

## Making a Difference – Mental Health Program

Expert diagnosis and proper treatment through a team approach makes a difference where help is needed most among clients with a dual diagnosis.

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## Adult Diagnostic Clinic – Unique to Ontario

Surrey Place Centre's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Adult Diagnostic Clinic is the only facility in Ontario exclusively for individuals 18 and older suspected of having FASD.

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## 3rd Annual Inspiring Hope Awards

Members of the Surrey Place Centre community were honoured for their outstanding contributions in support of people with developmental disabilities and recognized for their achievements.

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## Symphonic Passion Chorus: A Musical Success Story

From weekly rehearsals at Surrey Place Centre to performing the national anthem for 37,000 baseball fans at the Rogers Centre, the Symphonic Passion Chorus has come a long way in a short time.

*“We look for people who have a love of singing, and that’s a key reason why our choir members are blossoming.”*

*- Bruce Edwards,  
Founder and Director  
of Symphonic Passion  
Chorus*

Every Thursday evening, 20 adult clients make their way to Surrey Place Centre, to become the Symphonic Passion Chorus. Formed three years ago, the Chorus rehearses weekly and performs several times a year.

The Chorus performed at the Rogers Centre on May 17, 2009 and at the Sound of Music Theatre Event on November 27, 2008.

### A partnership with Counterpoint Chorale

The Symphonic Passion Chorus has a partnership with Counterpoint Chorale. Counterpoint Chorale has taken a leadership role in mentoring and supporting the Surrey Place Centre Choir. Including, fundraising opportunities and providing workshops.

Last December the two choirs held a holiday fundraising concert at Church of the Holy Trinity and raised \$1,000 for Surrey Place Centre's Groups and Workshops Fund.

### Positive Experiences

The Choir is directed by Bruce Edwards, Speech Language Pathologist and assisted by Christine Hein, an Occupational Therapist, along with several dedicated volunteers. The Choir also has a therapeutic focus, “beyond learning to sing, being a member of the Chorus offers many personal and social benefits,” Bruce explains. “Members learn to cooperate, share, and negotiate.”

“They increase their social network and become more integrated into the community, with the added benefit of increasing their self-esteem and quality of life.”

Of course, it's also joyful.

“I'm really having a great time!” says Chorus member Michelle Jones. “I like being part of the choir.”

“The choir is a good fit for me,” adds Mary Ann Farley. “I do a good job and I have a fun time singing.”

## Mental Health Program: Making a Difference Where Help Is Needed Most

People who have both a developmental disability and mental health needs are said to have a “dual diagnosis.” Surrey Place Centre’s Mental Health Program supports clients with a dual diagnosis who have complex needs and challenging behaviours, while also helping their families and caregivers.

**H**ealth care professionals need training in dual diagnosis to properly help people who have a developmental disability and mental health needs. Otherwise, symptoms of a mental health disorder can wrongly be attributed to the developmental disability. Also, diagnosis can be difficult because the developmental disability may alter the usual symptoms of a mental health disorder.

A proven factor in helping dual diagnosis clients is to use a team approach. When various disciplines work together, the client shows better improvement.

The following two cases are examples of how the Mental Health Program at Surrey Place Centre makes a difference.

### **Jenny: Expert diagnosis makes the difference**

Jenny, age 18, has a developmental disability in the mild range. She is very social, athletic and involved with her family and community.

About 18 months ago, she experienced a sudden and dramatic loss of skills that lasted about 10 days. She rarely spoke, had to be fed at times, and resisted getting out of bed. Later, when looking back, she described her mind as “frozen.” She had four more episodes, occurring every few months.

A medical investigation showed no reasons for the episodes.

The client was referred to Surrey Place Centre. A multi-disciplinary team assessment determined that Jenny had experienced dissociative episodes, and she started individual therapy at the Centre.

The episodes became less frequent and now seem to have disappeared. Jenny is re-

engaged in her activities and family life.

### **Nancy: Proper treatment through a team approach**

Nancy, age 19, has a diagnosis of a mild to moderate range developmental disability, and lives with her mother.

Nancy was sexually assaulted by an acquaintance of her mother who was helping them move to a new apartment. This trauma set off a dramatic chain of events. Nancy became very dependent on the Kids Help Phone, impacting her daily activities. She started running away, which put her at risk in the community and she had many emergency room visits. Nancy’s escalating anxiety led to increased tension at home with her mother, who was experiencing her own reaction to the trauma.

Nancy was temporarily placed in the only space available, the basement of a boys group home. This placement compounded her anxiety and finally a community support team placed her in a treatment home.

The treatment home staff worked together with the Surrey Place Centre Mental Health Team to support Nancy and her mother through assessment, treatment and service planning.

For Nancy, this has been a supportive and positive experience. She has gained many skills for independence and coping, and will soon be moving on due to her tremendous gains.

### **Increasing the awareness of dual diagnosis**

For the Centre’s Mental Health Program team, addressing the mental health issues of clients like Jenny and Nancy is very rewarding.

Fortunately, in the health care community at large, dual diagnosis is receiving more and more attention – and Surrey Place Centre is part of this movement. The Mental Health Program team members at the Centre provide education and training on dual diagnosis to other community agencies, and through the course of their work share their knowledge with other health care professionals.

*Dual Diagnosis refers to individuals who have a diagnosed emotional/psychiatric disturbance as well as a diagnosed developmental disability. This definition was defined jointly by the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Community and Social Services in 1997.*

*People living with developmental disabilities have a higher rate of mental health disorders than the rest of the population.*

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Adult Diagnostic Clinic Is Unique to Ontario

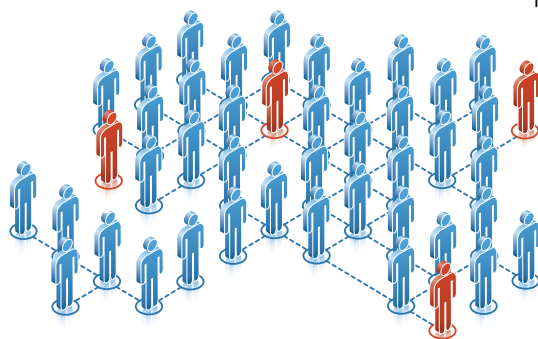
Established in May of 2007, Surrey Place Centre's FASD Adult Diagnostic Clinic is the only facility in Ontario providing assessment, diagnosis and treatment recommendations exclusively for individuals 18 and older suspected of having FASD.

While some individuals with FASD may have global intellectual disabilities, a more common pattern is for individuals to have what are called "scattered abilities" (i.e. strengths in some areas but significant challenges in others). For example, an individual with FASD may have good communication skills but may have problems remembering things like appointments and schedules. They often are very sociable but may be easily distracted and have a hard time staying focused on things. They may be able to read and write fairly well, but have difficulty with math and managing money. They may have a reasonably good sense of right and wrong, but often do things on impulse that brings them into conflict with the law.

That's what life can be like for a person who has FASD.

"FASD can be an invisible disability," explains Dr. Valerie Temple, Psychologist, of Surrey Place Centre's FASD Clinic. "Other people don't see your disability and they can have very high expectations. But you just can't live up to their expectations sometimes. And that's immensely frustrating for the person with FASD."

"Spectrum" in the name of the disorder refers to the variety of effects of FASD, including behavioural, intellectual, and physical – and the wide variety of degrees, from mild to severe. It also refers to the fact that there are several different diagnoses within the general grouping of FASD.



The cause of FASD is alcohol consumption by a woman during pregnancy resulting in brain damage to the developing fetus. But diagnosing the disorder is challenging, especially in adults, and requires an

interdisciplinary assessment approach.

The Surrey Place Centre Adult Program is already known for its interdisciplinary team approach to assessing adults with known or suspected intellectual disabilities. So it was a natural extension of this work to expand services to include adults with suspected FASD.

## Helping people suspected of having FASD

Individuals with FASD often experience difficult circumstances growing up. As adults they may have a variety of difficulties and challenges including: mental health issues, addictions problems, conflict with the law, or difficulty maintaining stable housing. In cases where they themselves have children, they often need assistance and support with respect to parenting.

Receiving a diagnosis can help a person with FASD in several ways:

- The individual can gain a better understanding and appreciation of himself or herself knowing the reason for their challenges.
- The individual can gain access to additional services and support including income and employment assistance from the Ontario Disability Support Program.
- Strategies and interventions specific to FASD can be used, which may be the difference between living to their potential and spending much of their adulthood possibly homeless or in conflict with others.

In addition to providing a diagnostic assessment, the FASD Adult Diagnostic Clinic can offer or recommend other services such as behaviour therapy, counselling and case management.

Clinic team members also work in the community to educate other service providers and professional groups, and advocate on behalf of adults suspected of having FASD.

## Inspiring Hope Awards and Recognition Event Honours Achievements

On June 11, members of the Surrey Place Centre community celebrated the accomplishments of special individuals who make a difference in the lives of people with developmental disabilities.



*"Hope is not a dream, but a way of making dreams become a reality. Once you choose hope, anything and everything is possible."*

- Peter Wright, Chair,  
Board of Directors

The third annual ceremony opened with an array of distinguished speakers and accomplished performers. Lucille Roch, Ministry of Community and Social Services (Deputy Minister), spoke of creating opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to participate in the community. Musical guests KiSara stirred the crowd as Sara, diagnosed with autism as a child, sang *Possibilities* to thunderous applause.

Getinline spokesperson Andrew Garcia explained how his Coffee Shed experience makes him more independent. And Alexandra Landsberg moved the audience as she spoke about how Surrey Place Centre staff became part of her extended family in raising Sam, her son with Down syndrome.

### The 2009 Annual Award Recipients

Surrey Place Centre's Spirit Award went to Dan Masse and Andrew Zima for going above and beyond their regular day to day duties as staff members of the Centre.

Long Term Service Awards were presented to 29 recipients who reached significant milestones as Surrey Place Centre employees,

highlighting Cerene Johnson and Mary Gallippi who attained 30 years of service.

The June Callwood Award recognized three people for their outstanding contribution in support of individuals with developmental disabilities:

- James Cochrane, who has Down syndrome, works with young children who also have Down syndrome and speaks publicly on behalf of individuals with Down syndrome.
- Ian Brown wrote *The Boy in the Moon – A Father's Search for the Value of His Handicapped Son's Life*, a book that shares his experience of raising Walker who has a serious genetic disorder.
- Dr. Wendy Roberts, Co-Director of the Autism Research Unit at the Hospital for Sick Kids, conducts important research, trains researchers and educates the public as one of Canada's leading experts on autism.

In celebrating the achievements of such dedicated individuals, the ceremony left all in attendance hopeful and inspired.

## connections

Connections is provided to inform and update you on Surrey Places Centre programs and activities. If you do not wish to receive Connections, or would like to comment on the articles in this issue, please contact:

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**Living Your Potential - All Your Life!**  
Enabling Full Participation  
For People With Developmental Disabilities