commend you. I never had the courage to come in and seek help. You deserve a pat on the back for doing that."

Laura Snazel

When Laura Snazel went to the podium to tell her story, she admitted to feeling very emotional. A 1998 graduate of Brentcliffe, she talked about the sadness surrounding her addiction to alcohol, and the feelings of "shame, so difficult to erase."

Laura described the start of her addiction this way: "I was a shy person, but I loved to be with people. I found social situations easier to deal with if I'd had a few drinks."

By the time she was divorced with a two-year old child, Laura was a fairly regular social drinker. "Alcohol would become my reward at the end of a busy work week."

When three major life events hit her in her forties, alcohol became her major coping strategy. "I would rotate trips to different liquor stores to hide how much I was drinking. Addiction had taken over my life. My partner was in denial. Others walked out of my life."

When Laura had her first session at Brentcliffe, she cried with a mixture of joy and sorrow all the way home. She attributes the process of recovery with enhancing her spiritual growth. "It was a blessing in disguise. As horrible as it was, I never would have been the person that I am today without having gone through recovery."

Soon afterward she started

volunteering. After returning to school to earn a College Diploma in Human Services Counselling, Laura was recently hired as an Addiction Counsellor in York Region. "I know addiction can be overcome, and change is possible."

Doug Millstone

"I couldn't start or end my day without a drink," said the night's final speaker, Doug Millstone, a self-employed professional. "I'm from the Jewish community, where there is no such thing as an alcoholic."

Doug took the audience back to June 26, 1986, when at 36 years old he faked a car breakdown at the side of the highway and stepped out in front of a tractor trailer in an act of suicidal despair. "I looked into the abyss," he recalled with emotion, "and could feel my death."

Fortunately, Doug didn't die. He wound up in hospital with damaged ribs and on morphine. He made a vow never to drink again. His wife stuck with him. He was sent to Brentcliffe for an assessment and began his recovery. He was put on the medication Antabuse until he was able to slowly go off that drug.

"When you get clean, you still have the same personality," Doug reminded the Brentcliffe residents, stressing the importance of taking steps to get grounded. He began training to become a facilitator at CAMH and joined the *From the Heart* team. He too thanked the audience for the opportunity to share his story with them.

"All of you face some sort of abyss – step back from it," he urged.

Questions from the clients in the addiction program were revealing. "Am I going to be happy again?" one CAMH client asked the speakers. Another client asked about how to face her fear of serving her upcoming 2-year prison sentence. The *From the Heart* volunteers answered these difficult questions with insight, intelligence and a great deal of compassion.

The last message was about avoiding cues that could trigger a relapse. Laura avoids parties where her social shyness might become a trigger. Doug's trigger was stress, so he uses diaphragmatic breathing, exercise on a Nordic track and hot baths for relaxation.

"I used drugs all day, every day, 365 days a year. Waking up was a trigger," Michael smiled. "I make lists of the things I choose to do and what I choose not to do, and don't put myself in high-risk situations."

The importance of after-care was stressed to the residents. "Stay grounded. Reconnect with your therapist. Connect with a peer group. The frequency that you need to attend will come from your heart," said Doug.

From the heart, indeed.

If any one has any questions about the *From the Heart* speaker series contact Jim Davey, Coordinator, Volunteer Resources – Outpatient and Community Programs, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Human Resources and Organizational Development, 1001 Queen Street West, Room 1029, by phone at 416 535-8501 ext. 6238, by fax at 416 583-4612, or by e-mail at Jim_Davey@camh.net

...[CAMH's redevelopment project breaks ground] continued from page 1

Dynamic Master of Ceremonies **Dr. David Goldbloom** kicked off the event with the help of the Park Drummers, before introducing **Mayor David Miller** to the crowd. Canadian Auto Workers President **Buzz Hargrove** was pointed out in the crowd.

Taborah Johnson led the crowd of several hundred people in a riveting a capella rendition of "O Canada", sung with so much heart that those in attendance will not soon forget it. With emotion and pride, Taborah engaged her audience to sing with heartfelt praise of Canada. Although most know Taborah as a renowned jazz singer, actress, children's television star and radio host, she is also becoming known as one of the faces of the CAMH Foundation's *Transforming Lives* Awareness Campaign.

With the sun shining, the west lawn of Queen Street West seemed to radiate change and hope. First Nations Elder **Vern Harper**, who had previously performed a traditional native smudging ceremony, mesmerized the crowd as he whistled to the East, the West, South and North and implored mother earth to understand that we are planting the seeds of prosperity for people that will nurture good energy and love.

Elder Vern Harper was not the only guest speaker to use the "L" word. "Health care is not just about service – it's about love... I love CAMH," said a jubilant **George Smitherman**, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "Our government is really proud to be a part of CAMH's transformation."



Taborah Johnson sings "O Canada" with her heart and soul.

Indeed, CAMH's transformation holds great promise for CAMH's clients, staff, and community. Toronto Mayor David Miller called CAMH's transformation a radical re-imagining of 27 hectares and was proud to call our redevelopment project part of the convergence/innovation sector. "When you connect streets, you make neighbourhoods. CAMH will be connected to the city through the development of the new urban village."

The final guest speaker was **Stephen Crawford**, a client in CAMH's Mood and Anxiety Program who has struggled with bipolar disorder since his adolescence. "Before my treatment at CAMH, I did not have much insight into the symptoms of my illness. The care I received at CAMH places great emphasis on education and community participation; as a result, I've experienced a better quality of care than I had previously received anywhere else."

Stephen went on to note that having safe surroundings



Tiny tots from the Queen Street Child Care Centre arrived on the scene ready to dig in!

Echoing this sentiment was **David Caplan**, Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. "Today the sun is shining on CAMH. We gave CAMH the green light, and we've made good on that commitment."

And with that, **Joan Piscopo**, Chair of the Client and Family Reference Group, took the mike from MC Dr. David Goldbloom to countdown the seconds before everyone was to dig in. In an exhilarating moment that followed, everyone broke ground together on Phase 1A of CAMH's redevelopment project, called *Transforming Lives Here*.

After cheers and hollers of congratulation from all, everyone was invited to eat the sumptuous treats catered by the consumer-run business the Raging Spoon while listening to the sounds of the rock-and-roll band the Deloraines.

Our groundbreaking was truly an historic event made possible by the efforts and contributions of CAMH staff, clients, families, donors, community and government partners. It was a day for us to all share pride in our progress and to anticipate our achievements to come.

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Culture Counts

On Friday, September 15, *Culture Counts* feted the culmination of efforts behind the success of its pilot project – the cultural adaptation and translation of the *Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines* for the Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, and Tamil communities, and the development of posters with culturally appropriate alcohol-related messages for the Somali and Serbian communities.

For more information on the *Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines* please visit www.camh.net or call 1 800 463-6273.



The Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines for the Tamil community.



Elder Vern Harper prepares the ground to be broken by gently whistling to the North, South, East and West.



Digging In: Dr. Paul Garfinkel, CAMH CEO and President, shares a moment of elation with Ministers David Caplan and George Smitherman.

...[The Working Life' on display at Propeller Gallery] continued from page 2

photograph themes related to work.

For some of the clients in the IRU it was initially a challenge to take on the role of photographer, but they quickly grew into the role. At first glance some of the pictures on display seemed to be quite straightforward, but a longer look at the images in context with their accompanying captions revealed their extraordinary meaning and poignancy. Says Hesther, "It takes courage and honesty to allow others a glimpse into your world, a willingness to take a risk to make a connection."

Vincent Welcome, a former resident of CAMH, took pictures of 'his properties', of which one was the Old City Hall in downtown Toronto. "I built it a long, long time ago in another lifetime. I don't like how they've changed it," he said. Vincent couldn't hide the pride he felt at his photo, displayed prominently at the doors of the gallery.

The Photo ID project complements CAMH's focus on client-centred care by helping empower clients to build their self-esteem and motivating them to interact and become conscious of their environment in a new way.

"It's important to combat this feeling of 'less' associated with mentally ill people," said Dr. Paul Garfinkel, CEO and President of CAMH. "What I like about this [project] is how well it's created a connection. What started as a project for clients and staff grew to one that included neighbours and one that ultimately celebrates our similarities."

Indeed, the Photo ID project is an exceptional example of one of the many ways we can raise the visibility of hospital residents in our community in a positive way. Says Hesther, "A good first step to take when combating stigma is to stop accepting the isolation, the segregation, that accompanies stigma. If anything, this exhibit shows the amazing variety of interesting, moving, surprising and powerful things that people – with and without mental illness – have to say about work, about themselves, about their lives, their friends and their families."

The Working Life exhibit was on display at the Propeller Gallery for Visual Arts, located at 984 Queen Street West, from December 6 to 17, 2006.

CAMH's Client Relations Service and Bill of Client Rights

Six years ago now, the Client Relations Service at CAMH was in the infancy of development and the staff consisted of only one person.

Today it is staffed by Joan Lewis, Client Relations Coordinator; Lynne Campbell, Client Relations Facilitator; and Jennifer Swalm, Department Secretary. As a part of the CAMH Empowerment Project, the service was put in place to provide an important and relatively objective 'in-house' avenue for feedback – both positive and negative.

Consistent with CAMH's core goal, to improve client-centred quality care and access to programs and services, CAMH welcomes feedback from anyone who uses its services or aims to access its services. CAMH is committed to receiving, in a courteous, respectful and responsive manner, any feedback about client care or any matter relating to the operation of the organization. This includes feedback regarding the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights*, which was a collaborative effort strongly driven by the Empowerment (Client) Council and adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2004.

"Our four areas of feedback are complaints, compliments, suggestions and questions," says Joan. "In most cases, you hear more of what's wrong than what's right, but we encourage program areas to submit positive feedback when they receive it."

Wherever complaints can be resolved directly and immediately, that course of action is encouraged. CAMH is committed to addressing identified complaints responsibly, thoroughly, systematically and quickly, as part of its accountability to clients, family members or members of the public.

The processes used assist in fulfilling the rights outlined in the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights*. Right #10, the Right to Complain, indicates that resolutions to complaints are to be consistent with the first nine rights articulated in the Bill. The Client Relations Service collects data related to feedback and each complaint is categorized under one of the Rights in the Bill. In this way the Client Relations data is one measure of how CAMH is doing with the implementation of the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights*.

When systemic themes are identified, the Client Relations Service launches collaborative initiatives with representation from all stakeholders, to review current practices and their history, and work toward developing and implementing improvements. These may result in 'new' or changed guidelines, policies and/or procedures, which, along with other measures such as recommendations for staff training, are

intended to facilitate changes in practice.

From the last Client Satisfaction Survey we learned 44 percent of CAMH clients knew how to submit feedback and complaints. To increase client knowledge in this area some promotional materials have been developed. A bookmark and a new telephone sign were designed and printed. The bookmark was translated into seven languages in addition to English and French. When clients are leaving a voice message for Client Relations they are asked to include their name, location and preferred language. When needed, the service will arrange for a relevant translator to be present at their time of meeting.

To date CAMH staff and physicians have received training on the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights* in person and via e-learning. The clinical orientation for new staff includes a section about the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights*. The Empowerment Council is currently offering client training about the Bill, as many clients are unaware of their rights. As training for clients is an ongoing task, assistance is required from staff to review the Bill with clients when they are admitted to programs, and to reinforce with clients their rights as articulated in the Bill.

"We are currently working to produce a Client Information Package that will include information on CAMH, its privacy policy, the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights*, the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, the Empowerment Council and the Family Council. This Client Information package will be available for clinics and units to order from a central place within CAMH.

For more information on the Client Relations Service, or the *CAMH Bill of Client Rights* contact Joan Lewis at 416 535-8501 ext. 2028 or Lynne Campbell at ext. 2078. [↗](#)



The Client Relations Services team (left to right): Jennifer Swalm, Joan Lewis, and Lynne Campbell.

CAMH and Toronto East General Hospital Team Up to Provide Withdrawal Management Program in Scarborough

The Toronto East General Hospital Day Withdrawal Management Program is working in partnership with several organizations, including the Scarborough Addictions Services Partnership – a community based partnership supported by CAMH – and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, to deliver day withdrawal services to people living in Scarborough.

Developed with Ed Castro, supervisor of Scarborough Addiction Services Partnerships, and Doug Smith, Manager of Toronto East General Hospital's Addictions Services, the

program serves clients in a low profile manner, in a needed area, and works in partnership with a variety of agencies.

"We needed to be where the clients are. There was no service in Scarborough," said Doug. In the past, whenever a client living in Scarborough needed to seek care at a withdrawal management site, he or she had to travel downtown. Now, the program is conducted in a residential building located in central/east Scarborough.

"It's right in the building. So we've taken this kind of withdrawal management program right to the source," said Doug.

The service, which has been in operation since May 2006, takes in 15 clients and works with them for four weeks. The program has been designed to educate people with addictions on how to manage the symptoms of long-term withdrawal and the behavioural patterns that happen when coming off drugs. A full day of programming consists of acupuncture, a psycho-educational component, living skills and relaxation therapy.

Chris Bartha, Administrative Director of the Addictions Program at CAMH, which is a supporting partner of the Scarborough Addictions Services Partnership, describes the Scarborough day withdrawal service as an excellent example of a changing and more flexible withdrawal management system that is committed to working in partnerships to better serve vulnerable clients who need access to services in their home community.

"This low profile approach, in familiar surroundings, rather than in a hospital setting, contributes to a non-threatening environment, making clients feel better. In fact some of the clients who use the service live in the building or in the surrounding buildings," states Ed.

Although there are people who are

wary of the service being located in their apartment building, Sam, a client of the service has expressed that it has saved his life: "I realized I had to do something. I was either going to end up dead or without anything. So I took the steps to come here. This service is opening my eyes. It's helping me to recover," he said.

Lighting, heating and rental costs are covered by The Toronto Community Housing Corporation. As well, Doug said that the corporation's police service has agreed to help by taking an intervention approach when dealing with clients. For example, when they are asked to remove people living in public housing, members of the force will take the time to examine if they have addictions. "Instead of evicting a family, they're going to send them here."

"This program exists because of the partnerships," said Ed. The Scarborough Addictions Services Partnership funded the start-up costs for this program in 2002 and 2003.

Doug says, "This is the new trend in healthcare. Hospitals are taking down their barriers to partnerships. We need to work together for the clients' greater good to make the movement from A to B to C seem seamless and simple for the client." [↗](#)



Left to right: Steve Villeneuve, Day Withdrawal Counsellor; Ed Castro, Supervisor of Scarborough Addiction Services Partnerships; Doug Smith, Manager of Toronto East General Hospital's Addictions Services.