

## Guest Column: Darlene Wierski-Devoe

Blogger: [Raising Socially Anxious Children](#)

*Editor's Note: I've known Darlene through her blog for a few years now and we met in person at a PCMH conference. This blog really inspired me and I thought others might enjoy it too!*

August 29, 2011: Well, after months of talking about it and asking for your support and awareness "The Chocolate Race" was held yesterday and what a tremendously moving experience for me. It was so much more than a race for mental health awareness. It was moving that I won second prize for the most donations; my goal was \$500.00 and I received \$730.00 in the end. It was all about my personal best and finishing the race. It didn't matter what place I came in.

Two years ago when I took myself to the hospital for my panic attack my world crumbled underneath me. I couldn't leave my house some days let alone think about being an hour away from my house, walking 10km for charity. I started the race and had already had two days previous of intense jitters. Not so much for the race but the anxiety and I had been playing the game of push and pull together. It tried to pull me in and I pushed it away. So at yesterday's race the starting gun went off we began to walk and within 5 minutes we turned a corner uphill. I was fine until we turned that corner and then my whole equilibrium went askew and I began to feel like I was walking crooked. This got my mind thinking that something was wrong and the flood of negative thoughts came washing in. I had thoughts of "I can't finish this", "what if I pass out?". I was walking with some friends and had the wonderful opportunity to meet someone new. The two of us were walking and entrenched in learning about each other. The distraction of our conversation and the instinctual knowledge that if anything did happen there would be people there to help me allowed me to surf the wave of anxiety. I was not going to quit and I was going to finish because I knew I could do it.

So you can hopefully imagine my euphoria when I crossed over the last bridge and I could see the finish line. I am almost there. I started something and now I'm finishing it! I have walked 10km in beautiful Port Dalhousie. The winds were quite strong almost as if the universe knew I don't like extreme heat and it felt like a gentle push from all of those people who have supported me and embraced my desire to make a difference.

At the finish line I saw two wonderful signs. One being held by my husband and the other by my son who propped himself up on a cement block and standing there arms raised high struggling to keep it open against the wind. The wonderful new friend that I had connected with and I grabbed hands and together we crossed that finish line.

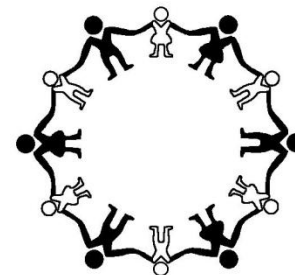
I did this race to raise awareness of mental health. I did this race to raise funds for the Anxiety Disorder Association of Canada (ADAC). I did this race because I wanted to challenge myself. Without the support of family, friends and places like Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK), George Hull, Therapists and the community I would not have crossed that finish line.

**I did this race because I could.**

## Mood Disorders Society of Canada Seeks Input

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada is seeking to understand mental health care concerns among Canadians living with mental illness, family members or caregivers of those with mental illness, and anyone concerned about the Mental Health Care System in Canada so they can relay those concerns to our provincial, territorial, and federal governments.

Please respond to their survey [here](#) before September 30, 2011.



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## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Dr. Sean Cameron will be presenting on "**Homework Help**" - how best to use that nightly one hour of homework time -

September 20, 2011 at 7 pm – Guelph, ON – To register call (519) 837-2050 or email

[info@ldawc.ca](mailto:info@ldawc.ca)

**Vanier Children's Services 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Breakfast** with keynote speaker, The Honourable Michael J. Kirby – September 28, 2011 – London, Ontario – Register [here](#).

**Psychosis, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Dissociation** with Dr. Kim Mueser and Dr. Ruth Lanius – October 13 & 14, 2011 – Ottawa, Ontario. Register [here](#).

**Working With Stuck Kids**, led by Gordon Neufeld, October 20 – 21, 2011 - Toronto, Ontario – visit the [web site](#) for more information.

**Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative Problem Solving Approach** – with J. Stuart Ablon, Director of "Think Kids" at Massachusetts General Hospital October 13, 2011 – CPRI, London, Ontario – Register [here](#).

**CMHA in London, Ontario** offers numerous workshops throughout the year including Mental Health First Aid and When Families Grieve. For more information, visit their [web site](#).

**Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI)** offers a series of workshops across Ontario this fall. For more information, visit their [web site](#).

## PCMH and the Pledge for Child and Youth Mental Health!

**DON'T FORGET PCMH's Pledge for Child and Youth Mental Health.** As we move closer to the election, please remember this important initiative and keep our children top of mind for our elected (and soon-to-be-elected) officials!

In consultation with many of you, and families across the Province, PCMH has developed the Pledge for Child and Youth Mental Health, which outlines what we require to meaningfully transform mental health services in a manner that will truly benefit us and our children. The upcoming election on October 6 is our chance to raise our voices, to increase public awareness and build political support for comprehensive reform of mental health services for children, youth and their families.

**You can support the PCMH campaign in the following ways:**

1. **Take a moment to pledge your support by clicking the Take the Pledge button!** By signing the Pledge, you are adding your voice to thousands of others who are calling on government to promote family-centred child and youth mental health care in Ontario.
2. **Forward this message to all your networks.** Share it via Facebook, Twitter or email by clicking on the icons on this page. Ask others to sign the Pledge and support the campaign to show that *children's mental health is everybody's business*.
3. **Ask all your local candidates to sign the Pledge.** Visit each candidate or contact them by email, letter, or phone and ask them to sign the Pledge online. Urge every candidate to make a commitment to improve services and supports to families dealing with mental illness.
4. **Join the Pledge Campaign!** Contact us at [admin@pcmh.ca](mailto:admin@pcmh.ca) to request your campaign package, which will include Tools, Tips and Strategies on how to advocate and promote the Pledge. Working together we can make a difference for our kids!

Thank you for your support!

## Chapter News!

Look for information about individual Chapter events and activities on the [PCMH web site](#).

**Waterloo Chapter:** Tina sent word that she is encouraged by the many mentions of mental health (challenges, opportunities and initiative being undertaken) in the Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) minutes and other documents.

**St. Catharines:** Pathstone Mental Health will feature a talk by **Emily Cannon**, daughter of PCMH Executive Director, Sarah at their AGM on September 21, 2011.

## Support PCMH

We hope you will help support PCMH by ordering or renewing your favorite magazine subscriptions online and sharing the site with your friends and relatives. With your help, we are sure to earn the funds we need this year! We appreciate your support.

Visit the [web site](#) and purchase subscriptions today!

## Articles and Newsletters about Mental Health

If you would like to share an article about mental health or related newsletter from another mental health agency that you found of interest, please e-mail [admin@pcmh.ca](mailto:admin@pcmh.ca).

From the Globe & Mail, Andre Picard talks about Canada's new mental health strategy. See article [here](#).

From CBC, an article about Canadians with mental illnesses being denied entry into the U.S. The article states that this does not apply to young offenders. See article [here](#).

Oxford County Child and Youth Newsletter can be found [here](#) and features information about upcoming events and workshops.

Schizophrenia Society of Ontario publishes a quarterly newsletter – copies of which can be found [here](#).

## From Our Members

*Our members often send us inspiring messages, poetry, and their thoughts about what their family is going through – feel free to submit your own essays, poetry and thoughts by emailing [admin@pcmh.ca](mailto:admin@pcmh.ca) and let us know you want to be in the newsletter!*

### Compassion Fatigue

If these walls could speak  
They'd tell you about tears  
About many sleepless nights  
Over 14 years

They'd speak about broken hearts  
And many shattered dreams  
To the outside world-perfect lives  
I assure you, not how it seems  
Compassion Fatigue

If these walls could speak  
They'd tell of a marriage gone awry  
The father has given up  
The wife afraid their child will die

So these walls would tell you  
Although the home is built with brick and stone  
That inside these walls  
Even husband and wife learn to live alone

You learn to live in silence  
To suppress so much pain  
As people pass on judgment  
When a loved one is not sane

Even those that "get it"  
Begin to walk away  
Then you're filled with wonder  
At those remaining who stay

But darkness fills the house  
When your company is gone  
And although I'm not the "sick" one  
I pray there is no dawn

Each minute becomes a struggle  
To find my own will to live  
My loved one really needs me  
But I have nothing left to give

Submitted by: Anonymous, St. Thomas Chapter

### Depression

I have always known there was darkness around me. Within me.  
I always sought the light. Prayed for the light. Looked for the light.  
Sometimes I would wander into the dark, but never for long.  
Now I am encased in the darkness. Enshrouded in the darkness.  
Consumed by darkness. Lost my soul to darkness. Been devoured heart & mind by the darkness. I cannot see the light. I must find the light. I choose to believe that there is light. I must else I'll be washed away by the darkness. I cannot survive without the light. Will not exist without the light.

Submitted by: Holly McNea, St. Thomas Chapter

If you would like to share your work or your child's work, please e-mail [admin@pcmh.ca](mailto:admin@pcmh.ca).