

Parents for Children's  
Mental Health  
600 The East Mall  
3rd Floor  
Toronto, M9B 4B1

# HEAR OUR VOICE



## Meet the Parents

behind Parents for  
Children's Mental Health

Watch Video ▶

Newsletter  
September  
2010

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(IL-R) Laura Coughlin, Tina Blanchette, Liz Nickason and Carol Parr

Since 2005, kidsLINK has supported the operation of PCMH chapter in Waterloo Region.

Parents and professionals alike are desperate for resources to help children often described as "behavioural" in many settings; home, school & community. PCMH in Waterloo Region has, with community support, assembled a Resource Guide aimed at helping parents navigate the system and learn advocacy tools to help their child to succeed. The guide is written in the parent voice, by people who have experienced first-hand what it means to raise a special needs child with mental health concerns in Waterloo Region. Although many of the listings here are regional, similar services do exist in other regions of the country. The key is knowing what is available and what to ask for!

PCMH thanks Laura, Tina, Liz and Carol for their continued advocacy and awareness about child and youth mental health. Not only have these amazing women engaged local service providers, it is quite evident that they have engaged an entire community to be vessels of change! To watch this amazing video please visit:

[www.PCMHwaterloo.com](http://www.PCMHwaterloo.com)

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Powerful and positive effects are brought to families, friends, colleagues and communities when positive changes are made to personal relationships. This anniversary year we are celebrating this power with a 4-part speaker series.

Each Speaker Event features a dynamic, celebrated Canadian speaking about the subject of change, why it's important, and how it can dramatically improve the quality of our lives.

When you purchase tickets or a sponsorship, you will help create far-reaching change in our community with your support of K-W Counselling Services. Your help can spark a cascade of positive change and improvement in the lives of our friends and neighbours.

## CLARA HUGHES

Presented in partnership with [United Way KW](#)

Thursday, November 11, 2010

Tickets \$95 or Tables of 8 \$950

### Bingemans Ballroom:

- 6:00pm Reception
- 7:00pm Dinner

Keynote Speaker following dinner

### CONTACT INFO:

519-884-0000

[speakerseries@kwcounselling.com](mailto:speakerseries@kwcounselling.com)

*Ticket Sales support KW Counselling Services' work with families, children and youth. A charitable tax receipt will be provided for a portion of the ticket cost (the entire event cost less the cost of the meal)". A non charitable receipt will be provided for the entire cost of Corporate Tables.*

### TODAY'S PARENT SALUTES PCMH!

RBC is working with Today's Parent Magazine and you will see some RBC promotional material in the October and November issue on-line and print version. The November issue will include an insert titled 'Trusted Resources for Parents'. To create this list of resources, RBC sought the opinions of some key partners to tell them about some of the trusted sources of information that they recommend to parents to find out more information about a children's mental health issue. Based on the recommendations received, we created a list of 'Trusted Resources for Parents'. PCMH was recommended on the top 10 list!.

### BRAG BOARD:

Emily Cannon daughter of Sarah Cannon was the keynote speaker at this year's AGM. We thank Emily for her honesty and bravery in sharing with us all a look into the life of a bi-polar adolescent. As Em described the challenges that she faces on a day to day basis including the incessant bullying for being "different" the impact was clear we collectively need to continue doing what we are doing and help make this province better for all of our children. Emily we are so very proud of you and thank you for reminding us why we do what we do here at PCMH!

September 10, 2010  
in Honour of World Suicide Prevention Day  
*Tuesday December 11th, 1990*

*Right now I am sitting in front of my locker and no one knows what I have done. I'm scared. Scared that everyone will hate me and no one will understand what I've just done. Scared to live though. I really am. I honestly can't see a future. I want someone to help me, to take away the hurt and make me happy but no one can.  
Please forgive me for I am so sorry.*

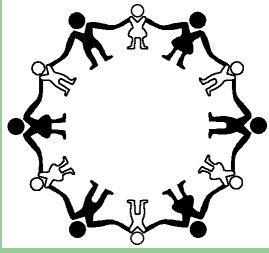
That was part of the suicide note I wrote on my 17th Birthday. It was about 4 weeks after I had BEGGED for help and sat in the Hospital Emergency room with my high school guidance counsellor for 5 hours. I had two wonderful teachers that had noted something was wrong and they worked so hard to get me the help I needed. Children's Mental Health services and awareness in 1990 was even less than it is today. I had "held on" and managed to see a Psychiatrist through the emergency room and he wrote a script for Prozac, with 2 refills, without a second glance. There were no other services or treatment offered, just the prescription and an appointment for 6 weeks later for follow up. My loving and concerned, yet ill informed parents, filled it and gave me the bottle to administer to myself. I took it for several weeks and was not feeling any better. The day after I got the prescription re-filled was my birthday and I was just more miserable and more lost, more lonely and more desperate. When I downed the contents of the bottle on my lunch hour at school I hadn't planned to do it that day or in that way but thinking and writing about my death had been the primary focus of my life for quite some time by that point.

I remember standing there, stunned, staring at the empty bottle and thinking "now what?". Part of me felt a little exhilarated with the knowledge that my horrible existence would soon be over. I sat at my locker, my heart racing, and wrote the note. Then I realized I would likely pass out at my locker and be found unconscious or dead by some unsuspecting student. I felt horribly guilty that someone would find me like that. This wasn't at all what I had envisioned when I thought of the various ways to end my life. I began to panic. Eventually I went to my guidance counsellor and handed her the note I had written.

Beyond that was a long and very painful path of multiple hospitalizations and medication trials and repeated suicide attempts. I had some horrible and scary experiences while hospitalized as a 17 year old in an adult Psychiatric ward. I also met some amazing people along the way who began to help me rebuild my life and uncover the causes of my severe clinical depression. I lost and found friends along the way. My parents endured unimaginable pain and sorrow. With the help of a therapist provided by the hospital where I had been an inpatient, I was able to do a great deal of healing. With the right medications I was able to move past the deep depression and anxiety and function again.

20 years later I took my own 11 year old son to the emergency room after he brought me housecoat belts and rope, begging for me to tie him up because he was worried he was going to hurt himself. He repeatedly told us that he wanted to die. That life was too hard and he wanted to die so it all would stop. He begged us to keep him safe. We were sent home from the emergency room. There were no beds available, we were told there was nothing they could do. Thankfully we didn't listen. We made calls, pounded on doors and refused to stop until he received the treatment that he needed.

It goes without saying that I am glad I did not die that day in 1990. But my pain was so real and so raw I still break into a sweat when I think about those days. I am glad my son was able to tell us this past spring how horrible and desperate he felt. Unfortunately too many people die from suicide every day. The general public often thinks those that attempt or die from suicide are weak or desperate for attention. Mental illness is as much a true illness as Cancer and Diabetes. People who are struggling with any form of a mental illness need our support and assistance not our judgement. Its not that they want to die - they just don't know where to go, who to talk to or what to do. They just want the pain to end.



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### PCMH salutes this year's CHAMPIONS:

**Volunteer: Ken Boe**  
Organized our first and hopefully annual awareness day donating 92 volunteer hours in 2 months to bring a message of hope to his community.

**Partnership and Collaboration: David Kraft** senior consultant, campaigns and research with StratCom, Strategic Communications in Toronto. With passion and desire he was key in helping us develop our plan for Building Hope

**Media: Yolanda Gallo** in partnership with the Barrie Examiner has ensured she is standing firmly in front of stigma with bi-weekly articles about children's mental health being published.

**Fundraising: Gaby and Brian Wass**, their efforts have been successful in raising over \$5000 for PCMH this year. We thank them for helping us Build Sustainability so that we can continue to Build Hope.

Never underestimate the power of partnerships

By SARAH CANNON, SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

If you asked families who are struggling to cope with mental illness how many partners they have in dealing with these complex issues, my guess is that many of them would probably laugh and reply: "As soon as anyone finds out my family is dealing with mental illness, they turn their backs on me, definitely they do not link arms with me to support me in my journey."

Too often, families face barrier after barrier in an attempt to get services and care, and they feel that every door has some secret code of criteria that they just never seem to meet. Consequently, I feel we as family members tend to jump to "battle mode", for years we have been fighting and demanding someone stand up and take notice of what is going on with our child and youth, and when the co-operative and collaborative approach seems to get us nowhere we resort to demanding, and insisting. More often than not, this has been the approach that has finally seen results, so instead of spending time with the collaborative efforts, we often are programmed to go right to the demanding and insisting.

But this month is about partnerships and their importance, and please don't get me wrong, I support fully partnerships, collaboration, and co-operation, and the work I have done with Parents for Children's Mental Health and my daughter has been profoundly affected by the partnerships I have been fortunate enough to have forged.

Families must look at the "clinical team" as partners, partners in wellness for your children. Not only must you partner with the "clinical team", partner with you child, youth, loved one. Join them in their battle and let them know you are walking down that road to recovery arm in arm with them, equal partner, ready to fight when they need, be silent when that is best, and support them if they need to lean on you -all without condition. As much as we feel isolated in our role as a family member, we cannot imagine how isolating it must feel for those who suffer.

Outside of the partnerships we have to develop if we are to successfully lead our loved ones on the road to recovery, we all have a responsibility to partner to ensure that the crisis of child and youth mental health is addressed in this province. In August, the Select Committee on Mental Health released a report that came from a partnership of MPPs where the issue was greater than the politics. The report was formed on the foundation of partnership, and a partnership of unlikely partners in most instances. The crisis that our province faces with mental health demanded that a strong partnership and collaboration was required if those who suffer were to be truly kept at the centre of the recommendations made, and that is what was done. They have done their job, it is now time for us to do ours.

If there is going to be a difference made, it will be us, the public, the voices for our children, who will see to it. This is not a time to sit back and celebrate what the committee has produced, as commendable as it is, it is a time for us to celebrate their work by seeing it through. We are the partnership to implementation, we are the driving force to action. The committee members themselves acknowledge that the work is now in our hands, and without our commitment, the recommendations could risk remaining just that -- recommendations.

Never underestimate the power of partnerships on the journey to wellness, as even the most seemingly invalid partnerships can become the one partner that made all the difference. It is incumbent on all of us to partner in this fight against mental illness, we must link arms, join voices, and commit to fighting with the same vigor and commitment that we fight for wellness in those who suffer physical illness.