



Mood
Disorders
Association
of
Ontario

UPDATE FROM MDAO

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New Developments

There have been exciting developments within our programs and service delivery over the past six months that I would like to share with you.

The Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC LHIN) provides funding to the MDAO to support families who have a loved one between the ages of 15-35 who experience a first episode of psychosis and a mood disorder. Last year, we assisted over 479 family members and their loved ones who qualified for ongoing services through the Early Intervention Psychosis Program. What we found was that for every family who qualified under the Early Intervention Psychosis mandate, we had another four families who sought our help for loved ones with varying degrees of mental illness, including those with histories of trauma and concurrent disorders. We had the capacity to provide only brief support to these families; unfortunately, they were unable to take advantage of our family recovery programs and clinical support because of the specific mandate of our funded programming.

We thought: ‘wouldn’t it be great if we could increase our funded capacity to assist these families?’ Our proposed service model would include comprehensive interventions for families and their loved ones within a recovery-oriented, peer, and family-supportive environment. In November of last year, our dream became a reality when we received additional funding from the TC LHIN to do just that, and our new Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program was born.

With our new Family Matters Program, we can now develop and build a sustainable family peer support and recovery program that supports the whole family – parents, spouses, siblings, and other caregivers. Family members will be able to share what they have learned from MDAO’s clinical support and recovery programs and offer support to one another. This program will broaden the scope of support for families beyond those experiencing psychosis and beyond parents of youth to more complex clients with trauma and concurrent disorders. It will provide families with the skills, knowledge, and assistance required to navigate the system, make informed decisions, and to build strong support networks. Family members will be engaged and offered training to become peer mentors to support other families as a way of sustaining support.

MDAO has a strong reputation as a champion in providing peer support programming to individuals and families impacted by depression, bipolar, and anxiety disorders and we have developed a holistic suite of services over the years. We are considered a model organization for peer support and innovative, creative recovery programs, sustained by a strong network of volunteers who have an incredible amount of passion, commitment, and experience.

In 2011, the MDAO received generous Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) support to start important work in building a strong provincial network. We conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to determine how to best support groups across Ontario and help them provide quality support to their members. A flexible membership structure was developed that met the requirements of diverse groups from different regions. Building upon the enthusiasm and needs of our Ontario Affiliates, in June of 2013 we received additional funding from OTF to launch a three year project. The project is a capacity-building initiative that implements the recommendations emerging from the OTF-funded needs assessment. It will enable us to increase the standardization of peer-support and recovery programs, disseminate best practices to member groups, and support Ontario's regional volunteer networks, thereby ensuring high quality peer support province-wide. Community organizations throughout Ontario are excited to join MDAO in offering these services in their own communities. We are enthusiastic about this project as well; we believe that it is important to build a rapport and strengthen relationships with our communities in a manner that is consistent with the expressed needs of mood disorders groups across Ontario.

MDAO Vision and Values Mission and Operating Principles

MDAO Vision

Individuals and families affected by mood disorders recover and heal.

MDAO Values

- Recovery and self discovery is possible
- Building hope is key
- Peer support based on lived experience can contribute to recovery
- We support a comprehensive approach to recovery that meets the unique needs of each individual
- Supporting families can help them play a positive role in recovery and contributes to wellbeing of the family
- It is possible to reduce both stigma in society and self-stigma

MDAO Mission

Recovery Supports and Programs: To support recovery and healing for individuals affected by mood disorders and their families by providing innovative, high quality supports and programs.

Entry and Navigation: To be responsive to the needs of individuals affected by mood disorders and their families by facilitating their entry to recovery and helping them to navigate to the services and supports they need.

Knowledge: To contribute to knowledge of the effectiveness of recovery supports and programs through evaluation.

Awareness and Outreach: To engage the community to increase awareness about mood disorders and reduce stigma and to communicate about the supports and programs that we offer.

Operating Principles

Accessible: We will strive to be accessible to everyone who needs our support and programs

Responsive: We will strive to understand the needs of our participants and provide programs and supports which respond to these needs

Timely: We will strive to provide support and programs when it is sought by participants

Safe: We will strive to provide programs of high quality and standards which are safe for the participants and stakeholders.

Streams of Recovery

Our motto is: “Talk to someone who’s been there”;

we can only keep our doors open with the skill, commitment, and encouragement of our staff and volunteers. In this communication, we will get the opportunity to learn a little bit about the special people who work at the MDAO. We celebrate the work and passion of the hundreds of volunteers who keep our doors open every day, and make no mistake – they make all of this happen. I am so proud to work at a place where we witness the journeys of thousands of people across Ontario; their courage and spirit encourage us and we are honored to support them on their paths to recovery. MDAO is also a place where anyone – a loved one, a friend, a co-worker, a sibling, a grandmother – can come and talk to someone who has been there; we are unwavering in our emphasis on peer support. We strive to understand the needs of our participants and then respond to those needs. MDAO is committed to helping individuals and families recover and heal from mood disorders throughout the province of Ontario.

I am thrilled to introduce to you our “Streams of Recovery” model. This model will help us to understand the needs of our participants and provide programs and supports which respond to those needs. We will help thousands of individuals and families on their paths to recovery and wellness. We will answer hundreds upon hundreds of questions and be a source of valuable information. We will assist people in finding the support they need, in learning about their illnesses, and in finding resources within their communities. We will support people’s ability to cope and survive and encourage their potential to heal, recover, and thrive.

Ann Marie Mac Donald
Executive Director and CEO
Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

*Talk
to someone who's been there*

About me...

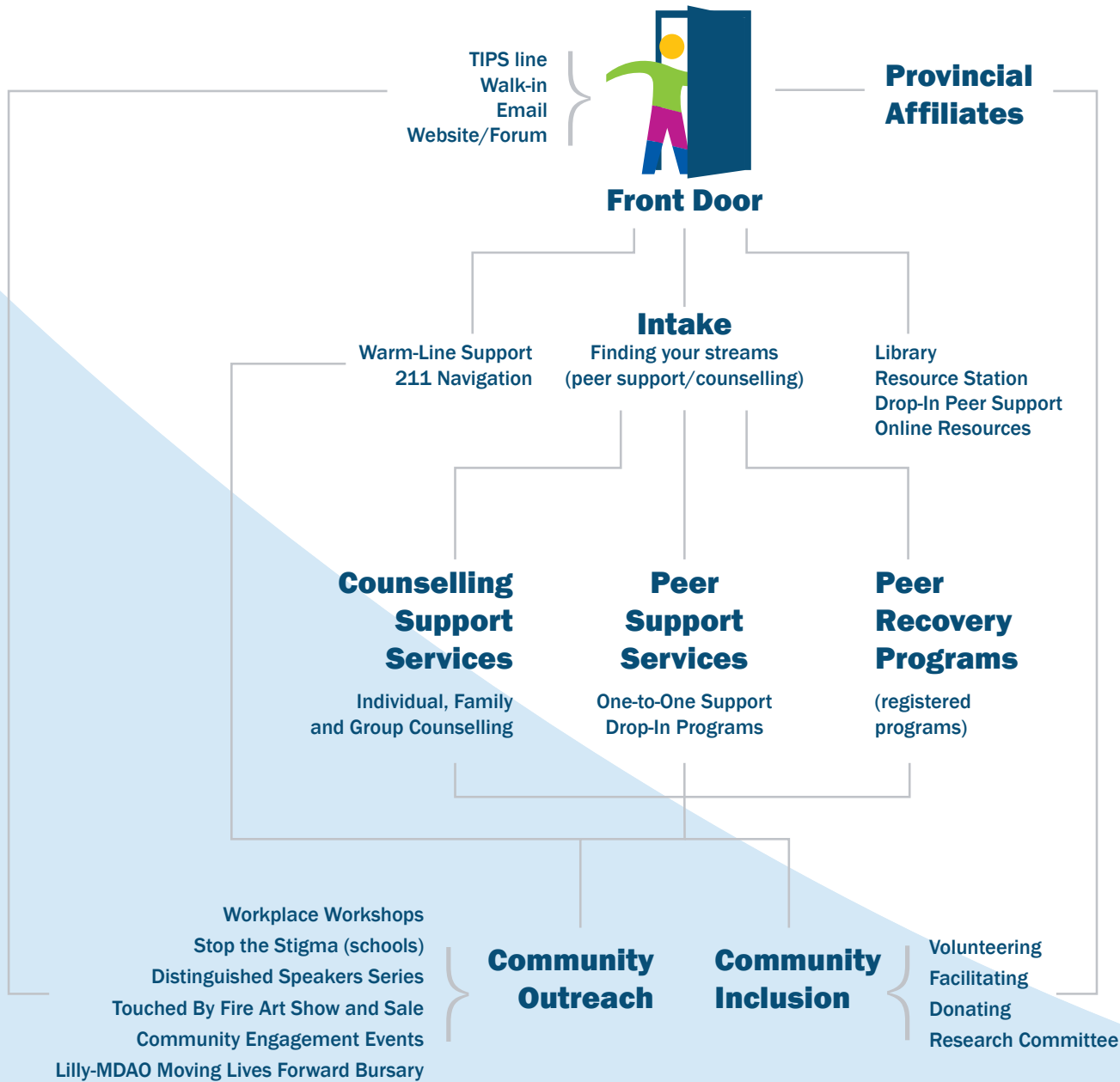
I hold over eighteen years of leadership experience in business including banking, sales, marketing, and human resources. I formed my own human resources consultancy which focused on providing organizational development, human resources, and management counsel to senior executives in a variety of leading Canadian companies. I have always focused my ability to connect people together to build excellent relationships at all levels.

I was a proud member of the Board of Directors at Mood Disorders Association for over eight years and chaired the board during my last year. We led a number of key initiatives including an organizational change design project together with the development and implementation of Human Resources policies and programs.

What I do...

As Executive Director and CEO of the MDAO, I am committed to MDAO’s vision of providing encouragement and services to individuals and families impacted by mood disorders and supporting them in their journey to recovery and healing. I am proud that we are a leader in group peer support programs and strategies; we facilitate a province-wide network of several drop-in peer support groups in many locations and at various times. I am particularly proud of the fact that at the heart of all of our services, support is provided by those with the lived experience as a powerful pathway to recovery.

Streams of Recovery



Peer Support Services

Bipolar Peer Support Group
Concurrent Disorders Group
Courage and Compassion
Depression and Anxiety
Support Group
Depression and Bipolar
Disorder Peer Support
Depression and Pain Peer
Support Group
Women's Peer Support Group
Men's Peer Support Group
Family Members Group
Support for Supporters
LGBTQ Peer Support Group
Older Adults Peer Support
Group
Youth and Young Adults Peer
Support Group
West End Peer Group

Counselling Support Services

Family Matters Peer Support
and Recovery Program
Early Intervention Psychosis
Program

Peer Recovery Programs

Laughing Like Crazy
Wellness and Recovery Action
Plan (W.R.A.P.)
Wellness and Recovery Action
Plan (W.R.A.P.) for Families
Families Matter Recovery
Program
Family Matters Open Family
Forum
Dealing with Families
Strengthening Families
Together

Gaining Autonomy with my
Medication (G.A.M.)
Boost Your Mood
Touched By Fire Art Program

Provincial Affiliates

Barrie
Bowmanville
Chatham
Georgetown
Guelph
Hamilton
Hearst
Ingersoll
Kapuskasing
Kenora
Kingston
Kitchener-Waterloo

Leamington
London
Midland
Newmarket
Niagara Region
Oakville
Orillia
Ottawa
Oxford
Peterborough
Richmond Hill
Sarnia
Schreiber
Smooth Rock Falls
St. Catharines
Toronto
Vineland
Windsor
Woodstock



Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program

The Mood Disorder Association of Ontario has developed a comprehensive support program for family members who are experiencing the complex challenges associated with providing and receiving care to those living with mood disorders and/or addictions.

While family members and caregivers are essential to the support team when addressing the needs of a loved one with mental health and addiction challenges, very often family members become in need of services and supports themselves.

Meet the Family Matters Team...



Shelly Murphy
Clinical Program Manager
Family Matters Peer Support
and Recovery Program

About me...

I am pleased to be the new Clinical Program Manager for the Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program at the MDAO. I bring with me close to twenty years of professional experience working in adolescent, child and family, education, mental health and addiction services for the Provinces of Prince Edward Island and Ontario. I have been highly successful in achieving positive outcomes and goals with hundreds of youth and family members in crisis with a strong focus on counselling support, therapeutic intervention, bio-psycho-social education and advocacy work. I have worked within both public and private sectors, giving me a wide breadth of understanding of community systems and engagement. Some of my most notable front line roles have been:

- Rape crisis & sexual assault phone support
- Youth worker services for a Provincial Adolescent Residential Treatment Facility
- Youth & family counselling support service for Child & Family Services
- Counselling services within the education system for youth and families identified as high risk
- Collaborated in the development and management of a "Small Options" group home and program for young men with multiple complex issues, requiring 24 hour supervision and immediate crisis intervention services
- Youth & family support services for the Early Intervention Psychosis program at the Mood Disorder Association of Ontario

What I do...

As Clinical Program Manager for the Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery program, my role is to manage, facilitate, and support existing MDAO family peer support and recovery programs and develop exciting new initiatives directed towards servicing family members and individuals. In addition, I will continue to maintain and collaborate with community partners to build mental health capabilities in order to respond to complex case needs. I will carry forward my:



Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program

This new program will continue to adhere to the individual peer support and recovery work that MDAO does best while expanding upon and strengthening services in the following areas:

- Clinical support services for family members between the ages of 16 – 65 challenged with complex mental health and addiction needs
- Educational resources for family members
- Recovery programs for family members
- Peer support groups
- One-on-one family peer support
- Psycho-educational programs
- System navigation
- Support networks
- Community outreach

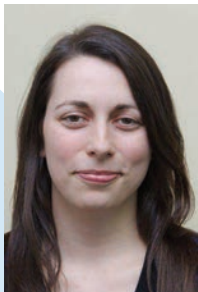


Ontario

Ministry of Health &
Long Term Care

Local Health Integration
Network

- Exceptional skills in individual, group, and family counselling
- Outstanding skills in assessment of clinical and social service needs
- Excellent relationship building, organizational, communication, and leadership skills
- And a solid commitment to anti-oppressive, trauma-informed, and client-centered approaches to practice



Becky Curran
Intake, Assessment, and Outreach Worker
Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program

About me...

I have worked with people experiencing mental health and substance use challenges at various community agencies in Toronto, including a practicum placement supporting older adults with mental health and substance use issues. In addition, I have had employment experiences at drop-in centres and in housing access. From these experiences, I am bringing to this role an understanding of the centrality of informal supports including family and friends of people living with mental health and substance use issues. I am also bringing my experience with crisis support, solution-focused counselling, and assessment to work collaboratively with people in coordinating necessary supports and developing their own skills, especially in relation to system navigation and self-advocacy.

I am approaching this role with diverse perspectives on supporting people living with mental health and substance use issues. Of particular interest to me are models of mental health recovery, harm reduction, and peer support from strengths-based, trauma-informed perspectives. I developed an interest in these models through my personal experiences, my Social Service Worker diploma at George Brown, my Master of Social Work Degree at York University, and my practice experiences. I look forward to continuing to develop my understanding of these models and gaining new perspective through my work at the MDAO.

What I do...

As the Intake, Assessment, and Outreach Worker, I am the first point of contact for individuals and family members who are interested in accessing supports, as well as for service providers wanting to make a referral or request further information about the Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program. I work directly with people to determine how we can best support them by discussing their current circumstances, the issues they are dealing with, and the supports we can provide. If we are unable to support someone through the MDAO, I will

provide them with resources and information regarding other services and supports in their community.

In terms of outreach, we provide presentations and workshops regarding our programs to other organizations, schools, community/family associations, and health promotion programs.



Daniel Farb
Peer Support Worker
Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program

About me...

I am a peer support worker with the Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program at the MDAO. Working from a holistic, humanistic perspective, I utilize my grounding in recovery principles, educational background in psychology, group facilitation skills, life coaching training, personal lived experience, and creative self-expression to help others affected by mental health and addiction issues.

Navigating life can be difficult enough for people in the best of times; navigating life while also dealing with mental health issues can be extremely daunting. For family members and supporters, it can be confusing, scary, and downright painful to watch loved ones suffering from mental illness. Being informed by my own personal experiences with mental health and addiction recovery, in addition to my experience of having family members with mental health challenges, I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of those who are struggling to find their way.

What I do...

In addition to providing one-on-one personal support to clients and their families, I am also responsible for facilitating a variety of groups and programs, including Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) groups for both individuals and family members of people with mood disorders. My goal is to make sure that people affected by mental health issues and their families receive the support they need on their journey of recovery.

People can and do recovery from mental health challenges and are able to live fulfilling, meaningful lives – all we need is the right kind of support along the way.

Family Matters Programs:

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)[®] for Families

The purpose of the WRAP for Families program is to provide strength-based support for family members of people with mood disorders. Covering the same material as the regular WRAP program but within a different context, the program will help family members to develop and practice self-care strategies,

learn the key concepts of mental health recovery, and be introduced to the concept of peer support. Family members will learn to exemplify recovery principles and in turn be of greater support to individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

The Family Matters Open Family Forum

The Family Matters Open Family Forum will provide an opportunity for those who are supporting someone with a mental health issue to access and share information, give and receive peer support, and find out more about our Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program and other resources in Toronto.

Through guest speakers, psychoeducational presentations, and group discussions, the Open Family Forum aims to provide practical and emotional support to those who are supporting someone with a mental health issue. Each week will have a topic that will be introduced but the format will be flexible to address the concerns of those attending the group, and time will always be dedicated for questions and group discussion. Attending the Open Family Forum will facilitate the opportunity for family members to connect with other supporters and consult with Family Matters team members.

The Open Family Forum will be held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at the MDAO from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.

The Open Family Forum is an open group that does not require registration or prior participation at the MDAO or the Family Matters Program, but an RSVP to Becky by email at beckyc@moooddisorders.ca or by phone at 416-486-8046 ext. 240 is requested.



Please check out our Facebook page facebook.com/MDAOFamilyMatters or our website www.moooddisorders.ca to find out about the next Open Family Forum and session topic.

Dealing with Family

Dealing with Family is a peer recovery program designed to help individuals with mood disorders and related issues to be able to talk with their family members about their mental health issues. Rather than a presentation or a course that is taught, this program is a facilitated conversation; it's a forum for participants to consider ideas and perspectives and to see how they may be useful in their lives.

In this intensive, four session program, participants will explore such issues as:

- Building and maintaining relationships

- How we talk about mental health issues
- Self-stigma and shame
- The role of listening in communication
- Assertiveness and self-advocacy
- Setting and upholding boundaries

In addition to conceptual material covered, participants will be encouraged to engage in experiential learning through active group participation and self-reflective exercises throughout the program. Dealing with Family is a registered program occurring over four weeks, meeting once a week at a set time for a length of 2.5 – 3 hours each session.

Families Matter Peer Support & Recovery Group

This group is designed for those family members who have been through individual counselling sessions with our social workers and are looking to strengthen their support network. The 10 week group has a psycho-educational component to strengthen our

understanding of mood disorders, a self-awareness component to help us better understand our role within these familial relationships, and a strong self-care and peer support component to help us develop the lasting support needed for family recovery.



Early Intervention Psychosis Program



Early Intervention
Psychosis Program

Early Intervention Psychosis Program

When someone you love has been diagnosed with psychosis or is experiencing early symptoms of psychosis, you may have concerns and questions you would like to talk about. MDAO offers counselling and support for families of young people (aged 15 to 35) who are living with a mood disorder and/or psychosis. The Early Intervention Psychosis Program can also assist you and your family to better understand psychosis and the importance of early intervention.

Meet the Early Intervention Team...

If you...

- Are a family member of an individual between the ages of 15-35 who may be experiencing early symptoms of psychosis or have been diagnosed with psychosis
- Are an individual between the ages of 15-35 who has been experiencing early symptoms of psychosis or have been diagnosed with psychosis
- Are inquiring about...
 - Resources
 - Education/information
 - Drop-in groups
 - Recovery programs

...we can provide support!



Leanne Needham
Youth and Family Services
Coordinator
Early Intervention Psychosis Program

About me...

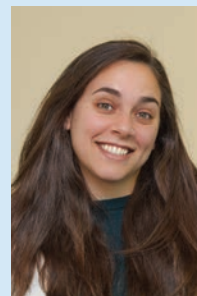
I have a Masters of Social Work and have been working with families in the area of mental health for 5 years. I joined MDAO because I feel strongly about the value of peer support in recovery and because I knew it would provide a friendly and supportive environment in which to help families. I am just returning from a maternity leave and I am very excited that MDAO is now able to offer support to a broader scope of families due to new funding.

What I do...

I joined MDAO in 2011 in the role of the Family and Youth Coordinator in the Early Intervention Psychosis Program. This program is funded by the Toronto Central LHIN (Local Health Integration Network) and the MOHLTC (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care) to provide counselling, education, and support to families that have a loved one between the ages of 15-35 who

are coping with psychosis and a mood disorder. Support is offered to families over the phone, in individual or family counselling sessions, as well as through peer support programs, such as Strengthening Families Together.

Since families can play an integral role in a person's recovery, it is important that they receive education about mood disorders, help navigating the mental health system, as well as emotional support. The Early Intervention Psychosis Program exists not only to support the family after a diagnosis has been given, but also to help them recognize the early warning signs of illness so that they can help their loved one receive treatment and support faster.



Christina D'Agostino
Acting Youth and Family Services
Coordinator
Early Intervention Psychosis Program

About me...

My name is Christina D'Agostino and I am the acting Youth and Family Services Coordinator for

the Early Intervention Psychosis Program at MDAO. Since beginning here, I have found the environment and all the people within it to be welcoming and lively.

My educational background contains elements of psychology, gender studies, international development, politics, and social work. My past experience includes working in various capacities with young people in high schools, facilitating within classroom, arts- facilitation, peer support with youth, and working with queer communities.

I am someone who enjoys many elements of music and rhythm, as well as being engaged in various forms of community arts and social change. I like to engage in mindfulness meditation and have been active in sports throughout my life. I am a

pretty sensitive person who likes to read, write, and imagine multiple possibilities. I love many things to do with food, growth, and relating to people through shared connections and unique differences.

What I do...

My role at the MDAO is centered on providing education, awareness, and support to youth as well as their families who are experiencing or have experienced psychosis. I work to provide basic psychoeducation, system navigation, and counselling support to people who may be having challenges with psychosis or mood disorders. I also coordinate the Moving Lives Forward bursary program as well as our involvement in the Stop the Stigma program in secondary schools in Toronto. I have also participated in facilitating some groups as a peer.

Early Intervention Programs:

Strengthening Families Together

Strengthening Families Together is an 8-week program for families who are providing care and support to a person aged 15-35 who is living with a mood disorder and psychosis. Course topics include:

- What are psychosis and other related mental illnesses?
- Coping as a family
- Treatment and recovery

- Healthy communication
- Dealing with crisis
- Understanding the mental health system
- Supporting yourself and your loved one

Strengthening Families together is a program offered in collaboration with the Schizophrenia Society of Canada (SSC) and the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO).

Stop the Stigma

Stop the Stigma is a program that partners with the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Toronto District School Board to bring awareness about mental health issues to youth to help break down stigma and help youth in order to get help when it is needed. Since its inception in 2009, MDAO has helped schools run their own Stop the Stigma Awareness weeks in which students organize events, speakers and information

booths to raise awareness about mental health. MDAO now partners by bringing educational presentations and speakers to these events and an opportunity for youth to connect to our services. This program has also been implemented in some schools across the province.

Eli Lilly Moving Lives Forward Bursary

The Eli Lilly Bursary Program is an annual program in which select people receive a financial award to help them return/continue their schooling while coping with a mood disorder. This award is intended to open doors to educational opportunities by providing financial support to people living with a mood disorder as they pursue post-secondary studies. The Mood Disorders Association

of Ontario is grateful to the Lilly Giving Program of Eli Lilly Canada Inc. for providing the funding for this bursary award. Bursaries are awarded based on the expressed financial need of applicants. The maximum amount of each award is \$2000. Information about applying for the Bursary Program will become available in April and award recipients will be announced in June of each year.

The Lilly logo is written in a red, cursive script font.

Answers That Matter.



Provincial Peer Support and Recovery Programs

Barrie
Bowmanville
Chatham
Georgetown
Guelph
Hamilton
Hearst
Ingersoll
Kapuskasing
Kenora
Kingston
Kitchener-Waterloo
Leamington
London
Midland
Newmarket
Niagara Region
Oakville
Orillia
Ottawa
Oxford
Peterborough
Richmond Hill
Sarnia
Schreiber
Smooth Rock Falls
St. Catharines
Toronto
Vineland
Windsor
Woodstock



An agency of the Government of Ontario.
Relève du gouvernement de l'Ontario.



Local Health Integration
Network

Provincial Peer Support Programs

In addition to providing a strong hub of peer support services and programs at our head office in Toronto, the MDAO has 35 affiliate member organizations that offer peer support across the province. Recently, with the support of funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we launched the Peer Support Provincial Capacity Building (PSCB) project. The purpose of the project is to help us better connect with and build the capacity of our 35 affiliate members, which run 54 peer support groups across Ontario.

The main purpose of the project is to come up with an organization and membership model that will be sensitive, flexible, and adaptable to the demands and expectations of each region. Funding will be used to implement training and develop volunteer, e-learning, and communication tools that will help strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the provincial peer-support network. The initiative will help remove barriers and standardize, peer-support and recovery programs for Ontarians living with mood disorders.

Meet the Provincial Peer Support Team...



Jeremiah Bach
Senior Manager
Ontario Peer Support Programs

About me...

Hello there, my name is Jeremiah Bach, and I am the Senior Manager of Ontario Peer Support programs here at MDAO. I came to the MDAO in October of 2013, after spending time working with the Mental Health Commission of Canada as part of a mental health and homelessness project. I was also a Peer Support Worker for seven years in different parts of Toronto. I've done work in the psychiatric consumer/survivor community for almost a decade, and I can't imagine what life would be like without all the amazing people that are part of our peer communities. Over this time, I've always lived by the idea that as peers we can offer each other something that we can't find anywhere else: the ability to understand unique and difficult experiences that can only be fully

appreciated if you've gone through it yourself. That's what first drew me to MDAO, and our central idea: "Talk to someone who's been there."

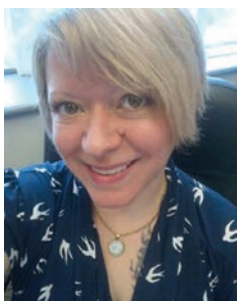
What I do...

You might be wondering: 'Ontario Peer Support Programs – what does that mean?' As you know, MDAO is a provincial organization, which means that even our peer support programs stretch across the province. For folks in Toronto, you probably know about the 15 drop-in peer support groups we have here, but we also have over 30 affiliate groups across Ontario! From Sarnia, to Kenora, to Ottawa, there are amazing groups providing peer support with the help of MDAO in every corner of the province. As part of the Peer Support Provincial Capacity Building (PSCB) project, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), the MDAO is supporting these groups by providing training, supporting facilitators, helping with group policy, graphic design, and a number of other things. For example, one of the big projects we will be taking on is providing Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) facilitator training to many of our affiliate groups across the province, absolutely free! Overall, we want to see peer support continue to grow in Ontario by

collaborating with our independent affiliate groups, as we strive to create healthy and vibrant communities in the province. If you want to check out all the places where MDAO has affiliate groups, go to: <http://mooddisorders.ca/peer-support-groups-across-ontario>.

In Toronto, along with the drop-in groups, I also have the pleasure of looking after the MDAO Recovery groups. Recovery groups are run by Peer Facilitators, just like our drop-in groups, but the difference is that you register for these groups instead of just “dropping in.” They are also based on an existing program, rather than being discussion based like the drop-in groups. Recovery programs include WRAP, Laughing Like Crazy, and Gaining Autonomy with my Medication (GAM). To find out more about, you can visit: <http://mooddisorders.ca/program/recovery-programs-O>.

Our peer facilitators, phone volunteers, and Peer Support Workers have a lot to offer and are part of a long tradition of peer support in the province. So wherever you live in Ontario, I hope you get a chance to be part of MDAO groups and programs at some point in the near future. I'll also be on the road quite a bit in the coming months, so maybe I'll see you around!



Amanda J. Hall
Peer Support Worker
Ontario Peer Support Programs

About me...

Please allow me to introduce myself; my name is Amanda J. Hall, and I am (very happy and humbled to be) the new Peer Support Worker at the MDAO. I spent over a year volunteering at the MDAO in a number of capacities, including roles such as: group facilitator, warm line/TIPS operator, and outreach. I was the founding member, president, and event/fundraising planner of the Alternative Parents of Toronto social group, which remained active for over a decade and maintained over 250 members. Some of my professional highlights also include: working as a physician's assistant at Emergency Medical Services Inc., running my own privately retained childcare business, and providing care for older adults living with dementia/Alzheimer's. I am currently attending George Brown college in the Social Service Worker program (specializing in mental health and addictions), and I have previously studied in the fields of Funeral Services, Health Sciences, and Personal Support Work.

What I Do...

My role at the MDAO is to provide one-on-one peer support in a welcoming, open-minded, and non-judgmental setting; I also provide telephone support both locally and to folks in need throughout Ontario. Some of my other duties include: group facilitation, various projects concerning provincial initiatives, and providing referrals both within the MDAO (such as to the Family Matters program) and outside of the MDAO (in areas where the MDAO does not currently offer services).

I am available on Mondays and Thursdays 9:30am-5:00pm, and may be reached at by phone at 416-486-8046 ext. 238, or by email at amandah@mooddisorders.ca

Peer Recovery Programs (registered groups):

Recovery programs at the MDAO are pre-registered programs (i.e. people must call/email to register themselves for an upcoming program to participate) that are offered periodically and run for a finite length of time (i.e. have a beginning and end). They are more structured than the drop-in peer support groups and have a range

of different modalities. Facilitators of these programs are peers who have undergone specialized training and/or have substantial personal experience with the subject matter and content being delivered. Below is a list of recovery programs offered by the MDAO:

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)[®]

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) is an intervention that was developed by people who had been dealing with a variety of psychiatric symptoms and who were working hard to feel better and get on with their lives. WRAP is a non-clinical, non-diagnostic recovery program that explores key recovery concepts and tools that people can use to keep themselves well. The WRAP program at the

MDAO occurs on a weekly basis over the course of eight weeks.

WRAP has been associated with:

- Increases in positive attitudes and knowledge about recovery and self-advocacy

- Significant improvements in symptoms including greater reductions in depression and anxiety scores
- Preparedness and crisis planning, and a greater belief in the possibility of recovery

- Hopefulness, higher personal confidence and goal orientation, and increased ability for self-management
- For more information, please visit www.moooddisorders.ca/program/wellness-recovery-action-plan-wrap

My Journey with WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)

By: Steve Hubel, WRAP Provincial Facilitator

WRAP was a game changer for me.

It started when a Peer Support Worker invited me to a series of “lunch and learns.” We watched a video of a woman named Mary Ellen Copeland facilitating a program called WRAP in front of a dozen people. WRAP was developed in the 1990’s by Mary Ellen Copeland and dozens of peers that explored what helped people stay well for long periods of time.

After lunch and the video, seven or eight of us would have a round table discussion for an hour about how we felt and what parts struck a chord with us. What resonated with me the most was how courageous it was for the people in the video and at my table to share what they had gone through.

In 2012, while attending peer support groups at the MDAO, I found out that WRAP was being offered as an 8 week recovery group. Our group started with 14 participants, and as we talked a bond was created. Some of the people I met in this group I still keep in touch with.

My positive experience with the peer support I received at MDAO led me to enroll in the PREFER (Peer Recovery Education for Employment and Resilience) program at the Krasman Centre. One part of the program was a four day course to learn how to facilitate WRAP. This was an incredible learning experience and furthered not only my knowledge of WRAP and how to facilitate it, but how it can fit into my everyday life.

After facilitating my own workshops, I was offered the opportunity by the MDAO to attend Advanced Level Facilitator training to learn to train others to be WRAP Facilitators.

As one of two WRAP Provincial Facilitators for the MDAO, I will be facilitating WRAP programs around the province, as well as training new WRAP facilitators so that more people can benefit from WRAP.

The Oxford dictionary definition of “game changer” is: An event, idea, or procedure that affects a significant shift in the current way of doing or thinking about something. WRAP continues to positively impact my everyday life and has helped me lead the life I want to lead.



**LAUGHING
LIKECRAZY**

Laughing Like Crazy

The backbone of the Laughing Like Crazy program is an intensive 16 week group that teaches participants how to develop a stand-up comedy routine based on their experiences of mental health issues and the mental health system. Each meeting combines mutual support and group building with learning how to write, hone, and deliver a stand-up routine. The culmination of the program is a public showcase performance where people perform stand-up comedy for the very first time.

There are now over a hundred graduates of the intensive program who can be booked for public and private performances. These shows raise awareness, reduce stigma, and are an opportunity to create a meaningful

dialogue about the impacts of mental health issues on individuals and communities.

“I am currently involved with MDAO as both a facilitator and a graduate of the Laughing Like Crazy program. I also attend some of the drop-in support groups. The MDAO has been a wonderful experience for me because of Laughing Like Crazy and WRAP. I was introduced to both of these programs at the MDAO. They have been more than helpful to me. Laughing Like Crazy is about the best therapy I have done!”

~George Z.

Gaining Autonomy with my Medication (GAM) (pilot program)

Do you struggle with figuring out how medications fit into your life? Are you tired of people telling you what to do about your psych meds? Do you want a different approach to looking after your meds? Do you want to take more CONTROL over your psychiatric medication?

Gaining Autonomy with my Medication (GAM) takes a quality of life approach to psychiatric medication

that gets away from the tired arguments of whether medications are “good” or “bad,” and focuses on what’s best for YOU. Still relatively new to Ontario, GAM has been hugely successful in Quebec, and has gained acclaim from psychiatric consumer/survivors, psychiatrists, and universities. This program is offered in both English and French.

Other Recovery Programs

There are a number of other programs that have been offered at the MDAO over the years and new programs that will likely be offered in the future. We are constantly looking for innovative and creative ways to help people in their journey of recovery and to best serve the people

who use our services. If there are particular types of groups you’d like to see offered or have ideas you’d like to share with us, please feel free to drop us a line and let us know at: info@moooddisorders.ca or give us a call at 416-486-8046.

Drop-In Peer Support Groups

Drop-in peer support groups at the MDAO are groups open to people who identify as having experiences with mood disorders and related issues. The groups run regularly at a set place, date, and time on an ongoing basis, and no registration is required to attend. There are a variety of groups available with different focuses (e.g. depression and anxiety group) or are open to people in particular communities (e.g. group for family members of people with mood disorders).

The term “peer” refers to an individual who identifies as having personal “lived experience” with a particular issue. Facilitators of the drop-in peer support groups are peers who identify as having experience with the particular issue of focus in the group (e.g. a person who facilitates the bipolar peer support group would self-identify as having personal experiences with bipolar disorder).

People who attend groups are not required to have a formal diagnosis of any kind and do not need to openly identify as having a particular mood disorder. The degree to which an individual wishes to participate in a group is entirely optional; nobody is required to speak or share if they don’t feel comfortable doing so.

The purpose of the peer support groups is for people with similar experiences to share about what they’re dealing with in a supportive, non-judgmental, and safe environment, and to give and receive support. Below is a list of peer support drop-in groups offered by the MDAO in Toronto:

Bipolar Peer Support Group
Concurrent Disorders Group
Courage and Compassion
Depression and Anxiety Support Group
Depression and Bipolar Peer Support Group
Depression and Pain Support Group
Family Members Group
LGBTQ Peer Support Group
Men’s Peer Support Group
Older Adults Peer Support Group
Supporting for Supporters
West End Peer Support Group
Women’s Peer Support Group
Youth and Young Adults Peer Support Group

Other Programs and Resources



**Telephone
Information
Peer
Support**

Telephone Information Peer Support (TIPS) “warm-line”:

Telephone Information Peer Support (TIPS) is our toll-free telephone number that allows callers from across the province to access information and support. Trained volunteers are available during office hours (Monday to Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) to provide callers

with local support group details, guidance on how to find a doctor, as well as offering peer to peer support.

The number is: **1-866-363-MOOD (6663)**, Monday to Friday, 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Online Peer Support Forums

The MDAO has online peer support forums set up for people to discuss mood disorders and related issues. These forums are designed to provide visitors to the MDAO website with an opportunity to connect with others in an online community for support. Individuals using the forums can create any username they'd like so that they can stay anonymous. Forums have been set-up for Depression and Bipolar Disorder Support, Family Support,

and Postpartum Depression Support with various subtopics in each forum. People are encouraged to visit the forums, engage in mutual support, and exchange ideas with people affected by mood disorders.

The online forums can be accessed through the “Online Programs” section of the MDAO website, or directly via this link: <http://mdao.vcc.com/>

Research Committee



Andrew Kcomt
Research Consultant
MDAO Research Advisory
Committee (MRAC) Chair

About me...

Hello everyone, my name is Andrew and I'm a research consultant at the MDAO, as well as the chair of our newly formed MDAO Research Advisory Committee (MRAC). I'm a graduate of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto and have practiced in a pediatric hospital setting. Prior to the MDAO, most of my career has been with the pharmaceutical industry managing clinical research trials, as well as a variety of roles in drug information and business development. In my spare time,

I enjoy photography as well as being a big film buff, particularly in the area of documentary film and also enjoy volunteering with the LGBTQ community. If you're ever in the office, feel free to drop by my desk and help yourself to some candy treats from the ever popular "Jolly Jar!"

What I/we do...

A poll of our membership identified that a majority of our members believe in the importance of research and would like to see an increased involvement of the organization in such projects. As a result of this needs assessment, we have created the MRAC committee, which consists of members with lived and/or family experience with mood disorders. These members represent a cross-section of the province and offer their extensive experience and expertise in helping us guide our research and program evaluation initiatives. This collaborative model of involving those with lived and/or family experience in such activities is very much aligned with our strategic vision of providing the best possible services to Ontarians.

Some of the exciting projects we are working on include a pilot evaluation of our very popular Laughing Like Crazy stand-up comedy program, through a partnership with the University Health Network. We are also currently conducting a program evaluation of our newly formed Family Matters Peer Support and Recovery Program that combines both peer support and clinical services to family members who are experiencing the complex challenges associated with providing and receiving care

to those living with mood disorders and/or addictions. These evaluations will be essential in providing evidence to our funders and the general public about the excellent and innovative services we provide at the MDAO.

The MDAO has also partnered with a number of clinicians and researchers involved in some novel research projects. We are participating on the Canadian Biomarker Integration Network in Depression (CAN-BIND) Patient and Family Advisory Committee, which is looking at reducing the impact of depression and its treatment by identifying "biomarkers." Biomarkers are biological and clinical characteristics which will ultimately guide treatment selection and hopefully shorten the path from diagnosis to effective treatment. We are also partnered with The Collaborative RESearch Team to study psychosocial issues in Bipolar Disorder (CREST-BD), which is a multidisciplinary network of researchers, healthcare providers, and people living with the bipolar disorder that are dedicated to research and knowledge exchange about psychological and social factors affecting the condition. In addition, I am part of the planning team for the International Society of Bipolar Disorder conference which will be held in Toronto from June 3 to 6, 2015, that will include an advocacy day bringing together those with lived experience and clinicians/researchers.

As you can see, we have a lot of exciting projects on the go this year and we hope to share our findings with you in the months to come through some of our upcoming knowledge translation activities.

Volunteering

Volunteering is at the heart of the important work being done by the MDAO. We wouldn't be able to provide the many services, events, programs, and projects focused on supporting people living with mood disorders and their families without our incredible volunteers.

Volunteers of the MDAO have the opportunity to meet new people, make new friends, and be involved in purposeful, meaningful work. Volunteers receive a complimentary membership to the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario and also receive initial and ongoing training by a team of generous, supportive,

and accepting individuals. Volunteers learn more about mood disorders, recovery, and coping skills and have the opportunity to build skills in areas such as telephone and computer use, interpersonal communications, and administrative work. Volunteers also have opportunities to provide leadership, support, information and resources in groups and programs.

For more information, check out the "Volunteer" section of our website at: www.moooddisorders.ca/support-us/volunteer

"I've been a volunteer at MDAO for about one year. I enjoy interacting with callers on TIPS (Telephone Information Peer Support). I feel we all have a craving to have our lived experience acknowledged and clarified, respected, and accepted. When relevant, I like to share with people how our peer support model and recovery programs can help them along their healing journey and/or provide referrals outside MDAO that can support their desire of better managing their mental health.

I've also facilitated our Pain and Depression group. There isn't any doubt in my mind of the benefit of a safe community to get and receive support about the vulnerable aspects of ourselves.

I can't imagine a more meaningful activity than helping myself and others find that peace within."

~Keith D'Silva



“Due to ongoing depression, it is important that I keep some schedule in my life and that I do activities that are meaningful. I recently retired and was looking for a place to volunteer that would use some of my skills from 30 years working in various social service roles. These included skills in administration, counselling, research, and organization. MDAO seemed to be an obvious choice and it is located close to where I live.

By volunteering at the MDAO, I get a sense of being part of the working world and satisfaction in helping others. I continue to use and expand my skill base. I attempt new things and keep my brain active.

My participation has been mostly on the reception/warm line. I am beginning to volunteer as a group facilitator. I am able to help peers by listening to their issues and giving them the benefit of my experience.

Volunteering has been very good for me. I'm surrounded by excellent co-workers and given meaningful tasks. I am learning a lot about this agency and peer support in general.”

~Barbara M.



“The word ‘volunteering’ has many meanings to me: self-confidence, self-esteem, compassion, caring, and the most amazing feeling of life satisfaction. But above all, volunteering is dedication through giving and giving back.

Monday, March 31, 2014, was my first day of volunteering at the MDAO. I shadowed a funky, tattoo-loving young lady named Amanda. It has been two and a half months and I have been fortunate enough to learn many things and I'm still learning. Within the association I am a TIPS/warm-line phone volunteer and I have started to facilitate my own peer support drop-in group. But the most important thing that I love about the MDAO is that I can be myself, and I am helping others which provides me with a natural sense of accomplishment. In the role of volunteer, I gain a sense of pride and identity. The better I

feel about myself, the more likely I am to have a positive view of my life and future goals. Most importantly, the final reason why I love to volunteer is that I am learning how I can take my lived experiences with my mood disorders and turn them into something positive by helping others.

Along my journey, Anne (GAM group facilitator) and Steve (acting volunteer coordinator and WRAP facilitator) have become my mentors (even if they do not know it). They are two special people that I look up to in high regard! Thank you to the both of you who have anchored me with my journey and helped me to grow. Also, I would like to thank Amanda and the amazing staff at the MDAO for making me feel welcome at the organization.”

~Melanie S.

“Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’” – Mary Anne Radmacher-Hershey



“As one who has adjusted successfully to living with a mood disorder, it only makes sense to give back and ‘share the wisdom and wealth’ one has learned along the way. That's why I volunteer at the MDAO. I love facilitating the Older Adults group in particular because I am always impressed at the courage the members exhibit in sharing, sometimes, very deep things with virtual strangers; as well, it does my heart good to see them jump in and support one another.

I again particularly appreciate the Older Adults group as the participants in general have a great deal of life experience that they bring to the group. With my being in a wheelchair, I too have some life experience that I can draw from in order to better reach and relate to those in deep pain and emotional agony. I very much value MDAO and the opportunities with which it and the leadership have entrusted to me. I am grateful for their trust and appreciation of me and of the unique set of gifts, talents, and abilities that I bring to facilitation. I love what I do and I have been so pleased to hear on occasion that those on the receiving end of what I do seem to appreciate it as well.”

~Ellen R.

TOUCHED BY FIRE

Touched by Fire Art Show and Sale

Touched By Fire's inclusive virtual marketplace provides an open venue, thus encouraging active participation and engagement in the creative community. By recognizing the artistic contribution of artists with mood disorders, the Touched By Fire gallery provides sales and promotional opportunities that help instill confidence and help artists connect at their own pace. The juried event provides a celebration for the best work of the year, promoting pride in excellence and creative growth, and giving artists considerable exposure. The show also offers the community an opportunity to learn more about mood disorders, Touched By Fire, and the MDAO. It gives those touched by our programs the chance to provide sponsorship financially or as volunteers, as well as inviting more artists with mood disorders to discover the program and its benefits to them.

For more information, please visit: <http://touchedbyfire.co/>

Touched By Fire Art Program

Art classes made up of:

- Learn to Draw by Learning to See Differently
- Learn to Paint for the Absolute Beginner



Gwen Hayes
Art Class Facilitator

About me...

I've been involved with MDAO for a couple of years, starting as a volunteer with the Touched By Fire program, and then coming on board as a consultant to do communications work. My focus then shifted towards grant-writing to get support for various programs and once again to connecting with

Touched By Fire artists to develop their profiles for the MDAO blog.

What I do...

These days I'm a peer support worker/art class facilitator. The art classes fall under the umbrella of the Touched By Fire program, which is just one of MDAO's arts for mental health initiatives. I believe that opportunities to be involved in art-making and creative processes are essential to people on a recovery journey.

There are so many barriers to being able to participate in the arts for people with mood disorders, yet research consistently demonstrates the benefits of arts for mental health, so it's wonderful that MDAO can offer arts-based programs. Beyond developing new skills, the art classes provide the therapeutic benefits of art-making with the opportunity to socialize with peers who "get" what it's like to have a mood disorder. The classes help people reconnect with ways of focusing, learning, and creating that



Touched By Fire

Administration

they may not have experienced for quite some time.

Our focus on process supports positive self-expression without the pressure of trying to attain some preconceived notion of what a desirable outcome might be, and developing an artistic practice contributes to well-being and overall

quality of life. The art classes are just one way that MDAO reaches out and welcomes people into a vibrant community. It gives me great pleasure to be involved with these programs, activities, and particularly all the people I've met here.

MDAO has given me a great sense of "belonging."

Administration



Lawrence Peddie
Office Manager

About me...

I came to MDAO after spending time in the corporate world – working for an IT Services vendor,

a design studio, and a software development company – and the not-for-profit world. In my off time, I sit on the Board of Directors of two community-based orchestras and work with several other arts organizations.

What I do...

I'm the Office Manager at MDAO, trying to keep things running smoothly. Some of my responsibilities include event planning, web/graphic design, basic IT support and just about all aspects of logistical coordination for the office.

Shirley Enns
Manager of Finance

About me...

I am a CPA, CMA (Chartered Professional Accountant, Certified Management Accountant). I started with MDAO in January 2012 as the part time Manager of Finance.

What I do...

My responsibilities as Manager of Finance include: preparing the financial statements; working with the staff, the Executive Director, and the Board of Directors in

developing the annual budget; preparing analysis for the Executive Director and the Board of Directors; organizing the financial data and submitting all required reporting to MOHLTC, our major funder. I am accountable for the implementing and maintaining customary and appropriate internal accounting procedures and controls. I also work with our external auditors and manage the audit process.



Eric Jonasson
Information Research Specialist

About me...

I am a Science Graduate of University of Guelph and have experience working in the lab in the food and cosmetics industries. I originally came to the MDAO as a volunteer working on the newsletters, and have since performed various roles in bookkeeping, the

library, information management, and the Distinguished Speakers series.

What I do...

I am mainly involved in the administration of several programs at MDAO, including the Laughing Like Crazy stand-up comedy program, the Touched by Fire art show, and other recovery programs. In addition, I put together the quarterly and biannual Common Data Set (CDS) and ConnexOntario reporting for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; these reports let the Ministry know the scope and amount of services we provide and the populations we are serving. With the help of volunteers and students, I also organize displays for corporate health fairs and community events, and arrange for speakers to talk about mood disorders on an on-going basis.



MDAO – Coming from the Past and Moving to the Future

Since I am the longest serving staff member at the MDAO, people tend to ask me: “What was it like when the MDAO was starting out?” Well, things were not that different than they are now. Our roots were the same as they are today – peer support, family support, information, and education. However, we did use to do things a little bit differently.

To keep the membership informed, physical newsletters were mailed out to 2000+ individuals and community organizations with Toronto peer support calendars and upcoming speakers enclosed. We were always working two months in advance to keep people up to date on the latest happenings at the MDAO.

The internet was in its infancy – our initial introduction to it was through a dial-up service in the early 1990's. We had a basic website (using Microsoft Frontpage) which was basically a bulletin board for groups and activities. Finally, by the late 1990's, we had “high-speed” internet with four computer terminals.

Prior to high-speed internet, our library provided a wealth of knowledge on mental illness and mood disorders to explore information, wellness, and countless biographies. Yes, there was a time when you did not simply surf the internet for the latest information. Also, I find the learning process when I read books is a bit different than searching for information online – I reflect and ponder things and do not take them at face value. Thankfully, even with the current state of technology, we still have our well-stocked, ever-growing library here at the MDAO.

Moving forward, I am sure that the MDAO will continue to find innovative ways to provide information and support to individuals and families dealing with mood disorders while retaining the heart and soul of our vision: individuals and families affected by mood disorders recover and heal.

~Eric



In Memoriam...

Leonard "Len" McKinley Wood
1938 – 2014

It is with a very heavy heart that I advise you of the passing of our beloved board member Len Wood. Words seem inadequate to express the profound sadness I feel about Len's death. He was such a pillar of strength and guidance for our organization. Len was an incredible beacon of light to so many people. He always put other people's needs ahead of his own. When I first started as Executive Director, Len gave me a copy of a poem that he wrote; he told me that he would read it at the end of his workshops and drop-in groups. I placed it on the website immediately and hung it proudly in my office and read it often. I wanted to share a couple of sentences with you:

"Don't assume you know what is best for us, allow us to explain what we need. Just actively listen to our expressed thoughts, before you choose how to proceed. Experiences of mental illness and or addiction in a community will tend to persist. But true recovery is possible for most people, when hope, support, and love exist."

Regards,
Ann Marie MacDonald
Executive Director

Obituary:

Len Wood, 76, died June 7, 2014 at Georgian Bay General Hospital in Midland after a courageous battle with cancer. Born in Midland in 1938, Len was the second of four sons to Mary and Lorne "Smokey" Wood.

Len was a very caring and compassionate person. Having long suffered from the effects of bipolar disorder, he recognized that the best way to deal with it was to help himself by treating the disorder as a gift; he learned to employ his experiences and insights by helping and supporting others with mood disorders to help themselves.

His work as a volunteer, especially with mental wellness, provided him great joy, purpose and a sense of well being. Len strongly encouraged others to take personal responsibility and not to see themselves as a diagnosed

illness but as human beings with hopes, dreams and desires who happen to be dealing with another event in their lives.

Len sat on more than 40 boards and committees, all related to mental health and/or addictions. He served as Chair of the Community Advisory Board-MHCP for 11 of his 18 years on the Board. He recently served as Past-President of the Patient/Client and Family Council at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, of which he was a founding member, and he was President of the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario.

His most precious awards were the many personal cards and notes of thanks from many he had helped to begin their journey of helping themselves through improved self-esteem and sense of personal worth.