

The Consumer/Survivor Information Resource Centre of Toronto

BULLETIN

**Information for consumer/survivors of the mental health system,
those who serve us, and those who care about us.**

*Distributed through generous support from the Community Support and Research Unit (CSRU)
of the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH)*

January 15, 2009 Bulletin 386

LOCATION: 1001 Queen St. West, Toronto, ON
MAILING ADDRESS: c/o CAMH, 1001 Queen St. West, Toronto, ON M6J 1H4
DROP-IN HOURS: Monday to Friday, 1-4 pm PHONE HOURS: Monday to Friday, 9-5 pm
TEL: 416-595-2882 FAX: 416-595-0291 E-MAIL: csinfo@camh.net WEBSITE: <http://www.csinfo.ca/>

Doing It for Ourselves

For this edition of the Bulletin I visited Nadine Reid of Sound Times Support Services. Many of our readers are familiar with Sound Times, a consumer/survivor initiative (CSI) in Toronto that provides a variety of services to consumer/survivors. Nadine has worked as a Harm Reduction Community Service Worker at Sound Times for 3 years and before this for 7 years in downtown Toronto. She is committed to working with substance users at both the individual level and through systemic advocacy. I met Nadine at the October 2008 C/S Info Session on Harm Reduction where she was a panelist and I wanted to learn more about her cutting edge approach to harm reduction and addiction management.

Nadine explained that for many users, drug(s) have had both positive and negative effects. Self-medication at times of crisis and during periods of emotional or physical pain has provided a form of *in the moment*, short-term relief. But, she cautions, excessive drug use does not provide a good long-term solution. Nadine embraces a quality of life approach to harm reduction that recognizes the need for balance between managing an addiction and enjoying a full life. Improving the overall quality of a substance user's life allows addiction to play a smaller role and addiction then ceases to be the centre around which everything else revolves. At Sound Times Nadine works with individuals on a one-to-one basis and is available to make referrals to detox, therapy and relapse prevention programs. She facilitates monthly discussion groups where members tackle topics such as triggers, how to cope with cravings, stress busting, self-care and time-management, among other issues crucial to creating a good quality of life and managing addiction.

The Harm Reduction program at Sound Times has seen some changes over the past year. Sound Times members were looking for information about how psych meds and street drugs interact - information that is important for managing an addiction. GAMM (Gaining Autonomy Through My Medication) is now part of the harm reduction program because of the strong overlap between addiction and other mental health issues. *Packing It In* is another Sound Times program that takes a quality of life harm reduction approach. Sound Times hosts a facilitated support group for active smokers who may or may not want to quit smoking but are interested in exploring financial, social, nutritional, and other aspects of managing their smoking habit. (Nadine shared a helpful nutritional tip for smokers: Esther-C combined with calcium and taken at night may help to reduce the negative health effects.)

Nadine has observed a need for wellness-focused services for people dealing with substance abuse. Sound Times addresses this gap through the wellness dimension of their harm reduction program. This initiative

includes the Herb Garden Collective and a Relaxation Group that teaches breathing and meditation techniques. The Herb Garden Group is currently working on producing an Herbal Reference Guide.

Nadine explained that many members know where to go for safer drug use support but do not have adequate access to resources concerning quality of life issues such as employment, education, recreation, social networks and nutrition. Nutritional support, for instance, is an important and often neglected issue for users during and between drug runs and as an ongoing problem for long-time users. The mind-body connection gets disrupted by the numbing effect that addiction can produce, especially during a drug run (bender or binge) and this can lead to losing track of nutritional health.

Sound Times is interested in developing the Harm Reduction Program further by creating a peer support list-serve (on-line message board) for people who are dealing with both addiction and other mental health problems (“concurrent disorder”). Nadine believes that an on-line list of resources would be helpful too because it would provide outreach to substance users who are not Sound Times members and who may be isolated from support communities. Nadine explained that many consumer/survivors use on-line resources for research, connection and support.

I asked Nadine for the most important ideas she would like to share with our readers about harm reduction and substance use. Her message is that addiction is manageable. It is not your whole life and there are ways of managing it that are self-empowering. By accessing good quality information you can create your own plan, one that works for you, based on your experience and needs.

Sound Times Support Services
Harm Reduction at Sound Times
280 Parliament St.

<http://www.soundtimes.com/>

To contact Nadine Reid please call 416-979-1700 x504.

Colleen

Newsbytes

Health Canada Product Warning. Health Canada has released a warning to consumers about a smoking-cessation aid product called Champix, manufactured by Pfizer. They report that although Champix can be effective for quitting smoking some people have reported adverse effects. While it is not clear whether Champix is the cause of the depressive symptoms those taking it should be aware of the risk and should stop taking the drug immediately if such concerns arise. (OTTAWA - Quit-smoking aid may cause depression: Health Canada. Canwest News Service. Tuesday, January 06, 2009. nationalpost.com).

New online recovery program for people with addictions. Paul Radkowski of the American Counseling Association released a 6-month online recovery program on January 2, 2009. It is available 24/7 and includes video sessions, weekly emails from Radkowski, and homework. The first 3 months is \$15 (U.S.) or pay what you can. The next 3 months are \$149/month (U.S.). Radkowski hopes the program will provide an anonymous treatment option and that it will be useful for people who do not seek treatment due to stigma. For details about the program visit liferecoveryprogram.com. (“Online help for addicts toiling with resolutions”. Debra Black, Staff Reporter, Toronto Star, January 1, 2009. <http://www.healthzone.ca/health/article/560514>).

Scientists discover honeybees and humans have similar reactions to cocaine. Australian scientists have discovered that the judgment of both honeybees and humans are affected by cocaine. Published by the Australian National University, the University of Illinois and Australia’s Macquarie University, the study reports, “the cocaine-induced honey bees “waggle danced” much more enthusiastically than other bees and seemed to experience the same addictive pleasures as humans.” When the bees go “cold turkey” it affects their ability to learn, which is similar to what happens to humans. (“Honey bees get buzzed”. Pauline Askin. SYDNEY - The Globe and Mail, Science, Tuesday, December 30, 2008. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20081229.wbeescope1229/BNStory/Science/>).

Contents

Doing It for
Ourselves
Page 1

Newsbytes
Page 2

Wish List
Page 3

C/S
Information
Session
Page 3

Job Postings
Page 3 - 5

Announcements
Page 5 - 6

Places To Go...
Pages 7 - 9

My Eyeglasses
Page 10

Wish List

We have received requests for a microwave that measures approximately 19" wide, 12" deep and up to 22" tall; a toaster or toaster oven; pots and pans and a Hepa Air Filter. We have received donations of 2 cookbooks and a set of 60 recipes. If you can fulfill any of these requests, have something to donate or would like to make a request for something, please call us at 416-595-2882 or email us at csinfo@camh.net.

C/S Information Session

Stay tuned for the location and date of our upcoming February 2009 C/S Information Session on ODSP. This will be an opportunity to learn more about ODSP from several experts and to have your questions answered by people who really know what they are talking about.

Job Postings

Advanced Notice of Opportunities to work with the Psychiatric Patient Advocacy Office (PPAO)

- PPAO will soon be recruiting on-call Rights Advisers for several openings in their community-based Rights Advice Service.
- Please check their website at <http://www.ppaogov.on.ca/> for postings which will appear in January 2009.

Join us for Career Week at our Employment Resource Centre St. Stephen's Community House

January 19th - January 23rd Speakers Series:

- Apprentices
- Hiring process in Retail
- Pardons and Waiver
- How to get a Government Job
- Employment Trends
- Academic Upgrading
- Services for Foreign Trained Professionals

St. Stephen's Employment Programs
1415 Bathurst Street, Ground Floor
(Just one block south of St. Clair Ave West)

For further schedule details please call 416-531-4631 or email infoETC@ststephenshouse.com.

WoodGreen Community Services & Habitat Services Seeks Peer Leaders

Position Title: Peer Leader (up to 5 positions available)
Program: Tenant Education & Outreach Project
Project Length: January 2009 - March 31st, 2009

You will be given an hourly honorarium to compensate you for your time.

POSITION SUMMARY

This position involves working directly with the Tenant Outreach Support Worker from WoodGreen Community Services. The Peer Leader will assist WoodGreen staff in carrying out inspections in Habitat's rooming and boarding houses, prepping units that need to be sprayed, and educating other tenants about bedbugs.

QUALIFICATIONS

- strong interpersonal skills
- able to interact with a variety of different people
- good time management skills
- punctual
- good observational skills
- willingness to learn
- good communication skills
- prior knowledge of bedbugs an asset

Contact Elaine @ 416-469-5211 x1132

Although a specific deadline for receiving applications has not been set, please apply as early as possible.

Peer Worker Application Form for the Habitat Services & WoodGreen Bedbug Project Fax: 416-537-2894

1. Full Name: _____
2. Contact number: _____

3. Are you available to work daytime shifts up to 4 hours each? Y N
4. Are you available for daytime work from January 2009 to March 31 2009? Y N
5. Are you able to pick up heavy materials, boxes, furniture, etc? (about 20-50 pounds) Y N
6. Are you willing to work in an environment with bed bugs (with all the provided safety garments & tools provided by WoodGreen)? Y N
7. Do you have any past work or volunteer experience, if so please list:

8. Why are you interested in this position of Peer Worker with the Bedbug Program?

The Gerstein Crisis Centre Seeks Relief Staff

- Relief Staff is required for the **Community Crisis Worker** position at the Gerstein Centre.
- The Centre provides services to adults living in the City of Toronto and the City of York who have psychiatric problems and are in crisis. We are a non-medical, community-based agency and use a client-centered approach.
- The Centre operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the shifts are 12 hours, beginning at 8:30 am and 8:30 pm.
- Relief staff are involved in all aspects of the Centre, answering crisis calls on the telephone, providing support and crisis intervention to people in their homes, in the community or staying at the Centre.

Qualified candidates should have:

- at least two years experience in community mental health and crisis intervention or experience in a related field.
- a thorough knowledge of community service agencies in Toronto and familiarity with the Directory of Community Services in Metropolitan Toronto (the 'Blue Book').
- demonstrated capability to be flexible and to work under pressure.
- good written and verbal communication skills.
- a valid Ontario driver's license and a Class F license (or be willing to obtain one).

Please note:

The position will involve shift work including overnights, weekends and holidays, depending on your availability. We are particularly looking for individuals available to work Monday through Friday days and evenings. Consumers/survivors from the psychiatric system, members of ethno-racial communities and Native Canadians are encouraged to apply.

Please send resumes to:

Selection Committee
Gerstein Crisis Centre
100 Charles Street East
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 1V3
Fax: 416-929-1080

Email: <mailto:jobs@gersteincentre.org>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Inclusion of an announcement is *not* an endorsement of the views of any organization or individual.

Call for Submissions Revue Cinema's 6th Drop Your Shorts Film Festival

- All types of shorts (15 minutes and less)
- Submission Deadline: Saturday, January 24, 2009 from noon to 1:30 pm.
- \$10 Registration Fee
- \$2.00 Admission Fee to Screening which will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2009
- 400 Roncesvalles Ave. 3 Blocks South of the intersection of Bloor St. and Dundas St. West

Visit RevueCinema.ca or call 416-531-9950 or email <mailto:rental@revuecinema.ca>.

2009 RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Voices from the Street, a collective of individuals who use their personal experiences with homelessness and poverty to educate the public and push for change, is looking to recruit new members.

YOU GET:

- 12 weeks of intensive training in public speaking, leadership, conflict resolution, diversity issues, and facilitation
- A small cash honorarium of \$60 per week for participating
- A TTC Metropass
- A hearty lunch on the days you are training
- A connection to others who have similar experiences and a desire for change.

YOU GIVE:

- Your time (every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm from March 31st to June 18th)
- A desire to speak openly and publicly about your personal experiences with homelessness and poverty
- An ability to work well with others and a respect for diversity
- A passion for social justice and a desire for change
- Your leadership skills back to your community.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Voices from the Street, please submit a letter (legibly written or typed) detailing why you would like to join, what you feel you would bring to the group, any leadership experience you have, and details about your previous or current involvement in the community. Letters should be submitted by February 27th, 2009 to:

VOICES FROM THE STREET
C/O ONTARIO COUNCIL OF ALTERNATIVE BUSINESSES
1499 QUEEN STREET WEST, Suite #203
TORONTO, ON M6R 1A3
FAX: 416-504-8063
E-MAIL: speakersbureau@bellnet.ca

For those interested in more information, Information Sessions will be held on February 18th at 1:30 pm at the Gerstein Centre (100 Charles Street East) and on February 10th at 1:30 pm at the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (1499 Queen Street West, Suite 203). Attendance at these sessions is encouraged, but not mandatory. TTC tokens will be available.

EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL PRESENTS

Have you ever received services at CAMH or elsewhere in the community? Are you a psychiatric consumer or survivor or a person who has had substance use issues? If this describes you and you want to make a difference, come to a meeting at the CAMH site you attended, and/or come to our Annual General Meeting. Give the Empowerment Council direction and elect a representative for the coming year, or run to be a rep yourself for your site or for the community.

Site Meeting Times and Places:

250 College Street – Monday, January 12, 2009 – 5:00 pm in Room 801
1001 Queen Street – Tuesday, January 20, 2009 – 3:00 pm in Room 2066
33 Russell Street – Tuesday, January 20, 2009 – 5:30 pm in Room 2062
60 White Squirrel Way – Thursday, January 22, 2009 – 5:30 pm in Room 115

The Annual General Meeting:

1001 Queen Street West – Tuesday, January 27, 2009 – 5:30 pm in the Cafeteria
Refreshments and \$6.00 transportation fee will be provided.

For more information please contact Beth Jacob at 416-535-8501 x6837 or email beth_Jacob@camh.net.

PLACES TO GO... PEOPLE TO SEE...

Free and Low-Cost Events for January 15 - January 31

Art/Exhibits

Wednesdays from 6 to 8:30 pm. Fall/Winter 2009. **Art Gallery of Ontario**. 317 Dundas Street West. Call 416-979-6648 or visit www.ago.net. FREE

Open daily from 10 am – 6 pm. Opens Sunday, January 4 from 10am to 6 pm. **New Directions In Drawing: Kingnait (Cape Dorset)**. The Museum of Inuit Art presents thirteen innovative drawings by younger generation Cape Dorset artists including Annie Pootogook, Shuvina Ashoona, and Kavavaow Mannomee. The newest generation of Cape Dorset graphic artists both follow and diverge from the Inuit artists that came before them. Exploring themes as diverse as landscape, social problems and portraiture, as well as more traditional themes, a broad range of styles is represented from high realism to near- abstraction. Museum of Inuit Art. 207 Queen's Quay West. Call 416-640-1571 or visit www.miamuseum.ca. Adults \$6, Student/Senior \$5, Children under 5 are free.

Comedy

January 25, 2009 at 8 pm. **Monkey Toast: The Improvised Talk Show**. Canadian Comedy Award Winner. Featuring David Shore, Colin Mochrie, Lisa Merchant, Jan Caruana, Sandy Jobin-Bevans, and others. Gladstone Ballroom. 1214 Queen St. West. Visit monkeytoast.com or gladstonehotel.com. PWYC

Festival/Celebration

January 25 from 12 – 5 pm. **Chinese New Year Celebration**. Chinese New Year 2009 – The Year of the Ox. Displays, shows and authentic Chinese food. Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto. Multi-purpose Hall. 5183 Sheppard Ave. East. Call 416-292-9293 or email info@cccgt.org or visit <http://www.cccgt.org>. FREE and open to the general public.

Film/Movies/Video

Ongoing. **The Revue Cinema**. Voted the best repertory cinema in NOW magazine 2008. Films showing in January include *Rachel Getting Married*, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, *JCVD*, *Man on Wire*, *Twilight*, *Madagascar 2*, and *Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. 400 Roncesvalles Ave. 3 Blocks South of the intersection at Bloor and Dundas West. Call 416-531-9950 or email rental@revuecinema.ca or visit revuecinema.ca/now_playing for details. Sunday Matinees are \$5.00 for everyone (including non-members). Admission for children and for Seniors is always \$5.00.

Friday, January 16 at 6 pm. **Friday Night at the Movies**. *Kung Fu Panda* (2008). 92 minutes. Rated PG. Toronto Public Library. Parkdale Branch. 1303 Queen St. West. Call 416-393-7686 or visit www.torontopubliclibrary.ca. FREE

January 21 at 2 pm. **Wednesday Afternoons at the Movies**. Adult and Older Adults Program. *Best Years of Our Lives*. 1946. 2 hours, 48 minute classic film about WWII vets who return home and try to pick up the threads of their lives. Winner of 7 Academy Awards. Toronto Public Library. Beaches Branch. 2161 Queen St. East. Call 416-393-7703. FREE

January 28 at 2 pm. **Wednesday Afternoons at the Movies**. Adult and Older Adults Program. *Tess*. 1980. 2 hours, 50 minutes. Based on Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Toronto Public Library. Beaches Branch. 2161 Queen St. East. Call 416-393-7703. FREE

Music

January 16 at 2 pm. **Beethoven Kuerti: 5-Part Lecture Series**. The third lecture in a series of five 90-minute lecture-demonstrations, each dedicated to one of the five Beethoven Piano Concertos, presented

by the internationally acclaimed Beethoven interpreter Anton Kuerti. As one of the most remarkable pianists of our time, Mr. Kuerti's great musicality and profound stylistic knowledge of German classical composers are respected world-wide and have made his performances exemplary and memorable. He has recorded all five concertos with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and continues to receive rave reviews for his concerto performances with orchestras around the globe. The Royal Conservatory. TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning. 273 Bloor Street West. Call 416-408-2824. FREE

January 25 from 4 – 7 pm. **The Songwriter's Expo**. Featuring Bunmi Adeoye, Laura Belyea and James Carroll. Funded by the Toronto Arts Council and the Songwriters Association of Canada, and sponsored by the Cadillac Lounge and Long & McQuade, the Songwriters' Expo is a showcase in its own league, designed for Toronto's multi-layered music community. Held on a monthly basis and always on a Sunday, it provides a welcome opportunity for both established and rising new performers to unveil their work in a creative, synergistic environment. Cadillac Lounge. 1296 Queen Street West. Call 416-536-7717 or email info@songwritersexpo.com or visit www.songwritersexpo.com. PWYC

Thursday, January 15 at noon. Canadian Opera Company. Dance Series: A Triple Threat Cabaret. Recent graduates from the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts. Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. 145 Queen St. W. 416-363-8231. FREE

Thursday, January 15 at 12:10 pm. University of Toronto Faculty of Music. **Thursdays at Noon – Flute, viola and percussion**. Works by Bach, Ravel, Luedeke, Colgrass, Parker. Walter Hall. Edward Johnson Building. 80 Queen's Park. 416-978-3744. FREE

Thursday, January 15 at 12:15 pm. Metropolitan United Church. **Emma Elkinson, flute; Fiona Jane Wood, piano**. 56 Queen St. E. Call 416-363-0331 x26. FREE

Saturday, January 17 at 7:30 pm. **Music for Women's Voices**. Works by Hildegard of Bingen, Bridget of Sweden, Leonin, Dufay, also Gregorian chant. Schola Magdalene. Church of St. Mary Magdalene. 477 Manning Ave. Call 416-531-7955. PWYC

Sunday, January 18 at 4:30 pm. Christ Church Deer Park. **Jazz Vespers: Nancy Walker Trio**. 1570 Yonge St. Call 416-920-5211. FREE or PWYC.

Monday, January 19 at 7 pm. Riverdale Youth Singers. **Chillout**. Songs for a winter's night, including ambient and electronic music. St. John's Presbyterian Church. 415 Broadview Ave. Call 416-875-1587. FREE

January 20, 21, and 23 at 7:30 pm. University of Toronto Faculty of Music. **New Music Festival: Student Composers Concert**. Works by graduate student composers. Walter Hall. Edward Johnson Building. 80 Queen's Park. Call 416-978-3744. FREE

Thursday, January 22 at 7:30 pm. **Nexus – Back to the Future**. Improvisations by Nexus. University of Toronto Faculty of Music. New Music Festival. Walter Hall. Edward Johnson Building. 80 Queen's Park. Call 416-978-3744. FREE

Photography



Now until January 31, Tuesday through Saturday from 11 am – 6 pm. **Mike Disfarmer: Vintage Prints**. Capturing the raw honesty of his subjects in his sublimely lit photos, Mike Disfarmer is one of the world's greatest portraitists. This exhibit offers a unique glimpse into Depression Era Middle America. Stephen Bulger Gallery. 1026 Queen Street West. Call 416-504-0575 or email info@bulgery.com or visit www.bulgery.com. FREE

Workshops

Monday, January 26 at 1 pm. The Older LGBTTO Resource Centre. Rebecca Gower, a homeopathic physician and former colleague at the 519 will be with us to discuss **Homeopathy** and the ways it can assist different health conditions that affect seniors. Light refreshments available. FREE



Thursday, January 15, 22, and 29 from 6:15 - 8 pm. **High Park Speakers Weekly Meeting.** Improve your presentation public speaking skills at Toastmasters. Toronto Public Library. [Annette Street Library](#). 145 Annette St. Email info@highpark.freetoasthost.net or visit highpark.freetoasthost.net. FREE

The North York Women's Centre Presents:

- Saturday, January 24 from 3 - 6 pm. Follow up date: Saturday, February 21, 5 – 6 pm. **Following Your Passion.** Do you have a start-up business idea in mind? Are you ready to find a career you are passionate about? If this sounds like you then join us for this fun and inspiring workshop. You will walk out of the workshop with 2-3 new options for a career or start-up business as well as the commitment to make positive changes in your life. The North York Women's Centre. 201 Caribou Road. FREE
- Saturday, January 31 from 2 – 3:30 pm. **Women's Health and Acupuncture.** An information session on the uses of acupuncture in women's health. Acupuncture focuses on underlying causes of illness and uses a holistic approach to wellness. The North York Women's Centre. 201 Caribou Road. FREE

Note: Tokens are provided for women who otherwise would not be able to attend the workshops. Child minding may be available with advance notice. To register call the NYWC at 416-781-0479 between the hours of 10 and 4 pm, Monday - Thursday or use our online registration form at [Workshops](#). Email: info@nywc.org.

January 13 and January 31 at 2 pm. **Flurrious.** Modern Times Stage Company presents a flurry of activities throughout January.

- Tuesday, January 13 at 2 pm. **Backstage Access.** Inside the rehearsal hall with Director Soheil Parsa and the cast of Hallaj. Theatre Direct at the Wynchwood Barns, 601 Christie St. FREE
- Saturday, January 31 at 2 pm. Goossun Art-illery. **Work Demonstration & Forum on Theatre Anthropology** with visiting Artistic Director Vahid of Goossun Art-illery and local participating artists. Lower Ossington Theatre, 100A Ossington Avenue. FREE

Call Sue Balint at 416-214-1428 or email info@moderntimesstage.com or visit www.moderntimesstage.com.

Writers/Books

Tuesdays to Thursdays from 10 am – 6 pm. Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm. Open 4 days a week.

Children's Book Bank. Their website says: "The space is safe, warm and inviting and is intended to create a wonderful oasis for the children; a place where they can relax and experience the magic of books and enjoy reading." The Children's Book Bank offers high quality new and gently used children's books for infants and children up to 12 years old. 350 Berkeley St. (at Gerrard St.). Call 416-922-7323 or email info@childrensbookbank.com or visit <http://www.childrensbookbank.com/>. FREE

Tuesday, January 27 from 7 – 10 pm. **CANADIAN WRITERS IN PERSON.** A Series of Free Public Readings. David Chariandy's debut novel *Soucouyant* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007) was a finalist for five prizes including the 2007 Governor-General's Award, the 2008 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Best First Book (Canada and the Caribbean) and the 2008 Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize (B.C.). York University. Accolade West Building. Room 109. Call Professor Gail Vanstone at 416-736-2100 x33957 or email stars@atkinson.yorku.ca or visit <http://www.atkinson.yorku.ca/cdnwriters>. FREE and open to the public.

C/S Words to the Wise

This edition, the last word goes to Laura Lesser of Toronto.

My Eyeglasses

By: Laura Lesser

“Oh my gosh, I lost the left lens of my glasses!” I did not realize that the left lens of my glasses had popped out until they felt too light when I took them off. My daughter and I searched the apartment with a fine toothcomb to no avail. It was time for an eye check up any way, so I called the optometrist beside Lenscrafters at the Eaton Centre to make an appointment. The appointment was scheduled for the next day at 4 p.m.

Dr. Chung was the name of the optometrist who assessed my eyes. She was very professional while she examined my eyes. From what I could see (ha! ha!) she gave me a thorough eye exam and sent me home with a new prescription. I could not look for new eyeglasses that day because the stores were closing in the Eaton Centre. I decided to get my eyeglasses from Lenscrafters because they have one-hour service to fill prescriptions.

The next day, I went to the Lenscrafters at the Eaton Centre to look for a new pair of glasses. When I produced the form that ODSP gave me to pay for my glasses, the optician who was serving had a complete change of her demeanor. I was told that they did not have any eyeglasses for people who were on ODSP. Several people that I know got their eyeglasses there who were on ODSP. The same lady told me that I might want to go to Sears Optical Department. The lady at Sears Optical at the Eaton Centre was very dismissive when she told me that I might want to go to Lenscrafters and see what they have. I told her that I had already visited Lenscrafters, and that I felt stigmatized because she made no attempt to help me. Another day of wearing my eyeglasses with only the right lens.

I spoke to the manager at the Eaton Centre Lenscrafters and he apologized to me when I told him how I felt. I spoke to the manager at the Lenscrafters at Dufferin Mall, and told him that I could only spend \$89.99 on frames for my glasses if I wanted ODSP to pay for them. The man on the phone told me to come down and see what he had in stock.

I went down to the Lenscrafters at Dufferin Mall and I was greeted by one of the opticians. She seemed not to know what I was talking about when I presented my form from ODSP to pay for my glasses. She went to one of the men in the back of the store and he came to help me. I told the man that I was feeling so ashamed because it seemed that the two opticians in the Eaton Centre did not want to accommodate me. I was in such a mood that I contemplated writing to my MPP Cherie DiNovo about my experience the day before. He showed me all kinds of glasses that were out of the price range that I had told him. Finally, he showed me a pair of glasses that were \$99.99. I asked him if he could drop the \$10 difference between what ODSP pays and what the glasses were worth. The man who served me went to the manager of the store and he said that they could not help me.

The manager, Tony, of the store came to me and told me that he would see what he could do for me. I asked him if I could pay the \$10 difference in cash. I got out the \$10 plus \$1.30 for the difference in tax. As I got my money out, the man told me to put my money away and he would see what he could do for me. He was very courteous and I did not feel stigmatized having ODSP pay for my glasses.

When I came back to get my glasses, they were ready and I did not have to walk around Toronto with only my right lens in my old pair of glasses. I got my new glasses within 2 hours because I wear bifocals and that requires more time than single lens glasses. I felt like a valued customer instead of a stigmatized ODSP recipient. I will continue doing business with Tony because he was very helpful and courteous to me. Thank you Tony.