



## In this Special Summer issue:

- Report on Community Consultations

*"I had never really paid attention to the pre-flight information before, but after caring for a loved one with mental illness this past year, all of a sudden it struck a chord with me. The pre-flight recording reminded all passengers to put on their own oxygen mask first, before helping someone else put on theirs. I started crying as I realized I hadn't taken care of myself at all in the past year, and if I was to truly be there and support my loved one, I needed to take better care of me."*

- Louise, caregiver  
In the City of Ottawa's [Mental Health Caregiver Guide](#)

## Contact us:

**MICA**  
19 Colonnade Road  
P.O. Box 5065  
Ottawa, ON K2G 4V8  
[www.micaontario.com](http://www.micaontario.com)  
☎ 613-860-7800



## A Midsummer Note from the Mental Illness Caregivers Association's Board of Directors

With Canada Day 150 here and gone, we hope you are settling into a peaceful yet enjoyable summer. In our April issue we told you about planned community consultations in Cornwall and Smiths Falls. These meetings have taken place and so this special summer issue of our newsletter is a report on what was said about:

- Caregiver resources
- Circles of support around loved ones and caregivers
- Employment for persons living with mental illness

We also report on what attendees said – just so you don't miss out if you were not able to attend. Discussions were lively and suggestions well thought out. Of course, we would like to hear more. Have your say at [www.micaontario.com](http://www.micaontario.com). Your comments and suggestions and the comments of those who attended the sessions will be factored into our next steps.

And finally, a reminder to come out to our annual fundraiser, Art in Strathcona Park, on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. located at 25 Range Road in Ottawa. For more information check out our website at [http://micaontario.com/news\\_events.php](http://micaontario.com/news_events.php).

Paul McIntyre  
Chair, MICA

## Community Consultations – What Was Said

### Caregiver Resource: The City of Ottawa's [Mental Health Caregiver Guide](#)

What We said	What You Told Us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Guide fills a need identified by MICA and others to provide helpful tips, tools &amp; information for caregivers to care for themselves while assuming the responsibility of caring for someone else.</li><li>• "Build Your Own Toolbox" activities show how to create support networks, connect with yourself &amp; others, take your emotional temperature, and build resilience.</li><li>• Trusted mental health providers had input to developing the Guide: nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, caregivers, and individuals with lived experience shared how you can care for yourself while caring for a child, a youth, an adult, or an older adult.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Materials being developed should explain to employers what the impact is on employees who are caregivers of loved ones with a mental illness. This would generate better understanding in the workplace among co-workers and teams.</li><li>• An attendee emphasized the importance of self-care, but spoke of the challenge in making sure we care for ourselves: "I did not have half a minute for self-care."</li><li>• Get the resources to those who need them: caregivers have a responsibility to introduce these resources to those who have been providing care for a while but especially to caregivers whose loved ones are newly diagnosed.</li></ul>

## Pilot Project: Planning for the Needs of Loved Ones Living with Mental Illnesses

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*"We had friends – within three years we had none and that's why developing support networks are important for the well-being of caregivers and their loved ones"*  
**- Anonymous caregiver**

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### SAVE THE DATES:

MICA presents:  
[Art in Strathcona Park](#)  
 25 Range Rd., Ottawa  
 August 19<sup>th</sup>  
 10 AM - 4 PM

Schizophrenia Society of Ontario presents:  
[Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Course for Caregivers](#)  
 October 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>

[Self-Discovery and Recovery Series](#)  
 Renfrew, ON  
 August 16<sup>th</sup>

Friendship Support Group presents:  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Yard and Bake Sale**  
 Carlington Community Health Centre  
 August 30<sup>th</sup>  
 3 – 6 PM

What We said	What You Told Us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MICA and Citizen Advocacy Ottawa are partners in a pilot project designed to create intentional relationships for families and their loved ones living with a mental illness. The project is helping us to learn how genuine circles of support can work to support our loved ones now and into the future when principal caregivers are gone.</li> <li>Families support each other, a network is created around the loved one, social activities are organized, and facilitators are paid through a Trillium grant.</li> <li>We are learning with our partner, Citizen Advocacy Ottawa, whose model provides a framework for this. We want to see how it best functions for caregivers and their family members living with mental illness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is excellent to recognize that people living with a mental illness sometimes need more support than their families can give.</li> <li>Further recognition needs to be given to the fact that many families cannot afford to pay a facilitator.</li> <li>There is an uneven playing field between people with developmental delays who seem to be able to get funding and supports for activities, while many people living with mental illness face just as many obstacles and become very isolated in their own homes without proper support.</li> </ul>

## Employment for Persons Living with Mental Illness

What We said	What You Told Us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MICA has met with Ontario Provincial Government and Federal Government representatives to seek support and involvement for securing greater employment opportunities for persons with mental illness and improving the workplace for caregivers.</li> <li>Our goal for the fall: one or two events led by caregivers involving representatives of both levels of government, to improve understanding of what existing programs offer and to highlight the needs of those living with a mental illness – closing the gap.</li> <li>Addressing retention in the workplace: too often someone with a mental illness who is recently hired, is unable to adapt and leaves prematurely.</li> <li>MICA will work on encouraging a shift in workplace thinking where caregivers are better equipped and supported by employers to deal with the complexities of caring for their loved one while remaining productive in the workplace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caregivers are squeezed by demands at work and at home.</li> <li>Consideration should be given to resources for peer support in the workplace for caregivers, including time off to deal with issues that arise as a result of caregiver responsibilities.</li> <li>There are many players involved in employment support programs and the rules of entry are complicated with some limitations, and as a result many programs are inaccessible. Caregivers need a better understanding of the rules and how to access these programs.</li> </ul>