

MENTAL ILLNESS DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE

by Sean D. Krausert

Old or young, rich or poor, man or woman – ALL Canadians will have direct contact with mental illness in their lifetimes. According to Health Canada's "A Report on Mental Illness in Canada, 2002", 20% of all Canadians will experience mental illness in their lifetime; and EVERYONE will have a friend, colleague, or family member who will experience a mental illness.

The most prevalent forms of mental illness are depression and anxiety disorders. Other forms include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders and attention deficit disorders.

Tragically, there is a social stigma attached to mental illness that compounds the suffering of those afflicted. In 2008, the Canadian Medical Association provided statistics with respect to "the stigma":

- 50% of Canadians would tell friends or co-workers they have a family member with mental illness (72% would discuss cancer and 68% would discuss diabetes in the family).
- 12% of Canadians would hire a lawyer who has suffered from mental illness.
- 49% of Canadians would socialize with a



friend who has a serious mental illness.

- 46% of Canadians think people use the term mental illness as an excuse for bad behaviour.

It's no wonder that a mere 1/3 of those who need mental health services actually receive them. (Statistics Canada: Canadian Community Health Survey – Mental Health and Well-Being 2003)

While depression doesn't discriminate, government funding seems to treat mental illness unfairly. A 2008 article published by the Institute of Health Economics, entitled "How Much Should We Spend on Mental Health", noted that mental illness constitutes more than 15% of the burden of disease in Canada but only receives 5.5% of health care dollars.

Mental health issues affect us all... not only emotionally and within our relationships, but it hits us hard financially, too. Every day 500,000 Canadians are absent from work for mental health/psychiatric problems. (Insurance Journal 2003 as cited by the Government of Canada in "The Face of Mental Health and Illness in Canada", 2006) How much does it cost us? A study published in Chronic Diseases in Canada estimates that in 2008 the total cost of mental illness to our economy in terms of health care and lost productivity was . . . \$51 BILLION!

We all need to reach out and support one another, and let sufferers of mental illness know they are not alone. People will get the help they need (and recover faster) when they know they are loved and supported. And, in the end, that benefits us all.

Sean D. Krausert is the Executive Director of Global WE Initiatives Corp, an organization dedicated to breaking down barriers that divide people. He is also the producer of a theatrical production entitled 'Dirty Laundry' - a one-woman performance revealing a true story about mental illness. See the ad below!

Dirty Laundry is Coming Back to Nanaimo!



Marilyn Avient

Dirty Laundry . . . an engaging one-woman two-act play written and performed by Marilyn Avient returns to the Malaspina Theatre at Vancouver Island University on Saturday December 4th. This entertaining drama is a courageous, no holds barred, true story that plunges into the never-talked-about world of mental illness . . . exposing the stigma, the burden on loved ones, the private suffering of the individual, and the very real hope of recovery.

In September 2009, *Dirty Laundry* made its "world premiere" at Malaspina Theatre to a standing ovation.

Since then, it has travelled to Victoria, the Yukon, and Alberta. Testimonials from Nanaimo audience members included:

"This is no ordinary piece of theatre . . . but a solo flight by an intrepid soul."

Garry Davey, Gabriola Island

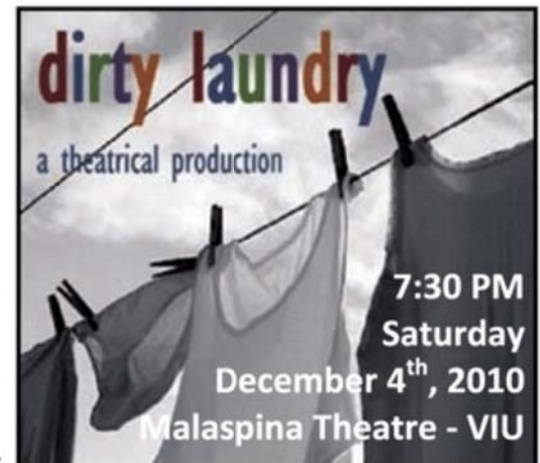
"What a BRILLIANT presentation!!"

Rachel Cooper, VIU Psychology Dept.

Don't miss your chance to see *Dirty Laundry*! The show's next stops include Edmonton and Calgary in early 2011.

Proudly Supported by Ron Cantelon, MLA Parksville-Qualicum

www.roncantelonmla.bc.ca



To purchase advance tickets, view a video trailer, and learn more . . . go to:

www.dirtylaundrytheatre.ca

Advance Tickets \$17.50

Tickets "At the Door" \$20.00

(prices include taxes)