

From August 17 to September 13, the public was able to support SSO by making a donation at more than 635 LCBO locations throughout Ontario. SSO promoted the campaign over social media, and also used it as a vehicle to tell people about the realities of schizophrenia. Using the hashtag #getthefacts, SSO told followers of our social media channels about what happens when people face both mental illness and stigma. Here are some of the facts shared over social media:

- Between 40 to 50 per cent of people with schizophrenia live with their families.
- Less than 20 per cent of people living with schizophrenia are employed in the competitive marketplace.
- People living with schizophrenia will occupy between 1 in 12 hospital beds in Canada.
- Only 49 per cent of Canadians they would socialize with a friend who has a serious mental illness.

Mary Alberti, SSO's CEO said the campaign "draws attention to one of the largest challenges people living with schizophrenia face — discrimination. In addition to the debilitating symptoms of the illness, stigma and discrimination affects the way people with schizophrenia live every day and can be a barrier to everything from education and housing to employment and relationships."

SSO is grateful for the support we received and we will continue to talk about the realities of schizophrenia and psychosis through our education programs, counselling services, and the diverse array of channels that let us reach out and discuss these issues every single day.

**135,000
ONTARIANS
LIVE WITH
SCHIZOPHRENIA.
THEY ALSO LIVE WITH
DISCRIMINATION.**

DONATE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

COUNSELLING • SUPPORT • EDUCATION • RESEARCH



www.schizophrenia.on.ca

Campaign visual that appeared in over 635 LCBO stores

A REASON TO HOPE

Fall 2014



SSO PREPARES STUDENTS FOR THEIR FUTURE

Fall is an exciting time at SSO. It means a new group of students will be helping us to support families and individuals who live with schizophrenia and psychosis, while gaining the real world experience they'll need to move forward in their future careers. From intake where we help people in need of resources and services to data analysis and collaborating on new mental health policy, there are plenty of exciting opportunities at SSO. Below are some of the great students furthering their education at SSO this year.

Lili is a fourth year student in the joint York University-Seneca Rehabilitation program and is currently working in SSO's Programs department. Lili has been assisting with intake and registering clients for our Strengthening Families Together (SFT) group sessions. She's excited about the opportunity to work in a field she's passionate about, especially since it means having a tangible and lasting positive impact on the lives of others. "Growing up, I always saw myself doing something that helps people in some way. I developed an interest in mental health shortly after my brother's friend was diagnosed with schizophrenia," Lili says. Her aim is to reduce the stigma that's often associated with mental illness, and help people lead healthier and happier lives.



Lili Van wants to help others lead happier, healthier lives



Melody Lofti likes the learning opportunities for students

Melody works in SSO's Policy department. She is currently in her final year of the Master of Social Work program at the University of Toronto, and this is Melody's second placement with a mental health organization. "I wanted to gain experience that would add to what I was learning in school," Melody says. "I was seeking an organization that actively frames its work through social justice and anti-oppressive practice. After learning about SSO, its work, goals, and the learning opportunities available for students, I felt it would be the right fit for me." She is also engaged in coalition work, which helps her learn about advocacy and systems change. In the future, Melody hopes to work with refugees and immigrant communities to address the unique needs resulting from the trauma of persecution, forced migration, acculturation, and raising children who are negotiating various cultural expectations.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Iris Ball 2015

SSO's 11th annual Iris Ball will be taking place on March 4, 2015. It will be an evening of fine dining, entertainment and one-of-a-kind auction items. This promises to be a night to remember. Purchase your table or tickets now! Contact **Julie Kurta** at **416.449.6830 ext 228** or **jkurta@schizophrenia.on.ca**. Check the SSO website for further details.

E-newsletter

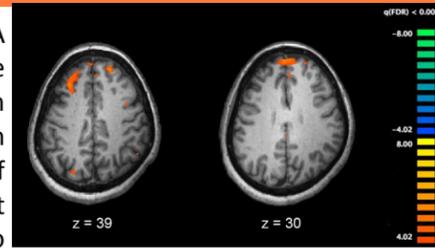
In an effort to be more environmentally aware and reduce waste, SSO is trying to distribute more electronic copies of its Reason To Hope newsletter. If you would like to receive an electronic version of this newsletter please email **paperless@schizophrenia.on.ca** and you will be added to our electronic mailing list. Help the environment and continue to find out what's new at SSO.

Get in touch with SSO

Have an important question about SSO or just want to know what we're up to? You can give us a call toll-free at **1.800.449.6367** or email us at **info@schizophrenia.on.ca**. You can also like and follow **Schizophrenia Society of Ontario** on Facebook or follow us on Twitter **@peace_of_minds**. Visit **www.schizophrenia.on.ca** for details on how to volunteer or donate to SSO.

NEW RESEARCH SPARKS DEBATE OVER SCHIZOPHRENIA

A recent debate has emerged over the exact nature of schizophrenia. A team of researchers from the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis released the results of a study showing that schizophrenia is in fact eight different disorders. The research team reported their results in the American Journal of Psychiatry. They were studying the interactions of different genes in relation to schizophrenia. The scientists have said that only by placing each of the genes into different groups were they able to understand their interactions and came to the conclusion that schizophrenia must be eight different disorders. The research was led by Robert Cloninger, whose team studied over 4000 people diagnosed with schizophrenia.



Is schizophrenia only one disease or many?

However, not everyone agrees with the results. A group of 10 geneticists published a public declaration on the website Genomes Unzipped: Public Personal Genomics stating, “We believe that the authors have not included important alternative explanations – if we are correct, then the major conclusions of this paper are invalidated.” They argue that certain issues around the study, such as its ability to be replicated, selection of samples, and even whether or not the research properly factored in the sex of the participants are at issue.

Cloninger and his colleagues published a lengthy response, highlighting the interdisciplinary approach of the Washington University study and arguing that the novel methodology may have been unusual to the critics — especially those specializing only in genetics — but that it rested on sound principles.

It's not entirely clear if this matter is completely resolved, but what it shows is that we are in an exciting time in schizophrenia research, where new understandings and interpretations are being explored, and that the gateway to more effective treatments is slowly but surely being opened.

SSO PROFILES: TAMI AFRIAT'S JOURNEY OF INDEPENDENCE



Tami Afriat credits SSO with helping her recover

Tami Afriat is an entrepreneur. She runs her own home business in what she describes as her path to financial independence. Tami is proud of her success — happy to overcome the discrimination and stigma that too often creates barriers for people living with schizophrenia.

Tami was first diagnosed with schizophrenia while attending York University. She was just 20 years old. She believed her professors and classmates were conspiring against her. Through York University's counselling services, she was referred to CAMH and received treatment for three months. Tami was determined to finish what she started at university and graduated with an Honours BA in English and Women's Studies. Tami eventually married and had a daughter, but had relapses due to the stress related to her past experiences with schizophrenia.

Although she was again admitted to several hospitals, she didn't get the help she needed until she phoned SSO. Tami was able to access one-on-one counselling and attend hour long sessions for over half a year through one of SSO's own counsellors. She credits these sessions with helping her significantly in her recovery journey.

“Through these sessions I learned a lot about communication, and was able to work through many problems that had been with me for years. I'm grateful for the help I received from SSO,” Tami says.

Tami has overcome many barriers to work, including not being hired — or being let go — simply because she lives with schizophrenia. Through a government program and being granted exclusive rights to a specific brand of electric toothbrush, Tami now runs a successful business online. She receives significant support from her husband of 10 years and loves being a mother to their five year old daughter. She now shares her story of illness and recovery to help others facing similar challenges. Most of all, she shares it to give back to SSO — who gave her just the help she needed along the way.



SSO MAKES AN IMPACT ON WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY



World Suicide Prevention Day took place on September 10

On September 10, SSO commemorated World Suicide Prevention Day — a day to reflect on how we can better support people in crisis and ensure that people living with mental illness get the help they need.

This year's theme was “Suicide Prevention: One World Connected.” More information is available on the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) website. SSO offered resources for support including its Ask The Expert line, which connects families and individuals living with mental illness to vital support services.

These resources were shared over Facebook and Twitter where we received a significant response from people who viewed it. The posting was shared over 33 times and was seen by over 4000 people. This became a great opportunity to showcase the diverse range of support services available to people living with mental illness within Ontario. System navigation is often the biggest challenge — many of the people who call or email SSO are looking to be connected to the right services.

World Suicide Prevention Day was a great opportunity to highlight the challenges faced by people who live with mental illness. Sharing information is the best way to break down barriers and challenge the stigma that prevents people from seeking help.

DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS – A RESOURCE FOR NORTHERN ONTARIO

There is small but passionate group of volunteers who have been with SSO since the very beginning. Based in Sudbury, these five people take time out of their busy schedules to provide support for individuals and families who live with schizophrenia. One of them is Evelyn Fillier, who has seen the evolution of the mental health system and its treatment of people who live with schizophrenia. “I've definitely seen improvements,” says Evelyn. “The healthcare system is now doing more to meet the needs of our younger population by identifying people earlier to make sure they get treatment faster.”

Evelyn, a registered nurse with Health Sciences North has found that her professional experience has also been beneficial to her volunteer work at SSO. “My work allows me to bring a lot to the table and I am able to share information that families are looking for such as on new research, medications and services,” she says.

The group holds monthly meetings with volunteers, individuals living with schizophrenia and their family members, and sometimes professionals from other mental health organizations and service providers. There is usually an educational component which includes a guest speaker who gives a presentation and provides useful information to those in attendance. In addition to these meetings, volunteers connect people to mental health services, meet with family members in the community, and hold an annual spring dinner to raise funds to support SSO's research program. Public awareness and education are crucial and Evelyn is hopeful that more people in the community will volunteer and become a valuable resource for those who need help. “I hope we will always be able to offer support to people who need it,” she says. “And by tapping into the next generation who can continue this great work, we will be able to.”

If you're near Sudbury and would like to volunteer, contact SSO at info@schizophrenia.on.ca



Volunteers Brenda Pajunen and Evelyn Fillier (left)