



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Cowichan Valley  
Mental health for all

CMHA  
Cowichan Valley Branch  
'Mental Health Quarterly'  
Volume 1 Issue 2, Spring 2018



*Welcome to our Spring issue of the Mental Health Quarterly.  
We hope you will find this newsletter informative .  
In this issue, you will find information on BikeWorks and ArtWorks,  
mood & anxiety disorders, and the new Overdose Prevention Site.*



**What's New at CMHA-CVB?**

The Overdose Prevention Site moved to 221 Trunk Road on April 7th after demands for the service greatly exceeded original expectations. Initially, the site was receiving 20 to 30 visits a month. This has doubled to 50 to 60 visits a day. There have been over 30 overdoses at the Duncan site since opening (no deaths), highlighting the need for this resource.

The new site will provide more space, which will greatly assist with client flow and decrease the number of people waiting to get into the facility. Security services will patrol the new site 24/7 to minimize any impact the site may have on the general community.

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Welcome **Sheila Jones** and **Geoff Johnson** to the CMHA-CVB Board of Directors.

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Congratulations to **Sean Redmond**, who was appointed to the position of Manager of Warmland House, including CMHA-CVB's Housing Outreach and Harm Reduction programs, as of the end of March.



## Mood and Anxiety Disorders

We, as humans, usually experience a **plethora of emotions throughout our lives** including joy, excitement, anger, grief, and fear. It is also considered normal to experience some degree of anxiety when faced with new stressors or the unknown. In general, most people's moods and anxiety levels will vary along with their lived experiences.

Unfortunately, many people experience **persistent mood and anxiety states that become damaging**. Other people may experience extreme emotional variability that interferes with their daily living. When this happens people are often diagnosed as having a mood or anxiety disorder. Mood and anxiety disorders are thought to be the **most common types of mental illness in Canada**. In 2013, three million Canadians over the age of 18 reported being affected by one. Nearly one-third of those affected reported having symptoms that interfered significantly with their activities of daily living.

**Mood disorders include** illnesses that depress and/or elevate a person's mood beyond what would be normally expected. This includes mood extremes (highs and lows), as well as the duration of the moods. Examples of mood disorders include: clinical depression, seasonal affective disorder, postpartum depression, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar disorder.

**Depressive symptoms include** feeling hopeless, worthless, down, irritable, and numb. Affected individuals may also experience overwhelming fatigue, loss or increased appetite, sleeplessness, or they may sleep too much. Unlike other mood disorders people with bipolar may experience episodes of mania characterized by happiness, irritability, anger, racing thoughts, and feeling powerful.

**Anxiety disorders include** phobias, panic disorder, acrophobia, social anxiety disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder. There are other disorders which are associated with overwhelming anxiety including obsessive compulsive disorder and post-traumatic disorder which are not classified as anxiety disorders. These conditions can be very debilitating -- both in terms of day-to-day functioning and quality of life.

**There are many different treatment modalities** including medication, cognitive behaviour therapy, mindfulness practices, meditation, and counselling. Often people benefit the most when they are supported through several different modalities. This could include medication prescribed by a doctor, reputable websites including CMHA (<https://cmha.bc.ca>), and low cost counselling offered through our Duncan CMHA branch. Adults and youth over the age of 16 struggling with depression and anxiety may also benefit from CMHA-CVB's Bounce Back program.



## Dates of Interest

**May 7 to May 13, 2018** — CMHA's 67th Mental Health Week

**Thursday, June 28, 2018**, noon, at Warmland House— CMHA-CVB Annual General Meeting



## Bike Works and ArtWorks

The **U-Fix It BikeWorks and ArtWorks** is one of CMHA-CVB's **most successful and durable outreach and resiliency programs**. With four permanent staff and a host of volunteers and senior participants the shops are cruising into their 14th year of operation. What happens in the somewhat dingy and run down little space that has kept it going for that long? What are the youth finding that make it a place worth going? The shops were begun as a youth resiliency project. The idea was that **providing youth with a place to go would make them easier to connect with than trying to track down youth in the community**. The guiding ideas of the shops come from the Circle of Courage. There are four things that all people need to live healthy lives: belonging, independence, generosity, and mastery. These four themes have been involved in **almost every aspect of the BikeWorks**, including that initial decision to open a youth centre and 'disguise' it as a bike shop.

At one level the shops function as what they seem to be, a bike shop and an art studio. Of course, there are differences. **The bikes are all donated and second hand. The art projects use recycled materials, and are often group-based.** Most of the people 'working' are too young to vote. It often comes as a surprise to people that we would rather have them earn a bike by helping at the shop than take their money. Or, if they would rather, they can build themselves a bike, and it costs them nothing at all! For many young people, being able to get a free bike and have access to free arts and craft activities are valuable additions to their lives. A daily snack of some sort is welcome as well! In these ways, the shops function as an anti-poverty initiative.

For many youth the **BikeWorks/ArtWorks has become a second home**, with the staff and other participants being a second family. The question to our practicum students is always "whose name did you learn today?". By developing relationship and connections, our participants cease being customers and start being crew, and we give them a shirt that proves it. By becoming part of the team, the youth are invited into decision-making about how the shop is running, how many hours of time a certain bike will cost, and even what the snack might be on a given day. **Through this sense of belonging, a community is built that crosses economic, racial, age, and gang lines.**

Families have chores, and the shops are no different. **Participants trade volunteer time for bikes and bike parts.** Hours are the currency of choice. By giving their time young people are able to make a valuable contribution to the shops. By fixing a bike that then is sold, the youth has literally helped to put food on the snack table. By helping someone else fix their bike, or work on an art project **young people help to create that sense of belonging** that they themselves have experienced. By helping the homeless person with their bike youth are engaging in unwitting social justice. By helping the senior or the preschooler with their bikes, our crew are both crossing age lines, and are **demonstrating what it is to be a person of value**. This sense of making a contribution, of generosity, is a powerful antidote to the alienation that seems

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*“I don’t know anything about fixing bikes”* is the common reply when new people are told that they can work for the shop to gain a bike. *“That’s ok”*, is the reply, *“we will teach you”*. The research is pretty clear: **young people who know how to use tools do better in life than those who don’t**. To be successful in life one has to be able to do stuff. The task of the shop is not to do stuff for people, but to empower youth to learn how to do stuff them selves. This is also easily seen in the ArtWorks. The project of making a glass mosaic snack table is about learning how to do mosaic and work with glass along with other people, not about having a cool looking place to feed people. This learning starts young -- **we have a pair of three year olds that are well on their way to becoming mechanics!** In learning to build a bike, the skills for fixing a washing machine are developed, along with the confidence needed to take on a challenging job.

The form of independence that we try to develop at the Bikeworks/Artworks takes the shape of confidence in one’s skills, abilities, and community of support. **It is from a sense of belonging, and mastery that young people are able to find the inner strength to speak their truth, and to try new and creative things.** This sense of inner strength carries over into most aspects of life including the possibility of future education and career goals.

While these four themes—belonging, independence, generosity and mastery, are the groundwork of the shop, there is a fifth theme that we have found to be essential: **fun**. Without fun the shop would not function! Without fun, the young people would go somewhere else. Without fun, our staff would get bored and go play somewhere else. This is really the gift that the youth give back to us -- **the ability to play, and to laugh, and to be silly together**. It is refreshing and contagious, and for some, quite life altering.

*Dave Ehle, Manager Youth & Family Programs, CMHA-CVB*



## Notes of Thanks

Sincere thanks to the many people who made our *‘Fentanyl and Other Opioids in the Cowichan Valley’* information night possible. This includes **Dr. Shannon Waters from Island Health, and Mellissa Middlemiss and Brittani Rempel** from the overdose prevention site.

CMHA-CVB would like to thank **Island Ford Super Store** car dealership for their generous **donation of \$5,000 towards the CMHA-Warmland ‘Lend-a-Hand’ fund.**

We wish to express our sincerest gratitude to **Angela Harrison** for her years of dedicated service as our board treasurer. Angela’s astute mind, accounting expertise, and overall kindness will be greatly missed by all as she begins a new chapter in her life.



## In Closing...

We hope you found this newsletter useful. If you have a family member or friend who may benefit from this information or our local services, we invite you to share this newsletter with them.

We ask that you **encourage others to become CMHA-Cowichan Valley Branch members** and/or volunteers so that we may continue to support good mental health in the Cowichan Valley. **A membership brochure is attached and can be completed and returned with payment to CMHA-CVB.** Thank you!



## References

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