

For people with a mental illness,
their families and friends

mivoice

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*MI Experience –
providing an
opportunity to
tell your story.*



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A wrap-up

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From the Chief Executive

During Schizophrenia Awareness Week in May, Major Sam Cochran of Memphis Police toured Australia to talk about the model of crisis intervention Memphis has developed as first response to crises involving mental illness. I want to report to you the details of his visit and the outcomes so far.

MI Fellowship set up a series of meetings for Major Cochran to present the key elements of the Memphis model and begin conversations about its potential for transference into the Victorian context. Among others, Major Cochran met with a chief advisor to Premier and Cabinet, chief advisor to Police Minister Tim Holding, Daniel Andrews, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, key figures in Mental Health services, (including both clinical and non-clinical services), senior judiciary of Magistrates, County and Supreme Courts of Victoria, senior police, including Assistant Commissioner Ken Lay, State Coroner Graeme Johnstone, Senator Lyn Alison (who chaired the recent Senate Committee Report into mental health services), Dr Ruth Vine, Director Mental Health Services in Victoria, Sue Tait from the Office of Police Integrity, and Chief Psychiatrist Amgad Tanaghow. Many others also attended the Woodcock memorial lecture, including Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon, who also joined Major Cochran for supper afterwards to further discuss the model.

What Major Cochran made clear in each of the presentations and meetings was the vital importance of partnerships in the success of the model. He identifies three key groups in this: Police, mental health services and people with a mental illness and their families. All of these groups have input into the model and the training that forms part of it. Among other interesting parts of the program, police members who are

trained to become part of the Crisis Intervention Team spend a day in a rehabilitation program just talking to people with a mental illness so that both the police members and people with a mental illness see each other in a context outside of crisis.

Major Cochran also said that the model had contributed to changing attitudes about mental illness in Memphis generally and particularly among those police members who became part of the Crisis Intervention Team.

Since Major Cochran's visit, conversations have continued at many levels and we are hopeful that a pilot or a number of pilots will result. Chief Commissioner referred to the Memphis model in a public statement following the event and indicated that she had asked some senior police to report to her on the viability of a new intervention model in Victoria. Both the Health and Police ministerial offices have showed continued interest and are following through with talks. At a local level, several regions of Victoria have shown keen interest in being part of a pilot.

Obviously much water has to pass under the bridge to turn talks into committed action and resources, but Major Cochran's visit has taken us to the next step in seeing a more effective system of intervention at the crisis end of mental illness. The final aim is, of course, better outcomes for people with a mental illness, their families and friends. We will keep you informed of developments.



2.

Xavier Amador returns to Australia

Xavier Amador is returning to Australia from the USA in September as a guest of Mental Illness Fellowship Australia. Dr Amador, a clinical psychologist, will travel to major cities in Australia and share his expertise on working with people who have a mental illness who do not know they are unwell.

Dr Amador is the co-author of the book "I am not sick. I don't need help", which explains his approach to helping people with mental illness accept treatment. Stay tuned for more details of where and when you can hear Xavier speak while he is in Victoria.

Details of MI Fellowship's upcoming events can always be found on our website at <http://www.mifellowship.org/newsevents.asp>



Xavier Amador in Melbourne in May 2004, promoting the Woodcock Lecture

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News bites

Artwork in the Maude Street Mall in Shepparton



My View, Your View, Our View

Weeks of hard work culminated in a day of artwork and promotion for Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria in the Maude Street Mall in Shepparton on Friday May 19.

May 15 – 19 was Rural Health Week and Schizophrenia Awareness Week and a hard working team from the Specialist Residential Rehabilitation Program (SRRP) in Shepparton organised two events to celebrate.

The first was a very successful trivia and auction night which saw eighty people enthusiastically bid for a number of donated goods and have great fun answering a series of trivia questions put together by the talented MC Hammers who conducted the evening. Over \$2000 was raised and that money will be invested back into the Hume Region programs.

The same team of Cindy, Trudy and Meagan organised the 'art in the mall' promotion. This was preceded by visits to local schools. Program participants talked to students about mental

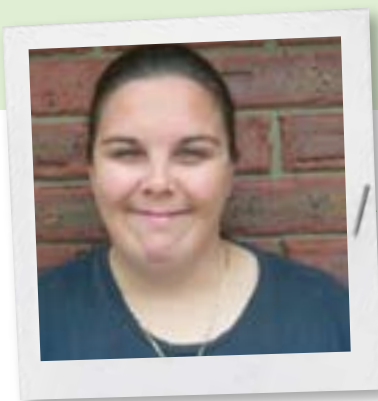
illness and then the students painted their interpretation of mental illness.

Sheets donated by Gouge Laundry were cut to size, undercoated by participants and then presented as canvases to aspiring artists: students, program participants and shoppers in the mall. The resulting artworks will be sewn together to make huge wall hangings which will be displayed at different program locations and the local in patient unit.

The paintings reflect many facets of mental illness from the darkness of despair, through frustration, bewilderment, support, caring, to the light and colour of hope.

As Cindy McCurdy, the co-ordinator of SRRP said, 'It was a great opportunity to engage the public and increase awareness of mental illness. It was terrific to see such a diverse group of people participating.'

3.



Past, a shadow that follows us around

Soldier at war... my mind is the enemy

A heart filled with such intense pain

Camouflage & hide no one will know

Survival of the Fittest

I don't recognise my self anymore

The needle on my compass is broken

My mind without a map, a maze of fear

"Where do I go from here?"

Fighting inner battles of heart & mind

Misery loves company, no foreign friend

I fought so hard, my expectations too high

Fall seven times stand up eight

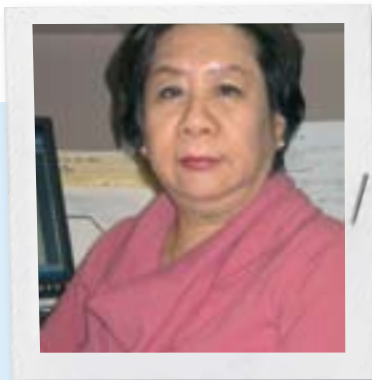
Did I shoot myself in the foot?

Tu-'pac it in, let the battle begin

Still I Rise!

©Wilksch

30.8.02



The names of the people in this story have been changed to protect identities

Snapshots

Uyen Nguyen Carrington is a counsellor at Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria. Here she shares the story of a Vietnamese family she has been working with.

Le Hanh's son has suffered from schizophrenia for more than ten years. The family have been in Australia for more than twenty years and at times felt as if they had failed at living up to the expectations of social and financial success due to their son's illness.

Their eldest son Long was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was seeing a psychiatrist but was delusional and thought that the psychiatrist was an agent sent to Australia from the Communist Regime in Vietnam. Long got on better with their family doctor, so he kept seeing this doctor and was prescribed with medication. He took the medication for a while but got fed up and started to only take his medication sporadically and in time he stopped taking it all together.

Originally Long started seeing that psychiatrist a few months after breaking up with his girlfriend, which happened twelve years prior. The girlfriend's brother assaulted Long one day when he went to see a neighbour who was friend to both of them, concerned that Long was trying to approach his sister. Long was upset when his ex-girlfriend and her family took out an intervention order against him. From then on, Long thought that everybody was against him, his ex girlfriend, his Vietnamese friends, the neighbours and the psychiatrist. He also thought that the Labor Party hired thugs to follow him, and harm him. Long had difficulty holding on to jobs as he talked to himself in a low voice at work. Seeing this behaviour, his employer sacked him. Though he graduated from TAFE with a Diploma in Architecture Design he could not get the type of job he expected to due to his mental illness.

Recently Long's parents got fed up with his mental health condition. They decided to approach MI Fellowship to help them to get treatment for their son.

In my role as counsellor at MI Fellowship, the first thing I did was ring their local community mental health service to refer Long. I was shocked when the intake worker replied to me that "if he had not taken any medication for ten years he must not have any illness".

I informed Long's mother about the difficulty of getting access to the community mental health centre. Her next strategy was to get a referral from their family doctor and they subsequently got an appointment with a psychiatrist and a case manager at that community mental health service.

Long's mother, Mrs. Hanh, called MI Fellowship in tears after an incident where Long had been aggressive towards their neighbours, thinking they were following and trying to harm

him. I suggested that Mrs Hanh call the area community mental health centre to ask their help. Even after seeing the professionals at the centre, Long refused to take medication saying he had stomach pain and no mental illness. Finally in May this year, the CAT Team and police arrived to take him to a hospital psychiatric ward. Though the police had handled the situation roughly, Long's parents were relieved that he was finally getting proper diagnosis and treatment. Through this, I was present to provide support, guidance to the family and even attended the family conference when Long was still in hospital. With his parents, I visited him at the hospital where the family was happy to be able to communicate well with the psychiatrist. They understood that the hospital was going to do a scan of Long's brain suspecting that he might have an acquired brain injury as well as schizophrenia. We all hoped that this diagnosis would allow for the appropriate medication to be prescribed in order to help Long on the road to recovery.

Long and his family will continue to attend the area mental health centre and visit their doctor. They will also encourage Long to pursue employment. Though they are still wondering if they had committed any sin in the past (this is a common belief among Vietnamese people practising Buddhism) to make Long suffer so much in his present life, they will continue to encourage Long to exercise and meditate as therapy like Buddhists have always done. These techniques have always helped people from Asia, and combined with proper medication, the family hope that one day Long can be employed and have a successful life.

For advice on family education & counselling sessions call MI Fellowship helpline (03) 8486 4222

Media spokespeople

MI Fellowship is increasingly being called upon by media outlets to provide comment about issues surrounding mental illness, including personal accounts of what it's like to live with a mental illness from various perspectives. If you would be interested in being 'on stand-by' to tell your story, we'd love to hear from you. We've had great success placing people with a mental illness, their parents and carers into the media in the past and only deal with journalists we can trust. You can opt-out at any time and can agree or not agree to participate on a case-by-case basis. If you are willing to do this, or would like to know more, contact Stephanie at MI Fellowship on 8486 4257 or membership@mifellowship.org

People & their stories

It's been 15 months since I had a psychotic episode and I have to say I'm feeling a whole lot better about things.

Sometimes it's been one step forward, two steps back, but ultimately I feel as though I'm moving away from the 'black dog' of depression hovering nearby and looking towards the real possibility of a positive future.

One step backwards was taking myself off my medication. I was feeling OK so I stopped taking them. It was a bit out of laziness as well. I slowly regressed back to wanting to stay in bed all day and not facing the world. Now I'm back on them and I feel much better.

Another step backwards was not being able to continue university – I started studying Film and Television. Three hours on public transport a day with 8.30am starts and the pressure of looming assignments was a bit much so I deferred my studies. My program was also full-time, I would recommend going back part-time to someone looking to study post-illness.

On the other hand I've now decided to pursue Public Relations using a degree I already have in Journalism. I have been volunteering for Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAAC) and hopefully starting volunteering for the Melbourne Fringe Festival in the near future. I'm not sure how much PR work there will be to do but at least it gets me out of bed in the morning and is a way of getting back into employment.

I've found that what really contributes to depression is unemployment and I highly recommend volunteering as a way



of getting back to work because it gives you something to do with your time – let's face it, there's only so much Oprah you can watch without getting nauseous, and it's more flexible than going straight back into a demanding workplace.

I've also found the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) to be another useful acronym.

They've guided me back into making a career choice and provide support and encouragement through their program, and also alleviate any Centrelink requirements which would prove difficult while recovering from an illness.

On the whole, I would say that it is not worth stressing about employment while trying to recover from an illness. I tried to go back to work too early at the start and it makes you feel exhausted and puts your health at risk. Take it easy, and in baby steps.

Danielle Cotter

Editors note: Find out more about CRS at www.crsaustralia.gov.au

5.

Park Bench[©] Observations of Daily life



Created by Peter Barker 'Park Bench' is a cartoon series, looking at life and social issues, provided by Peter Barker, who has lived with schizophrenia for over twenty years.



MI Centre Mural

The MI Centre Mural has been undertaken as a 12 month project. Participants, along with resident artist/staff member Stephen Crowe, have designed, planned, sketched and painted this masterpiece. Along the way they have learned the fine skills of artistry, as well as how to navigate a system of scaffolding and ladders. It is an absolute masterpiece that again demonstrates MI Fellowship's ability to 'achieve the unachievable' through patience, persistence and 'working with/alongside' each other. Congratulations to all involved!



From the President

Notice is given in this edition of our next Annual General Meeting on Friday 20 October. It may seem some time away, but one feature of our Annual General Meeting is the

presentation of awards to honour people at various levels who have made outstanding contributions to improving the lives of people with a mental illness, their families and friends.

Last year, the diversity of people who were recognized was extraordinary. They included a journalist, a case manager, a psychiatrist in community health, a carer and community educator, a police inspector, and our own Op Shop sorting team – an unlikely mix and yet each had, in their own way, made significant contribution to improving the lives of people with a mental illness, their families and friends.

Fran Kelly of ABC Radio National, who facilitated a panel conversation at the annual Bruce Woodcock Memorial Lecture this year, talked about her perception of changing views in the Australian community and among her colleagues in the media. She reflected that mental health had indeed gained ground as

a mainstream community issue, and that, although we have a long way to go, there has been an appreciable shift in the way media portrays mental illness. Depicting mental illness in a compassionate and sympathetic way is now a possibility. The self-disclosure by some publicly prominent figures, Fran said, has assisted this shift.

In this atmosphere, it becomes even more vital to recognise people who make outstanding contributions and to identify just what it is that makes a difference – sorting the donated clothes for the op shop or going that extra mile as a case manager – because it is the stories of real people making a difference that will continue to change community attitudes to move to greater understanding and acceptance.

Each one of you in your journeys has, no doubt, met extraordinary people who were able to make a difference – even if the difference was small in the overall context of dealing with the often complex issues around mental illness.

It is these people we wish to recognise in our annual awards. Please consider making a nomination for this year's awards. There are a number of categories to choose from. See page 10 in this edition for details about how to nominate, or contact Stephanie Puls at MI Fellowship, Fairfield Place, if you want assistance to make a nomination.

6.

Minter Ellison

MI Fellowship is grateful for the ongoing support of Minter Ellison Lawyers. Their wide ranging support in representing the rights of carers and people with a mental illness through their lawyer development program has been invaluable to the organisation. Minters have also generously provided advice and representation on industrial relations issues, contract overview, intellectual property, due diligence and IT support.

Minters' interest in supporting social ventures is so important to MI Fellowship, enabling us to provide better and cutting edge services to people with a mental illness in areas for which we are not funded. This assistance has helped us develop initiatives to address service gaps.

Minter Ellison partner Anthony Poynton said Minter Ellison was proud of its long association with MI Fellowship. "One of



our firm's guiding values is enduring relationships and that is precisely what we have sought to develop with MI Fellowship. Our Community Investment Program is aimed at breaking cycles of disadvantage – and we are confident that our work with MI Fellowship is contributing to this overall goal. We look forward to providing further support in the

future and commend the team at MI Fellowship for its outstanding work."

Out thanks again to Anthony Poynton and Minter Ellison for their ongoing support of MI Fellowship.



Schizophrenia Awareness Week 2006

Major Sam Cochran's visit to Victoria was a very busy one, with his days filled with meetings and media interviews and nights filled with functions to meet key figures in the mental health sector.

While in Melbourne, Major Cochran was featured on 'Life Matters' on Radio National, 'The Conversation Hour' on 774 ABC and was interviewed by The Age and Herald Sun newspapers. In meetings aimed at informing and lobbying key stakeholders in mental health in Victoria, Major Cochran met

Major Sam Cochran's visit to Victoria was a very busy one, with his days filled with meetings and media interviews and nights filled with functions to meet key figures in the mental health sector.



(L-R) Major Sam Cochran, Victoria Police Chief Commissioner, Christine Nixon and MI Fellowship's Liz Crowther.

Dates for your diary – 2006

Nominations for Awards close – Friday 25 August

Nominations for Board of Directors close –
Friday 1 September

Mental Health Week – 8-15 October

Open Mind Fiesta – Sunday 15 October

AGM, Awards and Annual Lecture – Friday 20 October

Volunteer thank you party – 4pm, Thursday 30 November

15th car raffle draw (Spring) – Thursday 7 December

Please find out more about all activities by calling 03 8486 4200 or visit www.mifellowship.org/newsevents.asp

with Yvette Nash, Chief Advisor to Police Minister; Daniel Andrews, Parliamentary Secretary for Health; the mental health Ministerial Advisory Committee; Commander Ashley Dickinson and Superintendent Graham Kent of Victoria Police; senior judiciary; representatives of mental health organisations and a number of MI Fellowship's financial and in-kind supporters.

On his last night in Melbourne, Major Cochran delivered the 8th annual Bruce Woodcock Memorial Lecture at BMW Edge Theatre. Major Cochran explained to the assembled crowd his critically acclaimed 'Crisis Intervention Team' model, developed in Tennessee, USA. Following the lecture, respected political journalist and current host of ABC Radio National's breakfast program, Fran Kelly reflected on the changing perception of mental illness in the media and facilitated a discussion and question time with Major Cochran, Elizabeth Crowther and John Mendoza, CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia.

A copy of the lecture is available to borrow from the MI Resource Centre for those unable to attend. Contact the Centre on 03 8486 4200 or visit us at Fairfield Place, 276 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield.



7.

Staff and their stories

Bernadette Doyle

- 1. What's your role at MI Fellowship?** My role at MI Fellowship is Manager of Advocacy and Education Services
- 2. What's your favourite part of your role?** Witnessing the courage and resilience of family, friends and people with mental illness advocate for change
- 3. Where have you worked prior to this role?** The Kimberley, Perth, rural Vic from Ouyen to Healesville and metro Melbourne as an educator, counselor and chaplain!
- 4. If you could say one thing to members, what would it be?** Never lose hope!!!
- 5. What are you reading at the moment?** 'Don't call me Nuts!' Patrick Corrigan & Robert Lundin
- 6. What's your most treasured possession?** My Essendon Football Club membership!!
- 7. In one word, describe the essence of MI Fellowship?** Advocacy & Empowerment



*Not again!
A carer's
reflections*

*No, not again!
The first time*

it had been scary, dangerous, a time of deep darkness, but with it all there had been some sense of adventure, an awareness of traversing new territory, new lessons learned.

Five years later it happened again, and the anguished carer found, after the initial despair, some strength in recalling the first episode and recalling that there was a way out of the forest's darkness.

But when it happened a third and even fourth time, the carer began to question and to doubt. Was she committed yet again to months in those dark places, could there be yet further paths to struggle along? There settled on her spirit a sense of blunted hope, of dimmed ideals, a fear that the forest paths might lead towards the light but would never break out into the sunshine. It seemed that forever their lives would be touched by shadows where lurking figures might pounce out upon them at the most unlikely times.

8.

God, we know you dwell in forest places as much as on shining peaks or grassland plains, but please give us some assurance that the forest paths are heading somewhere. Or, at least, if we have to keep treading the same old paths, please help us to see some new vistas, some previously unnoticed bird or at least some tiny orchid in the undergrowth that may remind us of your continuing presence. Please!

By Laura Aitkin, a member of MI Fellowship.

*Mental Illness
Education Schedule*

Well Ways: A travellers' guide to wellbeing for families and friends of people with mental illness.

The Well Ways program consists of eight three-hour weekly group education sessions plus follow-up workshops over 12 months.

Where: Mitcham

When: Tuesday 6.30-9.30pm commencing July 18

Where: Fairfield

When: Friday 10am-1pm commencing August 4

Where: Box Hill

When: Thursday 10am-1pm commencing September 7

Where: Heidelberg

When: Wednesday 6.30-9.30pm commencing October 4

Where: Mitcham

When: Tuesday 6.30-9.30pm commencing October 17

Double Trouble: A support and information program for families and friends of people with dual diagnosis (mental illness and substance abuse)

The Double Trouble program consists of six three-hour weekly group education sessions

Where: Fairfield

When: Thursday 10am-1pm commencing October 12

Understanding Mental Illness Workshops

Where: MI Fellowship, Fairfield Place,
276 Heidelberg Rd, Fairfield

When: 6.30pm on August 16; 9.30am on October 4;
6.30pm on November 9

For more information about any of these programs or to book, please call 03 8486 4200 or email enquiries@mifellowship.org

Notice of Annual General Meeting

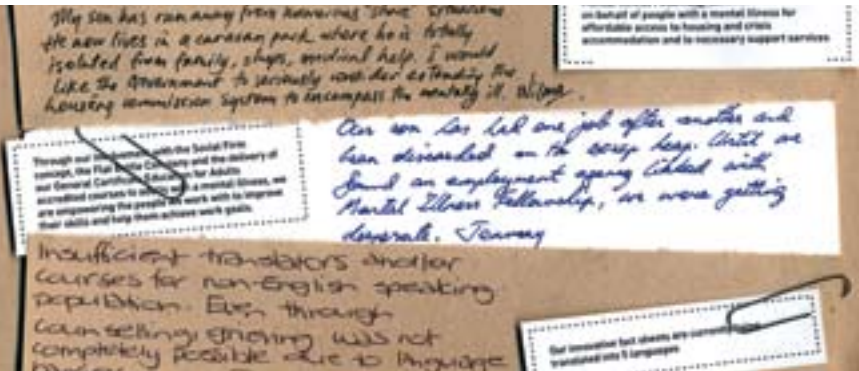
Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria will host our AGM at Fairfield Place on Friday 20 October. The AGM will feature a special guest speaker and the distribution of our annual awards. It's an important night for MI Fellowship to report back to our members about the previous financial year, as well as an opportunity to recognise people who make a contribution to the lives of those affected by mental illness.

WHERE: MI Fellowship, Fairfield Place,
276 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield

WHEN: Friday 20 October at 5.30pm



MI Advocacy for the state election – your chance to be heard



Members would have recently received a letter from MI Fellowship about our current advocacy campaign in which members are urged to lobby their local politicians for better support for people affected by mental illness.

The data collected from members earlier in the year revealed the following as common areas of concern:

1. Clinical care and treatment planning
2. Appropriate housing
3. Ongoing non-clinical support
4. Employment
5. Family/carer support
6. Cost of medications
7. Access to psychiatrists/psychologists
8. Confidentiality

Election time provides a unique opportunity to make politicians aware of what you believe is important.

You can tell them any time, but of course when there is an election looming they will be more inclined to listen in the hope of securing your vote! MI Fellowship urges you to make your voice heard at this time and put mental health at the top of the agenda.

If you have any questions about this campaign or MI Fellowship's advocacy more generally, please contact Stephanie at Fairfield Place on 03 8486 4257 or email membership@mifellowship.org



9.

Open Mind Fiesta 2006: Sunday 15 October

Open Mind Fiesta is just around the corner! Every year the fiesta is growing in size and we need volunteers to help make it happen. We are seeking people who are interested in making this year's Fiesta as successful as it has been in the past. Volunteering at Open Mind Fiesta is a great way to spend a Sunday in spring and a rewarding way to participate with Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria.

You can volunteer for a range of duties including selling carnival ride tickets, making and selling fairy floss, helping in the

children's area and supervising barricades. The day is broken up into three hour shifts so you can volunteer for as little or as long as you like and when your shift is over you can enjoy the Fiesta.

For further information on how to become a volunteer at this event or to have a Volunteer Participation form sent to you, please call Annmarie Collins on 03 8486 4205 or email acollins@mifellowship.org.

MI Fellowship would like to thank the AMP Foundation, who have financially supported Open Mind Fiesta for the last two years through their community fundraising program. The program enables financial planners to partner with a local charity to organise a fundraising event. The AMP Foundation then matches, dollar for dollar, any money AMP financial planners raise for charities up to \$10,000. Over the years, AMP Financial Planners' fundraising efforts have contributed millions of dollars to local communities.



2006 MI Fellowship Awards – Why you should nominate

Each year the Mental Illness Fellowship Awards recognise the outstanding contribution made by individuals to improving the wellbeing of people with a mental illness, their families and friends. The Awards will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on Friday 20 October 2006.



Last year, Max and Denise Cole, MI Fellowship members, nominated Jen Akester who is their son's Case Manager. In their nomination, the Cole's praised Jen, saying "From day one Jen has treated our family with respect and dignity and acknowledged the role of the family in treatment and wellbeing."

The awards were a unique way to recognise Jen and the gratitude the Cole's felt toward her for what they felt was going above and beyond the call of duty, showing extraordinary compassion and professionalism.

You can also recognise someone you believe goes above and beyond the call of duty by nominating them for a MI Fellowship award.

10.

The Award categories are as follows:

Mental Illness Fellowship Award (annual)

Awarded to a volunteer, participant or carer associated with the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, for their outstanding contribution to participants and/or carers in MI Fellowship programs.

Mental Health Community Award (annual)

Awarded to a person working in the general community, for

their outstanding service to people living with a mental illness or carers of people with a mental illness.

Volunteer of the Year Award (annual)

Awarded to a volunteer for outstanding contribution to MI Fellowship.

O'Meara Award (non-annual)

The O'Meara Award is MI Fellowship's Award for individuals who have made an outstanding and extraordinary contribution to the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria over many years, in areas such as development of the organisation, advocacy or another significant area. It is not an annual award due to its prestigious nature. The award is named after John O'Meara, the organisation's first president. In recognition, the person receives Honorary Life Membership of MI Fellowship.

Blickle Award (non-annual)

The Blickle Award is MI Fellowship's Award for individuals who have made sustained impact on the development of the mental health field outside of MI Fellowship. It will typically be somebody who is well known for their work in the mental health field who has made significant impact on the lives of people with a mental illness or the family members over a sustained period of time. It is not an annual award due to its prestigious nature. The award is named after Jurgen Blickle of SEW-Eurodrive, a key supporter of MI Fellowship.

In recognition, the person receives Honorary Life Membership of MI Fellowship.

Nomination forms are available from www.mifellowship.org/newsevents.asp or by calling Fairfield Place on 03 8486 4200. Nominations must be made before 25 August 2006.

Join our Board of Directors

Nominations are welcome for our Board of Directors. All persons nominated and nominating for a position on the Board of Directors of the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria must be current financial Members of MI Fellowship.

For more information, call Bernie Trahair on 03 8486 4200. Nominations must be received by 5pm, 1 September 2006.

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor

There was a great article in The Geelong Times in May about a young girl with bipolar. I was delighted to see such a positive story highlight the fact that anyone can be affected by mental illness. The family mentioned all the support they had, including from Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria. May there be more such stories in mainstream media!

V. Young, Geelong.

Editor's note: The article mentioned in this letter is available to view at <http://www.mifellowship.org/newsours.asp>

From the editor:

Please send your letters to:

Stephanie Puls, Fairfield Place, 276 Heidelberg Rd, Fairfield 3078 or email to membership@mifellowship.org

We are always pleased to hear from members, in response to MI Voice, or about anything that's on your mind. It's an effective way to communicate with other members also. If you have a suggestion or comment to make, please feel free to drop us a note.

Dealing with the issues of mental illness in the wider community

“I don't like people to know I have this illness. Too many treat me differently when they find out”

Providing members with a forum in which to raise issues of concern, particularly when those issues can be brought onto the agenda before a state election, has been a prime motivation for our recent advocacy programs. Members were very forthcoming and forthright in sending in their concerns. Some of these issues are raised in the article on previous pages.

MI Fellowship's recent Tax Appeal provided the ideal vehicle to broaden the opportunity for non-members to also voice their concerns. Some of our supporters may not have the direct connection with mental illness of members, however, their concerns do reflect community expectations and the lack of fulfillment of those expectations.

A small selection of the many responses received provides an insight into how those within the general community view and deal with mental illness, perhaps not directly and sometimes outside the traditional illnesses, but still of concern within their family spheres.

Bronwyn writes, “I haven't had any personal experience but I have observed the high incidence of depression among friends, male and female, in our rural area. There is a lack of support for them in the country. I am concerned about people being pushed into communities without appropriate support.

Too many crimes (are) by people that are unsupported.”

An elderly gentleman caring for an elderly wife diagnosed with Alzheimers expressed serious concern about the lack of or difficulty of obtaining emergency respite care. At a time in their lives and at their ages – 84 and 90 years of age, respectively – when their lives should be settled, they are worried and concerned over lack of services.

A truly touching anonymous response, “I am 39. I was 19 when I was diagnosed with mental illness. I don't like people to know I have this illness. Too many treat me differently when they find out. Recently, I was unwell again and felt too ashamed and embarrassed to tell my family, except my mother, then only after three weeks. She did come straight away to help me. She says I need someone to help me round the house.”

Reading through these and the many other concerns received, it is sometimes difficult not to become emotional when confronted by the raw pain of dealing with issues on a daily basis, among them difficulty in accessing services, stigma, minimal or no support.

To all our supporters who have taken the time and displayed enormous personal courage to send in a written account of their concern, please be assured that these issues will remain on our agenda and continue to form the basis of our advocacy. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Jo Luciani and Eifion Breese of MI Fellowship, Fairfield Place



11.

MI Fellowship staff lead by example through MI Challenge

Last year, two MI Fellowship staff members participated in a MI Challenge, when they trekked the Great Wall of China. Ilonka Whitsed and Cindy McCurdy from Wangaratta and Shepparton respectively raised \$5000 each, making a terrific contribution to the organisation, enabling us to continue to support people affected by mental illness.

And in an exciting development, two staff members from MI Fellowship at Fairfield Place have also decided to take on the challenge of trekking to Everest Base Camp in September this year. Joanne Luciani (Fundraising Coordinator) and Eifion Breese (General Manager, Rehabilitation Services) have started training in earnest, making regular trips to the 'Thousand Steps' in Dandenong, among other training pursuits. “It's a great opportunity to

support MI Fellowship in a different way and at the same time reach for a significant personal goal” said Joanne. Eifion and Joanne are paying their own trip costs and are working tirelessly to meet their fundraising target in the months leading up to their departure on 11 September.

Individuals or organisations interested in supporting Eifion and Joanne with their fundraising should contact Joanne on 03 8486 4200 or email jluciani@mifellowship.org Individuals interested in participating in a MI Challenge of their own should contact Chris Harrison on 0423 780 716 or email charrison@memorablechallenges.com. Challenge yourself to make a difference this year! More information at www.mifellowship.org/michallenge.asp

Who are we?

Mental Illness Fellowship is Victoria's leading membership-based not-for-profit organisation working with people with a mental illness, their family and friends to improve their wellbeing.

Our Vision

Our vision is of a society in which mental illness will be understood and accepted. People with mental illness will be afforded the same regard as those with physical illnesses and resources will be available to offer early interventions and state of the art treatment and support. These interventions will be so effective that long-term negative consequences of mental illness will have disappeared for the person and their family. People will no longer experience stigma and society will treat them with the same respect and dignity as any other person, and welcome and fully include them as community members.

Our Values

Honesty	Acceptance	Equity
Flexibility	Commitment	Participation

Our Mission

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria works with people with mental illness, their families and friends to improve their well being. More specifically we work to achieve mental health reform through education, support and advocacy, and we provide a range of innovative programs in both membership and services. We also provide mutual support and self help, day programs, employment, home based and accommodation services, respite and residential rehabilitation services.

2005/6 Board of Directors

The Hon. Robert Knowles - President
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Design: Artwords **Printing:** Print Impressions

MI Voice is for members and aims to keep them informed of the latest information on mental illness and our advocacy work. It is also our opportunity to keep potential and existing supporters who donate informed of the Mental Illness Fellowship's activities and the difference their contribution makes. MI Voice is the quarterly publication of the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, Fairfield Place 276 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield, Victoria, 3078, Australia.

Telephone 03 8486 4200
Email enquiries@mifellowship.org
Website www.mifellowship.org

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Ways to support and keep us informed

Please use this form to change your address details, become a Member of the Mental Illness Fellowship or to show your support for our work.

- For credit card donations call 03 8486 4200 and quote MIV06, or complete this form and either post or fax your credit card details
- For cheques and money orders post this form to:
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Questions about donations?

Please contact us on 03 8486 4200 or via enquiries@mifellowship.org

Please tick here if you do not wish to receive further information about Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria or if you are under 18

I would like some more information about:

- Volunteering – Your donation of time and talent.
- Pledging a monthly contribution – Giving families a chance. And a future.
- Bequests – Remember the Mental Illness Fellowship in your will.