

Mood Disorder Association of Manitoba
Supporting Manitobans Who Live With Depression
by
Brian Campbell

Some 20% of all Manitobans live with a depression related issue. The Mood Disorder Association of Manitoba (MDAM) has been in operation since 1983 and helps to support Manitobans dealing with all forms of depression. This includes Dysthymia, Bipolar Disorder, Co-occurring Disorders, Seasonal Affective Disorder, Postpartum Depression, Borderline Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia, Anxiety and LGBT related depression, among many others.

Executive Director, Tara Brousseau Snider, has been with MDAM for nine years and she says, “When I first started, we were helping 11,000 people, and last year we helped over 55,000 people, so we have grown immensely. That’s partly because people are realizing that they can seek and receive help; they can get support.”

MDAM is a province-wide organization with eight branch offices across the province that offers a number of services including summer band and dance camps, a sports camp, a creative arts program, a youth support group and a leisure group. They have support groups for men and women, LGBT, Postpartum Depression, addictions, menopause, Borderline Personality, family and friends and general depression. They also have cognitive behaviour programs, mental first aid and a peer program.

The volunteer peer program has over 200 active volunteers with lived experience, who offer support to others in helping them deal with their mood disorders. “Evidence is showing more and more that peer support is critical in the world of mental illness, because it can help lead the way in their recovery,” Tara says. “It is wonderful to be able to recover from a mental illness through volunteering.”

Children between 11 and 17 who are experiencing a mood disorder, can attend camps during Spring Break and in the summer, where they can play a musical

instrument, sing or, beginning this summer, dance. They will also be educated on what a mood disorder is, how to get help and how to live life with a mood disorder.

“We offer education to groups ranging from children to seniors,” Tara says. “We have 43 different workshops. We will go to workplaces and talk to employers and employees. We talk to family members and caregivers. We will do workshops on ‘What is a Mood Disorder,’ and what it looks like at different ages. What it looks like for a teenager versus a senior.”

MDAM currently has just under 20 employees province-wide, and six mostly part time workers in Winnipeg, so they are very reliant on volunteers. Tara says, “Although we are a very lean organization, we are really rich in resources through the people who help us.”

They follow what they refer to as ‘the recovery model’ where they help their client develop the ability to live with their mental illness in the best way for them to flourish. MDAM may need to advocate for different support systems such as housing or income, or by helping families develop a recovery system at home. “We offer hope, we offer support, we walk with people in their journeys and everything is individualized,” Tara says. “By following the recovery method, we give everyone the opportunity to recover from their mental illness in the best way possible for them.”

MDAM’s office is at 4 Fort Street, in the same building as the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society, Anxiety Disorder Association of Manitoba and OCD Centre Manitoba, and they regularly work together. Tara says, “We are kind of a one place to come when you feel that there is something wrong with you, and you can get help here.”

Although the number of MDAM’s clients has increased dramatically over the last few years, their government funding has not, so they rely on the community for the necessary funds to continue supporting their clients. They have an annual gala every spring that helps with both funding and awareness, donations are, of course, gratefully accepted and, as of this spring, the necklace and lapel pin created from Reid Bricker’s sculpture are now available for sale.

“It is just wonderful to have that kind of recognition, especially from the Bricker family,” Tara says. “I really admire the Brickers for speaking out and asking for change and I believe they are the great change makers right now in our city.”

She adds, “What people can do is come to MDAM, be educated, learn about it, and don’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it. We will appreciate any help you can give us; if you have time to volunteer or be a part of one of our events or education programs we would gladly welcome you into our organization.”

To find out more about the Mood Disorder Association of Manitoba, go to www.mooddisordersmanitoba.ca

Reid Bricker’s LifesArt necklace and lapel pin can be purchased either through MDAM or by going to www.hilarydruxman.com