

Carers Representative Program E-Bulletin:

Carers in Mind

15th August 2009

Welcome to the Carer Representation Program E-Bulletin sent out every fortnight to inform you about committees, news and events of interest to the Carer Representation Program. This issue we have information on the Mental Health Arts and Music Festival, committees attended by Carer Representatives and the Red Cross MATES Program.

Mental Health Week Events

Mental Health Arts and Music Festival

World Mental Health Day is the 10th of October 2009 and Mental Health Recovery ACT is marking the occasion by holding a Mental Health Arts and Music Festival in Garema Place from 4pm until 10pm. The theme of the Festival is recovery from mental illness, and removing the stigma of mental illness by engaging the Canberra community.

A short film competition and poetry competition are being held as part of the festival. People from all walks of life are free to enter and the categories are:

Open – anyone is able to enter a film or poetry into this category

Consumer and Carers – Mental Health Consumers and their Carers can enter a film or poem into this category

Student – High School, College or Tertiary Students can enter this category (student number & school name is required to enter this category).

The films and poems will be shortlisted by the mhRACT committee and a panel of judges will choose a Winner and a Highly Commended for each category. The short listed films will be able to be viewed by the community later in the week.

Also for community organisations wishing to get involved the Mental Health Week 2009 (4 to 10 October) the reimbursement form is attached to this E-Bulletin along with the competition entry forms.

Committee Updates

Each issue an update of a Carer Representatives Committee will be included in this section. This issue will cover the Seclusion and Restraint Working Group.

Carer Representation

The regular monthly meeting of the Seclusion and Restraint Working Group was held on 21 July at the Canberra Hospital Psychiatric Services Unit. The group includes staff from the Psychiatric Services Unit and Older Persons Mental Health Unit, Public Advocate representative, Occupational Therapists, consumers and carers.

The ACT has participated in the National Beacon Site Demonstration Project on elimination and/or reduction of seclusion and restraint for the past two years. The collection of accurate data shows clear overall reduction in the incidence and length of time of seclusion and restraint episodes at the PSU. Although the Beacon project has ceased, the ACT will continue to collect and analyse data on these occurrences. Residual funding was used to buy comfortable furniture and electronic games for the use of consumers.

PSU Staff have prepared a pamphlet providing information for distribution to people whose friends or family members have been admitted to the PSU.

Consumer representatives are now included in weekly seclusion review meetings to provide feedback and better understanding of why episodes occurred and how they could best be prevented.

Carers and consumers have been invited to participate with recovery training for PSU staff over the next two weeks. Carers will be able to tell their stories in an inter-active and harmonious environment. Thanks to Judy Bentley for this report.

If you further in formation relating to the Seclusion and Restraint Working Party feel free to contact the Carer Policy and Representation Officer at Carers ACT: Claire Carpenter via email, clairec@carersact.asn.au or on 6296 9936

Red Cross MATES Program

Red Cross has started up a new program in the ACT called MATES. The MATES program aims to assist isolated individuals to reconnect with their community through regular contact with volunteers. Participants and volunteers undertake social activities together which can help build self confidence and a sense of well-being. As this is brand new for the ACT we are trying to build awareness of the program within the community and encourage people to become involved either as participants or volunteers.

If you would like more information about the program please contact the MATES Coordinator on 6234 7641 or email tcollins@redcross.org.au or you can read a bit more about it on our website http://www.redcross.org.au/act/services_communitycare.htm