

## Thank you for CMHA award

I first want to thank the staff at CMHA who nominated me for this award. I was completely shocked and honoured when I heard that division had chosen me as the recipient of the Nadine Stirling award.

I never imagined being so privileged to volunteer for such a wonderful organization as CMHA. Starting out speaking to families at the peer support group back in 2004 I had no idea that it would lead to the many wonderful opportunities that CMHA has given me. Back in 2006 (?) when I was asked if I wanted to apply to sit on the board of directors I was coming through some of the worst years that I have experienced with my bipolar disorder. Speaking to the peer support group and then sitting on the board of directors gave me a chance to really start to recover from my illness. After 11 years of struggling with a mental illness my work at CMHA was allowing me to finally see some purpose in my suffering. I was starting to see that through my pain I could start to do things for others experiencing mental illness and, in some way, that work, in return, was helping me to heal. Painful years of struggle were now giving me blossoming opportunities. So really anything that I have given to the organization has not been without the organization giving back to me a hundred times more. My family is indebted to CMHA and what it did for us back in 1995 when I first became ill because really CMHA helped set us on the path to recovery. So thank you to the staff and volunteers at CMHA for making such a difference in my life.

I also just want to quickly thank my entire family, my mom is here tonight representing them, for without them I could not accomplish what I do. My family supports and encourages me, they talk sense to me when my mind cannot reason, they watch over my kids and me when I am ill, they drive me to activities when my illness does not allow me to myself, they pick me up when I fall down and they have given me unconditional love through some very difficult circumstances. So to my family this award is also for you.

Thank you.