

Our Voice

Volume 2, Issue 1

March 2004

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The Quilt of Honour Goes to Queen's Park

The Honourable Marie Bountrogianni, Minister, Ministry of Children's Services



Susan Hess, President, Parents for Children's Mental Health



President's Report - Susan Hess

- On December 8, 2003, The Quilt of Honour went to Queen's Park. I had the honour and privilege of introducing the children of the quilt to the Ministers and MPPs in the Legislative Dining Room.
- Thank you to Garfield Dunlop, MPP- Simcoe—North, John Wilkinson, MPP—Perth-Middlesex, and Shelley Martel, MPP—Nickel Belt, for their support and involvement in this evening event.
- The Hon. James K. Bartleman—your message underlined the need for children's mental health issues to be a priority. Thank you.
- There was a "brightness" in the legislative dining room that evening, which came from within. Hope and optimism permeated the air. It was wonderful to be in the presence of Ministers and MPPs whose hearts responded to our kids.
- Sandra Papatello, Minister of Community and Social Services, who spoke to me privately before the evening began. Thank you, Sandra, for your strong support over the years for children's mental health issues.
- Michael Gravelle, MPP—Thunder Bay-Superior North, Liberal Caucus Chair, who sought me out to share his understanding that our need is "immediate" not two years hence. Yes Michael, I would love to bring the Quilt and speak before the Caucus. I am available whenever the time can be arranged—waiting to hear!
- When a child is diagnosed with cancer the community, the school, the neighbourhood swarm around this child and his family to create a cocoon of support—treatment is accessed in a timely fashion. When a child is diagnosed with a mental health problem, no one "blinks" — everyone runs in the opposite direction.
- Marie Bountrogianni, Minister of Children's Services and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has "blinked". She is the bright light, the ray of hope, the strong advocate our kids with mental health challenges need. How refreshing it is to have someone in the position of Minister of Children's Services who has worked in the field and knows our kids. She "gets it". Explaining "our kids" to her isn't necessary. Thank you for your compassion, your insight, and your determination to make a difference for our kids.
- Having said all this, as a parent of a young person with serious mental health issues, as well as listening to other parents around the province—questions continue to invade my thoughts.
- When did this province stop caring about children with mental health problems?
- At what time did people lose sight of the value of a child's life regardless of his/her mental health challenges?
- Why does having a mental health problem define you as a "bad kid"?
- When will the "human-ness" be returned to our kid's lives?
- How do you look into the eyes of a six year old who constantly tells you he hates his life, he wants to die, and tell him he has to wait six months for help?
- How do you tell a fifteen year old who attempts to wipe away the emotional pain by cutting herself, that this year there is no program to help her?
- How do you ease a mother's suffering as she watches her nine year old son lash out, kicking a playmate in the face with his hockey skate?
- What do you say to the family after their eleven year old took her own life while waiting for help?
- OUR CHILDREN CANNOT WAIT !
- Are these children not worthy of having the help they need, when they need it?

(Continued on page 3)

President's Report

(Continued from page 2)

- Is the work of staff at our children's mental health centres, who help our kids, not essential?
- Will our community children's mental health centres go the way of the dinosaur? How shameful this would be—a terrible legacy!
- Children with mental health problems deserve and are entitled to quality care with the finest trained staff. We have these gold standard services in our province. We have amazing staff who are dedicated and committed to making a difference for our kids. They need the dollars to allow them to do just that!
- It is not necessary to “recreate”. This is a “capacity issue” — we need more staff—more programs not less, to help our children in a timely fashion as soon as the need arises. This takes more dollars invested into our community children's mental health services now rather than later.
- “Simplified access” means nothing if the resources are not available for the services that will help our children. “Simplified access” is not going to eliminate the wait time for our kids. It isn't going to put back the programmes that have been cut from the children's mental health centres. The very programmes that help our children regain their lives.
- Yes, CAS is important. It is needed for protective issues for our children who need this protection. It is not needed to access mental health services for children whose families are willing and capable of caring for them. With community mental health services easily accessible the whole family can be supported before breakdown occurs. The other way is a fairly intrusive, disruptive and costly means of accessing services.
- As parents we want community mental health services readily available for our children.
- We want to keep our families together.

We read about the rash and unaccountable spending by the Federal Government. We are aware of the debt left behind by the previous provincial government.

- Premier McGuinty, on a recent visit to Windsor, mentioned that the inherited deficit budget can be viewed as a negative, yet this government is and must see it as a positive—an opportunity for this government to focus in on the priorities. Two of which we have been told are children and health.
- As a point of interest, core funding for CMH services in Ontario has declined since 1993 while the number of children needing treatment (served and waiting) has more than doubled...”agencies have reduced services in order to operate within their historical base funding allocation” (Ontario Provincial Auditor 2003)
- Please have the courage to do what other governments have not and focus in on helping the children with mental health challenges by making them and the community mental health centres that provide the services for these children a priority.
- I hear the words. I want to believe the words. However, I do not see the action behind these words, that assures me that every child with mental health difficulties will receive the help, support, and treatments that they need in a timely fashion.
- I encourage all parents/concerned citizens/family members/staff to contact Premier McGuinty at the following:

www.townhallontario.gov.on.ca

Share your concerns — your stories — make him aware of the NEED.

(Continued on page 4)

President's Report

(Continued from page 3)

- On February 3, 2004 I was delighted to be invited to the 13th Annual Krista Sepp Memorial Award luncheon. To be in the presence of children's mental health professionals, to feel their enthusiasm for their job, to hear their love for the children they work with, to hear this love and respect mirrored back to them through the children's words, was to be in the presence of fine, caring human beings.
- Congratulations to all nominees, and to Pat Chehowy of The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, winner of the 2004 Horizon Award and Bob Heeney, Whitby Mental Health Centre-Adolescent Program, winner of the 2004 Mentoring Award. Please see more of this in the body of our newsletter.
- On February 4, 2004 the London Alliance for Vulnerable Children sponsored a community event for the Quilt of Honour Tour. One hundred community members were present. I met a courageous young mother named April who gave a compelling talk about the challenges she and her children have faced—and the triumphs! I applaud you April!
- The PCMH Parent Facilitator Training Workshop brochure has been sent to the Executive Directors at all the Children's Mental Health Centres. If you are interested in attending this workshop, please ask to see the brochure. Registration is limited and the deadline is March 8, 2004. I look forward to seeing many of you at this workshop in April.

*** Highlight in next issue of Our Voice—The Syl Apps Drums of Fire, Drumming and Percussion Club ***

13th Annual Krista Sepp Memorial Award

The Krista Sepp Memorial Award was established in 1991 in memory of Krista Sepp, who was murdered on February 3, 1989 while performing her duties as a child and youth counsellor. As a young child and youth counsellor, Krista was determined to make a difference in a high risk and often undervalued industry. In her work, Krista consistently demonstrated empathy, enthusiasm, idealism, a thirst for knowledge, and a keenness to apply theory to practice.

Throughout Ontario, child and youth counsellors/workers play a vital role in the delivery of many programs that help young people and their families deal with complex problems. This Award was established to honour the qualities Krista brought to the field, to recognize the important contribution of child and youth counsellors/workers and to raise awareness of children's mental health issues. The Award is presented to a child and youth counsellor/worker who demonstrates exemplary contribution to the field of practice and who emulates the professional Krista would have become.

The Krista Sepp Award provides a forum for annual recognition of the high quality work and dedication of front-line child and youth counsellors/workers across the province and continues to promote awareness of children's mental health issues and a commitment to service excellence.

In previous years, one award was presented annually. In 2004, Krista would have been working in the field of child and youth work for well over a decade. To pay tribute to her memory in this regard two awards were presented this year.

The Horizon Award: To recognize the promising work of front line staff who have been in the CYW/CYC field for 5 years or less.

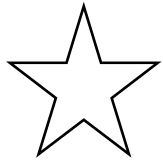
The Mentoring Award: To honour the ongoing contributions of front line staff who have been in the field for 6 years and more.

PCMH is pleased to profile the nominees and winners of this year's award in this newsletter.

2004 Krista Sepp Award Winners

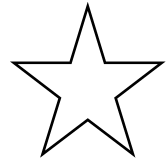
Horizon Award

Pat Chehowy
The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre

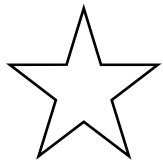


Mentoring Award

Bob Heeney
Whitby Mental Health Centre—Adolescent Program

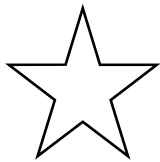
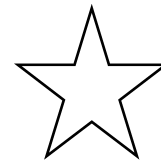


2004 Krista Sepp Award Nominees



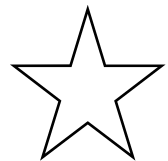
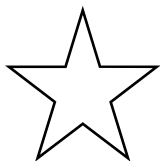
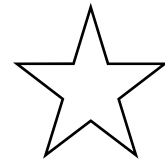
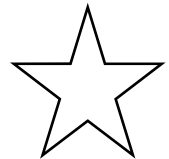
Horizon Award

Mary Dawson, Youthdale Treatment Centres Inc.
Natalie John, Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services
Kirstie McLean, Bayfield Homes Ltd.
Jennifer Pasch, Children's Aid Society of London & Middlesex
Caterina Varvarito, Halton Child and & Youth Services



Mentoring Award

Christine Adonis, Pathways for Children, Youth & Families
Bob Allen, Bayfield Homes Ltd.
Len AQUI, Kinark Child & Family Services—York Region
Jennifer Austin, The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre
Linda Bieman, New Path Youth and Family Services
Jeff Debruyne, Ridgeview Children's Home Inc.
Karen Deluca, Trillium Residential Services Inc.
Darlene Denis-Friske, Renfrew County Board of Education
Zoe Edwards, Children's Aid Society of London-Middlesex
Stephanie Estabrook, Somerset West Community Health Centre
Suzanne Gonsalves, Kinark Child & Family Services—York Region
Jim Hall, The Shoniker Clinic
Tourell Harris, Syl Apps Youth Centre—Kinark Child & Family Services
Michael Lethaby, Western Area Youth Services (WAYS)
Marcel Levean, Halton Child & Youth Services
Bill Martin, Bruce Grey Children's Services
Sherri Miller, Blue Hills Child and Family Centre
Ling Mui, The George Hull Centre for Children and Families
Winnifred Plummer, Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto
Keverne Postma, Syl Apps Youth Centre—Kinark Child & Family Services
Shawn Ross, Transitions for Youth (MacMillan Youth Centre)
John Soars, Kinark Child & Family Services—Peterborough
Diane Start, Kinark Child & Family Services—York Region
Jason Stringer, Youthdale Treatment Centres Inc.
Melanie Studholme, Craigwood Youth Services
Dilwyn Thomas, Pioneer Youth Services
Brian Vaillancourt, Syl Apps Youth Centre—Kinark Child & Family Services
Jim Van Schie, Kinark Child and Family Services—York Region
Judy Watson, Kinark Child & Family Services—Durham
Julie Watts, Lynwood Hall Child & Family Centre
Marion Whitfield, Madame Vanier Children's Services



Excerpt from Krista Sepp Acceptance Speech given by Bob Heeney, February 3, 2004

“In the Krista Sepp announcement that was mailed to agencies and written up in the OACYC Chronicle newsletter, it states, ‘the nominee will be given the opportunity to describe an event, a case, or an **experience** meaningful to them.’

For the past 12 days, I have had time to reflect on my career. I have chosen to talk to you today about a **very** meaningful experience I recently had.

I never had the opportunity to meet Krista Sepp personally and I wanted to know more about this young lady. Even though today is the anniversary of her death, I want to **celebrate her life**. I would like to share with you information I obtained about Krista and her family, when I phoned her mother in Sault Ste. Marie on January 28. I make hundreds of phone calls each year and **this** was a difficult call for me to make. I knew it would be emotional for Mrs. Sepp and I certainly did not want to cause her any discomfort. My goal was to listen to her story. When Joan Sepp answered her phone, she first thought I was a telemarketer. We shared a laugh when I told her that I was actually a Child and Youth Counsellor calling from Whitby, Ontario. I told her about the award and I explained that I wanted to obtain more information about the young woman named in this award. Joan began to cry, and told me that I had ‘**touched her heart**’. She told me that I was the first award recipient to call her. She **wanted** to tell her story.

She started by telling me that Krista was the second child she had lost from being murdered. Krista’s brother was murdered when he was 31 and Krista was murdered when she was 21. Mrs. Sepp had lost 2 children in a 5-year period. She describes herself as a **survivor** and a person of faith. She finds solace in prayer. According to Mrs. Sepp, she feels that there must be a reason that she and her husband have had to deal with such loss. She stated, ‘There must be some good to come from this.’ Joan held back tears as she described Krista as ‘a joy who brought us so much happiness. She was bright, petite and personable. She had charisma and was well liked by everyone she met. She loved people and was always doing something for others. She was a beautiful person both inside and out and a good student. She studied hard and was conscientious in her work. She didn’t really have a favorite subject in school, she was more of a people person ever since she was a little girl. She was always surrounded by a large circle of friends. She even wanted to go on to become a doctor.’

When Krista was growing up, she traveled all over North America with her parents on summer vacations. Krista was 21 when she graduated from Sault College and the first thing she did was to go on a 2-month trip with her parents. They drove out to Banff and Calgary where she had another brother, who she was very fond of. Mrs. Sepp told that she had no idea at the time that this would be the last trip she would take with her daughter.

After being on the road with her parents for 2 months, Krista flew back to Ontario to look for work. Her parents drove home and met up with her 6 days later. She was busy sending her resume out to various agencies with the goal of finding employment in her chosen field. She eventually secured a position in the Kinark organization. Her father drove both her and a friend to Midland and got them set up in an apartment because as parents they ‘wanted to make sure she was **all right** and make sure she was **comfortable**.’

Throughout this phone conversation, I couldn’t help but get the feeling that Krista came from a family filled with love and support. After her death, her parents took up the cause of moving forward to make our profession safer for both staff and clients. John states, ‘**we wanted to help others so this would not happen again.**’

This is where Krista came from. In talking about her grief, Mrs. Sepp said, ‘sometimes I feel **so alone**’ and as we finished our call she thanked me and said, ‘**I feel connected now.**’ She asked me to write her a letter after today’s ceremony and tell her more about this event.

Ladies and gentlemen, the profession of Child and Youth Work is all about **connections**—connections to clients and families, connections to colleagues and managers, and connections to community partners. The profession is built on a foundation of relationships, feelings and emotions. We **know** that successful relationships are ones shaped from mutual respect, trust, support, honesty, commitment and safety.

I have learned this not only from my involvement in the profession, and from my involvement on our professional council but this was also reinforced through my connection with Mrs. Sepp. I had a solid start as provided to me from my own parents and it was obvious to me that **Krista** also had a similar start to her career. We only wish that it could have been much longer.

Ministry of Children's Services

"Premier McGuinty created the new Ministry of Children's Services to ensure children's issues are a top priority. The Ministry will help give kids the best start in life through quality early-childhood services, make it easier for families to access the services they need at all stages of a child's development, and help youth become productive adults."

reprinted from Ontario Government website News Releases February 4, 2004

Minister's Biography

Dr. Marie Bountrogianni was elected to the Ontario legislature in 1999 and re-elected in 2003. She has served in the legislature as opposition critic for colleges and universities and for women's issues. From 1989 to 1999

Dr. Bountrogianni served as Chief Psychologist for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and was an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McMaster University.

Dr. Bountrogianni has worked for the Toronto and Peel Boards of Education and taught at Wilfrid Laurier University, Seneca College and Ryerson Polytechnic University. In 1997 she was hired by the European Community to evaluate proposals for funding of graduate programs in Europe.

An active member of her community, Dr. Bountrogianni was a director of St. Peter's Hospital in Hamilton from 1993 to 1998 and served as the hospital's vice-chair from 1995 to 1998. She was a member of both the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Youth Crime Committee and the Bereavement Working Group in Hamilton. She has provided support to numerous community initiatives including serving as honorary co-chair of the Hamilton & Bay AIDSwalk and Grace Haven Capital Campaign. She was named 2002 Woman of the Year in Politics by the Hamilton Status of Women Committee.

Dr. Bountrogianni and her husband, Dr. Ioannis Tsanis, a professor of engineering at McMaster University, have two children, Alexander, 15, and Joanna, 12.

Dr. Bountrogianni Speaks – January 29, 2004:

- "As we build the new Ministry of Children's Services, we have a tremendous opportunity to create real, positive change in the way we support our children, youth and families."
- "Working with our community partners, we can help give kids the best start by getting them ready to learn, making it easier for families to access the services they need for all stages of a child's development, and preparing youth to become productive adults."
- She emphasized that the government is making children a top priority, and that she is committed to working with Ontario communities to simplify and improve the system of supports for children, youth and families.

Ministry of Children's Services – Programs and Services

1. Adoption
2. Child Care
3. Child Protection
4. Early Years Challenge Fund
5. Early Years Initiatives
6. Foster Care
7. Child and Family Service Advocacy
8. Children with Special Needs
9. Youth Justice Services

Under "Children with Special Needs" the areas listed are:

1. Early Years (Children up to age six)
2. Services for Children with Developmental Disabilities
3. Children's Mental Health
4. Specialized Services
5. Health Services
6. Other Programs and Services

For more information visit the government website at:

www.gov.on.ca and select the Ministry of Children's Services

Youth Suicide—Myths and Realities

Reprinted from Canadian Mental Health Association Pamphlet “Reflections on Youth Suicide”

Myth: Young people rarely think about suicide.

Reality: Teens and suicide are more closely linked than adults might expect. In a survey of 15,000 grade 7 to 12 students in British Columbia, 34% knew of someone who had attempted or died by suicide; 16% had seriously considered suicide; 14% had made a suicide plan; 7% had made an attempt and 2% had required medical attention due to an attempt.

Myth: Talking about suicide will give a young person the idea, or permission, to consider suicide as a solution to their problems.

Reality: Talking calmly about suicide, without showing fear or making judgments, can bring relief to someone who is feeling terribly isolated. A willingness to listen shows sincere concerns; encouraging someone to speak about their suicidal feelings can reduce the risk of an attempt.

Myth: Suicide is sudden and unpredictable.

Reality: Suicide is most often a process, not an event. Eight out of ten people who die by suicide gave some, or even many, indications of their intentions.

Myth: Suicidal youth are only seeking attention or trying to manipulate others.

Reality: Efforts to manipulate or grab attention are always a cause for concern. It is difficult to determine if a youth is at risk of suicide. All suicide threats must be taken seriously.

Myth: Suicidal people are determined to die.

Reality: Suicidal youth are in pain. They don't necessarily want to die; they want their pain to end. If their ability to cope is stretched to the limit, or if problems occur together with a mental illness, it can seem that death is the only way to make the pain stop.

Myth: A suicidal person will always be at risk.

Reality: Most people feel suicidal at some time in their lives. The overwhelming desire to escape from pain can be relieved when the problem or pressure is relieved. Learning effective coping techniques to deal with stressful situations can help.

Where To Go For More Information on Youth Suicide

Visit our Website www.ParentsforChildrensMentalHealth.org to locate the Children's Mental Health Ontario Agency closest to you.

Internet Resources recommended by the Canadian Mental Health Association:

The Canadian Health Network: www.canadian-health-network.ca

The Canadian Mental Health Association www.cmha.ca

Suicide Information and Education Centre www.siec.ca/crisis.html

Your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association can provide you with information on emergency response, suicide prevention and other professional services in your community.

Youth Suicide—What Are The Signs

Reprinted from Canadian Mental Health Association Pamphlet “When a Young Person Is Suicidal”

Most people who consider suicide are not determined to die. They are undecided about whether to live or die, so they may take risks and leave it to someone else to save them. Warning signs may be their way of asking for help or revealing the seriousness of their situation. Warning signs can be very subtle. They can also be as obvious as someone saying, “You won’t be seeing me any more.”

Here are some common warning signs:

- Sudden change in behaviour (for better or worse)
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Lack of interest
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs
- Recent loss of a friend, family member or parent, especially if they died by suicide
- Conflicting feelings or a sense of shame about being gay or straight
- Mood swings, emotional outbursts, high level of irritability or aggression
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Preoccupation with death, giving away valued possessions
- Talk of suicide: e.g. “no one cares if I live or die”
- Making a plan or increased risk taking
- Writing or drawing about suicide (in a diary for example)
- “hero worship” of people who have died by suicide

Remember—there is no ultimate list of warning signs. It may be right to be concerned about someone simply because their behaviour is out of character. Sudden shifts in a person’s attitude or actions can alert friends to potential problems.

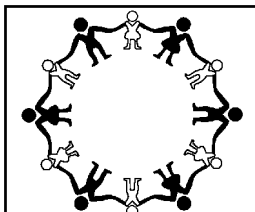
25 Ways To Reduce Stress

1. **Touch**—hold hands, stroke a pet, hug a loved one. Physical contact is the best stress reliever of all.
2. Find enjoyable ways to **Exercise**—breathe deeply, stretch your muscles, ride a bike, jog—do something.
3. **Get it off your chest.** Bottling up feelings increases stress.
4. **Talk** to a loving friend or relative. A sympathetic listener is always helpful.
5. Schedule more **Fun.** Work goes faster and produces less stress when fun is a part of your life.
6. Have a **Massage.** Tension will melt away.
7. **Prepare yourself to wait.** Long lines can be almost pleasant with a good book in your hand.
8. Find the **Humour** in it. Every disaster has something funny about it.
9. **Relax your standards.** Doing everything perfectly is unnecessary.
10. **Get help** with the jobs you hate. It’s worth it.
11. Establish a **Serene Island** of your own—even if it’s just a comfortable chair in a corner.
12. **Change your perspective.** Try asking yourself “so what?”
13. **Count your blessings.**
14. **Unclutter your life.** Anything you can do to simplify your life helps reduce stress.
15. **Pamper yourself.**
16. Get plenty of **Rest and Sleep**
17. Learn to use **Relaxation techniques.**
18. Find a new **Hobby.**
19. **Get up earlier** in the morning. Give yourself an extra 15 minutes to avoid morning mishaps.
20. **Prepare** for morning the night before.
21. **Never wear ill fitting clothes.** They can be stressful all day long.
22. **Don’t rely on your memory.** Make notes for yourself on things to do and remember.
23. **Practice preventative maintenance.** Keep automobiles and appliances clean and serviced.
24. **Make duplicates of all keys.** Exchange house and car keys with a trusted neighbour.
25. **Say ‘no’ more often.** Learn to turn down invitations, requests and activities you don’t have time for.

PARENTS FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

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To Advocate, To Educate, To Support

We're on the Web!
www.ParentsforChildren'sMentalHealth.org

What's Happening

At Parents for Children's Mental Health we want to know what's happening in your agency or community. Let us know and we'll let others know by including the information in our newsletters.

Share your ideas, achievements, and challenges. Send us articles from your local newsletter and we'll publish them in this provincial newsletter. We will happily advertise upcoming events of provincial interest—free of charge!

Our mailing list includes all members of PCMH, member agencies of CMHO, Provincial SEACs, and other interested individuals. Our publication schedule is September 1, December 1, March 1, and May 1.

We welcome any comments, suggestions, and submissions. Submissions of articles and information on children's mental health issues are welcome. Publication of such articles is subject to editorial review. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that all submissions will be printed.

The editor can be reached at:

OurVoice@ParentsforChildrensMentalHealth.org

How You Can Help

Children need many things for healthy development. Among the most important are a loving and stable environment, education, proper nutrition, and health care—both physical and mental.

You may have a child or know of a child who is experiencing emotional or behavioural problems. These problems can interfere with classroom learning, impair social skills, and create tension in the home. A delay in receiving treatment makes the situation worse.

Children's mental health treatment works. Sadly, most local and regional children's mental health centres have long wait lists. Government funding for children's mental health services falls far short of what is required to help meet the mental health needs of children and youth.

We ask that you let government know of your concern. Mail, fax or phone. Send your message loud and clear.

Parents for Children's Mental Health has 3 template letters and a postcard which you may use to send your message to the government.

You may access these advocacy tools on our website or by

contacting Parents for Children's Mental Health at the phone number or email listed above.

Including some data from your local children's mental health centre or a brief glimpse into your personal experience is very helpful in underlining the need that exists in the area of children's mental health. PCMH can provide names and addresses of those to whom you can send your letters.

Come Join Us!

The interests of children, youth and families are better served when our voice is made strong by the support of individuals, families, groups and organizations. We urge you to join today.

Membership information can be found on our website or by contacting Parents for Children's Mental Health at the phone number or email listed above.

**Together we can help to improve
children's mental health in Ontario**