



# Tools for Life



## Conference and Exhibition

# An Overview

### Tools for Life: A Meaningful Experience

The Tools for Life Conference and Exhibit was held on October 25<sup>th</sup> at Horton High School in Greenwich. Now in its eighth year, the conference showcases local and provincial organizations, businesses and people who help others in learning, employment and daily living. Over seventy conference sessions were held throughout the school ranging from how to start a business to building community capacity. Presenters came from organizations across the province. There was also an exhibit area in the gym, for the almost one hundred exhibitors, whose tables were laden with information on products and services offered by each group.

My first session was “Exploring the Strait Work Program at NSCC” conducted by Diane Johnson-Snook, Program Coordinator. This one-year program, only available at the Strait Area campus at Port Hawkesbury, is a transition program for high school students with disabilities. It includes budgeting, shopping, and living in an apartment as well as personal and work development. Most students who graduate either enroll in other courses or get a job.

The session “How Do People Get around in Nova *(Continued on page 2)*

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Scotia If They Do Not Drive” was conducted by John Roswell and Ron Mullins, Vice Chair and Director of Community Transit Nova Scotia, respectively. The small but lively group talked about issues such as accessibility and affordability for seniors, people in rural communities, and those who need to use the bus for medical, work, and school-related reasons.

The late afternoon session I chose to attend was “Learning Disabilities: There Is a Brighter Future” conducted by Joline Boudreau. This university-graduated naturopath talked about Irlen syndrome: a visual perception disorder as well as other learning disabilities she has. She also gave tips for post-secondary education and info on assistive technology for students.

The conference has become huge (a thousand people were expected to attend). I also noticed that the meal tickets are now ten dollars which was more than last year so the costs are rising. More coordination could have been given in the exhibit area and lunch area. But it was still very informative and hopefully there will be another conference next year.

I'll like to thank Jim Roy, Kings Transit, Diane Johnson-Snook, John Roswell, Ron Mullins, Joline Boudreau and the rest of the planners, volunteers, exhibitors, and presenters for making this conference possible.

By Melinda Cadarette

## Planning for Equitable Employment

Nova Scotia has the highest incidence of disability in all of Canada with only 52% of people with disabilities in the workforce. This translates to 55,000 working-aged, unemployed individuals and 42% of income assistance recipients, according to a study conducted by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Persons with disabilities are twice as likely to experience barriers to employment. This statistic is of concern because the well-being of Nova Scotia depends on the equal contribution of all its citizens.

There are a number of barriers to employment for persons living with disabilities. The fear generated by stereotypes persists in the workplace, leaving employers and colleagues feeling timid about a

person's competency. Many employers simply do not have the basic training and/or supports to create an all-inclusive work environment (i.e. accessibility). Sometimes there is inadequate or nonexistent support in the workplace. Often, people just do not have reliable transportation. These and other challenges are addressed in an Employability Table with the goal of increasing support and/or training for greater employment inclusion.

At the Tools for Life conference 2013, Charlie MacDonald, Coordinator of the Nova Scotia Persons with Disabilities Employability Table developed by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, asserts that our emphasis should not be on what a person is incapable of doing, but rather, “Oh, you have a disability? Where do you want to work?” The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the equal rights of *all* citizens; the agenda is to raise participation in the workforce steadily over the next five years through a number of strategies: supporting entrepreneurship, assistive technology, transition supports, job coaching, training for employers, wage subsidy program, tax rebate for employers, and adopting an ‘employment focused’ framework for service providers. These recommendations aim for economic self-sufficiency and greater self-confidence for all persons with disabilities regardless of the severity.

By Dena Walker

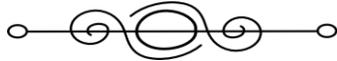
### Reference

Employability: closing the circle. 2012. *AbilityHere.ca: Home of the Nova Scotia Persons with Disabilities Employability Table*. Retrieved from <<http://abilityhere.ca/persons-with-disabilities-in-nova-scotia/>>



# In The News

Harley Lawrence, a homeless man with a mental illness, died in suspicious circumstances on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in a bus shelter in Berwick. During his time in the town, he did not want help, but people from the Evangeline Club made an effort to reach him but without success. Since Harley died people have become more aware of the mental health services in our area. Even though the club wasn't able to help Harley out of his situation, its members are making a real effort to make sure nobody else "falls through the cracks."



A pharmacist from Sydney is attempting to change lives by taking prescriptions right to his customers' doors. Hugh Toner, who started the "Daily Dose to You" program, brings meds to approximately 24 people each day. These people have a "mental illness, dementia, or other conditions." They live alone and have a hard time coping. The purpose of the program is not just supplying their meds but to give these people contact on a daily basis with another person. This program is very beneficial to the customers who take part in it.



Painting helps people living with a mental illness express their thoughts and emotions and provides them with a way to cope. Jacqueline Connors, a recreational therapist, runs an art program at the Abbie J. Lane Building located in Halifax. The people who partake in this program are "acute mental health patients." These people have a hard time engaging in a one on one situation and art reduces the pressure and provides the opportunity for people to open up and develop relationships in a group setting. Completing an art project makes people feel they have accomplished something and builds self-confidence, feelings which continue "outside the program." Art therapy is good for the soul.

By Tony Legere

#### References:

"Harley Lawrence's death spreads mental health awareness." [CBCNEWS Nova Scotia](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/harley-lawrence-s-death-spreads-mental-health-awareness-1.2424824), 13 November 2013. 16 November 2013.

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"Sydney pharmacist changing lives making house calls." [CBCNEWS Nova Scotia](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/sydney-pharmacist-changing-lives-making-house-calls-1.2254042), 28 October 2013. 16 November 2013.

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"Art therapy: painting a brighter future for mental health." [CTV NEWS](http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/art-therapy-painting-a-brighter-future-for-mental-health-1.1542104), 13 November 2013. 16 November 2013.

<<http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/art-therapy-painting-a-brighter-future-for-mental-health-1.1542104>>

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### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Mental Health First Aid courses are being offered on: January 14 to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, February, 6 to 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and March 28 to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The cost is \$150 per person, and the location is to be announced.

If you are interested please register at [www.kingsns.cmha.ca](http://www.kingsns.cmha.ca) or call Melinda at 679-7464.

### CMHA Client Christmas Party

Please bring your children, and join us for a festive turkey dinner, crafts, games, sing-song, Christmas gift draws, pictures with Santa, and gifts for the children.



**When: Friday, December 20**  
**Where: Louis Millett Centre,**  
**New Minas**  
**Time: 10am to 3pm**

**RSVP Melinda at 679-7464**  
Transportation is available

## The Media's Portrayal of Addiction and Mental Health

This Tools for Life conference session was presented by two students from the Addictions Community Outreach Program offered at the Nova Scotia Community College in Kentville. Courtney Wilson and Kendra Pierce, under the direction of their instructor, Dale Gruchy, led a session dealing with the portrayal of addiction and mental illness in the media.

The presenters revealed that the mental health issues most often depicted in the media are gender disorders, associative disorder and schizophrenia. *On Gray's Anatomy*, they said, it seems people with a mental illness cannot be happy. Stereotypes abound on television: addicts are responsible for their addictions; people with heroin addictions have to steal to support their habits; people with schizophrenia are dangerous. These are harmful stereotypes and many people living with addiction and mental health problems feel these media portrayals are unfair. Wilson and Pierce suggested that the media be taken with a "grain of salt." They added that media can be an "ally in changing prejudices" and in airing human interest stories.



### Realistic Portrayals

Looking beyond the Tools for Life presentation, a review of recent literature finds that, as Wilson and Piece predicted, mental illness is no longer a taboo subject for television shows; rather it has become a popular plot line for many shows in the current season. Carrie Mathison, star of *Homeland*, stops taking her medication for bipolar disorder and begins self-medicating with exercise and alternative therapies. Dr. Vasilis Pozios, a member of the American Psychiatric Association, applauded *Homeland* for the accurate depiction of the disorder. "Instead of being someone who is [either] happy or sad, which is the layperson's possible understanding of bipolar disorder, this shows the actual major depressive episodes, the manic episodes and also the psychosis that that can happen with bipolar disorder," Pozios explained. It should be pointed out that failing to take prescribed medication can have grave consequences for someone with a mental illness.

MaryLee Sudworth of *The Guardian* asserts that these shows can also facilitate conversations about important issues. Further; these shows are bringing concerns about mental illness into the forefront. She wrote, "They give people who are dealing with a mental illness (or those close to someone who is) a chance to watch and reflect on their own issues."

By Heather Frenette

#### References:

TV shows explore mental illness in their characters.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865588177/TV-shows-explore-mental-illness-in-their-characters.html>

Homeland and Bipolar Disorder: How TV Characters Are Changing the Way We View Mental Illness | TIME.com

<http://healthland.time.com/2013/10/08/homeland-and-bipolar-disorder-how-tv-characters-are-changing-the-way-we-view-mental-illness/#ixzz2kisnAfet>



#### A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to CMHA, 11 Opportunity Lane Suite 3 Box 10 Coldbrook NS B4R 0A5 (Cheque or money order will be accepted).

#### Staff & Volunteers

Editor: Heather Frenette Writers: Tony Legere and Melinda Cadarette  
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We also thank Brenda Main, Michelle Ferdinand, and Laurel Taylor for their help.

