

# Our Voice



News from NSHA Mental Health and Addictions, Central Zone (Halifax area, Eastern Shore, and West Hants)

## Meet Nicole Robinson, BCBA

Submitted by Patricia Dauphinee



Our Dual Diagnosis Program welcomed Board Certified Behavioural Analyst (BCBA) Nicole Robinson to the team in December 2015, to work directly with patients living with an intellectual disability and a mental illness. Dual Diagnosis has an inpatient component, Emerald Hall,

and the Community Outreach Assessment Support and Treatment Team, better known as COAST.

A BCBA is a practitioner in applied behaviour analysis (ABA). *"Applied Behaviour Analysis is the process of systematically applying interventions based upon the principles of learning theory to improve socially significant behaviours to a meaningful degree, and to demonstrate that the interventions employed are responsible for the improvement in behaviour."* (Baer, Wolf & Risley, 1968)

Robinson explains that this simply means how we learn. ABA is a science about and how our environment and our response to behaviour interact to influence change.

Originally from Ontario, Robinson earned her undergraduate degree in speech and language sciences from Brock University in St. Catharines (Ontario). "My grandfather had a stroke and lost the ability to communicate effectively which sparked my interest in this field", she says. "I also really enjoyed working with kiddos with special needs, and a large void when you have a special need is the lack of ability to communicate which can lead to challenging behaviours." She went on to become a communicative disorders assistant and moved to Nova Scotia to work with the speech pathology team at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital.

She started working closely with children with autism and became interested in communication

and behaviour. This led her to pursue a Masters in applied behaviour analysis. "I did my course work online through Ball State University (Indiana), and then I completed the required 1,500 independent fieldwork hours with a BCBA supervisor located in Halifax. It was really challenging because there was only one BCBA in Halifax at the time," explains Robinson.

She saw the posting for her current position prior to starting her training and felt that there was a real need in Nova Scotia for this role. "Working with the unique population and dealing with the complex cases that the Dual Diagnosis Program serves sounded very interesting."

"I love working with the multidisciplinary team on Emerald Hall. Everyone comes to the table with a different perspective. My main role is observation and interviewing. I work directly with the frontline staff trying to determine the inhibitors to serving our clients, and often times it will be a challenging behaviour - either a skill or performance deficit. I do a lot of client observation and direct interviewing with staff to obtain information that we then use to form a behaviour-based plan", explains Robinson. "We learn what triggers may cause a client's behaviour and we try and prevent those triggers using a strategy called 'priming'. For example, if a client gets upset because mom's visit is delayed, we can prepare for that by giving the client lots of fun things to do before mom arrives. This will help the client learn the skill of waiting. If this is not effective, we can have some consequence strategies in place. We are teaching the client skills that they lack."

Robinson smiles as she talks about how motivated she is to be in a coaching role for staff. "I enjoy teaching and coaching others in ABA strategies. Our program is provincial in scope, and I'm excited to interact with colleagues across the province and provide training, mentorship and capacity building".

One of the things that she enjoys most is the interaction with the families/parents. "My role has



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# Meet Nicole Robinson, BCBA

continued from FRONT COVER

been really well received by family members. I'm happy to know that I'm helping their children and, at the same time, providing support and relief for them."

When not working, Robinson enjoys spending time with her fiancé Patrick and Angus, her 4 year-old black lab. They enjoy "stay"cations, visiting the many beaches in Nova Scotia and surfing.

"I am proud and excited to have been welcomed to NSHA Mental Health and Addictions, and to watch Nova Scotia grow in this field," she says. "It is motivating as a new staff member, to see that people stay for a long time in the program and are dedicated to seeing things grow and change. I'm excited to be a part of this growth and change!"

Robinson is also the co-owner of a small business, Reach Out Respite, an organization that provides therapeutic respite services for youth with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. They offer a break for caregivers and a valuable learning opportunity for participants. To learn more about Reach Out Respite, visit their [website](#).

# Remember and reflect

Submitted by Ruth Helliwell, RN, Willow Hall

On July 20<sup>th</sup>, Willow Hall hosted a celebration of the life of Joan Boniface.

Joan passed away unexpectedly a year ago on July 11, 2015. At the time of her death, she was the manager for Willow Hall, Sleep Lab, ECT and Seniors Mental Health Services.

Joan's children and grandchildren (shown at right) and colleagues joined together to honor Joan with the dedication of a new bench and dappled willow tree in our Wandering Garden.

It was with deep respect, as well as much sadness, that we gathered for the dedication. Respect for Joan's commitment to her family and work, her ever present level headedness and her unwavering dedication to all of the areas she managed, and sadness for having had to say goodbye far too soon.

A plaque, placed in the garden near the new tree, commemorates Joan's years of service at the Nova Scotia Hospital site. It reads, "Joan Boniface RN, 1987 - 2015, Remember and Reflect".





# Quality team in action: Crisis Services

Submitted by the NSHA Mental Health and Addictions Quality Council, Central Zone

The Crisis Quality Team includes representation from the following service areas: Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), Urgent Care, the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team (MHMCT) and the Short Stay Unit.

The chair of the Quality Team, **Matthew White**, provided an overview of the team's work at the May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Mental Health and Addictions Quality Council.

Some examples of the work shared are as follows:

- 1. Revision of the Brief Mental Health Assessment (BMHA):** A major focus of the past year has been to revise the assessment forms used by Crisis Services with the goal to make them more efficient to input information and improve the effectiveness of the flow of information across clinicians and services. New features include space for both the primary assessor and physician summary and plan, the suicide risk assessment is now embedded into the form, and it has been designed to discuss family involvement and ask for permission to contact them early on the care process.
- 2. Inter-Service Collaboration:** The Crisis Quality Team partnered with the Community Mental Health and Addictions Quality Team to improve collaboration between the Psychiatric Emergency Service (PES) and the Community Mental Health teams. This collaboration resulted in improved awareness of how the services function and the expectations of each when a patient is transitioning between the services.
- 3. Pilot of the Relapse Prevention Plan:** The Short Stay Unit took the initiative to pilot the new Relapse Prevention Plan on their unit. They found it to be an important addition to safety planning and they were able to embed it into their existing documentation package. Furthermore, patients found the form user friendly and clinicians felt it improved continuity of care and consistency when the patient was discharged to the community.

The Crisis Quality Team members are: **Matthew White (chair), Mary Pyche, Sue Perkins, Tom MacKay, Heika Sarty-Boutilier, Donna Methot, John Lillies, Lori Lake, and Cynthia Legacy-Turcotte.**

Thank you for the great work of this Quality Team and for sharing with the Quality Council. We will continue to learn and share our successes and challenges as we move forward in our collective efforts to improve quality of care across NSHA Mental Health and Addictions, Central Zone.

For more information, please contact **Laura Ankcorn**, quality leader, at [Laura.Ankcorn@nshealth.ca](mailto:Laura.Ankcorn@nshealth.ca).

## Experience survey results

The Patient and Family Experience Surveys were introduced to all service areas of NSHA Mental Health and Addictions, Central Zone (Halifax, Eastern Shore and West Hants areas) in the Fall of 2014. The first set of results are now available and cover the 18 month period ending March 31, 2016. [Read](#) an overview of results and recommendations for improvement, made by the Feed-



back and Experience Action Team (FEAT).

Each service area has also received results specific to their area and will work on improvement plans through their respective Quality Team. If you would like to view the results for your team, please contact your manager or **Laura Ankcorn**, quality lead, at [Laura.Ankcorn@nshealth.ca](mailto:Laura.Ankcorn@nshealth.ca).

Thank you to everyone who supported people to complete these surveys and provide us with this valuable feedback.



# It's not just bears who have consistent outcomes in the woods

Submitted by Katlyn Alcorn and Amanda Federink, therapeutic recreation students

As therapeutic recreation students, we are taught that recreation and leisure opportunities are a basic human right, that activities should be inclusive and that the concepts from our classes can be applied to any population. After our education, we are required to complete a 16-week internship under a certified therapeutic recreation specialist (CTRS) which is how two students, one from Ontario and the other from Saskatchewan, ended up in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

We applied, interviewed and moved our lives across the country to work in Acute Mental Health at the Abbie J. Lane. We both remember our interviews quite clearly and reflected on them the other day after speaking with our supervisors who asked, "How did you feel coming here? Did you have any pre-conceived ideas about it - specifically the camping trip?" Surprisingly, this is what we remember most from our interviews in late 2015. We heard about a camping trip and we couldn't wait to become a part of this incredible opportunity.



Of course, as therapeutic recreation students, we understood that the individuals we would be working with would be capable of attending camp, and keeping up with the daily living activities such as cooking and cleaning. However, many of the clients' family and friends were skeptical. Stigma around mental illness had made them question the abilities of the clients. We used the opportunity to teach the loved ones that they had nothing to worry about. This was our first real opportunity to advocate for our clients and reduce the stigma of mental illness.

Fast forward to early May 2016, it was time to go on the camping trip. We were excited and, at the same time, concerned that clients may not enjoy the activities that we had planned or the overall camping experience. Our supervisors had done this type of activity successfully in the past, but we were first time organizers. We were worried that our clients may have difficulty trusting us enough to go away with us - away from a safe place and a normal routine.

We had a group of seven clients who decided to trust us and attend camp. What an experience it turned out to be! We saw people come out of their shells, experience many "firsts" (including someone's first S'more) and make social connections. We learned that taking clients away from the hospital-setting for awhile can be one of the best things for them (in our opinion). Those who were initially shy, opened up with conversation, smiling and joking around.

When we returned from our trip, we reviewed the client satisfaction surveys concerning the trip and discussed the experience with some of the campers. We talked about the new skills that were learned, such as team work, social skills and having fun by participating in activities (e.g. building campfires, hiking and playing games). The results from the survey were unanimous - everyone had a great time. Although some people were nervous going into this trip, we all came out as a close-knit group who overcame fears and "firsts" (and a ridiculous number of blackflies).

The camping trip helped us learn more about the importance of building rapport and trust. We noticed when we returned that the clients who attended camp continued to be engaged, sought us out to ask about programming and we noticed an increase in their participation in recreational opportunities.

We are now embarking on our second camping trip with a new group of participants, and we can't wait to learn more about our campers and watch them interact with one another.

We both agree that our internship has been one of the greatest learning experiences of our lives, and we are so grateful to have the opportunity to spend our summer on the East Coast and participate in programs such as the Wilderness Wellness camping trip.



# Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia welcomes new board members and honors partners

Submitted by the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, community members joined the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia at The Nova Scotia Hospital site in Dartmouth for its 2015-16 Annual General Meeting.

The Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia Board of Trustees nominated and elected a new chair, Mike Elgie (Community Volunteer). Mike has served on the Foundation Board for three years. The former chair of the IWK Foundation Board, he brings extensive governance experience to the role.

We would also like to welcome the following new members:

- Alisa Alyward: Regional Vice President, RBC. Alisa leads a market which includes 15 retail stores in the HRM. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Mount Allison University and an Executive Masters of Business Administration from Saint Mary's.
- Faten Alshazly: Chief Creative Officer and Co-Founder of We Us Them. Faten is also a professor at Dalhousie University and NSCAD University. She was named one of Canada's 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network.
- Jennifer Simister: VP of Finance and Operations at STI Technologies Ltd, CPA, CA. Jennifer also serves on the Foundation's Finance & Audit Committee.

We were also pleased to acknowledge the service and dedication of retiring Board Member Barbara Hall (Community Volunteer).

The Mental Health Foundation presented Vision Awards to the following individuals and groups:

### Outstanding Volunteers

- Edward Ma: Edward has been a dedicated volunteer with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia since he first joined the Mental Health Foundation for HUGS day in 2014. He makes it a priority to take part in every event possible, taking on any task required with enthusiasm and energy.
- Madi Sutton: Madi first began volunteering with the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia when she was in grade 10. She brings compas-

sion and optimism to the cause through every event she takes part in.

### Partners in Our Vision

- The Windsor Foundation: Since 2010, the Windsor Foundation has supported mental health-care in Nova Scotia through quality of life programs for the most vulnerable. It has supported a variety of programs including baking and cooking, family activities, music therapy and gardening. This past fall, the Windsor Foundation extended its support of music therapy to vulnerable seniors in long-term care. The Enhanced Quality of Life Extramural Program: Bringing Music Therapy to Vulnerable Seniors in the Nursing Home Setting is a pilot program promoting accessibility for music in all nursing homes in Nova Scotia.
- Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia Grants Committee: This year, for the very first time, the Foundation launched a Quarterly Community Grants program. This required its dedicated committee members to go from scoring grants once a year, to five times a year. It also allowed the Foundation to award more grant funding and to become more proactive than ever before. The Foundation extends its thanks Committee Members Shawn Hiscott (Chair), Darrell Johnston, Mary Black, Shauna Blundon, Harvey Gilmour, Patricia MacArthur, Belinda Seagram, Nick Peters and Barbara Hall.

### Outstanding Achievement

- Matt and Rod Burgar: Teamed up with his father and agent, Rod Burgar, on February 19, 2016 for the Foundation's A Different Stage of Mind event, Matt took on the persona of Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan took away the Top Fundraiser Award with a final tally of over \$62,000!

Throughout the fundraising process leading up to the event, Matt and Rod were a dynamic duo: scouting large donations and practicing tirelessly. The Mental Health Foundation is so grateful for their efforts.

We look forward to a successful year in 2016-17! [View or download](#) the 2015-16 Community Report.



## Our people

### New staff

- James Barrett, RN - 6 Lane
- Christelle Boudreau, psychiatry resident
- Kelsey Brownridge, co-op student - ECFH
- Susan Butler, LPN - CTP
- Anne-Renee Charbonneau, secretary - Dart CMH
- Jennalee Cole, grad nurse (GN) - ECFH
- Meaghan Fullerton, Schools Plus MH clinician - Hants CMH
- Betsy Gallant, GN - 6 Lane
- Elizabeth Han, psychiatry resident
- Jessica Hodder, GN - 6 Lane
- Lisa Holt, RN - CTP
- Carley Lawrence, co-op nursing student - 7 Lane
- Kaleigh Lebel, co-op student - CTP
- Garrett Lynds, co-op nursing student - SSU
- Shannon MacAulay, GN - 7 Lane
- Gavrielle MacDonald, GN - Mayflower Unit
- Evan MacKay, GN - 6 Lane
- Rebecca MacKay, GN - Addictions ITP
- Gregory MacMullin, psychiatry resident
- Garrett Martin, co-op nursing student - Bed/Sack CMH
- Anoup Matthew-Peters, LPN - Emerald Hall
- Christine McClelland, psychiatry resident
- Rachel Miller, LPN - CTP
- Megan Perry, GN - Mayflower Unit
- Tyson Rizzardo, psychiatry resident
- Danielle Hwayeon Shin, RN - 7 Lane
- Chelcie Soroka, psychiatry resident
- Graham Stevenson, psychiatry resident
- Staci White, GN - ECFH
- Moira Wissink, GN - CTP



## Welcome to Dr. Olugbenga Alaba Williams

We welcome **Dr. Olugbenga Alaba Williams** as a full-time psychiatrist with Dual Diagnosis (Emerald Hall/COAST). Dr. Williams is a neuropsychiatrist with special interest in Intellectual Disabilities (ID). He has many years' experience working with patients with autistic spectrum disorder, dementia in people with ID, other complex and challenging behaviors in ID.

Dr. Williams completed his undergraduate degree in medicine with MBBS in Nigeria in 1994, and he holds a master of science degree (MSc) in Clinical Neuropsychiatry from The University of Birmingham, UK. He is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists UK (MRCPsych) and a member of the British Neuropsychiatric Association (BNPA), UK. He comes to our team with approximately 14 years' experience in psychiatry in the Republic of Ireland.

Dr. Williams is currently completing an MD/PhD program in Neuropsychiatry and research with the University of Limerick Ireland (Research Topic: Developing a bedside cognitive testing procedure for the efficient detection of cognitive impairment and delirium in everyday clinical settings).

Dr. Williams joins our team just as **Dr. Mai Riives** is retiring after her many years of dedicated service to our patients and their families. Special thanks to Dr. Riives for supporting the care and transition of our patients as we awaited Dr. Williams' arrival.





# Wellness Garden at the AJL

Submitted by Cary Greene, LPN

Through funding provided by the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, we have created a very tranquil environment on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the AJL for patients, family members and staff which we call the Wellness Garden.

The patio consists of raised garden beds, gazebo, tables and chairs, basketball net and a water fountain. It is the location for a number of programs and activities such as gardening, relaxation and music.

We also host BBQs in the garden, and have held two so far this year. The fresh vegetables from the garden are picked and served during the BBQs.

This beautiful outdoor space is enjoyed by all!



## Upcoming events



Psychosis: New Perspectives, Bright Horizons (#sscHorizons) seeks to educate while creating awareness. This conference will provide an opportunity to learn more about psychotic disorders while sharing the latest research and developments in treatment and support.

#sscHorizons will feature:

- Three plenary keynote presentations
- A plenary legal panel discussion
- 12 breakout sessions
- Theatrical performances
- Networking
- Exhibitor space
- and more!

Early bird registration is available until Friday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. We also have special registration pricing for SSNS members.

For more information, go to the [website](#).

## Interesting reads

### Dual diagnosis patients need options to living in hospitals

**Read** the article written by Dr. Mutiat Sulymman, psychiatrist and clinical academic leader with the Dual Diagnosis Program, published in The Chronicle Herald on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

### Health Canada approves treatment options for patients with schizophrenia

Health Canada has approved a new treatment option for patients with schizophrenia which will allow them to focus more on recovery and less on their daily medications. **Read** the article, published in The Chronicle Herald on June 28<sup>th</sup>, which features quotes from Vince Daigle, peer support worker, and Dr. Phil Tibbo, psychiatrist with the Nova Scotia Early Psychosis Program.