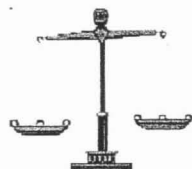

ARA

Mental Health Action Research & Advocacy Association of Greater Vancouver
"In Search of a Better Way"



We the People

September 2004, Volume 1, Issue 8

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Did you know?

What we do at ARA

Pulling out the Tools: The 'Mood Emergency Plan'

By Shannon Ryan

For myself, the road to recovery has been a slow and often times up-hill road with many ruts and bumps along the way and as I write this I am reminded of the simple yet very fitting slogan, take it "One Day at a Time". Certainly, healing takes time, patience, determination, etc., but it also requires taking some action and by reflecting on the tools/strategies that really work for ME, and by putting those tools to work - one day at a time - I can honestly say that the journey has been worth it!

Recovery and what actually works in each of our recovery processes, (especially after a particularly severe bout of depression, mania or psychosis) is such an individualized process. What we each keep in our 'toolkits,' the recovery strategies we choose to utilize in our day-to-day lives, are often learned on a trial-and-error basis. One such tool that I find useful is the 'Mood Emergency Plan'.

Some of you may be familiar with this recovery strategy or you may have heard of having an 'Action Plan' in place or have heard of the more formal terms like a 'Psychiatric Advance Direc-

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tive, a Ulysses Agreement or Ulysses Contract, or even a Living Will but regardless of what you choose to call it, this strategy simply involves designing a plan of action when you're WELL – which allows for the healthy self, not the ill self, to determine what is in YOUR best interest and what YOUR wishes are if and when you become ill.

A Mood Emergency Plan, shared with key folks in your circle of support allows others to fully understand what your wishes are for things like: preferred medications and medications that you will NOT take; acceptable and unacceptable treatment options; preferred and unacceptable treatment facilities; what you WANT and what you do NOT want from your supporters when experiencing severe symptoms; who will care for children; arrangements for the care of pets or household activities, etc., etc..

In my own experience, I have found that my decision-making capabilities and energy are often severely impaired when my symptoms are especially pronounced and having a Mood Emergency Plan in place, having action steps that either myself or my supporters can take when necessary allows me to plan ahead and ideally prevent some of the disastrous complications that can arise. Having an action plan in place means that I have a much better chance of avoiding negative treatment methods, inadequate medications, and family complications/arguments and undo stress for myself, my family and friends.

During the 1st Century, Syrus stated, "It is a bad plan that admits of no modification" and it is important to make changes or modify your plan, as needed. Certainly, nothing in this life is static

including the ways in which our illnesses present, who enters or perhaps leaves our circle of support, where we live, etc., and as a result, it is important to revisit the Mood Emergency Plan and make the necessary changes and again, share the updated plan with key supporters.

Mary Ellen Copeland writes and teaches on mental health and recovery and her work, titled "Wellness Recovery Action Plan" (1997) may be useful as a guideline in developing an action plan that is tailored to your particular situation and to your wishes. As well, she has what she calls a "Crisis Plan" template on her website that you can download and then tailor to suit your own needs.

The website address is:

www.mentalhealthrecovery.com

Designing a Mood Emergency Plan, sharing it with key support people in your life, and making the necessary modifications as needed is one of many recovery tools that I have found useful and I'm reminded of that old cliché – "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!" I realize that it would be naïve to think that I can prevent all of the myriad of complications that can come up when you live with a mental illness but I know that planning ahead, when I am well, allows me to feel more confident as I travel the road of recovery, one day at a time.

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The "Ulysses Agreement" stems from the mythical Greek hero, 'Ulysses' who simply developed a plan in advance, shared his plan beforehand with his crew. These advance directions enabled Ulysses and his crew to avoid the disastrous results (certain death) of succumbing to the lure of the Sirens.

More specifically, Ulysses firmly instructed his crew to bind him to the mast of his ship BEFORE sailing past the irresistible and deadly Sirens and to ignore his command for release, and just keep sailing.

As a result, he and his crew survived
- Shannon Ryan

Untitled

This is a poem for my finite organ,
And its' eight point three pounds of flesh.
Due to a commandment of words,
My Children,
Advance forward these sentences,
Whose potentials I create,
In this space,
In this time,
Where things go in lines,
Like the buildings of men you destroy.

These words are my Children,
My product of birth.
I'm taking them out.
Pen to paper.
A rupture in this cage of images,
Because religions fail at Circles,
And make infinite simplicity the hold.

It's all I can do to fill empty space,
At seven a.m.
Filling where light does not travel,
The limits of my womb,
Where everybody thinks,
The one Child of brilliance,
Is born.

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Creative Arts

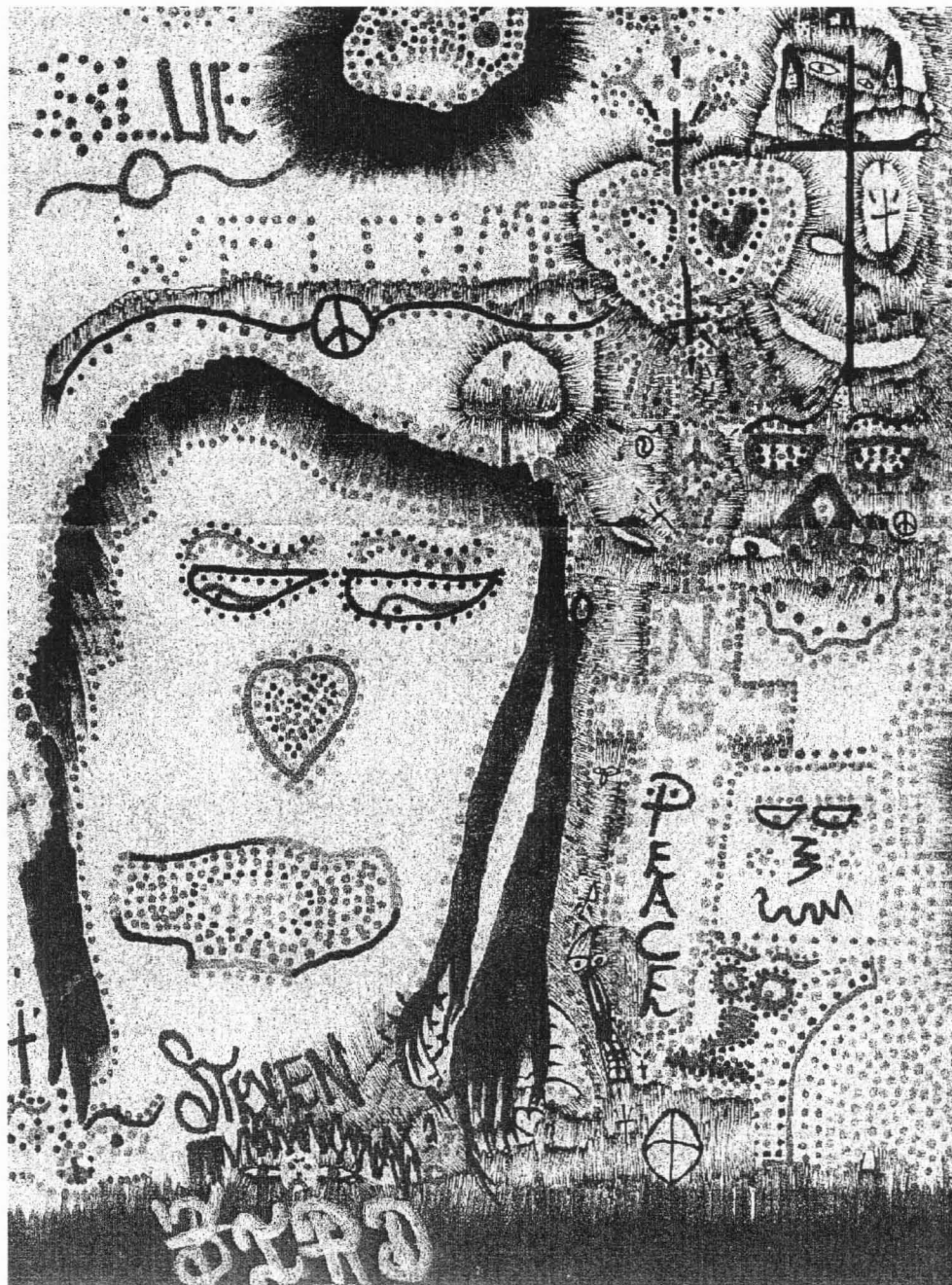
Many of us with mental health issues are highly creative. Artists in general seem to be a bit of a different breed, compared to the rest of society. This may be one of the areas where people with mental illnesses have actually have an advantage, because of natural and learned access to creative skills and talents. Perhaps it is also a result of seeing things in a different perspective and being less afraid of looking deeper at ourselves. This creativity is often a skill we use every day as a strategy to conquer or at least survive with our struggles.

- The Editor

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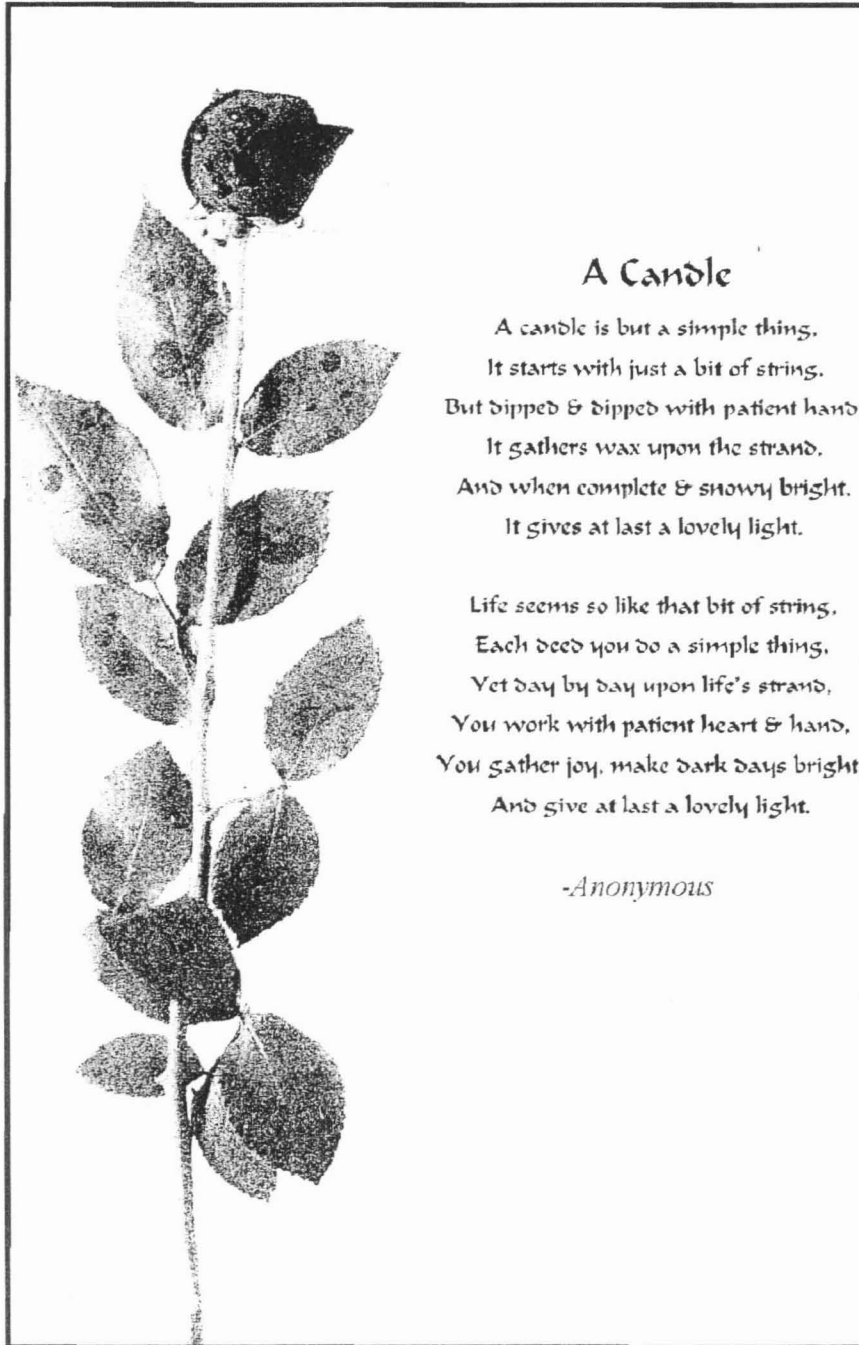
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-Steven W. Bird

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A Candle

A candle is but a simple thing,
It starts with just a bit of string,
But dipped & dipped with patient hand,
It gathers wax upon the strand,
And when complete & snowy bright,
It gives at last a lovely light.

Life seems so like that bit of string,
Each deed you do a simple thing,
Yet day by day upon life's strand,
You work with patient heart & hand,
You gather joy, make dark days bright,
And give at last a lovely light.

-Anonymous

Untitled

By Jason Greyeyes

Change can come on a tiptoe
Love is where it starts
It resides, often hides
Deep within our hearts

And just as pebbles make a mountain
Raindrops can make a sea
One day at a time
Change begins with you and me

Ordinary miracles
Happen all around
Just by giving and receiving
Comes belonging and believing

Every sun that rises
Never rose before
Each new day leads the way
Through a different door

And we can all be quiet heroes
Living quiet days
Walking through the world
Changing it in quiet ways

Ordinary miracles
Like candles in the dark
Each and every one of us lights a spark

And the walls can tumble
And the mountains can move
The winds and the tides can turn

Yes, Ordinary miracles
One for every star

No lightening bolt or clap of thunder
Only joy and quiet wonder

Endless possibilities
Right before our eyes
Oh see the way a miracle multiplies

Now hope can spring eternally
Just plant it and it grows
Love is all that's necessarily
Love in it's extraordinary way

Makes ordinary miracles
Every blessed day!

Forever and Ever

By Robyn Livingstone

Forever fooling you, masking me, I hide, you seek.
Who am I? You'll never know, but I'll let you peek.
Is it ever the correct time for us to say so long?
And if it is, it can't be right, it can't be wrong.

Cast off your aspersions, let it out, feel your pain.
If it is time to move on, break your heart, take it slow.
I once knew a girl who cried tears as deep as rain.
She could not deal with loss, refused to move with the flow.

In the future, if you learn how to forgive, how to forget
I'll always be there for you to hug, with no strings, no regret.
Just remember when I needed you so desperately, in the past.
If I then feel this bond, I promise you that it shall
never be broken, because it is true love...it will last.

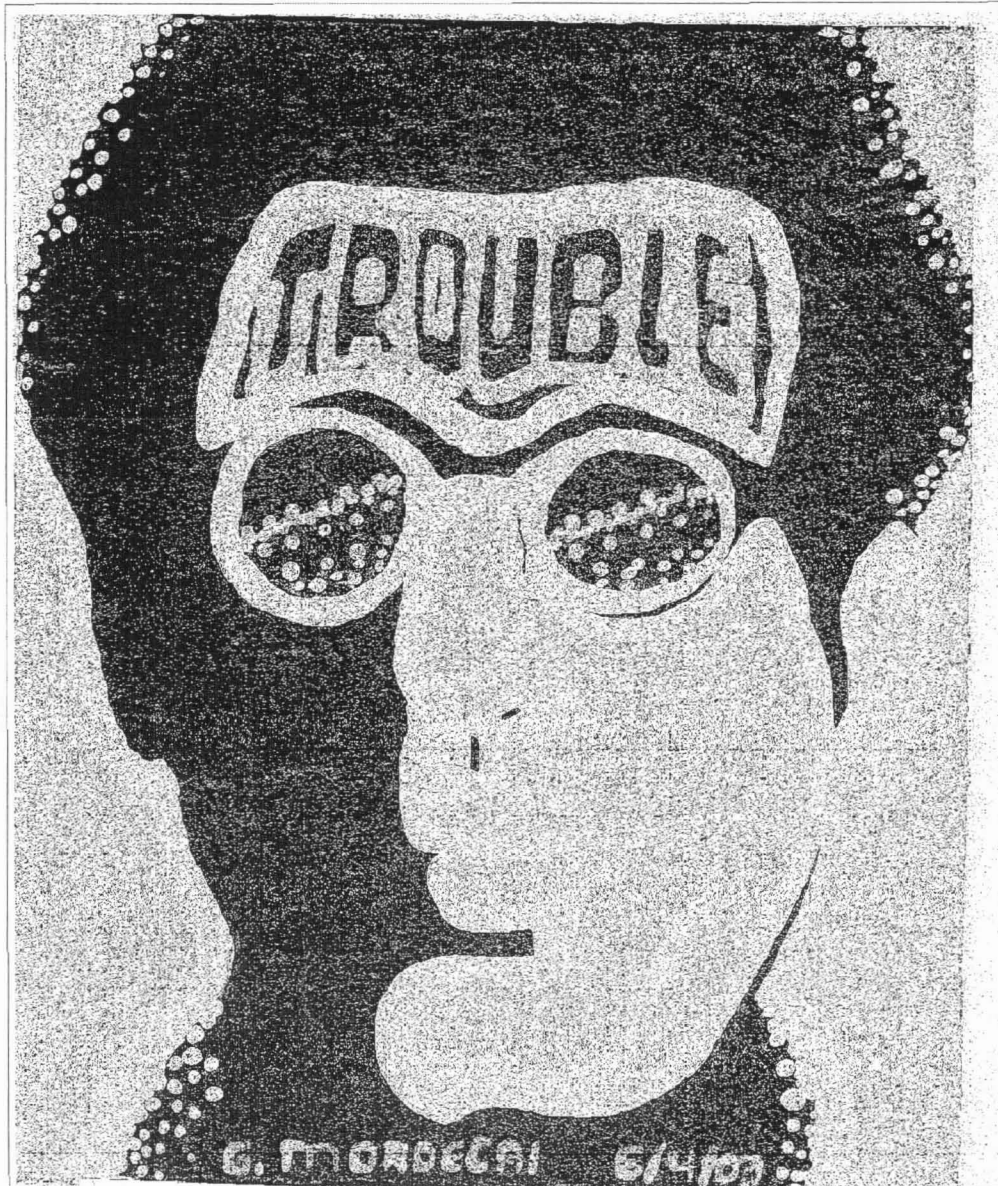
Countdown to Beyond

By Robyn Livingstone

Bankin' on nothing, figurin' on some on something
Take some bucks away, to return to pay, no way
How d'ya suppose this predicament transposed
If your in such dire straights why d'ya deserve to rats
rippin' change outta y'r head 'til it's all you can stand.
do ya still reach for the stars, as unreachable as Mars
I can't love anymore, life's such a bitch, yeh such a bore
What's a person to do? I have no answers, not even a clue.
Curry favors from classes, while wadin' in knee deep ashes &
can't stoop so low, with all my battered baggage in tow
makin' a mess at my best, further sinking into this deep distress
my dearest, please forget your shallow platitudes, so tough
Just as you are please, with your sanitley spirit at ease.



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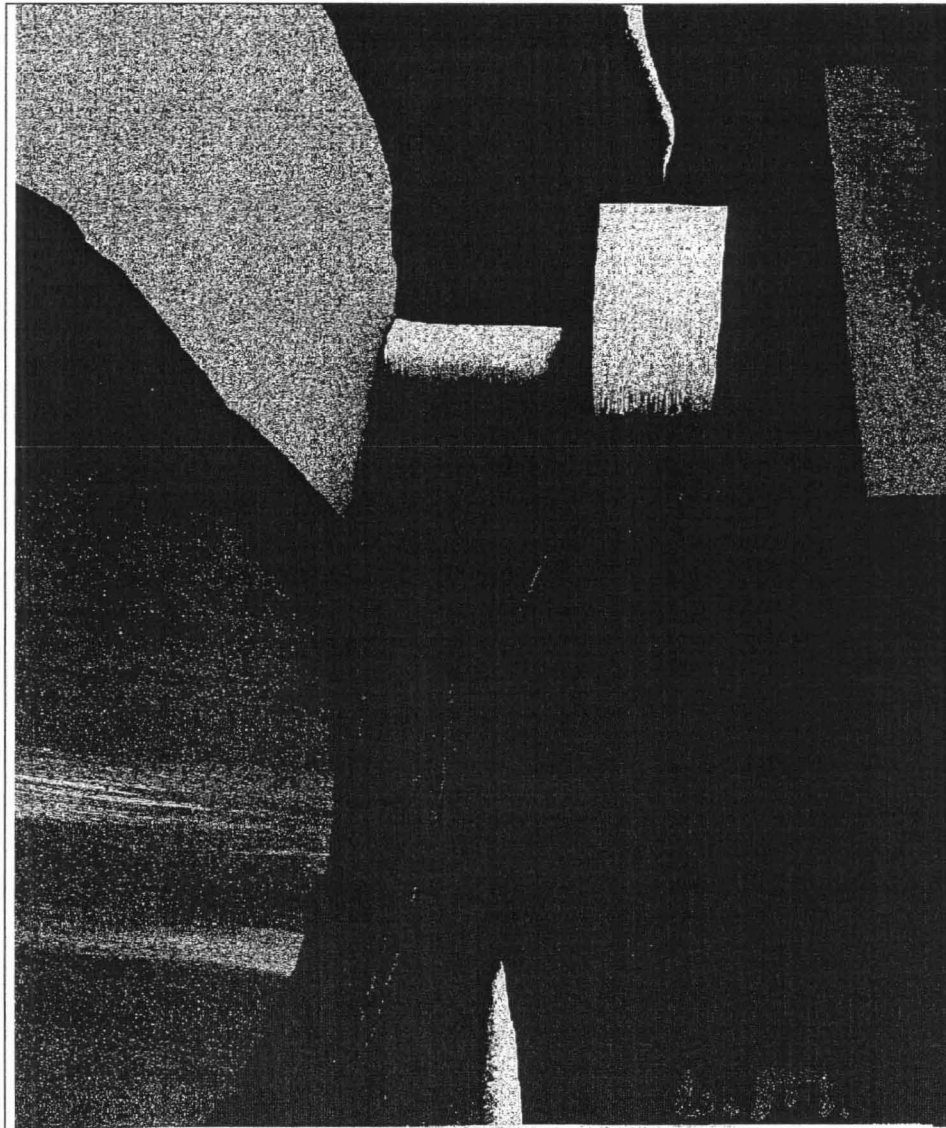


- G. Mordecai

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"I WISH I WAS WHITE,
RICH, POPULAR, AND
HANDSOME."
-ACRYLIC ON WATER-
COLOUR PAPER

- G. Mordecai

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Revolution In My Room

i have a soul
and i'm not afraid to use it
on dragons and things
with bony teeth
and overbearing ones, stepping like cats
into my Circle, yes,
you!
do you think i was talking to another,
possibly behind you,
when your needy arms
are like living knives?

i have a brain
and i'm not afraid to use it
on patriarchy and false holdings
of capital and screaming upper class wombs
who seem to think
i should shut my mouth,
stitch my ideas tight
when all they do is leak
onto paper.

i have a body
and i'm not afraid to use it
to spit on false images,
presented as the icing
on the non-fat cake
i'm not supposed to eat,
or to throttle you
when you've placed a blue galaxy
on my cheek
and bitter tastes in my feminine throat,
full of obscenities,
echoes of past days,
and battle cries of tomorrow.

i have a heart
and i'm not afraid to use it
to make nights turn into days
while i wait
for the 21st century prince
that will never come riding
up to my door to open it,
fragmenting me into a million pieces
because entropy is the masculine
law of the land,
these days
that
i refuse to accept.

count...

sixty beats-per-minute

this one thing,
my friend,
is the life,
the rhythm,
the words,
the math,
of a woman making war.

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**To my most wonderful daughter
Kayla**

By Tresa Nelson

For Someone that's as cute as a button
However like a flower so big and strong
Growing each day like a flower would
Grow so very nice these flowers
Will grow up so they could
Big and Strong and beautiful
Each day that goes by
We look at
everything at once
However so remember me
when I am gone

Love always your mother.

Creamy Herbed Noodles

Ingredients

- 2 c Chicken stock, fat-free
- 1/4 tsp Pepper
- 4 c Nests Italian noodles
- 1/2 c Herbed cream cheese, low-fat
- half Red or yellow pepper, chopped
- 1 1/4 c Water

Directions

In saucepan, bring stock, water and pepper to boil; stir in noodles. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until tender but firm, about 5 minutes.

Stir in herbed cream cheese until melted. Stir in red or yellow pepper. Cover and let stand until sauce is thickened, about 5 minutes.

Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional Facts

Per serving: 170 calories, 8 g protien
7 g total fat, 30 g carbohydrates



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Lunch a La Kart

Helping employ people with barriers to mainstream employment, this new business delivers lunches to busy offices in the Vancouver area.

This unique project is supported by Potluck Cafe & Society & Canadian Mental Health Association. The objectives of the project include:

- Providing great work for mental health consumers
- Orientation and training program
- Build capacity and confidence in employees
- Reduce stigma by building relationships with local businesses
- To build the business over 2 years employing 15-20 people



lunchdelivery@potluckcatering.com

Upcoming Events

DREGS Rock Bottom

Dregesco Productions Presents an Original Canadian Musical Drama
A candid story about the exploitation of at risk youth.

September 14-18 & 21-25 7:30pm
2:00pm Matinees, September 18 & 25
Evening Performances \$20
Matinees \$15

Birch Theatre @ Capilano College
(Children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult)

Autumn Moon Festival

September 26, 2004 10am-6pm
Admission by Donation
Dr Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Gardens
Pender Street & Carol Street

Heart of the City Community Arts Festival

October 10th-17th
Location: Various places in DTES
partnership between Carnegie Community Centre & Vancouver Moving Theatre.

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The 13th Annual Parade of the Lost Souls

Presented by Public Dreams

"Honour the Dead, Wake the Living, Face our Fears, and Celebrate Life!" Dress up, bring noisemakers or just join the fun and enjoy music, decorated houses and an un-earthly procession through Grandview area. Plus stay for the Grand finale!

Saturday October 30th 6:30 pm
Grandview Park
(Commercial Drive at Charles Street)
By Donation

*Volunteers needed for this event!
Please contact Heidi at
604.862.4130

Did you know?

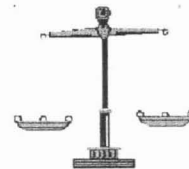
You can get discount show tickets and event tickets (usually 50% off). This is available through Tourism Vancouver, 200 Burrard Street. Open 7 days a week 10am-5pm.

WHAT WE DO AT ARA

As an organization, we are specifically dedicated to people suffering from mental health issues. We employ a number of staff who have themselves suffered from, or who are currently suffering from mental illness. We provide a safe, comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere to provide services for your needs. It is our goal to prevent exploitation at the hands of "the system" and to offer advocacy and intervention when "the system" fails. We aim to be both realistic and grassroots in our approach.

Some of the areas we can offer advocacy or intervention include, but are not limited to:

- Locating Resources
- Accessing Food
- Health & Safety Issues
- Medical/Dental
- Substance Abuse
- Child Apprehension
- Appeals & Tribunals
- Safe and Affordable Housing
- Legal Referrals
- Counselling and One-on-One Support



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Attention all Writers!

We at ARA are always looking for writers, if you have a personal story, or an article you would like to write relating to mental illness, please send all correspondence to the Editor at ARA #421-119W, Pender St., Vancouver, BC. You can also email correspondence to advocacy.ara-mha@telus.net, or fax us at 604 689-7318.

ARA's next newsletter is December 2004. Please send all correspondence by November 1st. We look forward to receiving your submissions. December theme will be "'Tis the Season to..." Tell us what you do during the holidays!

We would like to acknowledge and thank Vancouver Coastal Health for providing funding. This makes it possible for ARA to provide advocacy and support for mental health consumers.

ARA's Board of Directors are vital to the success of ARA and we would like to acknowledge their hard work. We have 8 members and their names are as follows:
Don MacKenzie, Esther Benbassat, Stephanie Reid, Maureen Murphy, Ilse Reiner, Chris Neilsen, Daniele Hurley, and Doug Beveridge.

ARA – Mental Health Action Research & Advocacy Association of Greater Vancouver

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Web Page: [Http://www.ara-mha.org](http://www.ara-mha.org)

The ARA Board of Directors are seeking new members! If you would like to share your strengths by helping to guide and build ARA's future direction, we invite to contact Helene Browne, our Executive Director for more information at (604) 689-7938

Editorial Team

Editor/Design and Layout

Seia Roots

Kayt Daugharty

Executive Director:

Helene Browne

and thanks to the

Administrative Staff!

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