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A Message from the Mental Illness Caregivers Association's Board of Directors

Let's talk mental illness and caregiving— first, by the numbers:

1 in 5 (6.7 million Canadians)

Experience a mental illness each year

50% of Canadians

Will have or have had a mental illness by age 40

6,000 children in 2015

Waited for mental health treatment

12,000 children in 2016

Waited for mental health treatment

10 to 20 years

Number of years mental illness can cut from a person's life expectancy

A 2012 study reported that 8.1 million Canadians aged 15 or older provided care for a family member.² From our research and approximate calculations at the [Mental Illness Caregivers Association \(MICA\)](http://www.micaontario.com) of Canada we

estimate that about 8% of these Canadians provided care to an immediate family member living with a mental illness.

The numbers tell the story of the enormous physical, emotional, and financial burden on individuals, families, communities and workplaces. Families represent the largest group of community caregivers for those with serious and persistent mental illness, advocating for access to treatment, planning for future needs, and dealing with emergencies and crises.

It's a difficult task, and that's why just knowing that others are dealing with the same issues is reassuring. When we share stories and experiences, others deepen their knowledge, try different strategies, and become more confident in their actions.

At MICA we know the challenges can sometimes be overwhelming, and that solutions often seem beyond reach. Although it can be a difficult journey, we are convinced that if caregivers come together we can address some of the challenges in a meaningful way. One of the ways of coming together is to join

MICA. Membership is free, and by joining you are lending your voice to addressing the challenges that our loved ones living with a mental illness are experiencing – challenges highlighted in the statistics above, including those related to treatment, employment, and housing.

In this issue of the newsletter, meet Board member Sandy Macpherson, who is working on an important project for the future well-being of her son and others; and find out about our new MICA Project Office, created to develop and implement activities to enhance your role as a caregiver.

We hope you find something useful and inspirational in this issue. Share your thoughts and concerns with us regarding some of the challenges you and your loved one face - from providing for the necessary supports to seeking employment and finding appropriate housing. Become a MICA member by visiting micaontario.com/registration or by [clicking here](#).

Paul McIntyre
Chair, MICA

¹ Mental Health Now! Advancing the Mental Health of Canadians: The Federal Role, September 2016, Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health

² Sinha M. 2013. Portrait of Caregivers 2012. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-652-X-No.001. Ottawa. Industry Canada, 21 pp. Available at: www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2013001-eng.pdf



Sharing Our Story: Introducing MICA Board Member Sandy Macpherson

“It shook our whole world, shattered many dreams, and changed our lives forever when our son became ill”, recalled MICA Board member Sandy Macpherson. “But the good news is that it made me aware of what’s important in life and to appreciate our blessings.”

Sandy and her family set out to learn more about mental illness, to meet other parents and caregivers, to advocate and to volunteer.

“I met so many people in the same situation. After several years of advocating for my son, I started volunteering, first with the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario – Ottawa Chapter, and then with MICA. I did some research into housing for people with mental illness for MICA, including Housing Trusts.”

Sandy is now participating in a project with two other families, as well as representatives from MICA

and [Citizen Advocacy](#), to build a community and relationships for their loved ones living with a mental illness that will live on after the current caregivers are gone.

Sandy says, “I want to work towards making Ontario, Canada and the world a better place for people with mental illness and their caregivers.”

“By loving you more, you love the person you are caring for more”

— Peggi Spears, [The Inspired Caregiver: Finding Joy While Caring for Those You Love](#)

Working with Community and Government on Caregivers’ Challenges - A pilot project planning for the needs of loved ones living with mental illnesses

Who will be in my loved one’s network of friends when I’m gone? Will my loved one have friends who share similar interests and lifestyles? MICA and Citizen Advocacy are partners in a pilot project designed to create intentional relationships for families and their loved ones living with a mental illness.

Funded by a Trillium Grant, Citizen Advocacy has hired a coordinator and two facilitators to pilot the concept with those living with a mental illness: to help build a network of people

who want to have intentional relationships which will last well into the future.

Three families are involved in the pilot project, which will test how well the concept works with those living with a mental illness.

The facilitators have gotten to know the families and their needs. Families have met each other and are helping and supporting each other as they discover their specific needs and what will work best for their loved ones.

Stay tuned for updates on the pilot project for caregivers and people living with a mental illness.

Until then, take a few moments and let us know what you think at the following address: mica_ottawa@rogers.com.

"I can't change the direction of the wind but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

Jimmy Dean

Giving a Voice to Caregivers – MICA Project Office

We are pleased to announce that MICA has created a Project Office to develop, implement, track, and manage the projects and activities that will provide caregivers with improved resources and will strengthen services such as housing and employment for our loved ones.

The Project Office will work with caregivers to identify gaps in care and will strive to narrow those gaps with the support of appropriate partners, who we encourage to strengthen their programs and/or services by providing the caregiver perspective.

The focus will be on solutions that enhance caregivers' capacity to tend to their own well-being and that of their loved ones. More news to follow as the Project Office proceeds with its work plan for the coming year.

NAMI's Family-to-Family Education Course – Free education for caregivers

Looking for information to help you cope with a loved one's mental illness? The Family-to-Family Education course may be the answer you are looking for.

This 12-week course is offered **free** to families, friends, and partners of someone with a mental illness.

It is taught by trained volunteers who also have a loved one with a mental illness. The course provides a vast array of technical and

medical information; it follows a set curriculum which balances education and skill training with self-care, emotional support, and empowerment.

At the end of the 12-week course, participants are better equipped to help their loved ones, and they have gained understanding into their loved one's illness. They have learned how to recognize signs of relapse and how to seek help when they need it. They have learned that they are not

alone and they have made friends that last long after the classes have ended.

If you are dealing with a relative with a mental illness, we urge you to seek the help and support that you need.

For more information on locations where the course is offered and how to register, please visit f2fontario.ca.

Coming Up: Watch for the following

Employment:

Our work with partners on employment for our loved ones.

SAVE THE DATE!

Art in Strathcona Park
Exhibition and Sale –
Saturday, August 19, 2017