

Life after a psychiatric break, an ongoing struggle with bipolar and borderline personality disorders, and years in psychiatric boarding homes can estrange a person from hopes of any sort of normal life. Gayle Chapman has been through this experience and is recovering. She has her own apartment and zips on her motor scooter to a University music course. She's a great person to know. She is also putting back into the system, sitting on numerous mental health related committees with an ambitious program of her own.

Gayle instigated this project and persisted, running the program out of her pocket, (and a shallow pocket it was) for the first year. CMHA then helped out with expenses and now her initiative is receiving support from the Capital Regional District.

Gayle has recently been nominated "Woman of Distinction" by the Y and received awards from CMHA - BC Division and CMHA locally, "Volunteer of the Year", for her efforts.

*Bruce*

## THE RECREATIONAL AND VISITING PROGRAM (For Residents of Mental Health Boarding Homes)

Three years ago, based on an experience I'd had with a friend while I was living in residential care, I established the Recreational and Visiting Program (R&VP). The aim of this program was to provide an opportunity to gradually involve a resident of a mental health boarding home in community activities and to help them become more comfortable in being away from the residential setting. While in a one-to-one interaction with a volunteer, hopefully the resident will develop a positive relationship with the general community.

The R&VP grew out of someone's love and sharing with me while I was in a mental health boarding home. This person came into my life, quietly and without an inner motive, and transformed my lonely, isolated experiences of the care home into a vision of hope. She shared with me, by doing recreational activities, a sense of self worth and future and, because of her unselfish involvement with me, I grew in confidence and skill and was eventually able to move out into the community into a residence all my own. After a couple of years adjusting to community life, I realized what a legacy my friend had given to me--a legacy that I truly needed to share with other residents. So, I developed the R&VP with the hope that many lives would have the opportunity to be touched by another individual in the way my life was touched.

The R&VP is funded by the Capital Health Region. Funding covers, at the very least, the activities the volunteer shares with the resident and, at the very most, bus passes and stipends.

We are always looking for volunteers and for additional funding for the program. If you are interested in either volunteering or making a donation to the program, please contact me, Gayle Chapman, at the Consumers' Communications Centre (the old Regional Mental Health Office) at 952-4319 (Anne Bowles) or drop in to 100-3200 Shelbourne Street most Wednesdays or Thursdays between 11:00 and 2:00 pm. Messages can be left at this number at any time during regular office hours. I will return your call as soon as possible.

As part of the volunteer program, we have a monthly Coffee Hour where the volunteers can get together and exchange information, ideas and experiences. Once every third month there is an educational lecture or video along with a discussion. Also, there is an Orientation held twice a year for new volunteers, providing them with information about mental illness and about time and stress management skills, to name a few.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you would like a brochure or have a question that needs answering, please feel free to contact me.



Sincerely,  
Gayle  
Chapman,  
Coordinator