

# MindFreedom<sup>journal</sup>

Fall 2008

[www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org)

## Freedom of Choice in Mental Health



*Canada gets Mad Pride! Cherise Clarke of Vancouver (left) and Ruth Ruth of Toronto help lead major Mad Pride celebrations throughout Canada. Story on page 14.*

- **Mad Pride Breaks Free in Ireland and The New York Times**
- **MindFreedom Celebrates UN Disability Treaty**
- **Interview with Little Brother, BIG PHARMA Director David Heine**

Ruth Ruth writes of the above photograph: "The picture is beautiful. I love it. And I love the moment in which it was taken! David Oaks snapped it just after a presentation of TIED TOGETHER, A Mad People's History Play. I play myself speaking to a class about my own activism, and Mad People's History takes form. The play was part of 'A Night of Mad Culture', at the Madness Citizenship and Social Justice Conference at Simon Frazer University in Vancouver, June 2008. Mad Culture's host was Cherise Clarke. Cherise graciously played a cast-on-the-spot cameo in TIED TOGETHER!" Cherise coordinates Mad Pride activities including art, music, poetry, and presentations with Gallery Gachet, an art center in Vancouver, Canada totally run by mental health consumers and psychiatric survivors.

**Published by MFI**

## MFI Wins Campaigns for Human Rights and Alternatives in the Mental Health System

MindFreedom International (MFI) unites thousands of individual members. The majority of MindFreedom's membership, board and staff are psychiatric survivors. However, membership is open to everyone who supports our human rights goals. Advocates, mental health professionals, family members and the general public are all valued members and leaders in the MindFreedom community.

MindFreedom International also unites grassroots organizations. Each Sponsor Group or Affiliate has a liaison on the MFI Support Coalition Advisory Council.

MFI is rooted in a global movement to change the mental health system. MFI is one of the few groups in the mental health field that is independent with no funding from or links to governments, mental health providers, drug companies, religious organizations, etc. Funding is entirely from members like you, and a few foundations.

MFI's mission: "In a spirit of mutual

cooperation, MindFreedom International leads a nonviolent revolution of freedom, equality, truth and human rights that unites people affected by the mental health system with movements for justice everywhere."

*If you are not yet a member, become a member or donate, now!* If you are already a member, consider an early renewal donation. MindFreedom is a non-profit organization under IRS 501(c)(3) and your donation is tax-deductible. (To join or donate, see the back cover or [www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org).)

You are also encouraged to check out our Mad Market of books and products at [www.MadMarket.org](http://www.MadMarket.org). Proceeds support MFI's human rights work.

You can now also download a free copy of our MindFreedom brochure. You can then print it out and distribute it to inform people about MFI campaigns for human rights and humane alternatives in the mental health system. It is available at: [www.mindfreedom.org/brochure](http://www.mindfreedom.org/brochure).

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**MindFreedom**  
Journal  
 Human Rights in Mental Health  
www.MindFreedom.org

**Please join!**

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# UNITED NATIONS ADOPTS DISABILITY RIGHTS CONVENTION

BY CELIA BROWN, PRESIDENT,  
MINDFREEDOM INTERNATIONAL

The United Nations celebrated the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at the General Assembly on Monday, May 12, 2008. (In the UN a convention is a type of treaty.)

Following this event, we had the UN Reception sponsored by mental health consumer/survivor of psychiatry human rights organizations including Mental Patient Liberation Alliance, World Network of Users/Survivors of Psychiatry (WNUSP), MindFreedom International, PsychRights, Human Rights Strategic Working Group, Ithaca Mental Patients Advocacy Coalition, Dreamweavers Peer Support and The Empowerment Center. It was held at the Church Center across from the United Nations. Thank you for your well-wishes, funds and informational materials that you shared with people at the reception.

Tina Minkowitz, of World Net-



*Myra Kovary, of MFI's UN team and WNUSP, plays the harp at the United Nations reception.*

work of Users/Survivors of Psychiatry, as well as Myra Kovary, Kate Millett, myself and others on the MindFreedom UN team, worked

hard for eight years on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN Reception was a way for us to celebrate and to recognize the many human rights struggles and contributions of the user/survivor of psychiatry community, and to stand united with our friends of national and regional disability organizations, members of the International Disability Caucus, the members of the new International Disability Alliance and the CRPD Forum to work to implement the convention.

There were brief remarks by Dan Hazen, Jan Wetzel, Tina and myself and people mingled at the reception with good food and drink.

We have come a long way in educating and building coalitions during the process of working on the convention at the UN. Let's continue to build alliances with other disability activists in the USA and around the world.

Nothing about us, without us.

## ***From the Executive Director: Why Mad Pride?***

BY DAVID W. OAKS

It's official. We're in fashion.

As you'll see in this issue, we Mad Pride activists have made the "Style" section of the *Sunday New York Times*. A few experts might now mistakenly call me normal. I have not used the psychiatric system for more than thirty years. I'm married to a wonderful, loving woman, Debra. We are tax-paying homeowners with a nice garden. For these past two decades, I've directed our respected non-profit human rights group, MindFreedom International.

I suspect, though, that many of my beliefs would still be labeled by some mental health professionals as delusional. Or nuts. Here are a few.

- I believe tens of thousands of us so-called mad citizens and allies are making history by transforming how we as a society approach the whole subject of the mind.
- I believe the psychiatric industry would like to screen

everyone for mental and emotional problems, and place millions of new customers onto their powerful drugs.

Please understand that I am pro-choice about your personal health care decisions. If you know the risks, if you have access to a range of alternatives, if you willingly choose prescribed pharmaceuticals, that is your own business and nobody else's. I have been there. I know what it's like to beg for a psychiatric drug. I also know what it's like to quit psychiatric drugs, and care must be taken to do this well.

- I believe many of these psychiatric drugs can be addictive, brain damaging and deadly, but much of this information is covered up from patients and their families.



*David Oaks*

# Mad Pride Covered by *New York Times*

It is no longer possible to doubt that the Mad Pride movement is gathering real momentum, and growing fast. Each year MFI helps celebrate these events in a host of countries all over the world, so it was a great pleasure to see the movement itself covered in the premier newspaper of the mainstream media, *The New York Times*.

The article, "'Mad Pride' Fights a Stigma," by Gabrielle Glaser, appeared in the Fashion & Style section of the Sunday edition on May 11, 2008.

In addition to MindFreedom International, also mentioned were the Freedom Center and the Icarus Project (both MFI sponsors).

*Here are a few of the article's highlights:*

"Just as gay-rights activists reclaimed the word queer as a badge of honor rather than a slur, these advocates proudly call themselves mad; they say their conditions do not preclude them from productive lives."

"Members of the mad pride movement do not always agree on their aims and intentions. For some, the objective is to continue the destigmatization of mental illness. A vocal, controversial wing rejects the need to treat mental afflictions with psychotropic drugs and seeks alternatives to the shifting, often inconsistent care offered by the medical establishment. Many members of the movement say they are publicly discussing their own struggles to help those

with similar conditions and to inform the general public."

"Members of MindFreedom International, which Mr. Oaks founded in the 1980s, have protested drug companies and participated in hunger strikes to demand proof that drugs can manage chemical imbalances in the brain. Mr. Oaks, who was found to be schizophrenic and manic-depressive while an undergraduate at Harvard, says he maintains his mental health with exercise, diet, peer counseling and wilderness trips — strategies that are well outside the mainstream thinking of psychiatrists and many patients."

The entire article, and other media coverage of MindFreedom, can be found in the "media" section of the MFI web site.

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## The Latest News at [www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org)

### *PsychRights Issues Alert On Behalf Of Ann L.*

New York State citizen Ann L. says her forced psychiatric drugging makes her "sick and is torture." But New York is aggressively pushing for more forced drugging of Ann L. on an outpatient basis in her own community residence. PsychRights and MindFreedom International are working together to support Ann L.'s bid for freedom in both the court room and the court of public opinion.

### *Patch Adams Now IAACM Chair*

Martin Luther King, Jr. often called for creating the International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. This IAACM has been revived by MFI to support Mad Pride activities. One of MFI's most publicly celebrated members, physician/clown Patch Adams, has agreed to be the honorary chair.

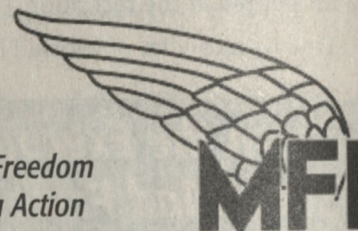
### *Support MindFreedom Shield!*

Artist Felice Eliscu, MFI member and shield registrant, needs us all to say "no" to her forced psychiatric drugging in Wisconsin.

### *Congress Investigates American Psychiatry*

For years, MFI and others have called for Congressional hearings about the undue influence of the pharmaceutical industry on psychiatry in the USA. Such hearings are beginning. MFI member, author and psychologist Bruce Levine covers Senator Grassley's investigation of Harvard psychiatrist Joseph Biederman, and the finances of the American Psychiatric Association.

Also on MindFreedom International website: News about US Congressional hearings on psychiatric abuse in foster care.



**MindFreedom  
Media Action**

How you can help MindFreedom's Media Campaign break the silence on human rights abuse in the mental health system and counter bias in the mainstream media.

### *David W. Oaks To Be "Special Presenter" At World Psychiatric Congress*

Every few years, the World Psychiatric Association holds a World Congress. The WPA has invited MindFreedom International's executive director, David W. Oaks, to be a "special presenter" at the Congress, which is in September 2008 in Prague.



Protesters at the Esmin Green vigil in New York, outside Kings County Hospital.

### Esmin Elizabeth Green Vigils Held in Three Nations

MFI co-sponsored vigils and protests to mourn the loss of Esmin Green whose death in a New York psychiatric emergency room was captured by a security camera and broadcast internationally. Events were held on July 25, 2008 in: New York, NY, USA; Seattle, WA, USA; Toronto, ON, Canada; and Cork, Ireland.



MindFreedom Ireland held two recent vigils in Cork, Ireland, one against electroshock, seen here, and another to remember Esmin Green.

## Upcoming Events

For complete information:  
[www.mindfreedom.org/  
 events\\_sf](http://www.mindfreedom.org/events_sf)

### NARPA 2008 Conference

1 - 4 October 2008  
 Austin, Texas, USA  
[www.narpa.org](http://www.narpa.org)

### ICSPP 2008 Conference

10 - 12 October 2008  
 Tampa, Florida, USA  
[www.icspp.org](http://www.icspp.org)

### Alternatives 2008 Conference

29 October – 2 November 2008  
 Buffalo, New York, USA

### ENUSP Conference on Discrimination and Stigma

TBA: Second half of September 2009  
 Thessaloniki, Greece

### MFI Choice in Mental Health Conference

TBA: 2010, USA



Get the Latest News on  
 Human Rights in  
 Mental Health at

[www.mindfreedom.org](http://www.mindfreedom.org)

# The Drive to Start New MindFreedom Affiliates

BY FRANK BLANKENSHIP, CHAIR,  
MFI AFFILIATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

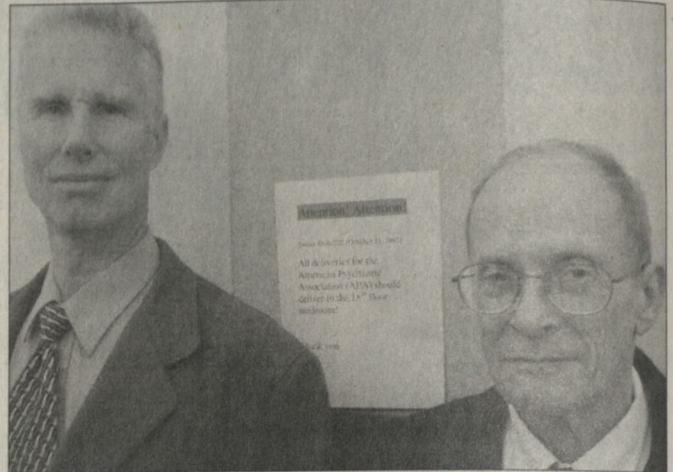
MindFreedom International is in the middle of a drive to form 20 new affiliates during the year 2008. Just imagine – 20 new MindFreedom affiliates! Our organization will have shown some real growth with 20 new affiliates actively participating in the struggle to win human rights in mental health care around the world. We have had some success in this campaign, too. Psychiatric survivors have contacted us from states such as Florida and Colorado, and countries such as South Africa and Norway, desiring to start affiliates.

Some of you may be asking, "What is a MindFreedom affiliate?" A MindFreedom affiliate is a regional branch of the global organization. An affiliate uses the name "MindFreedom" and, with the support of the parent organization, attaches this name to a specific locality. MindFreedom Ghana, MindFreedom Ireland, and MindFreedom Ontario are all examples of MindFreedom affiliates.

The power of MindFreedom International resides with its membership. You, as a member of MindFreedom, are the force to bring change and human rights to the mental health system in your region of the world. One of the most effective ways of bringing about this change is by starting a MindFreedom affiliate in your locality.

Starting a MindFreedom affiliate allows people to work on MindFreedom campaigns, plan Mad Pride events and promote alternatives to conventional psychiatric treatment in the communities where they live, work and unwind each day of the week.

It takes people, a few hard working individuals with the desire, the dedication and the energy to bring



*Frank Blankenship (left) and Larry Plumlee pose in front of the American Psychiatric Association main entrance in Arlington, Virginia. When the APA heard MFI was arriving to do a nonviolent guerilla "normality screening" skit, the APA shut down their main entrance to the public. The sign behind Frank and Larry says: "Today Only! (October 11, 2007) All deliveries for the American Psychiatric Association should be delivered to the 18<sup>th</sup> floor mailroom!"*

about this change. If you are one of those people, when you have made the decision that you want an affiliate in your area of the world, let the MindFreedom office know of your decision to start a MindFreedom affiliate. Once this is done, the name of your affiliate will be added to the public list of MindFreedom sponsor and affiliate organizations, and your *fun* will have just begun.

For more information on forming MindFreedom affiliates, please visit the sponsor and affiliate section of the MindFreedom International website at [www.mindfreedom.org/as/](http://www.mindfreedom.org/as/).

## Do You Have a Story to Tell?

We are now accepting submissions for the next issue of the MindFreedom Journal.

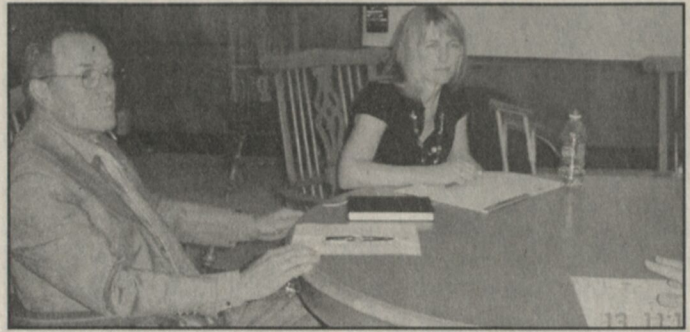
Submission Guidelines:

- 600 words or less.
- Electronic submissions only.
- Send as an attachment, along with your name, address, and telephone number to [submissions@mindfreedom.org](mailto:submissions@mindfreedom.org). If possible, include a high resolution digital photo.

While MindFreedom does not have the resources to pay for accepted submissions, those chosen do get a byline and publication in a journal with a circulation of thousands! Submissions that are not published will still be considered for inclusion on the MindFreedom website!

For tips about how to write your own news articles or human rights alerts, see "Frequently Asked Questions" on the MindFreedom website, [www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org).

*A delegation from Oregon Consumer/Survivor Coalition met with Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski in June. MindFreedom Oregon helped launch OCSC with the help of a grant from McKenzie River Gathering. OCSC President Rebecca Eichhorn reports about the meeting on the MFI web site at [www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org).*



## Choice Campaign Prepares Directory and Network of Alternatives

BY JANET FONER, CHAIR,  
MFI CHOICE IN MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

After our successful conference on alternatives last summer, Creative Revolution in Healing: Turning Our Minds Around, the Choice committee has mainly worked on two projects that came out of the conference. One project, led and developed by Matt Morrissey, is a directory of alternative mental health programs.

This is now ready to roll out to our website as soon as MFI raises the necessary funds. The directory will list programs that offer viable alternatives to the mental health system and also fit a list of criteria agreed on by our committee and the MFI Board of Directors. Visitors to our website will be able to search for various types of programs in the directory. If you are interested in being listed in the directory and/or in helping fund the project, please email [creativerevolution@mindfreedom.org](mailto:creativerevolution@mindfreedom.org). The second project, which I am leading, has

been to develop a network of people who run alternative programs or are otherwise involved in supporting their growth. This network began at the conference, and is a subgroup of the programs that will be listed in the directory. It is for people who want to support each other in running and establishing workable alternatives. We hold quarterly teleconferences and have had two so far. The first one discussed the principles of our network. On the second call we discussed the mission of our network, and are writing a concept paper about alternatives.

The Choice in Mental Health Committee has also begun plans for another MFI conference on alternatives, to be held in 2010, probably at the same place as our last one, Wisdom House, an excellent retreat site in Litchfield, CT. We hope many of you will join us there and continue creating and promoting alternatives to the mental health system!

[www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org)

## Youth Committee Attends Empowerment Summit

BY MARTIN RAFFERTY, MFI YOUTH COORDINATOR

In May, MFI's Youth Committee and Oregon Family Support Network (OFSN) teamed up to create a presentation at the Youth Empowerment Summit. With over eighty officials (police auditors, sheriffs, school board members and other decision makers – including the mayor, and mayor hopefuls) and more than 150 people total, this event aimed to create real change.

MindFreedom and OFSN had over an hour with these decision makers, and led a presentation based on the past experiences of the youth regarding mental health. Each of the panel members – all of them youths – had been involved in the mental health care system.

"Youth driven" means a fresh approach to the same message. According to Christina Piersol (an MFI youth committee member), MindFreedom's message is, "We must change the idea that drugs are the only option. Let's give our youth options and choices." Christina's message has been said before, by many different MindFreedom members. Yet the Youth Empowerment summit approached presentations differently, by using methods such as theater and music based on the work of Augusto Boal. For a preview see the "video" section of the MindFreedom web site.

Even though everyone who came claimed that it was a beautiful, unique and visually stunning event, the real test was to see if change occurred. MindFreedom's youth committee has been asked to attend several follow-up events, including a meeting with the local police auditor and a state-wide training for youth. MF Lane County has also won a \$500 Helios matching grant to hold a "Green Mind" fair encouraging youth involvement.



*Janet Foner, MFI board member and chair of the Choice in Mental Health Campaign Committee.*



*MFI Youth Campaign activist Christina Piersol speaks at the Youth Empowerment Summit.*

# Mad Pr!de !reland

On June 8, 2008 in Cork, Ireland, one of the largest and most successful Mad Pride events ever held took place in Fitzgeralds park. Heralded by a full-color insert that went into thirty-five thousand newspapers in the Cork area, the event surpassed all expectations.

Poet John McCarthy, who helped organize the event and also helped found MindFreedom Ireland, provided this report:

What a day! We had hoped for 1,000, prayed for 1,500, and at the end of the day we had 5,000 people in the park singing, dancing, playing, and most importantly laughing with us. We finished at 5:00 P.M. and it rained at 6:00 P.M.

There were queues of children waiting to have their faces painted, people buying food at the food stalls and sitting having picnics, listening to the various performances, singing, dancing, playing, families loving each other. And the beauty of it all – the so-called normal community mingled with the mad community and nobody was the wiser! How fantastic was that?

We tested everybody coming in for normality with an Oaks rubber chicken wielded by a clown. We hung mirrors on the trees stating, "This is the face of somebody 'labeled' with manic depression." We had clowns, theatre, interactive groups, live music, solo artists and bands, face painting and puppet making.

The media loved it and were all over it before and after the event, and the oh-so-positive coverage is still ongoing. *The Cork Evening Echo* appointed a journalist to cover the event two months before it took place and we had two articles a week leading up to it. They also issued 35,000 copies of an insert poster in their Friday edition, as well as two full page articles in the final week and numerous small mentions.

*The Cork Independent*, our leading free sheet, put in two free full page ads in the two weeks leading up to the event and so many articles that our national TV station sent a nationwide crew to record it, and it will soon be going out at prime time. Another national news station appointed a journalist to follow how the event was put together, and that hour long documentary was aired the week before. It was also featured on all their daytime shows via interviews. We were on local radio. The Sunday Tribune ran a series of articles. We appeared in all of the local and national daily and Sunday newspapers. All of the above free – yes, free.

Our deputy lord mayor attended and was so impressed that he stated that it should be an annual event and that the city should pick up the tab. So now the work begins. We need to make it a national event and that is the aim for next year.

I thank all of those who helped either financially, morally or physically from the bottom of my heart.



*A fantastically costumed performer entertains a youngster at the MAD PRIDE !RELAND event.*



(John McCarthy works with Mad Pride Ireland and MindFreedom Ireland. John assists Ruth Ruth as co-chair of the MindFreedom Mad Pride Campaign.)

**Participant Dr. Pat Bracken said:**

Well done, John! It was a fantastic day. They were playing and eating and enjoying themselves. It was, as you always wanted it to be, a 'family fun-day'. The day associated 'madness' not with danger, violence, threat, hospitals, injections and the like but with images of families enjoying themselves, musicians singing their hearts out and (thank God!) sunshine. There are lots of struggles in the field of mental health and lots of battles to be fought. There are times to be angry but also times to celebrate. In terms of the struggle against stigma, it was probably the best thing that ever happened in Ireland. Congrats!



At Mad Pride Ireland event, John McCarthy (second from left) uses a rubber chicken to see if Cork's Lord Mayor passes "the normality test."

## Why Mad Pride?

*continued from page 3*

- I believe many psychiatric drug corporations act like bullies by lying and choking out non-drug, humane options for mental health care.
- I believe there is no scientific evidence for claims by some in the psychiatric industry that a "chemical imbalance" is the basis for mental disorders.
- I believe much of the mental health industry is traumatizing, damaging and even killing millions of mental health clients who are, by some measures, among the most powerless in our society.
- I believe these human rights violations amount to a hurricane of unscientific psychiatric labels... psychiatric drugging without informed consent or non-drug options... torture in institutions using restraints, aversive therapy, electroshock... isolation in the community with segregation, impoverishment and discrimination... a criminal lack of options for good housing, for decent jobs and for humane alternatives to the traditional mental health system.

- I believe developing countries ought to be warned that this psychiatric hurricane is invading poor nations, and that this globalization of corporate psychiatry's human rights violations could impact hundreds of millions of people.
- I believe those of us who society perceives as having gone over the edge of sanity, and who have since returned, have something valuable to offer to citizens who are commonly considered normal.
- I believe our society is suffering from extreme, global catastrophes such as the climate crisis, yet humanity seems transfixed in a hypnotic trance of passive conformity.
- I believe we so-called mad citizens may help humanity wake up from this so-called normality and reach some of its highest goals of social and ecological justice.
- I believe this is Mad Pride!

*David was recently voted on as a board member of the United States International Council on Disabilities representing MindFreedom.*

## MENTAL HEALTH

*The story that you never read until today!*

### ORDER THE BOOK

*Dare to Imagine: From Lunatics to Citizens  
A Survivor's History of Mental Health in New Brunswick*  
EUGÈNE LEBLANC AND NÉRÉE ST-AMAND

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# Poetic Justice

## Rhymes and Reasons

Edmund Spenser, John Dryden, Alexander, and the Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats), Ogden Nash, Maya Angelou, Dr. Seuss and hip hop artists are major English writers and they all use rhyme in their poetry. In psychiatry, however, rhyming is considered a thought disorder, a pathological state, a breakdown of language. Psychiatry may not like the subjects of the poetry.

Here is the opening stanza of

### Twist

by Lydia Walsh Yildirim  
of MindFreedom, Ireland

The heart; heavy, twisted, knotted  
The mind; groggy, parched, soggy  
Once together, at once diverged  
You wouldn't believe what emerged

### Resistance

Copyright © 2008  
by Liz Purcell

She doesn't cook. Very much.  
Or knit and purl. Or sew and such...  
She don't wear blush. Or shave her pits.  
Or wax her brows. Or zap her zits.  
Even at risk... of being called a lez.  
She's too depressed. She says.

Thom Severtson in a poetry collection *Chaos of Angels* edited by Jones and Pero (Word Walker Press) writes a long poem about a boy labeled by his teacher with ADHD and needing medication:

### Handling a Class Clown

by Thom Severtson

Ted, the lad in question  
Overhearing her suggestion,  
Bent his spine and bowed his head,  
wishing hard he'd been born dead  
Rather than been tagged and labeled  
Learning challenged or disabled.

### Faith in Psychiatry

by Tom Greening

I am a fan of bogus science --  
for good advice I seek a seance,  
and I believe psychiatry  
can really help mad folks like me.  
Their neurotoxicology  
is better than phrenology.  
Just place your trust in what they say  
and you'll get better day by day,  
and if you don't and are frenetic  
that proves your illness is genetic.

### Black Sheep

by Joy Bright McCorkle

Once we find their real names,  
the calls to relatives are made.  
But oftentimes informed,  
they don't care where we're laid.  
They don't want our animals,  
possessions or truck. So the city  
with all our possessions are stuck.  
All "black sheep" of the family  
they seem relieved we're finally gone.  
No more calls from detox, jails or pens.  
It seems our only family  
are other homeless friends.  
It's the dirty, shaggy, homeless people  
who remember us with love.  
Hopefully, our true worth will be  
judged by those above.  
Like the tombstones of the Gold Rush  
our epitaphs seem to say:  
"Arrived from Nevada,  
died un-named the next day."



Submit poems to Bonnie Schell, MFI Poetry Editor, at [poetry@mindfreedom.org](mailto:poetry@mindfreedom.org).

MindFreedom's website now has  
an arts and poetry section. Go to  
[www.mindfreedom.org](http://www.mindfreedom.org), click on  
"Knowledge Base," go to "Arts."

# May is Mental Health Awareness Month

BY MARY VAN PELT

Seven years ago I experienced job discrimination based on my diagnosis.

Prior to that I was proud that my psychiatric disability was invisible. No one could see it, no one had to know.

After job discrimination changed my life I discovered holes in the Americans With Disabilities Act. The law did not protect my rights. I began speaking out for human rights and social justice.

When I tell my story I find only a few words open the door to a flood of stories about the pain of psychiatric disability and forced psychiatric treatment. Almost everyone has a story about a son, daughter, brother, sister, spouse or friend who lives with an invisible disorder.

A psychiatric disability is sometimes visible when we see an unkempt homeless person walking down the street, cigarette between fingers, head cast down and lost in his own murmuring. But that's a stereotype. At the other end of the spectrum is Kay Redfield Jamison, professor of psychiatry and author of *An Unquiet Mind*. She turned her

experience with bipolar disorder into a best selling book.

People who live with psychiatric disability and hold a professional title are almost always forced to keep their conditions silent and hidden. When my career ended so did my need to keep silent about a condition that kills thousands every year.

Suicide statistics are difficult to track due to the very nature of suicide. The act is surrounded by stigma. Depending upon the circumstances, suicide can be reported as death from natural causes. The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention estimates between three and twenty percent of persons diagnosed with bipolar disorder die each year by suicide. Because of my own experiences I find this statistic very easy to understand.

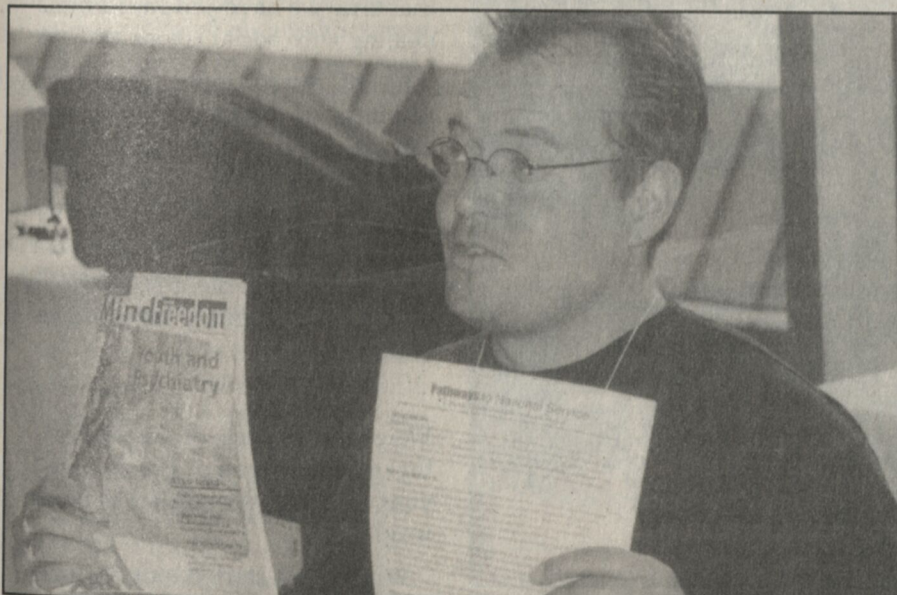
In her book, *Hollow Promises: Employment Discrimination Against People With Mental Disabilities*, Susan Stefan writes that public education about psychiatric disability is needed. The most potent kind of education occurs when a friend or family member has the courage to reveal that he or she has a psychiatric diagnosis. The invisible silence that surrounds hidden



Mary Van Pelt speaking at the Innovations Conference in Denver, Colorado.

psychiatric disabilities must be broken if we expect the law to protect us.

A version of Mary's piece was originally published in the May 9, 2008 *Valley Courier*, Alamosa, Colorado. Mary is a MindFreedom member who is also an independent radio and video producer on the topic of human rights in mental health. To learn more about her work go to: [www.maryvanpelt.com](http://www.maryvanpelt.com).



David Romprey displays the MindFreedom Journal during his 2007 testimony to the Oregon Senate.

## David Romprey MindFreedom Friend

David Romprey (August 18, 1965 - July 30, 2008) was a psychiatric survivor, mental health consumer, activist and friend of MindFreedom International. Here he is shown speaking in front of the Oregon Senate last year.

Tragically, David died days before beginning his dream job with the State of Oregon helping the individuals he cared about the most – those in back wards of psychiatric institutions. MindFreedom helped create a Virtual Memorial for David; you can find the link on the MF web site.

# An Interview with David Heine

David Heine is the producer/director of the film "Little Brother, BIG PHARMA." David has created more than 100 documentaries. This one is personal. His film explores the impact of long term psychiatric drug use by following the story of his brother Danny, who was first placed on Thorazine when he was twelve years old in 1963. Danny has now been on neuroleptics for 45 years. The film was released in May and shown at a packed premiere in Eugene, Oregon.

## Why did you choose to make this film?

Some years ago my sister, Susan Luzzaro, a talented writer living in San Diego, sent me a rough draft of a story she was writing about our brother, Danny, who was first diagnosed with "mental illness" at twelve and subsequently put on Thorazine. At the time I was living in Europe and while it was a powerful story and I thought it should be a film, I was not in a position to act on it.

When I returned to the US, Susan, who had become Danny's conservator, was busy working on reducing Danny's meds and we talked about a film that would follow his progress. Susan's complete story is published in *Healing Muse*. Even though what is known as "mental illness" had long been part of my life because of Danny, I really didn't know that much about it and even less about the neuroleptics used to treat Dan-

ny's condition. Our family always assumed they were necessary.

As with all the films I have made, I began to do research. This led to reading a number of books on the subject and long discussions with my sister. She recommended Robert Whitaker's *Mad in America*, which remains the best overall book I have read on the subject. It includes the history and the background of this country's treatment of those diagnosed with mental illness. I contacted Robert and he agreed to appear in the film.

I learned about David Oaks, who had formed MindFreedom International and had been active in fighting for the rights of survivors of our mental health system for many years. He was gracious enough to share his

wide-ranging knowledge of the subject with me and this became a great source of information and lively discussions. He also agreed to appear in the film. We were able to get a grant from a foundation and we were ready to start filming.



Danny's brother and filmmaker, David Heine.

## Can you share with us something about your background?

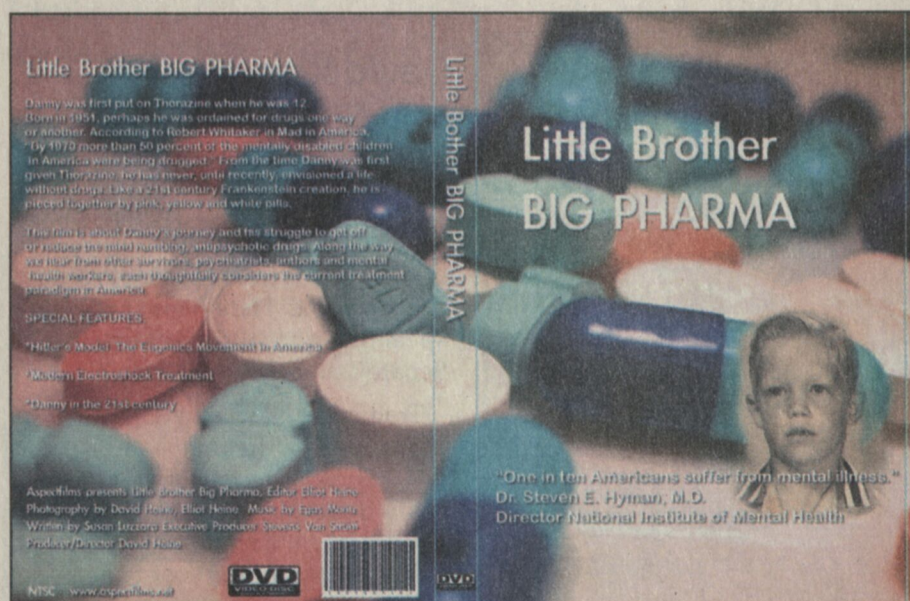
I came to documentary filmmaking after many starts down different paths. Once I owned and operated a 106 acre apple orchard in New Hampshire. It was there in 1976, I made my first documentary – a surreal rendering of cider-making. After a turn in corporate life, I studied telecommunications in San Diego and started my film career with a documentary about sculptor Donal Hord. In 1989 I formed a small independent production company. Since that time we have produced films dealing with social issues and art.

In 1997 my son joined the company and he is an excellent photographer and editor. For six years we produced a television program in Amsterdam, Netherlands, about art and culture in a very broad sense.

"Little Brother, BIG PHARMA" is our first documentary since returning to the US.

## Were there aspects of the process that surprised you or transformed your views on the subject in some way?

When I first started looking into the history of what is called mental illness in the US, I was surprised at



A DVD of the documentary film "Little Brother, BIG PHARMA" is available now at [www.madmarket.org](http://www.madmarket.org)

how experimental it has always been and how the "experts" were given a free hand to experiment with patients, from teeth pulling, brain cutting, electric shocks, spinning chairs, freezing cold baths, insulin shocks and now the several generations of drugs. Even more surprising was how few alternatives to the current pill paradigm were being offered.

I started reading about some of the side effects of the drugs my brother had been taking for years and began seeing them in his behavior as opposed to any natural course of his condition. It made me very sad to think how much of what we had always regarded as a progression of his illness were in fact side effects of the drugs he had taken for forty-five years. At one point Danny was on 19 prescriptions at once.

**Can you tell us a little about interviewing Dr. Nicholas Telew? As a proponent of many of the modes of treatment the film critically examines, was it necessary to approach the interview with him differently?**

Dr. Telew is a professional psychiatrist who is working in the current treatment paradigm and, for the most part, seems to believe in it. He said he is one of only two psychiatrists that still give electroshock treatments in Oregon. In any interview I try to be objective and fair and allow the other person to explain their beliefs. We edited the same way.

**What are your current plans? Can MFI members expect to see more of your films in the future?**

We are currently trying to find the largest audience possible for "Little Brother, BIG PHARMA." The issues raised in the film are topical as well as personal, and we think the subject touches a large segment of the American population. We are also interested in making a follow-up film that looks at alternative treatments around the world.



*David Oaks and Bhargavi Davar at the MindFreedom USA office.*

## **Bhargavi Davar, PhD. Travels to Oregon**

Bhargavi Davar, PhD. visits with David Oaks in the MFI office. Bhargavi traveled all the way from Pune, India where she directs MFI sponsor group Center for Advocacy in Mental Health. While in Eugene she gave a talk, "Globalization of the Mental Health Industry: The View from India's Psychiatric Survivors." Bhargavi warned that western-style psychiatric over-drugging and electroshock have already arrived in poor and developing countries, and are spreading rapidly. MFI's Larry Dobberstein videoed the talk, and a DVD is available from the Mad Market at [www.madmarket.org](http://www.madmarket.org).



*MindFreedom Lane County volunteer Howard paints one of the smaller pill props used in The Normathon.*

## **MindFreedom Lane County holds "Normathon"**

MindFreedom held a popular public skit in the middle of Eugene, Oregon called "The Normathon." Mental health worker Ron Unger, who coordinates MF Lane County, led the crowd in worshipful chanting to a Big Giant Pill prop in Ken Kesey Plaza on 17 May 2008. Then participants holding the Big Giant Pill chased youth carrying "Norma" (a figure tied in actual five-point restraints on a stretcher) through the downtown market. Martin Rafferty, youth outreach coordinator, put the skit on YouTube where it has had more than 1,000 views. For more info, including how-to-make a Big Giant Pill, see [www.mindfreedom.org/norm](http://www.mindfreedom.org/norm).

# An Interview with Ruth Ruth

*Ruth Ruth is a founding member of The Friendly Spike Theatre Band, an MFI sponsor group, and a major force in organizing many of the Mad Pride events that have taken place in Canada over the past fifteen years. Ruth Ruth is co-chair of the MFI Mad Pride Campaign.*

**How did you first get involved with the Mad Pride movement? How would you characterize your connection with it?**

A bit of history: Crazy Day was the first suggested name for the nearly-annual event that has taken place since 1993 in and around Parkdale, where the largest number of psychiatric survivors, consumers and ex-patients live in Toronto. After much debate, the original organizers decided to call this event Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day.

During these years, Pride Day was organized by committees ranging from 20 to a much smaller group of people – though with more logistical support on the actual day itself – all of which contributed to a sense of community and shared history. Pride Day was always held in September or October from 1993 to 1999. However, in 2000 the celebration was moved to July and expanded beyond one day to week-long events. This change was made to align Toronto with the international Mad Pride Day events elsewhere. Reflecting ongoing debates over how people choose to self identify, Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day was changed to Instance of Resistance in 2000, to Psych Survivor Pride Week in 2001 and, since 2002, Mad Pride.

I first came to Psychiatric Survivor Pride in 1993. My theatre company, The Friendly Spike Theatre Band (FSTB), was invited to showcase songs that had been developed for a play called, "MARKED, Living with A Stigma." One of the songs, "The Pill Song," written by local singer/songwriter Bill Yurick and my partner director at FSTB, Ken Innes, was presented, and history was made!

"A Pill A Pill A Pill for every ill, every pill you take will take away your will!" The audience loved both song and company! FSTB would be invited to perform in EVERY psychiatric survivor pride event thereafter. In 2002, FSTB joined a funding program at the Toronto Arts Council called Community Arts. This program

would enable the company to – as well as present its season of plays – work with the community to produce a yearly arts festival. And because at this time we were already helping to make Psychiatric Survivor Pride and its later incarnation, Mad Pride, happen, we stuck to it.

As well as an actor and theatre director, I am a psychiatric survivor. The first pride event in 1993 helped me find myself and my community. I haven't let go!

**What lessons do you take from your participation in (and organization of) these recent events?**

Using an organic approach that nurtures what is already there is a good start. For instance, if there is an established group of psychiatric survivors meeting, approach them; perhaps they will be interested in helping to make something happen.

**Do you have any advice for other people who are getting involved in Mad Pride?**

Reach out locally, get your town or city to proclaim the day, talk to your elected officials about it. Be creative. Have fun. Use what you have – psychiatric survivors are the most talented and resourceful of people.

**What is your vision for the future of the Mad Pride movement?**

I hope the movement continues to grow to help the mainstream consciousness shift from its greedy, exclusionary mindset to one that is more humane. Never before in the history of humankind have the messages of Mad Pride – that is, being who you are and being proud of it – been so needed.

Why? Because survivors have valuable skills to share. Many of us have been through hell, and have developed both philosophies and ways to cope. I don't have the answer, but WE do!

## Advertise in the MindFreedom Journal

**The MindFreedom Journal is mailed to thousands, as well as handed out for free at key annual conferences and other events in our field. Our diverse readership is keenly interested in human rights issues and alternatives to mainstream mental health care. Help support MindFreedom and its mission by advertising in the next issue!**

**For more information, please email [office@mindfreedom.org](mailto:office@mindfreedom.org).**

# A Personal Story of Choice in Mental Health Care

## Past Pieces

BY PAM ROSE

In my late forties, after many years of therapy and failed relationships I learned that I could stand on my own. My independence blossomed into confidence and soon there were no ceilings high enough to contain my dreams for my future.

Along every path there are bumps, some bigger than others, but we muddle through and eventually we get back on track. My bumps included bouts of severe depression, suicidal wishes, self-injury and horrible flashbacks that shook my world. At the end of a perfect day I would often find myself pondering over a handful of pills that night.

Every since I can remember I have had a rumbling of voices inside my head. Some of the voices held different values and beliefs than I did. Some of them helped me survive days of hell and others worked diligently to destroy whatever confidence I may have built. There were many days that the voices turned into screams coming from every direction, overshadowing the uncontrollable sobbing coming from deep within me. I called it spinning. My head was spinning so fast I couldn't grasp a thought of sanity.

While the voices were common to me I had never heard one of the voices as clearly as I did one night during a family event that reminded me that my place within my family was outside of it. The words, "Get out, get out of here now," shouted out from within my head. I heard that foreign voice so clearly that I had no other choice but to obey.

Days later, after a similar event with my parents, I again heard a different voice. This voice was the voice of myself at a time in my life that I had lost my children.

This voice was not so foreign. We had been struggling back and forth with feelings of blame and guilt. I hated that woman who failed at motherhood. I blamed her for my miserable existence. She blamed herself and the more I chastised her the more she felt the need to inflict punishment. That night I heard the words, "I don't hate you."

Feeling as though I must have had a psychotic break, I told my therapist what had happened and her reply changed my life forever. She explained to me that dissociation happens on a continuum. At one end of the continuum is what happens to most everyone. You're driving home and when you pull up into the driveway you find you don't remember the ride home at all. On the other end are the dissociation identity disorders.

After six months of denial I am beginning to accept that I have different parts of me that I created as a small child to take the abuse that my mind could not withstand at that time in my life. I have spent many years searching for the memories of my childhood. As others fondly recounted childhood stories, I would secretly search for mine. Knowing that you become who you are based on past experiences, I felt incomplete without my past and now, as I recapture my childhood, pieces are falling into place and I can move towards understanding who I am.

So here I am. I'm back on the road and the bumps are still there along with the nights I ponder over a handful of pills. The road seems to have grown longer now, but I think that is because I have turned onto a new road that will lead me beyond where I was heading before, the land of inner and outer peace.

*Pam works as an administrative assistant for the State of Idaho.*



Geoffrey Reaume

Check out the great merchandise at [www.MadMarket.org](http://www.MadMarket.org)

Get the latest updates at [www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org)

Geoffrey Reaume of the Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto is an author, historian and psychiatric survivor who presented at the conference in Vancouver, Canada, called *Madness and Citizenship*. David Oaks keynoted the conference, and his speech is on the MindFreedom web site. MindFreedom has donated six boxes of archival material to the independently-run archive. MFI thanks volunteer Violet Oaks for culling the material from the MindFreedom office.

# Support MindFreedom by Shopping [www.madmarket.org](http://www.madmarket.org)

Want to learn more about alternatives and human rights? The MadMarket carries dozens of titles on everything from the real science behind psychiatric drugs, to the history of the mental health system, to in-depth first hand accounts of abuse and recovery.

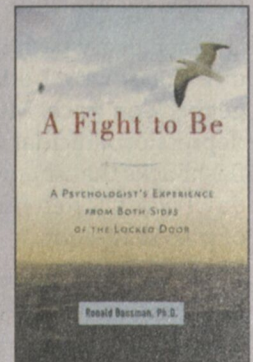
All proceeds from the MadMarket benefit MindFreedom's campaigns for human rights. Members always get a 10 percent discount.

Here are a few of the new books by MindFreedom members featured at [www.madmarket.org](http://www.madmarket.org).



**The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic**  
By Darby Penney, Peter Stastny, Lisa Rinzler (photographer)

More than four hundred abandoned suitcases filled with patients' belongings were found when Willard Psychiatric Center closed in 1995 after 125 years of operation. They are skillfully examined here and compared to the written record to create a moving – and devastating – group portrait of twentieth-century American psychiatric care.



**A Fight to Be**

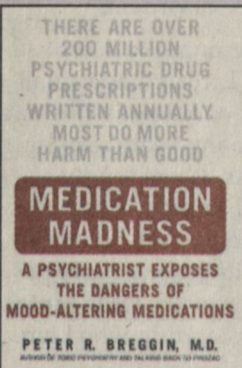
By Ronald Bassman, Ph.D.

A story of courage, determination, hope and possibility, Dr Bassman's unique insight from both sides of the locked door challenges readers to open their minds and their hearts, reexamine assumptions, discard limitations and embrace possibilities.

[www.madmarket.org](http://www.madmarket.org)

**Medicated Madness: True Stories of Mayhem, Murder and Suicide Caused by Psychiatric Drugs**  
By Peter Breggin, M.D.

'Reforming psychiatrist Breggin argues forcefully that antidepressants, stimulants and mood stabilizers do more harm than good...The cases he cites here, drawn from his own clinical practice and from legal actions in which he served as a consultant, or medical expert, frequently involve extreme adverse reactions: mayhem, murder and suicide.' (Kirkus Reviews)



The above books, plus DVD's and many more products, are available from [www.MadMarket.org](http://www.MadMarket.org).

If you are not on the web, phone the MF office to order: 1-877-MAD-PRIDE or 1-541-345-9106.

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