



**MDO Celebrating 25 Years**

**MDO is a registered, nonprofit volunteer-run organization that supports people with mood disorders and their loved ones.**

## Keeping in Touch with MDO

Phone: 613-526-5406

Mission Statement : Mood Disorders Ottawa Mutual Support Group (MDO) is a peer-run volunteer organization. We, members of MDO and individuals living with a mood disorder, our families and friends, engage in mutual support to improve the quality of our lives and to work at creating opportunities to reconnect with self and others. Together, we aim to offer a beacon of hope that people living with mental health challenges can and do live well. To these ends, MDO provides resources, programs, support groups, social and recreational activities for our members and their families and friends.

### Why Join MDO?



A membership with MDO allows you to take advantage of subsidized activities and events. You have the opportunity to go bowling, take part in outings at the beach, enjoy buffet lunches and movies and much more – but only if you're a member! However, the best part of having an MDO membership is that you get to help support an incredible organization that offers opportunities and support to people struggling with mood disorders. Now, you can't beat that!

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#### Annual Memberships

Regular Income Individual - \$10  
 Low Income Individual - \$3  
 Regular Income Family - \$12  
 Low Income Family - \$5  
 Professional/Corporate - \$25

#### Ways to Become a Member

- 1) Send a cheque to:  
 Mood Disorders Ottawa  
 c/o Canadian Mental Health Association  
 301-1355 Bank St. Ottawa,  
 ON K1H 8K7
- 2) Phone us at 613-526-5406
- 3) Show up at one of our events and buy a membership on the spot

**Our Website:** [www.mooddordersottawa.ca](http://www.mooddordersottawa.ca)



MDO is always looking for **volunteers** to keep things running smoothly. If you're interested in volunteering or even if you just have questions, please contact us and we will be happy to give you more information.

## Celebrating the Past, Present and Beginning the Next 25 Years

Mood Disorders of Ottawa (MDO) has much to celebrate. From the first Church meeting in 1986, to our first board, our first support group, our first family support group, our first guest speaker, the first donation to continue research in the area of Mood Disorders to The Royal Ottawa Hospital, the first *Sound Mind* broadcast, the first organized recreational activities and those members who have been trained to facilitate our recovery programs.

MDO will continue to offer peer support, recreational and social programs, recovery programs and information and community education as these activities are the foundation of our organization and we look forward to offering new recovery initiatives in the coming year.

The longevity and success of MDO has been a direct result of the many hours of dedicated work and support from our volunteers. Like many Consumer Survivor Groups, the future holds the very hard reality of funding and finding and keeping volunteers. MDO can keep the position of status quo, but I believe that MDO has the capacity to offer more through expanding our recovery programs, expanding our mutual support groups by reaching out to families and addressing the need that better family and caregiver support systems benefit all. The success of MDO over the past 25 years is a testament to the energy, focus and creativity of those volunteers who have come before us and no doubt will come after us.

From the beginning The Canadian Mental Health Association (Ottawa) has supported our organization and has played such an important role in allowing MDO to pursue its Mission and continue to reach out to as many people as we can through our Recovery Programs, Peer Support Meetings and Newsletter. I hope that this relationship will continue and have meaning for both our organizations for another 25 years and beyond.

I would like to thank the members of MDO for your support and encouragement over the past four years. If you are not already, I encourage all of you to be active and strong supporters of our wonderful organization.

*Lianna C.*

President





# The History of Mood Disorders Ottawa (MDO)



The journey that led to MDO began in the spring of 1986, when four people looking for support and connection met. Tom and Eleanor M, who had a son recently diagnosed with a mental illness and Gerry M. and Linda R., who had just been discharged from hospital, were looking for a support group to build on their recovery. Finding nothing, Gerry and Tom and Eleanor decided to take a leap—they placed a notice in the local paper advertising a meeting at St. Luke's Anglican Church.

That first meeting must have been a nervous yet exciting time for our four founders, who saw before them a group that included family members, consumer-survivors, Renee O. of the Canadian Mental Health Association, as well as a member of a Toronto support group, who spoke of her own experiences. From that meeting came a decision to meet monthly and our organization began the journey toward Ottawa's first depression/ manic depression (DMD) support group.

In the beginning, the meetings often consisted of presentations by medical professionals on manic depression and other mood disorders as well as panel discussions on various topics related to mental health. By June of 1987, a draft constitution had been developed by member Linda O. and a process for the election of a board of directors was established. Our first Board included four family members and three consumer-survivors. In 1988, membership had grown to 100 and the organization became a registered charity under the name Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group (DMD Ottawa).

The Board's focus in the early years was directed towards research and advocacy. It started with meeting a

local MPP to solicit support for issues arising from the Sark and Graham reports. They also held discussions with CMHA to build support for crisis intervention within municipal social services and began liaising with other groups in the mental health community.

Members were called in advance of the monthly meetings and interviewed to determine their interests and solicit topics for future presentations and speakers. Panel discussions were a popular vehicle to provide various view points on aspects of mental health from medical professionals, research specialists, social service providers and consumer-survivors. Individual members participated in these discussions and organized them amongst other special projects.

As a grassroots, member-run organization (meaning it was run out of someone's living room), fundraising was an essential activity and was led for many years by Eleanor M., who we can now truly appreciate as a powerhouse of a woman. She and her team of volunteers organized flea markets, bazaars, garage and bake sales and regular bingo, which raised a considerable amount of money. Funds were split between covering speaker costs, administrative needs, our Christmas party and Summer barbecue along with annual donations to the Royal Ottawa Hospital to support research in the area of mood disorders.

DMD Ottawa continued to grow and its advocacy work led to three board members, including Tom M., being invited to a provincial-level meeting to develop a constitution for what become the Depressive and Manic Depressive Association of Ontario, now known as the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario. The goal was to bring together the twenty-one support groups then in existence in Ontario in 1989. In later years, member Linda O. served as a representative for the Eastern Region of this association.

By 1990, we had developed a newsletter and started our first support group for people with mood disorders. The RAP group was initiated and led by member Dennis O. It ran bi-monthly as it is now and was held in addition to the larger

## Mood Disorders Ottawa



monthly meeting of all members (later called Info Night). The RAP group was initially designed to provide family members' adult children with a place to have open-ended discussion with their peers in a safe environment. Year-end saw it evolve into a self-help support group led by member Charlie C., open to adults of all ages. Soon it was known as Charlie's Rap Group.

Our newsletter was also gaining attention, being sent directly to all members, to 38 outside groups and distributed to local hospitals.



Our members were also serving on various outside committees such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, the City of Ottawa and the Depression and Manic Depressive Association of Ontario. Public relations activities were being undertaken and media and local events were being monitored and responded to by members.

Around this time, the organization received a grant of \$3,300.00 from the Secretary of State Canada Awards program to undertake research on supported employment in Ottawa-Carleton. Member Tom T. was to conduct a survey and prepared a report that would identify services to help disabled people transition back into the work force. Interviews were to be conducted with 40 service providers, community developers, employers and consumer-survivors.

Consumer-survivor members were pleased with the success of the organization, but also wanted a more targeted promotion of positive recovery. A consumer-survivor sub-committee was formed in 1991, chaired by members Gary H. and Charlie C. and called Discovery 2000.

## *Discovery 2000*

They chose the name to avoid the stigma against mental illness which is still all too prevalent. The new committee was funded to undertake social, recreational and educational activities with an emphasis on recovery, mutual and personal

development, self-esteem and self-confidence. It would enable members on disability, restricted budgets or those isolated by their illness to meet others coping with similar experiences. With the birth of this new subcommittee, the name of our newsletter was changed to Discovery to reflect our commitment to positive recovery.

In 1992, two members, Judy R. and Lila C., started the first family support group meeting in Orleans. Its goal was to provide an empathetic forum for relatives of consumer-survivors to meet and share their experiences. This group continues to meet and is now led by long-time family member Jackie R. Later, additional support for family members was offered through the free 14-week NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) course, which was often facilitated by members Judy R., Jackie R. and others.



Discussion also began at this time regarding the need for a buddy system to assist members who were hospitalized. Support for this concept was received from Dr. Paul G., then Clinical Director at the Royal Ottawa Hospital and recipient of donations for mental health research from our organization. The Board agreed to form a care committee led by member Linda R., to assist members in their transitions from hospital to home, public housing, boarding homes or other living arrangements. This new initiative was named the Buddy's and Sister's Program and began to receive a monthly budget of \$50.00 and continued its activities until 2000.

1993 saw the launch of a bi-weekly radio show at Carleton University called *Sound Mind*, which continued until 2011 through the hard work of member Heather B. It was originally developed and produced by two students Kathy F. and Melina C., both members of DMD who were learning to live and cope with manic



depression. The show covered various mental health and community issues.

By now, Discovery 2000 events were expanding and included museum trips, our longstanding Movie Night, day trips and occasional buffets. A lending library was started and membership cards began to be issued in 1994 with the success of our many activities. Through the efforts of Eleanor and her funding-raising team, DMD was able to donate \$3,000.00 to the Royal Ottawa Hospital, of which a portion was used to purchase a bench top spectrophotometer, a key piece of equipment used for the hospital's work on serotonin research. One of our members, Arabella N., was appointed to represent general psychiatry on the ROH's Consumer Advisory Council. In addition, another member, Steve T., was nominated to ROH's Forensic Advisory Group.

Public relations became increasingly important and in 1995 a new service was established on the National Capital Free Net site to provide information on our organization. A bulletin board was set up for electronic mail conversations related to mood disorders and support. A new brochure was developed and distributed to various agencies. DMD made application to incorporate and began the process of a legal name search. It was felt that being incorporated would help in receiving grants and funding to support programming of a growing membership now at 300. (Note: DMD/MDO did not proceed with incorporation. We are a registered charity with liability insurance for Board members and volunteers.)

We began co-operating with three new support groups in Aylmer, Hull and Gatineau and as a result developed a new quarterly publication called Action targeting Francophones. This new publication included a calendar of our events as well as informal reports on our projects and activities. Both newsletters were registered with the National Library of Canada; Discovery as ISSN 1201-8309 and Action as ISSN 1201-8317.

The family support group began a lecture series with two social workers and a pharmacist from the ROH to

talk about programs available from the hospital and community. Member Bill C. was one of a dozen consumer-survivor delegates at the Round Table on Mental Health called Fostering Collaboration among Mental Health Stakeholders. The Round Table was co-sponsored by the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the National Network for Mental Health and had 50 delegates. It was only the second time consumer-survivor delegates were able to openly discuss issues among psychiatrists and service providers.

In 1996, a joint proposal with Friends of Schizophrenia to the Community Investment Fund of the Ontario Ministry of Health for a \$15,000.00 family member training program was approved as was a \$7,000.00 grant proposed for consumer-survivor peer support activities. The funds to support our Discovery 2000 activities continue to this day in a flow-through with CMHA.

A second family support group was established in May 1996 in Kanata. Later that year, DMD initiated a support group for young adults, which met bi-weekly at All Saints Anglican Church in Sandy Hill

Unfortunately, dwindling attendance saw both groups dissolve in 1998 and 1999 respectively. The new century brought us some challenges as is common to many volunteer organizations. The Discovery newsletter became a bimonthly publication as a result of the loss of some of our volunteers, mainly Steve T.

Discussions also began regarding a need to change the name of our organization and a new name, Mood Disorders Ottawa Mutual Support Group was approved. The early 2000's saw the retirement of some hugely influential and long-standing members, Charlie C., who had facilitated Charlie's Rap Group for nine years and Judi R., who had been our treasurer and a key player in the funding that led to the start of the NAMI program in Ottawa.

In 2002, Janssen Ortho, a pharmaceutical company, agreed to fund the printing of our newsletter for two years, allowing for the publication to be mailed out to our members and

other interest groups five times a year. In November 2003, Mood Disorders Association of Ontario sponsored a one-day MDO conference, Understanding and Acceptance through Knowledge of Mental Health. The conference was designed to provide an opportunity for consumer-survivors, family members, service providers and the general public to share information and experience through panel discussion. The Conference would not have happened nor been such a success if not for the hard work of our members: Patricia G., Bill C., Gary H., Barbara K., David R. and Jeff R.

MDO continued to be heavily involved in advocating for mental health by attending other organizations initiatives like the 2004 Eastern Regional Network conference called Brave New Minds. This was a valuable opportunity to discuss innovative roles for consumer-survivors and was reinforced by a number of our members later serving on a Consumer Advisory Committee for the Champlain District Community Mental Health Coalition. Some of our members were subsequently delegates to the annual conferences held by the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario and Mental Health and Addictions.

For the first time, the 2004 Board of Directors included only consumers-survivors and it was commented at that year's AGM that the perspectives of family members on the Board was truly missed. In order to maintain its health as a strong and vibrant organization, MDO found it necessary to refocus its efforts on a broad range of administrative and management issues. A vision and planning session was held to address the issues of attracting new members, increasing our public profile and attracting new volunteers to serve on various task forces and committees. Our Board, then led by Linda O., began the task of developing program guidelines, a Board Handbook, new sources of funding to expand our activities and examining the need for liability insurance for Board members and volunteers.

The next few years offered more challenges and successes. MDO's core functions (family and consumer support groups, subsidized recreation

events and public information meetings at Southminster Church) were maintained and new funding allowed for the purchase of computers, printers and a phone. For a time, MDO even had its own office housed at CMHA and a part-time employee.

By 2007, MDO was in need of new volunteers and come autumn experienced a changing of the guard. Past president Barbara K., stepped down from the Board, retiring after 20 years of volunteering with MDO, along with Gary H. and Anne and Bob R., who ran Discovery. Jackie R., another veteran volunteer and Board member (whose family has also donated countless volunteer hours), attempted to retire at this point. Fortunately for MDO, Jackie R. continues to facilitate MDO's Family Support Group in Orleans and anchors our annual Christmas Party.

The year finished up with a membership calling project, revival of the now defunct newsletter and an application for funding from United Way. We were unsuccessful, but learned enough to get it right the next time!

The next two years saw MDO follow through with new initiatives, funding and technological advancements. Jackie C., cranked out the newsletter, Mood for Thought, set up the MDO listserv [mdosupport@hotmail.com](mailto:mdosupport@hotmail.com) and pushed development of MDO's website, the first of which was created by MDO group facilitator Yvan L. and then revamped by our current treasurer, Andrew G. Connections with other mental health groups and agencies were rekindled and soon MDO was liaising with Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa (PSO), Salus, CMHA, Apple, the Royal, MDAO and others, putting the organization back on the map and opening doors to new opportunities.

Opportunity came knocking in 2008. First, with the Run for Reach peer support fundraiser



that earned MDO \$4,000 and, second, a training event that led to the development of MDO's first peer-led recovery program. Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa (PSO) offered

our then president, Jackie C. and other members the chance to train as facilitators in a new mental health recovery system called WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan). WRAP was developed by Dr. Mary Ellen Copeland, an American consumer-survivor. The program focuses on a set of recovery concepts—hope, personal responsibility, education, support and self-advocacy—which Copeland discovered aided in long-term wellness. The WRAP framework offers a supportive environment in which people explore tools and strategies used to design their own wellness plans. MDO now has several certified facilitators delivering WRAP at MDO (2-3 times a year) and at other mental health organizations across Ottawa.

Through 2008-09, MDO focused on revitalizing and expanding its frontline services. Calls and emails were increasing. Many were from consumers, family members, doctors and workers across the city looking for support groups, social activities, information and spots in our WRAP courses. With stronger connections and communications in place came a spike in membership and often more than double the turnout at our numerous Discovery events. A bowling party organized by member Paul C., drew 45 members; our usual buffet outings were easily drawing 60 while the annual Christmas dinner now served over 100 members and their families.

Most notably, higher numbers of people were attending our Tuesday night support group for adults with mood disorders, prompting the need for two meeting rooms and two group facilitators. Luckily, MDO found dedicated support group facilitators in Yvan L., Howard W. and Greg G. (following in the footsteps of Pat G. and Charlie C.), and permission from CMHA to use an additional room.

In June 2008, MDO's finances improved dramatically with a successful grant application, securing \$7,500.00 from the Community Foundation of Ottawa. The money was used to develop our infrastructure and to support MDO's ability to offer recovery programming like WRAP and later Pathways.

By the fall, MDO members were getting involved with various community efforts. Some were one-off, like the shoreline clean-up organized by Walter W., others more long-term, like volunteering with Peer 2 Peer Wellness, a program that trains and matches peer supporters with inpatients of the Royal to ease transition from hospital to home.



Back at MDO headquarters, the search was on for a new treasurer to replace Ross M., who had kindly stayed on despite other commitments. The year closed with MDO partnering with PSO on summer beach trips and sending more members for trainings in WRAP and Pathways. (Pathways is a recovery program developed by WRAP facilitators that focuses on strengths and life goals instead of pathology and illness-management). MDO's support groups and Discovery events continued and Info Nights were well-attended. Highlights of MDO's speaker series included lectures by Reach Canada on the Hanson Trust, Dr. G. on his latest research and an enlightening evening of laughter yoga.

The 2009 AGM saw Jackie C., depart as president and the advent of our first Co-Chairs, Lianna C. and Walter W. MDO's recovery programming remained an important core offering, with free WRAP and Pathways courses held 2-3 times a year and continuing to this day. Our seat on the Champlain Peer Network (formerly the Eastern Regional Network) and affiliation with PSO offered new opportunities and supported MDO to build capacity in emerging recovery education and peer support. Members sought training in various areas, in particular, GAM (Gaining Autonomy with Medication), Intentional Peer Support, First Aid, Support Group facilitation and WRAP.

Outreach and networking remained an important focus for the organization with Board members attending and advertising MDO at health expos and conferences, including the Royal Ottawa's 100th anniversary. MDO continues to spread the word so that people who struggle with mental health challenges and family members know there are resources available beyond or in addition to doctors and medication. Following this theme, MDO is currently working on a

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resource guidebook for consumers and family members.



In closing reconstructing the history of MDO, as we've attempted to do here, was a challenge. We have likely missed many details and notable entries as the passing of Steve Anthony T in 2000, the many challenges and successes (Tom T., publishing his book come to mind). We have not forgotten but have chosen to list separately the awards that our members past and present have received.

To all those at MDO, past and present, thank you for being part of this organization and making it what it is today. MDO has proven that peer support can make a difference. Whenever people come together, whether it's four or 400, the opportunity for support and connection is there. MDO has capitalized on this and created an enduring legacy.

*Happy 25th Anniversary MDO!*

(Reference cited for Tom Mather obituary: <http://www.legacy.com/can-ottawa/obituaries.asp?Page=Notice&PersonID=145198592>)

Mood Disorder Ottawa  
 Fabulous  
 Outstanding  
 Sensational  
 Marvelous  
 Well Done  
 Superb  
 Excellent  
 Terrific  
 Great  
 Congratulations  
 25th Anniversary  
 MDO  
 Mood Disorders Ottawa  
 Good for You



# Sharing our Stories



## Mood Disorders Ottawa

with Causeway. We invited them to a MDO event and they have been active members ever since. They enjoy movie night and the annual BBQ and attend most Info Nights, setting up chairs and tables and helping with the clean-up.

Leslie and Harold work together delivering flyers in their neighbourhood and during the winter months they shovel neighbours' laneways.

### James and Carolyn

James studied Animation at Sheridan College in the early 70's and again at Algonquin College in 1992. He has worked for various printing companies, plus the animation for the 1982 movie Heavy Metal and a Saturday cartoon series based on Free Willie for CBC. James continues to be involved with Ottawa's annual Animation Festival.

James attends the Royal Ottawa Speaker Series Workshops and is well read in the area of the drugs and different therapies used in the treatment of Mental Illnesses.

Carolyn has been a long time member of MDO. A regular at MDO speaker night she is always willing to lend a hand to make sure the fellowship is at its best with the preparation of food. Carolyn participates in many MDO outings and the tulip festival walk is her favourite. If you take the time to visit with Carolyn you will surely have a new friend.



### Kathleen G.

Hi! My name is Kathleen G. and I have had connections with MDO/DMD for the last 19 years or so. I initially called to find out about support groups, but alas, I was too afraid to attend on my own. I then heard about the open meetings and started attending those as an onlooker.

The meetings I attended were very interesting and at one of them I met Renee O., Education Coordinator for the Canadian Mental Health Association. I was intrigued by her talk and got up the courage to ask her about volunteering for CMHA. This started a long and healthy relationship, where I sat on committees and advisory boards, participated in research and led to my receiving a "mental health service award" and obtaining a part-time contract position as a Recovery Education Facilitator. I have made many important connections through my membership with MDO and had some great opportunities. One of these was being a presenter to an open meeting. I had made a video, called "Words That Bite", with another member – Elizabeth D. The film was an anti-stigma video which told the story of two relatively intelligent women living with mental illness. It was a great privilege to present to my peers and be recognized for our efforts.

Over the years, the experiences I've had and the connections I made through MDO have led to my ongoing Recovery and my keen interest in Recovery education and advocacy. I am now a trained and experienced facilitator of "WRAP" (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)

Some stories don't  
have a clear beginning,  
middle, and end. Life  
is about not knowing,  
having to change,  
taking the moment and  
making the best of it,  
without knowing what's  
going to happen next.  
Delicious ambiguity...

-Gilda Radner

### Charles R and Sue H.

Charles has been a member of MDO for a number of years, serving on the MDO Executive as Secretary in 2001-2002 and Treasurer 2002-2004. Charles holds an Engineering and Computer Science Degree from Carleton University and has worked on Web Design in his father's engineering company.

Sue has been a member of MDO for the past 8 years. She studied Psychology at Carleton University and now enjoys volunteering with the SPCA and being involved with both APPLE and PSO events.

Charles and Sue meet 7½ years ago at a MDO bowling event. Both enjoy meeting people, movie night, picnics and Info night. They also share a love a biking and enjoy spending a few weeks in Florida during the winter months.

### Harold and Leslie T.

Harold is a true believer in the saying "falling head over heels". Harold and Leslie were volunteers at Causeway and the first time Harold laid eyes on Leslie he immediately fell down a flight of stairs (and luckily was not hurt). Leslie was quiet and shy for those first two years but Harold persisted and when Leslie went to PEI for a month, Harold told her that he would be waiting for her. They spent that month talking to each other by phone.



This year marks 6 years of marriage. Harold and Leslie have been volunteering with various organizations. Leslie

and “Pathways to Recovery”. I have also taken “The Art of Facilitating Self Determination” and Peer Support Training.

The last two years have made a remarkable difference in my life in terms of support and overall wellness. I have been a member of the board of MDO and have co-facilitated a WRAP group and look forward to many more challenges and opportunities. All this would not have been possible had I not ventured out to those first few meetings of the then “DMD”. I owe a great deal to the organization – who is really all of the wonderful people who coordinate, facilitate, participate and volunteer for the benefit of each other! Happy 25th Anniversary and congratulations MDO and thank you to all!

### Gary

My two years spent within the “society” of MDO has afforded me many opportunities to engage socially and form new friendships with people who “get” the mood disordered state of mind. I don’t have to explain myself when I am feeling distraught, confused, angry or tremulous over life’s sometimes overwhelming challenges.

I started out by attending the twice-monthly peer support meetings and then gradually began to go to social outings organized and subsidized by MDO. While it was great being able to afford events I could not otherwise manage on a limited salary, it was still difficult for me at times, as I experience anxiety in social situations. A huge turning point occurred for me when I bonded with eight people I took a WRAP workshop with. We seemed to have such great chemistry as a group that we all agreed (including the facilitators) to trade email addresses and phone numbers.

That was a year and a half ago and I am still in contact with all these new friends, with varying frequency. One in particular I communicate with by phone, email or in person at least once a day – she has at times been a lifeline when the seas of life were especially rough. Since its inception, our little social group has grown, as newcomers begin to join us in our social pursuits. Our group periodically meets at someone’s home for potluck, shared conversation and sometimes a relaxing game of Password. Sometimes we’ll attend a public function en masse, as I usually find social outings much more rewarding when I am with people I know.

That’s a long way for a guy to come socially, especially one who was a loner and isolated with his depression for most of his life. For years I did not enter a movie theater, or go to large restaurants, or pretty much any place with crowds of people. Now I often attend MDO movie night, restaurant outings, excursions like this winter’s Winterlude and “Sugar bush” and even a couple of visits to museums I would not have ventured to on my own.

I believe that when life seems to overwhelm me, I should try to “overwhelm it back”. This means to me, using every form of help I can possibly find to better know myself,

grow as a person, improve my self-esteem and as a result reduce the severity and frequency of my depressive episodes. In conjunction with AA, spiritual courses offered at places like Family Services and Serenity Renewal, lectures at the ROH (all of these brought to my attention through MDO’s newsletter, website and mail outs), MDO is a crucial portion of the little army I have formed to actively “fight back” at a life that in past seemed filled with insurmountable challenges. I am learning a new way of thinking and of reacting to life’s hardships. And I am no longer alone in this battle.

I have recently returned to work, sporadically but gaining regularity and confidence. It feels so great to again feel productive, have a sense of structure and purpose in my day, rather than sleeping ‘till noon or later and often feeling useless and incapable. My self-worth has improved, my insomnia is not as incapacitating. I have new mental coping skills that I can use to turn a depressing day into a relatively calm and fulfilling one. Not every day is wonderful, but fewer are those terrible, barely tolerable and seemingly interminable periods of misery. I am stumbling toward stability, clarity of mind, peace. Thanks MDO, for your part in that. Thank you to those reading this article who are a part of that evolving miracle.

### Paul

Depression is somewhat of an invisible illness. You can’t always see it manifesting itself in others because sometimes it doesn’t show, or people can hide their symptoms for various reasons. As a result, many people suffering from depression can isolate themselves from the world. They won’t share their feelings of depression and despair with friends or family for fear of being judged, criticized and labeled, etc. As a result, they feel alone and can have no one to talk to -- at a time they need to talk most.

Aside from a doctor or therapist, who can you talk to about your mental health? This is where MDO plays a significant role.

I have lived with depression for most, if not all, of my life. I experienced a major clinical depression back in 2005 and went off work. My psychiatrist suggested at that time that I seek a support group to help me through my depression. I took his advice and found MDO.

I started attending MDO support group meetings regularly. I found it very comforting to meet so many others who seemed to understand what it was I was going through and what it’s like to live with depression or bipolar disorder. I felt accepted for who I was and what I was going through by a group of peers.

The support meetings were very helpful to me. I felt I could openly talk about what was in my heart and on my mind, or I could ask others for their opinion on certain

topics. For example, I could ask if others had any experience with a certain medication.

The meeting facilitators, past and present, did an excellent job in my opinion. And although they, too, were there to talk about their own issues, they would often refrain from doing so for lack of time. I admired them for their selflessness.

MDO also coordinates social events to help members come together and get out of isolation. I attended many outings, like a few visits to a sugar bush, a (Halloween) haunted farm, glow-in-the-dark bowling, movie nights at the Empire Theatre, brunch at Tucker's restaurant, mini-golf, etc.

The annual picnic at Vincent Massey Park and the MDO Christmas dinner are always fun times because you get to meet new members and see current members and friends you haven't seen in a while.

MDO also has Information Night on the third Tuesday of every night and guest speakers are invited to give a presentation to members and the general public. I assisted to some of the presentations (another great time to meet up with your MDO friends!) and found them all to be very helpful.



I also did some volunteer work for MDO. For example, a few years ago, I helped put the MDO newsletter together and handled mailing it out. I also coordinated a few social events. A few years back, I played Santa Claus: one year I did a

comedy routine as a depressed Santa; the following year as a hypo-manic Santa. People seemed pleased with both shows. I also helped out with the barbecuing at the annual picnic and helped set up at Christmas time.

The best part about MDO for me is that, aside from the support, understanding and compassion I received when I was really depressed, I have made some great friends here.

Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary MDO! You've come a long way! Thanks for being there for me, for us, always!

### Catherine

I arrived back in Ottawa almost 5 years ago after moving from BC. I had been searching without success for some kind of support for about a year. I still had contact with my counselor in BC and had sessions with her by phone. I was becoming more isolated with nowhere to turn when my counselor found a group called "MDO" saying it was an organization for those with mood disorders.

My first contact was with Pat, a very gentle and welcoming lady who I talked with on the phone for a while.

She talked about the support group on 2nd and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month. The first Tuesday I attended, Pat was the facilitator and made me feel welcomed and accepted. It was the first time outside of my home that I spoke about being diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and didn't feel shame or guilt. I became a member of MDO that evening.

I learned that there was a need for phone callers once a month and knew I was good at talking on the phone and took on my first volunteer position. As I got to know more people and saw jobs that needed filling, I took on the greeter's table on info nights. I enjoyed getting to meet new faces and see existing members from month to month and listening to the many guest speakers who share their wealth of expertise with MDO.

About a year or so Denise and I volunteered to help with Movie Night on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month. Later we became co-facilitators, because we really enjoyed the position. Howard, our previous facilitator, trained us well before moving on. It is a real privilege for us to see members enjoy getting together and perhaps sharing a bite before getting their movie card. It is good to see so many familiar happy people and be able to catch up a little with each other's 'news'

I quite enjoy helping out at MDO - I have been helped immensely - and I love to be able to give back. I have met many people; some have become very good friends. Mental illness is tough enough to deal with, let alone having to deal with people who don't understand or who are judgemental. One of the great things about MDO that is so important is that no one passes judgment. We are all in a similar boat and are here for support and to support.

There are fantastic people working behind the scenes as volunteers at MDO. They make activities happen for all members to enjoy; whether it is Winterlude, meals at various restaurants, bowling, IMAX, Sugar Bush, just to name a few. If you have just 2 hours of free time: think of becoming a VOLUNTEER!!! You will be glad you did.



**MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN!**

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you~Maya Angelou

# The Stigma

Valerie J.

Mental illness is something that people deal with silently  
 Because of the media hype that says they'll act violently  
 There's also the reality that few will ever accept them  
 As a matter of fact most people will forever reject them  
 Most certainly they'll be few that will ever respect them  
 They hide to be sure no one will detect them  
 They're all sorts of services for the physically disabled  
 But not so with mental illness we don't want them enabled  
 We'd rather hide them away somewhere in the dark  
 We'd rather not see them in the neighbourhood park  
 And with mental illness you take mind numbing medications  
 So somehow you'll meet other people's expectations  
 And everyone tunes into another episode of Law and Order  
 Where the show's crazed killer has bipolar disorder  
 And although they pretend to be somewhat understanding  
 They don't think about the response that often they're demanding  
 There's a slanted view given of the mentally ill  
 That they all have within them the potential to kill  
 Even the words mental illness often seems much skewed  
 And often suggests behaviour that's chaotic or lewd  
 But these are people struggling with life on life's terms  
 They are not people carrying around psychological germs  
 They are not always the people that you have to fear  
 Sometimes they are the family members that we hold dear  
 And all the cruelty in your comments often cuts very deep  
 And your prejudice only sows the hatred that you reap  
 How many people don't get help because of the stigma that you leave them  
 So that they slip so far into their illness that we can no longer retrieve them  
 And what about those with schizophrenia, homeless and on the streets  
 Who have been the recipients of our attitudes that spelled out their defeats  
 Abused and discarded, laughed at or ignored  
 And the worst of our attitudes is when they're deplored  
 But they are someone's father, someone's mother, someone's son  
 And the harm that we've caused them cannot be undone  
 And some of them end up at shelters talking to a wall  
 Or carrying around a baby that really is a doll  
 They have slipped through the system and fallen through the cracks  
 The tragedy of their existence speaks to the services our system lacks  
 And the only door we help them through is the doors of the prison system  
 And no matter how often they look for answers they are never given wisdom  
 And when they can't follow the rules we lock them up in solitary confinement  
 Where we don't give them their meds until they suffer an auditory realignment  
 So in the emptiness of their cell they have no one they can talk to  
 And their cells are often so small they have no where they can walk to  
  
 So in a mind that experiences the world as crowding in around them  
 All the rules the system imposes just continues to confound them  
 So all their actions are seen as defiant when really it's their panic  
 And the negative reactions of the guards just cause them to be frantic  
 So in the end they are traumatized by the actions that are violent  
 So by the time someone comes to see them they can only remain silent  
 And if they are able to tell us we just believe it's one of their delusions  
 After all they have a mental illness and of that we've no illusions  
 So the label of two words means what they say is disregarded  
 And so their freedom or their rights will never be regarded

And we don't pay attention to them we don't even listen  
We think they only speak nonsense so there's nothing we'll be missing  
But we have missed something significant, the person that's inside them  
And how long they've lived their life with no one there beside them  
And what crime have they committed born with a mind that has betrayed them  
Where they struggle to find some clarity in a world that has dismayed them  
With no connection to another because no one chooses to connect  
They spend a life time in isolation experiencing only a disconnect  
And the only time we hear about them is when they make an error  
So the image the media depicts of them could never be less fairer  
What about the person whose dreams were stolen by their biology  
Or those whose harmful upbringing had damaged their psychology  
Where is the compensation for the crime committed against them  
And what about the prejudice that so many have dispensed them  
Where are the stories that talk about their abilities or their achievements  
What about the fact that they rise above their bereavements  
The losses they have experienced often surpass those of others  
They often have no chance in the role of a father or a mother  
But we don't often think of that when we treat them with disdain  
To understand that all they lost is all they can't reclaim  
You can't imagine a depression that's like a pain inside your head  
That makes it almost impossible to get up from your bed  
You can't imagine what it's like to want to die every day and every night  
Or to live with the kind of anxiety that causes you to hide somewhere out of sight  
Or to hear voices in your head that forever continue to attack you  
Or to have flashbacks of a time when your parents used to smack you  
Or to have been abandoned so many times you believe that no one will ever want you  
So that you cut yourself to distract yourself from the emptiness that haunts you  
To have a personality that split so often in order to tolerate the trauma  
Or to be addicted to the chaos that guarantees another drama  
To have to perform ritualistic behaviours to prevent the occurrence of a tragedy  
To be unable to think clearly enough to come up with a better strategy  
To have an attack of panic that makes you feel that you are dying  
To believe people are against you and everyone is lying  
To have moods that shift so dramatically you can't predict how you will feel  
To have periods psychosis where you can never be sure just what is real  
To have a personality so damaged you can never make a connection  
So you spend your entire life experiencing nothing more than rejection  
To find yourself on the streets seeking the drugs that allow escape  
And to never realize the dealers are committing mental rape  
To be manhandled by the police because you cannot understand  
To be rejected by your relatives who will no longer lend a hand  
While you stand by and snicker as they are often dragged away  
Making jokes and saying insults as the sum of all you say  
It must be nice to have the stability to judge others who are ill  
To wake up every day and never have to take a pill  
But maybe you could grow some empathy enough to understand their pain  
Or maybe you could reach out to them so that their hopes are not in vain  
Maybe you could treat them with the respect you give to others  
Maybe you could understand that they are your sisters or your brothers  
Maybe you could take the time to learn about a mental illness  
Maybe you could take the time to practice a good-willness  
I know these people would appreciate if they were better understood  
If you bothered to find out what they can't and what they could  
Or just to be regarded as an equal human being  
To be more than the prejudicial view you're often seeing

## Now the Gates Open

Anjali M.

The earth has spun  
measureless days and nights  
winter, spring, summer and autumn  
and it has taken me this long  
to find my purpose in it.

All my friends have fired me  
at some time or other,  
gripped as I was  
in a sort of mayhem of the spirit.

Now the gates open as I arrive  
and the house is in order.  
I thank God from the bottom of my  
heart  
that I can live as some others live,  
in tranquillity.

As I reach out to touch  
His trembling hand  
He utters some words  
That I can't understand.

I can't understand  
The confusion he feels  
For in his mind  
Everything is so real.

There's so much confusion  
Inside of his head  
Unspoken words that  
He thought he had said.  
Visions of people and  
Things reappear  
But with the blink of an eye  
They soon disappear.

More than ever I wish  
His life could be better  
He'd be happy and healthy  
And feel much greater.

Then maybe someday -----  
When I reach out to touch  
His trembling hand  
He might utter some words  
That I can understand.

Poetry is all that is worth remembering in  
life. William Hazlitt

## Affairs of the Heart

Linda O`N.

dear heart  
near heart  
heart-of-my-heart  
give your heart  
take my heart  
with all my heart, sweetheart!  
\*\*\*

tête-à-tête  
heart-to-heart  
stirring heart  
warming heart  
mooning, swooning, ballooning heart  
heart-throb  
heart-strings  
heart-offered  
heart sings!  
\*\*\*

heart-sore  
heart-sick  
heart-ache  
heart-rending  
heart-broken  
heart-exhaustion  
heart attack  
heart failure  
heart alone  
\*\*\*

you cold heart!  
you cruel heart!  
you heartless heart-breaker!  
heart-wounder!  
heart-crusher!  
you pain in the heart!  
\*\*\*

embryo heart  
fetus heart  
baby, belly, stethoscope heart  
tiny, amazing, sweetest, dearest, miracle  
newborn heart  
bursting-with-love heart!  
\*\*\*

open heart  
awakening heart  
aspiring, attracted heart  
heart dilated  
heart surrendered  
tender, vibrant, soaring heart  
\*\*\*

heart's home  
heart's haven  
heart's ease  
heart's rest  
home is where the heart is  
in the great heart-I and  
\*\*\*

take heart  
stout heart  
courageous heart  
Purple Heart

## I Wish

Jennifer St. S.

I wish I could fly to the golden  
crest of day break,  
to the endless deep blue sky.  
I wish I could run like the  
gazelles,  
but not from warning dangers,  
as freely as the heavens would  
allow.  
I wish I could smile like the  
dolphins,  
and let my spirit ride with the  
waves.  
I wish I could be someone,  
Loved and cared for so specially,  
that no limits could forsake me,  
no sadness could abound.

Newsletter October 2003

## Untitled

Jeff R.

I asked for help,  
You heard the silence,  
A gift few have,  
You let me speak,  
You heard the words,  
Few really listen,  
You let me learn,  
An answer I already know,  
A teacher hard to find,  
A beginning you gave,  
A journey I will take,  
Thanks. Newsletter July 2009

The poem is a little myth of man's capacity of making  
life meaningful. And in the end, the poem is not a  
thing we see—it is, rather, a light by which we may  
see— and what we see is life.

Robert Penn Warren

## A Gift's Not a Curse!

Raymond D. T. D. T. (Ottawa) ©

November 21, 2010

*As I struggled with my very destabilizing highs and lows  
God made me realize that these symptoms were not my foes.  
I felt driven by one disturbing source, a chemical imbalance!  
Fighting to rediscover my peace of mind, I befriended patience.  
Time introduced me to incessant energy, insomnia and creativity.*

*Now I felt invincible and relentless; I was the master of my destiny.  
Oh why couldn't I recognize the devastating impact of my instability?  
Then suddenly all the roof caved in. I became listless and very unhappy.*

*A heavy burden had invaded my tender heart. I no longer saw the sun!*

*Caring relatives, friends and professionals came to my rescue; I won!  
Under this darkest cloud existed a marvellous creative human being.  
Really, my relaxed mind saw the light. I cherished my new calling.  
Slowly, I rediscovered my true self in this key transformation.  
Eh, I had received **a gift not a curse**; this is my revelation!  
Poem written by Raymond D. T. D. T. (Ottawa) ©*

## We Rise

Tyrone G.

**We rise. We rise** today as one; one bendable yet unbreakable tidal wave.

**We rise** in mutual defense and support of one another.

We are the protected protectors; the mutual keepers of our brothers and sisters, of each other.  
Each an essential link interwoven into the whole, the invisible army

**We rise. We rise** unsilenced. Unleashed. Reveling in our voice.

**We rise** with our spirits undaunted.

We are comfortable working out of the anonymity of the shadows; struggling with our challenges, our demons. But we will not remain in or be silenced by the darkness of ignorance or prejudice, instead we move into the light, into the public forum. Our voice unfettered. Reveling.

**Beware** for **We Rise. We rise** after we stumble or fall.

**We rise** even in the face of the delusion that we have been broken and scattered.

Even when we are scattered to the ends of creation, even in the face of the illusion we are all dead and gone shall a remnant remain.

Out of our apparent defeat shall a remnant rise like Samson of old!

Strong and powerful in its perceived deficiency, even in its mythical fragility and weakness.

Reborn, renewed and transformed as a divinely sanctioned community.

A community that is the cradle of hope for all creation and a sanctuary for those lost in the dark.

**We rise. We rise** in God with spirits unconquered and unbowed. **We rise** as a beacon of hope to those lost in the abyss of despair and helplessness.

You who are lost on the road rejoice for **We rise**. Here come the protected protectors.

**Beware** for we shall not fail to be our brothers and sisters keepers, to be the keepers of one another.

**We rise** and we will always rise for we are not alone! **Never alone!**

## Where Did the Light Go?

Anne G.

Everything is beautiful outside  
But inside it is all ugly  
Unhappiness, confusion,  
incomprehension  
No love, no love, no love.

Why is it that others hate me so?  
Why does no one come to me to  
talk?  
Why does no one ever visit or  
phone?  
Why does my family shun me?

The birds are singing, the crickets  
are chirping  
Sunshine glows softly on the  
leaves  
outside my window  
The world seems happy  
And yesterday, so was I.

Today is different  
Something has changed but I  
know not what  
There is no reason for me to feel  
sad and lonely  
But inadequate and useless is  
how I feel.

## A Hit

Fred B.

doctor, you,  
you, too,  
can be black and blue  
we'll use your syringe  
the one with the hinge  
you use on your patients  
it's right behind you  
on the shelf  
myself  
and those you mangled  
and dangled  
the needles before your eyes  
till the sun did is  
I know you'll despise it, too!  
Do you?

Newsletter, May 1999

## Listful Thinking

Anne G.

Why do I draw up lists  
Of things that I must do?  
These are futile gestures  
That beckon without a clue.

And when I write down  
My most noble intentions  
They later on taunt me  
Of my intellectual inventions.

Please dear Lord above  
Help me to understand  
That it is only by Your will  
Even one such task be in  
demand.

For with your help O Lord  
I may perhaps persevere  
To know what need be done  
The rest crossed out without a  
tear.

It upsets me to no end  
To plan and plan and plan again  
Of great achievements that must  
be done  
Only to look completely silly in the  
end.

## A Member's Creed

Do more than belong,  
participate;  
Do more than care,  
help;  
Do more than believe,  
practice;  
Do more than be fair,  
be kind;  
Do more than forgive,  
forget;  
Do more than dream,  
work.

Newsletter, May 1999

## My Precious

Steve T.

Every morning when I wake.  
I worry what the day will  
bring.  
More problems to rye the  
soul, or cake,  
To celebrate this day in  
spring,  
Oh, I really wonder how you  
feel,  
All snuggled-up in feathered  
nest.  
Do you know today what's  
real?  
Did you get a good night's  
rest?

My love for you will never  
die,  
We've ridden tempests,  
enjoyed the calms,  
Aiming to please, we always  
try.  
Prescriptions, diets and  
herbal balms,  
Proud doctors pontificate and  
boast,  
But really its love that heals  
most

Newsletter Vol. 14 No 6,  
June 1999

## Painful Irish A Limerick

Gerry Mc. G.

There once was an Irishman from  
the Castle Glenmorga  
Who suffered a severe pain in his  
shoulda  
It was so severe  
He made it his career  
His problem was bipolar  
affective discorda

Newsletter, April 1992

Breathe-in experience,  
breathe-out poetry.



## Peer Support

Peer support occurs when people provide knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical help to each other. A bimonthly peer support group, formerly known as Charlie's Rap Group, for adults with mood disorders. Please join us for a friendly, confidential discussion of mood disorder-related topics.

**The group meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 1355 Bank Street, fourth floor (follow the signs), from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m.**

## 25 Years of Peer Support in Ottawa

A Special MDAO Article Featuring Lianna C.

Peer support is one of the most successful ways to help people cope with their illness. It helps people with little or no hope feel less isolated and helps them improve their coping skills. The peer relationship allows for the exchange of knowledge and shared experience that benefits both the peer and the peer supporter." Words of wisdom from Lianna C., the President of the Mood Disorders Ottawa Mutual Support Group, an affiliate member of Mood Disorders Association of Ontario. Lianna knows whereof she speaks, having decided to volunteer in peer support following her last hospital stay. As Lianna says, "I knew what I needed to give back to a community that had and continues to support me in my own recovery. I believe that when you have a better understanding of acceptance of your own situation there is a willingness to share with other people and show people that there is hope. We are not alone."

Now celebrating the 25th Anniversary, Mood Disorders Ottawa offers a variety of peer support and recovery programs including: monthly movie night, monthly information session, featuring a speaker knowledgeable about mental health; drop in peer support group which meets twice per month; monthly peer support group for family members; semi-annual recovery programs - Pathways to Recovery and Wellness Recovery Action Planning; and monthly social groups, such as museum visits, bowling, holiday celebrations and many more. This past year, the group had the opportunity to attend mental health workshops in high schools and local agencies, letting more people know about the power of peer support. Over the coming year, the group hopes to add a recovery program focused on families, called Family Recovery Action Plan.

"We have the capacity to offer more through expanding educational programs, expanding our mutual support groups by reaching out to families and addressing the fact that better family and caregiver support systems benefits the consumer as well." say Lianna.



## MDO Peer Support

Gary

About two years ago, following a series of medical crises and a resulting bout of severe depression, I started to look for help. My search began online and as many readers of this piece already know, the availability of medical or counselling support for anxiety, depression and other mood disorders is scant and scattered. I had a bad reaction to prescribed medications, so for a while it seemed my sanity was "hanging by a thread". I had become a solitary person, mostly due to my life-long depression and the disintegration, at an early age, of my family of origin. I was somehow holding down a job, but that tiny bit of social interaction only made me feel more lonely, especially at the end of a work day. While my co-workers were all heading home to families and significant others, I had a grungy noisy apartment to look forward to. My significant others were Max and Shadow, my two cats. It dawned on me one day, like a bolt of enlightenment that I was lonely and bored and needed people in my life but where to find these people?

In the course of my online meanderings, I stumbled onto the MDO web site and shortly thereafter stumbled into my

first peer support group meeting (meetings are held twice monthly, the 2nd and 4th Tues of each month). I'd had previous positive experience with this sort of supportive verbal sharing environment and hoped I might find some company and answers among others with similar challenges.

At first I didn't like the meetings, because I have SAD (Social Anxiety Disorder) and felt uncomfortable sharing my personal issues with people I didn't know. Being in social situations with strangers is far from my comfort zone. But I persisted and eventually found myself becoming more comfortable sharing my situations and learning from others as the faces of those who attend on a regular basis became more familiar. Eventually, even with my hit- and-miss memory, I found I knew a lot of fellow sharers by name. I found that I could divulge my toughest battles in confidence, that I didn't have to be alone and secretive about my battle with depression.

I find that now I look forward to my biweekly meetings. Admittedly, when I'm having a rough time, or am tired

after a long tedious day at work, it can be tough to get past that inertia or sense of futility that can cause me to “isolate”. But I’ve always learned at least one thing from every meeting I have attended and usually feel calmer afterward (like I’ve taken a super-med). I invariably regret if afterwards on those Tues evenings when I “lose” the argument and stay home rather than sharing my evening with my friends and acquaintances at MDO.

I would like to express gratitude to the facilitators who devote their time to ensure that the format of these meetings is consistent and that all who attend feel safe and have a chance to share and offer mutual support. Thanks to Howard, Greg, Yvan, Puja, Walter and any others I may have forgotten, for your empathy and dedication to this volunteering effort. I would also like to thank those members of MDO who regularly or even sporadically attend the peer support meetings. Without all the above-mentioned, there would be no meeting and that would be a terrible loss to my recovery.



To all Peer Support Facilitators who make Tuesday evening a time to share, listen and learn.

## MDO Movie Night

Denise L. and Catherine W.

For a number of years, Movie Night has been one of the most popular activities in MDO. In fact, it is so popular, that movie passes had to be restricted this year to 6 per year rather than the 12 that were previously provided to members. Movie Night was consuming too much of the Discovery 2000 budget and taking away from the funding for other important social events. A couple of years ago, Catherine and I enthusiastically volunteered to help out with Movie Night and then took over facilitating the event from Howard because we enjoyed it so much. It is a real privilege for us to volunteer our efforts towards this event.

How does it run? On the first Tuesday evening of each month, Catherine and I set up for business on the second level of the World Exchange Plaza downtown. Tuesday is a perfect night for this because the cost of admission to the theatre is half price. For the cost of a toonie, members can get a \$10 Empire Theatre movie pass that has no expiry date. We usually get 20 to 30 people each month.

What are the rewards? Members enjoy getting together and perhaps sharing a meal or coffee before or after. It is always good to see so many familiar faces and to have a chance to reconnect and get caught up with each other's lives. People often go to a movie together or make plans for future get-togethers. Having an opportunity to get support when struggling or simply having a reason for a good night out is so important for everyone involved. It's fun; it's interactive; it's low cost.

What better way to spend the first Tuesday of each month!



## Member Awards

	<b>Sophie S.</b> dedicated service to Discovery and DMD
1992	<b>Tom and Eleanor M.</b> as co-founders of DMD
1995	<b>Bill C.</b> the first consumer survivor to receive this award for his work with DMD and PSO.
1996	<b>Gary H.</b> for his work with DMD
1998	<b>Judi R.</b> for her work and contribution to DMD and family support.
1999	<b>Gerry</b> for his unwavering dedication and pioneering work in advocacy for consumers of mental health services.
2002	<b>Kathleen G.</b> for her on-going commitment and passion for helping people overcome the stigma of mental illness and suicide
2002	<b>Barbara K.</b> for her many years of tireless work in loyal support of the Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group
2002	<b>Nancy K.</b> for her leadership and devotion to the mental health community.
2004	<b>Patricia G.</b> for her exceptional effort and creativity in organizing and coordinating the conference, "Acceptance through Knowledge of Mental Illness" in November 2003.
2004	<b>Dr. Dennis O.</b> for his commitment and dedication to the early organizational development and activities of the Depression/Manic Depression Mutual Support Group.
2005	<b>Nicole K-G</b> for her outstanding contribution to the Mood Disorders Ottawa Mutual Support Group (formerly the Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group of Ottawa), Discovery 200 activities.
	The <b>R. Family</b> for their extraordinary contribution to the Mood Disorders Ottawa Mutual Support Group Formerly the Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group of Ottawa).
2010	<b>Mary H.</b> receives an award for her work with CMHA and the TD Banking Project which gives people with severe mental illness the ability to have savings accounts, debit cards, direct deposits and lessons in money management
	<b>Mary H.</b> for her extensive volunteer participation on boards,

	committees and projects in support of mental illness and poverty issues.
2009	<b>Jacqueline C.</b> for her leadership tireless efforts and dedication towards improving, expanding and revitalizing MDO (Mood Disorders Ottawa) and the assistance it provides to consumer/survivors and family
1997	<b>Hilary W.</b> for raising awareness on disability issues
	<b>Gary H.</b> receives a United Way reward for his work in mental health advocacy.
	<b>Gary H.</b> received the Ontario Community Action Award, Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, presented by Lieutenant Governor
	<b>Kathleen G.</b> received the Community Builder Award from United Way for her work in mental health advocacy
	<b>Tom and Eleanor M.</b> were honoured with the Governor General's Caring Canadians Award
	<b>Donald S.</b> earning Ottawa's annual Distinguished Civic Appreciation Award in Health Volunteerism
	<b>Nancy K. and Tom T.</b> both honoured with Civic Appreciation Certificates for Volunteerism in Health
	<b>Gerry</b> was honoured with the Royal Ottawa Hospital Inspirational Award
	<b>Kathleen G.</b> receives the Leading Women Building Communities Minister of Cultures Award for her volunteer work in disabilities and mental health

Congratulations

## In Memoriam

### Myra C, - October, 1998

Myra passed away October 11 in a tragic car accident. She gave us so much while she was with us: the sunshine she brought to Discovery events; her generosity with her friends and her car; the always ready smile; the high-spirited conversation; her tireless efforts on the phone-around; the advice she gave based on true wisdom and experience. We will never forget your contributions, Myra.

### Stephen A. – February, 2000

Stephen passed away February 9, 2000 at the age of 48. Stephen won a first grant from the provincial government for APPLE, Apost-Psychiatric Leisure Enterprise. He was a founding member of Ontario Psychiatric Survivors Alliance (Ottawa) and served on the board of PSO. Stephen set up the first drop-ins run for and by consumers who were given work, dignity and a pay cheque. He was a member of one of the first pilot project patient councils in Ontario at Brockville Psychiatric Hospital and subsequently Treasurer. He was a member of the Rental Committee, Centretown Community of Ottawa Corp. and of the Crisis Intervention Services Coalition. He was also involved with the Royal Ottawa Hospital (ROH) Forensics Community Advisory Committee, Director, Civil Liberties Association of Ottawa, a speaker for THE ROH Consumer-As-Expert Group and A contributor of a series of video tapes for the ROH medical library. Stephen was an executive member of the Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group – NCR; and Coordinator/Treasurer of their recreational group. He was editor of DMD Discovery newsletter, producer of *Sound Mind*, a program on mental health for CKCU FM 93.1.

### Tom M. – September, 2010

Tom passed away on Tuesday, September 7, 2010 at the age of 91. Tom and his wife Eleanor were trailblazers in the mental health field, initiating the first DMD support group in Ottawa, volunteering extensively and promoting mental health awareness. Tom and Eleanor were honoured in 2004 at Rideau Hall with the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

### Judith (Judi) R. – June, 2010

Judi, of Westport, passed away at home on June 24 at age 71. She was involved for many years as a volunteer with Depression and Manic Depression Mutual Support Group (DMD) in Ottawa and was their treasurer for many years. She helped organize many social functions such as the annual Christmas Party and summer Barbeques. She made and kept many friends from her association with the group. Judi was instrumental in procuring the necessary funding to send family members of people living with mental illness to receive training to facilitate the 12 week NAMI course at CMHA in Ottawa.



# Pathways to Recovery-Yori's Experience

Yori

Pathways to Recovery is a 12-week course given by MDO and has an accompanying workbook. I took that course in 2010. Whenever I take a course like Pathways or WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), I feel empowered. By working hard on Pathways and doing the many exercises contained in the workbook, I receive many benefits, such as gaining energy and purpose and having a purpose to get up in the morning.

Courses like Pathways to Recovery help me tremendously on my journey to survival, because I learn to help myself, even though I am often battling mental illness (psychosis, bipolar disorder, severe depression). When I am well, I am happy to be alive and very positive. When I am feeling unwell or getting sick, I am depressed and negative. I use different techniques to help me, including the Pathways to Recovery workbook. I read a few passages or do some of the exercises and feel better as a result.

This course and the accompanying workbook contain a lot of information about recovery and the journey to get there. Through reading material and exercises, we learn to know more about ourselves, to discover our personal strengths and to use tools and techniques to recover from mental illness. I discovered that I am a survivor, a strong, hardworking and resilient person. I am sure that it can also help a lot of people who have a mental illness. I recommend it!

Recovery and  
the Journey  
Getting There

## WRAP®

Wellness Recovery Action Plan™

WRAP® is a 10 to 12 week self-management recovery program designed to decrease symptoms, increase personal responsibility and improve the quality of life for people who experience psychiatric symptoms. This self-designed plan teaches you to use simple, safe, personal skills, supports and strategies to reduce or eliminate symptoms. It also includes plans for responses from others when you cannot make decisions, take care of yourself or keep yourself safe. WRAP is not meant to replace, but to complement, professional health care support and medication.



WRAP is designed to:

Decrease and prevent intrusive or troubling feelings and behaviours.

Increase person empowerment.

Assist people in achieving their own life goals and dreams.

Create positive change in the way you feel.

## Pathways to Recovery

Pathways to Recovery is 10 to 12 week program and is a valuable tool for people who have been labeled with mental health challenges who are thinking about what recovery would look like and what it means to be on the journey of recovery. Pathways groups offer a self-directed way of transforming experiences as a consumer/survivor, mental patient or mental health service system user and using those experiences to achieve recovery. Our goal in using this program is to provide a supportive culture for people to explore their own recovery in a self-directed and self-controlled way, but done in group so that the experience can involve mutual support and building relationships that support and sustain recovery. Our hope is that people who participate in this program and incorporate its work into their own journeys of healing, will one day receive most of their life's supports and resources outside of the mental health system. Exert from [www.cultureofrecovery.org](http://www.cultureofrecovery.org)

## What is Recovery?

Recovery is a process, a way of life, an attitude and a way of approaching the day's challenges. The need is to meet the challenge of the disability and to re-establish a new and valued sense of integrity and purpose within and beyond the limits of the disability; the aspiration is to live, work and love in a community in which one makes a significant.

Patricia D. National Consumer Leader

Recovery is a deeply personal, unique process of changing ones attitudes, values, feelings, goals and skills and /or new roles. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of a psychiatric disability

# Spiritual Depression

Linda O`N.

As someone diagnosed in 1980 with a mood disorder – and not very happy about it – developing a stronger spiritual orientation and relationship to God has been an important way of dealing with the effects of a mood disorder and stigma in my life. At the same time, I have to admit that my beliefs and my sense of faith, as well as my sense of self, have at times taken a beating from the challenge of living with a mental health problem. I call this condition spiritual depression.

What has helped me spiritually though the ups and downs of a mood disorder? Reducing the sense of isolation through involvement with a mental health support group, many of whose members have a profound understanding of human suffering and are deeply spiritual, has been essential. As well, being a Baha'I with an examined, chosen and evolving set of beliefs, a diverse spiritual community and like-minded friends with whom to share my beliefs and values has been a wonderful gift. Using spiritual practices such as prayer or meditation, drawing inspiration from scriptures or other spiritual writings, sharing insights with others, attending spiritual gatherings and celebrations and exploring spiritual concepts or challenges with others, have all been a source of spiritual growth and strengthening.

But as precious as this spiritual dimension of life is, it has been virtually out of reach whenever I've been clinically depressed and overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. This is a time when few people are able to pray or meditate, feel close to, or trust in God. It seems as though our spiritual senses have been deadened along with the physical ones, a time when sacred writings fail to inspire, or when the thought of going to services or meetings and being more than a piece of deadwood seems impossible.

Serious depressions that have arisen between long periods of relative stability in my own life have given rise to fundamental and difficult spiritual questions and even doubts. If God really loved me, would He permit me to suffer in this way? Is there meaning and purpose in what I'm going through? Am I intended to experience this and grow by this experience, or is it simply bad luck, or the changes and chances of this world? How can I grow when I feel diminished? Should I set these questions aside till I feel better and aim at simply getting through these rough times with as much dignity as I can muster, accepting the love and support of others as graciously as I can? Though no one can answer these questions for another person, I've found it helpful to talk them over with trusted friends. While I feel I have some answers, I find I keep revisiting them from time to time, in conversations with others, with my own heart and with the Creator.

Just as surviving a serious depression requires patience and a belief that our emotions and lives will eventually get

back to normal, surviving spiritual depression requires patience with our own souls and faith that our spiritual susceptibilities will eventually be restored. It's a time to ask for understanding, acceptance and support when we feel most vulnerable around other people and often least able to accept help. What are some of the things I've asked of friends? To pray for me or even to come over to read to me when I felt unable to do this myself. To be patient with me and to try to understand how the wretchedness I feel overwhelms every aspect of my life, seemingly turning strengths into weaknesses, at least temporarily.

In my experience, a period of spiritual depression is not a time to conclude that one has lost one's faith, or that God has vanished from one's life. It may, however, be a time to acknowledge that under extraordinary circumstances it is natural, even predictable, to have spiritual doubts or painful questions for the Creator. Such doubts may be a sign that some spiritual development or evolution is needed on our part – a good project for when we feel better. But in my experience, spiritual doubts and worries often simply go away when I feel better, just as the anguish and despair at the centre of severe depression eventually fades away. I have found that I must simply make room for these experiences in my spiritual life, accept them and accept myself when I'm going through them. I've come to see them as spiritual symptoms that affect me but are not my reality, just as the painful manifestations of clinical depression obscure my identity but do not destroy it and eventually fade away, leaving me depleted but intact. And nothing can compare with the spiritual joy, as a friend described it, of finding my faith secure in my heart again and being able to embrace it as an old friend.

**Linda** Mental Health Advocate and Member,  
Ottawa Baha'I Community. Presented at a panel.



## What DMD Means to Me

Linda O`N., May 1993

I was once asked to make a presentation as one of three members from our group as a success story, someone who has depression or manic-depression who is now doing well, i.e. is relatively stable, employed, leads a fairly balanced life, etc. The intent was to give people who are going through rough times a sense of hope, to show that change takes time and effort and to see to what factors such success could be attributed. It was easy to identify things that have made it easier for me to live with manic depression: learning as much as I could about the condition in order to deal with it; the support of friends and family; having an out-of-town family who were shielded from the worst of my episodes; having a long-term relationship with a psychiatrist I respected; being a good lithium responder; feeling a sense of support in having a good psychiatric hospital in the city; and, among the most important, my involvement over the years in the DMD group.

First and foremost, DMD offers me, on a larger scale, what meant so much as my early friendship with A; friendships allowed me to compare notes with others about manic depression. I was struck quite forcibly by his at an early meeting: the powerful perspective gained from learning of others' experiences and comparing them to your own. It's easy to feel sorry for yourself during the bad times or take the good times for granted if you are isolated in your situation and don't really have an idea of what others are going through. It's also great to know you're not the only one to do outrageous things while manic. In our group I've met people who were (after long struggles) in better shape than I was and it made me feel hopeful; when I've met people who were in worse shape, it made me feel grateful, as I do to this day.

Second, I've made many friends through the group that I'm always happy to see at the meetings or social get-togethers. A number of us also keep bumping into each other on the various volunteer committees, task forces and boards on which we serve from time to time. I really appreciate the efforts that our members are making both inside and outside the group to advocate on our behalf and work to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

*\*MDO was called DMD (Depression/Manic Depression Mutual Support Group) until 2005, before these conditions came to be known as mood disorders.*

## Inner Strengths

Peggy C.-W.

from her newly published book *Witcha TallTree*

Inner strengths are what are within our deep souls. Souls can be strong to pull through even though this other can go against you. I call the inner forces that guide us when perplexed. Concentration is needed when working the inner forces learning the knowledge to deal with inner forces. In guidance's of our teachers or leaders which sometimes can be helpful in survival in our walks of lives.

Some of the inner strengths can strong or weak but, still become benefited in our walking lives as we on pathways unknown. Sometimes following the inner forces telling us to focus in heavy concentration when inner forces are going in all directions.

To control our inner forces is to patience with virtue. Rome was not built in a day. It time took to build Rome, inner strength, and our inner forces in our daily lives as we again go on the roads of pilgrimage.



# My Involvement with the Manic-Depression Support Group of Ottawa

Raymond D. T. D. T., Ottawa, Ontario

I attended my first meeting with the Manic-Depression Support Group of Ottawa in the spring of 1999 after being discharged from Le Centre Hospitalier Pierre-Janet, Gatineau, QC. Having previously worked as a professional social worker in two Ontario Provincial Psychiatric Hospitals, I wholeheartedly believed in the value of participating in peer support activities on an individual and/or group basis.

Even though I received follow-up services from my psychiatrist and my psychologist upon my discharge from hospital, I felt that joining a peer support group would definitely help me to regain my self-esteem and my self-confidence. I'm pleased to say that I was not disappointed in spite of the fact that I was quite emotionally drained and frail when I showed up at my first meeting.

I remember being warmly greeted by other participants, especially the group leader who introduced himself as an ordinary human being who experienced the same illness as we did - one of his primary roles within the group was to ensure that every participant respect the rules of the group which he enunciated very clearly and in a non-threatening way. As I attentively listened to other participants' testimonials, I felt inspired by the courage they displayed as they shared what they experienced with their mental illness. I felt quickly reassured that I wasn't alone in trying to humanly cope with my mental illness.

No one was forced to share what he/she was experiencing during the meeting. I believe that, at my first meeting, I simply identified myself by my first name and told my peers when I was discharged from the hospital. I couldn't muster more courage to say more than that. Regardless of my hesitancy to share more information, I felt treated like a real person worthy of respect and dignity during and after the meeting.

I opened up at our second meeting and in spite of the fact that I was shaking in my boots as I shared what I experienced, I felt good for having done so... and I was greeted with a great deal of empathy and compassion. I attended the Support Group for approximately a year and I will be forever grateful to my peers for supporting me in my efforts to regain my self-esteem and self-confidence. Shortly after I started to attend these support meetings, I began to do volunteer work with persons suffering from Alzheimer's. I also volunteered at an organization which helps the poor and the homeless in Ottawa until I was employed there in 2000.

In 2010, I published a novel of fiction, *Riding the Tides of Life*, based on my personal struggles with my bipolar disorder. The protagonist, Greta Ludwig, is a 29-year-old Franco-Ontarian and Métis widow, who is the successful owner of a bookstore. As a result of the many stressors she encounters in her young life, she experiences an acute manic episode which brings her on the brink of a full blown mental breakdown and personal bankruptcy. She is admitted, against her will, for psychiatric assessment and treatment. Once she is discharged from hospital, she is followed by a psychiatric social worker and becomes a member of a mutual support group. Without breaching confidentiality, I've made extensive use of my personal experiences with the Ottawa Support Group in the scripting of this section of my novel.



# Friday Mania

Steve T.

You fly into town on your hot-wheeled chariot  
to taste the blush of a manic lady  
hastening to add that you don't  
place  
too much face in convention

The silver tipped tongue gently  
cuts the fog  
of tobacco clouds that linger and  
swirl  
over two deftly bantering dancers  
who are  
carving their destiny in each  
other's soul

No talk of loose charms cavort  
to her flight of memory and fancy  
spiralling waver upwards in  
ascendant beauty  
to complete and fill in bountiful  
graciousness

Should such virtue be controlled  
reviled, or cured  
or rather be adorned with wings  
and golden  
feathers  
so that she may soar to greater  
heights

Every man and ye woman has a  
day  
on the pinnacle of success  
May you share that joy  
each day for the rest of your life!

Newsletter Vol. 14 No 8, October  
1999

# Tears

Linda O`N.



It is not the benign tears  
of wedding, funerals,  
the family gatherings that mark  
the passages

It is not the involuntary tears  
we shed

from images of those  
who suffer more than we  
or at least, differently

It is not the silent tears  
for strangers--  
deigning past carnage  
on the highway

It is not the high emotion  
bringing moisture to the eye  
for all great works of artistry  
or each life's small epiphanies

It is not the Frey-eyed tears  
for the missed departed  
whose empty places  
leave a hole  
in the very shape of lies

It is not the ennobling tears  
that spring  
trim the heart's truths  
and turnings

It is not the small tears  
of the day-today sadnesses  
and disappointments

Nor even the imperceptible tears  
of cumulating pains  
and losses

It is the tide of tears  
bleak and hopeless  
vast and wide  
the tears that flood  
through the grinding down  
the deepening darkness  
the sweep to black  
unstoppable descent

It is the torrent of tears  
the needing to stem  
the steady stream  
in public places  
the having to drop  
the phone for sobbing  
welcoming the frogged days  
of sleep on hospital wards

It is the tears  
for endurance  
without nobility  
the choosing to live  
not from courage  
but lingering rule--  
spare other agony

It is the pathetic tears  
for being older  
and being less

it is the dry tears of knowing

nothing  
anymore

It is these tears I fear  
It is these tears I abhor

Newsletter Vol. 13 No 7 December  
1998

# Dark Wolves

S. K.

Tucked in warm and safe.  
My loved one's body  
A lifejacket around me.

Steady as she goes  
Says the Captain to a night that has  
all  
semblance of calm.

Why do they come and invade this  
holy place?

Today, they stayed behind the fence,  
beyond the house.

I saw them, their eyes on me.  
I ignored them and went about my  
day.

I told them to stay put, leave me  
alone.  
Don't come any closer.

They obeyed, biding their time-  
Until the Night.

Then,  
They came \_\_\_\_closer  
Then  
right into the bed.

It's a staring down kind of game.  
They tire of this play and go.  
I finally sleep.

Newsletter, February 2008

We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for from *Dead Poet's Society*



## Deep Pressed

Linda R.

Skint within my heart  
Emptied out of are  
A flat-lined brain  
Sleeping, sleeping

Broken dreams and dog-eared  
days  
The inability to rise and rage  
Against a world gone grey  
Sleeping, sleeping

Flat out on the lumpy couch  
Bones aching and ferried tongue  
A fascination with my pulse  
Beating, beating

The telephone ring  
Life's CPR  
Relief is not so far  
Ringing, ringing

Listen

When I ask you to listen  
And you start giving advice,  
You have not done what I have  
asked  
When I ask you to listen  
And you begin to tell me why I  
shouldn't feel  
the way I do  
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen  
And you feel you have to do  
something to solve  
my problem,  
You have failed me, strange as  
that may seem.

Listen,  
All I asked you to do was listening,  
not talk, or do.  
Just hear me.

I can do for myself;  
I'm not helpless perhaps  
discouraged for  
faltering

Newsletter, April 2008

But not helpless.

When you do something for me  
That I need to do for myself,  
You contribute to my fear and  
weakness.

But when you accept as fact that I  
feel  
what I feel,  
No matter how irrational,  
Then I stop trying to convince you  
and get  
on with understanding  
What's behind that irrational  
feeling?

And, when that's clear,  
The answers will be obvious,  
And I won't need any advice.  
Newsletter Issue 7 October 1990

When I ask you to listen  
And you feel you have to do  
something to solve  
my problem,  
You have failed me, strange as  
that may seem.

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Just hear me.

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And, when that's clear,  
The answers will be obvious,  
And I won't need any advice.

Newsletter Issue 7, October 1990

## Darkness Cloak

Linda O`N.

Darkness is a cloak  
descending on my shoulders  
enclosing me in folds of night  
purveyor of my dark identity

Darkness is a cloak  
enfolding, moulding me  
folding me up, under and over  
creasing, decreasing me

Wet indigo my cloak  
flooding my vale with tears  
pelting a cold dark rain  
soaking cold to the bone  
draining, remaining in me)

Darkness is a cloak  
whose shadow hands  
forever beckon to a darker place  
false promises of peace  
if I'll embrace

....  
But soon my darkness cloak  
Is loosening from my shoulders  
freeing me from folds of night  
uncreasing, releasing me

Easing from my frame  
from black to twilight fading  
from indigo to grey  
at last dissolving

....  
Gone now my darkness cloak  
cast down from my shoulders  
a deepening mist  
of hope

Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the  
skeleton architecture of future of change, a  
bridge for our lives. It lays the foundations for



# Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are responsible for overseeing the activities of a not for profit organization, ranging from huge foundations to small local charities. We at Mood Disorder Ottawa have been most fortunate extremely dedicated people voluntarily take on this role. *Thank you* for your hard work, your passion and your energy. It is because of all volunteers that Mood Disorders Ottawa is able to provide all programs and supports for we are a 100% volunteer run organization.



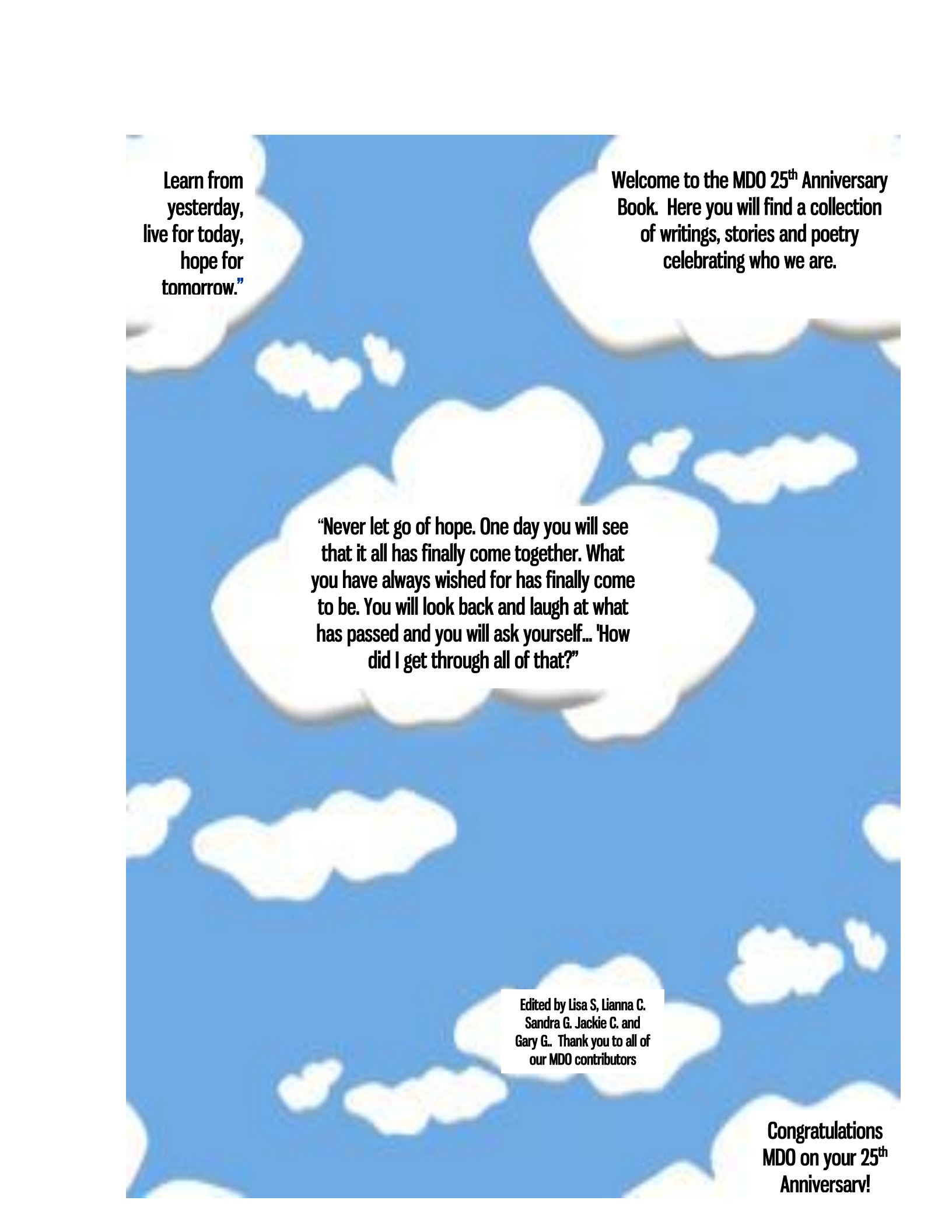
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Thank You



**Learn from  
yesterday,  
live for today,  
hope for  
tomorrow.”**

**Welcome to the MDO 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Book. Here you will find a collection  
of writings, stories and poetry  
celebrating who we are.**

**“Never let go of hope. One day you will see  
that it all has finally come together. What  
you have always wished for has finally come  
to be. You will look back and laugh at what  
has passed and you will ask yourself... 'How  
did I get through all of that?’”**

**Edited by Lisa S, Lianna C.  
Sandra G. Jackie C. and  
Gary G. Thank you to all of  
our MDO contributors**

**Congratulations  
MDO on your 25<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary!**

