



Pilot Success!

Planting the Seeds of Healthy Eating Programs

As the ground begins to thaw and the first signs of spring appear, we embrace the newness of the season. It's time to turn over the garden soil and plant the seeds we will nourish into flourishing vegetable plants. Although our Eating Well for Mental Health pilot programs have come to an end, we hope their shared experiences will help plant the seeds for other organizations to grow their own programs.

Read on to learn about what our pilots have been up to over the past few months.

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Pilot Snapshots

It's been a very busy few months for the Eating Well for Mental Health pilot sites since we last reported on them, and there is a lot to share. So much to share, in fact, that we can't possibly fit it all in one newsletter! Each pilot has been planned, implemented and evaluated in less than four months.

The Minding Our Bodies team would like to thank our pilots for their hard work in bringing healthy eating programming to their clients. We have learned a lot from your efforts and hope that others will as well. Here is a brief look at what our pilots were able to achieve:

Talking about Eating Well for Mental Health: Making Better Choices

Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO), a tribal council serving First Nations communities in Ontario's far north, piloted a healthy eating education program that featured six online workshops. Offering their workshops through their broadband videoconferencing network allowed KO to reach participants over great distances, making it possible for more than 50 people to participate over the course of the six sessions. The workshop topics were tailored to the particular challenges of living in northern First Nations communities, and were presented by a local horticulturist who strongly believes in growing what you eat.

The first four workshops began a dialogue around understanding food choices, menu planning and chronic disease management. The program leader, who has diabetes himself, shared his difficulties and some of the ways he overcomes them through eating well. The last two workshops focused on using recyclable material found in the community to build garden boxes, a topic for which there was high demand. Garden boxes can provide access to healthy produce and connect participants to their food. It was great to hear about the excitement of participants who were ready to build a garden box following the workshops!

The FRESH Project: Food, Recovery, Exercise, Skills, Hope

Canadian Mental Health Association, Huron-Perth Branch, located in Stratford, ran a seven-week intensive pilot that met twice a week, offering a low-impact physical activity class, and a nutrition education and cooking class. Participants engaged in a variety of physical activities such as Tai Chi, hot yoga, aqua fitness, ice skating and volunteer training for dog walking at the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA). Nutrition education topics included cooking on a budget, weight management, eating a low-sodium diet, nutrition and alcohol and drug use, and diabetes and heart disease.



Participants in the FRESH Project peel carrots in preparation for a healthy recipe they are about to make.

Weekly evaluations were completed by the participants, allowing program facilitators to identify concerns early on in order to modify the program accordingly. For example, the healthy eating class was improved by doing the hands-on cooking first so that individuals would have a full belly to listen to the education portion.

Participants in the FRESH Project were encouraged to take home what they learned in class and try it out on their own. After learning how to use hand blenders for smoothies and soups, for example, the 17 members of the group were given their own hand blenders.

Throughout the program members were also given a meat thermometer, a shaker of low-sodium spices, an aluminum water bottle, a t-shirt, various information pamphlets and, of course, any extra food or ingredients.



FRESH participants reported a decrease in social isolation as they made connections through the program. On non-program days some participants made plans to go to the YMCA together; others discovered a love for an activity they had never tried before and continued on with it. The program also created a peer leadership opportunity through the co-facilitation of a walking group.

Collective Community Kitchen: “Good Food, New Friends”

The Algoma Public Health Community Mental Health Program, located in Elliot Lake, ran a community kitchen program in partnership with the Beehive, a consumer/survivor initiative. Organizers secured a kitchen at no cost through Elliot Lake Retirement Living and hired a peer leader as a volunteer co-facilitator. Volunteers from the Beehive took care of the financial books, organized materials and worked as kitchen support staff.

Pilot participants met for half a day on Monday to choose recipes, make a shopping list, set up the kitchen and visit the grocery store to purchase ingredients. On Wednesday participants spent the day cooking in pairs. The food

cooked was divided up equally among the group, with members walking away with between 15 and 20 meals each. The group also attended an educational session once a month.

Participants were initially a bit wary of the \$25 fee collected each month to cover the cost of food and takeout containers; however, once they saw how much food they received by pooling their money, their concerns quickly faded. The planning and purchasing of ingredients also allowed them to apply budgeting lessons. In fact, by the last session they were spending just over half of their monthly budget!

By coming together and working as a team, the participants developed friendships and a sense of belonging to the group. Their self-confidence improved and participants felt empowered to apply what they learned in their daily lives.

Boost Your Mood: Move, Eat and Be Healthy!

The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO) in Toronto ran a six-week pilot co-facilitated by a dietitian and a personal trainer with lived experience of mental illness. The six classes offered an integrated approach, providing nutritional information and simple physical activities that participants could do at home, such as chair exercises and lifting soup cans.

One goal of the program was to increase participants' physical activity and nutrition literacy, as well as social interaction. Participants completed a self-assessment of their physical fitness, moods, eating habits and sleep patterns prior to and following the pilot. Throughout the pilot, they kept exercise and food journals to monitor activity levels and mood before and after eating certain foods.

Another goal of the pilot was to generate lesson plans that could be replicated by peer support or other field workers through a Train-the-Trainer program to be led by MDAO. At the end of the program, participants completed a satisfaction questionnaire which has helped MDAO modify the lesson plans for future use.

There were four nutrition sessions based on the

four food groups, each including related physical activities. For example, during the session on “milk and alternatives” the group was taught bone density exercises to emphasize the connection between food, body and mind. Although the group met only six times, participants achieved a better awareness about nutrition, took away some concrete skills and thrived in the interactive and social group. The most exciting thing about the Boost Your Mood program, however, is that it is being improved upon and will be shared with other organizations.

Food Is Mood: Eating Well for Mental Health

The Northern Initiative for Social Action (NISA), a consumer/survivor initiative in Sudbury, ran a drop-in cooking and educational program for their members. Participants took part in hands-on cooking classes, using economical and healthy ingredients, taught by NISA staff, Community Food Advisors (CFAs), and the N’Swakamok Native Friendship Center. Educational classes were led by CFAs (volunteers trained by the Ontario Public Health Association through the Nutrition Resource Centre) or by staff from the local public health unit. The classes featured Canada’s Food Guide, shopping on a budget, food safety and a grocery store tour.



One way the Food Is Mood program advertised its classes and updated members was through a blog written by the project manager. This was a great way to recap past classes and remind members of future dates. Check out NISA’s blog at foodismood.wordpress.com. As well, the program caught the attention of the media and was featured in the *Northern Life* newspaper and on CBC radio. What a great way to get the word out!

Over 20 members participated in the various classes, and after each class were asked to complete an evaluation.



Participants at CMHA Peterborough’s Food for Mood choose a recipe out of the Basic Shelf Cookbook. To get a free copy of the cookbook and a fabulous CFA Wooden Spoon (pictured below), see page 6 of this newsletter.



Most participants emphasized the positive social interaction achieved through the program. The hands-on cooking class allowed members to try new things in the kitchen but also to share their pre-existing skills and learn new ones from their peers.

In addition to their drop-in program, NISA created a cookbook containing recipes, photos of their pilot in action, and artwork from members. All recipes featured in the book were assessed by a registered dietitian to ensure they meet nutritional requirements. The cookbook was distributed to pilot participants and will be sold as a fundraiser to help sustain the program.

Food for Mood: Nutrition and Cooking Program

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Peterborough Branch ran an eight-week, hands-on nutrition and cooking skills program that met once a week at first and then twice a week for four weeks. The first four cooking classes were conducted by a chef from the Peterborough County Health Unit, and the remaining classes were conducted by the program leads, the final one being led by a participant. The instructors intertwined various

Dietitian and Dietetic Intern Core Learning Days

Our dietitian and dietetic intern training days took place this past November and December in Toronto and Ottawa. There were 105 participants on-site in Toronto and 66 participants in Ottawa, including registered dietitians, dietetic interns, undergraduate and graduate nutrition students, and IDPP (internationally trained) dietitian students. As well, we were fortunate to have about 30 participants from remote sites, such as Kitchener, Sarnia, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and London, attend the Toronto event through the Ontario Telemedicine Network. The core learning days provided an opportunity to enhance the community of practice for dietitians interested in the intersection of mental health and dietetics. They sparked interest

in those unfamiliar with mental health, and made the few who

“Many participants walked away with increased awareness and confidence in their knowledge about mental health and the mind/body connection.”

already work in the mental health sector feel more connected to their field. Many participants walked away with increased awareness and confidence in their knowledge about mental health and the mind/body connection. Participants were supportive of continuing opportunities for this type of

learning and building it into the undergraduate and dietetic curriculum. We are excited to see where this will lead in the future! We would like to thank Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital and the Ottawa Hospital for the generous use of their facilities and support staff, the Ottawa Athletic Club for their corporate donation to offset expenses at the Ottawa event, and all of the individuals who presented. Another big thank you goes out to Karen Trainoff, our program dietitian, who planned, coordinated and facilitated these days.



topics into each session, including food safety, kitchen terms, tools and techniques, meal planning, budgeting, and the relationship between mood and food.

Recipes from the Peterborough County-City Health Unit “Meals in Minutes” website and the *Basic Shelf Cookbook* were used in the classes and participants were provided with a copy of the recipes to use at home. Participants also received cooking kits, which included basic kitchen tools such as a cutting board, chef’s knife and reusable glass containers to encourage cooking at home. As a bonus, participants received a \$10 gift card for groceries after attending each class.

In addition to the eight cooking classes, four other sessions took place in a grocery store, with participants

helping the leaders gather ingredients for their cooking classes. The store outings also provided an opportunity to learn about meal planning, label reading, navigating the grocery store to search for nutritious items, and comparison shopping in an informal way. In addition to cooking with store-bought ingredients, kitchen sessions also demonstrated how to use common items from food banks, such as beans. Participants were empowered in the kitchen, as everyone had a role and contributed equally to the process of planning, preparing, cooking and cleaning. In this positive environment, participants started to experience feelings of social inclusion, and improvements in their physical and mental health.

New Online Resources!

Spring is here and so are some exciting additions to the *Minding Our Bodies* website!

Take a look at what our updated site now includes:

Toolkit Additions

Healthy eating information has been integrated into our toolkit. Now you can find healthy eating guidance, tools and resources alongside our existing physical activity information. This includes a business case for healthy eating and a PowerPoint presentation template that can be customized for your own presentations. Check it out at www.mindingourbodies.ca/toolkit.

Gardening for Food and Mental Health: The Grey Bruce Experience

"Gardening for Food and Mental Health" is a case study that describes the CMHA Grey Bruce Branch experience creating the Let It Grow garden program. The document, prepared by the Minding Our Bodies project, captures the experience of building a successful

community garden program and shares it with other organizations that may want to start their own garden. It also includes basic information to start you thinking about what type of garden project would best suit your agency. Additional community garden resources are listed in the appendices.



Program Directory

We are actively seeking out healthy eating programs to add to our program directory. Our pilots have graciously shared their programs but we would like to highlight others as well. Here is your chance to get your program online, join a community of practice and receive a little bonus in return: The first 20 organizations to submit their programs via our online submission form (and have them approved) will receive the *Basic Shelf Cookbook* and a fabulous Community Food Advisor wooden spoon! Submit your program today at www.mindingourbodies.ca/program_directory/add_your_program_to_the_directory.

These are only a few of the updates to our website. Please continue to check back for more additions over the next couple of months.

Recovery at Your Fingertips

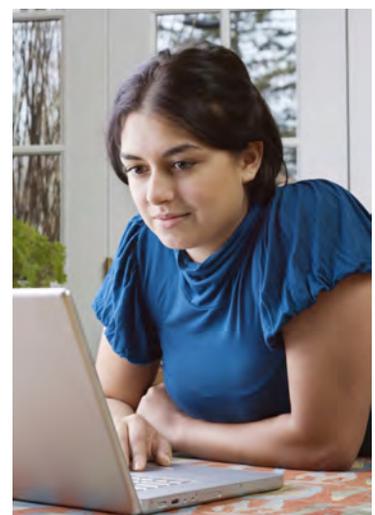
With the explosion of Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites, many people living with mental illnesses are beginning to use online tools to share their personal experiences and learn from each other.

That got folks at the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO) thinking: What if there were an online community to support people through their treatment and recovery – a site that would help people understand they are not alone, and allow them to monitor their own progress?

After talking with participants in various MDAO peer support and recovery programs, organizers had a good sense that such a site would be a tremendous support for people living with depression, bipolar disorder and other mental illnesses.

People also told the organization that their family members and loved ones would find a recovery-focused website helpful.

In keeping with its philosophy that people with lived experience are the best experts, MDAO held several meetings to find out what types of tools and information would be most helpful for people experiencing a mental



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Mental Health and Physical Activity Roundtable

During Mental Health Week (May 1-7, 2011), Minding Our Bodies will be holding a one-day Mental Health and Physical Activity Roundtable. It will take place on May 5 at the Metro Central YMCA, who is generously providing their facilities in Toronto to house this event.

The roundtable is intended for those working in the community mental health and physical activity sectors to exchange ideas and knowledge about initiatives to improve accessibility to physical activity opportunities for people with serious mental illness. The roundtable aims to:

1. **Demonstrate the connection** between mental health and physical activity.
2. **Raise awareness** of the important role that people with lived experience of mental illness can play in planning and delivering physical activity programs and the benefits of engagement.
3. **Empower community mental health staff** with tools and approaches to encourage movement along the physical activity continuum.
4. **Share lessons learned** from the Minding Our Bodies physical activity phase.
5. **Showcase successful models** that build bridges between the mental health and physical activity sectors.
6. **Raise awareness of services** and start to weave connections for greater partnerships to be built between physical activity and mental health groups (e.g., internships for students, shared facilities).



Join in and be a part of the Mental Health and Physical Activity Roundtable to be held on May 5, 2011 at the Metro Central YMCA

The agenda will include a panel of consumer-survivor peer leaders, a keynote from researchers at the University of Toronto, highlights of key physical activity training tools and options, a showcase of successful program models in the community mental health sector and an interactive cross-sectoral discussion to develop new ideas to overcome barriers and to bridge accessibility gaps.

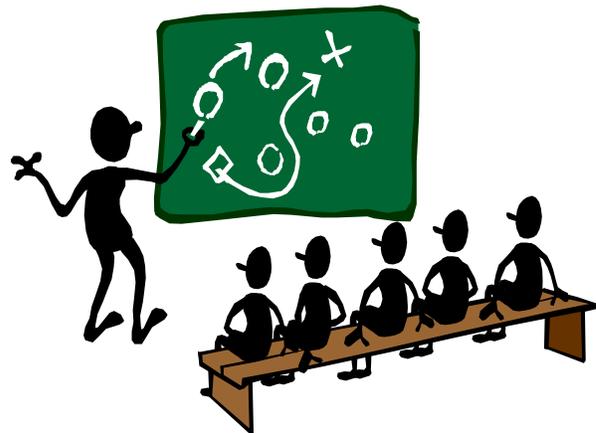
If you are unable to attend our May 5 roundtable, you can hear some of the Minding Our Bodies success stories through the Physical Activity Resource Centre webinars on April 18 and 19, 10-11:30 am.

Registration details for the roundtable and webinars can be found at www.mindingourbodies.ca.

From Pilot to Program: Moving Forward with Minding Our Bodies

With the wrap-up of Phase II: Eating Well for Mental Health, we are more encouraged than ever to keep the Minding Our Bodies project going. We are applying for a third round of funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport and look forward to continuing our goal of increasing the capacity of the community mental health system to promote active living and healthy eating for people with serious mental illness in support of recovery. What will the third phase look like?

Stay tuned to find out!



Recovery at Your Fingertips *Continued from page 7.*

illness. The site, set to launch in May 2011, will feature tools to help get an accurate diagnosis, understand treatment options, look at complementary approaches, plan for a potential crisis, make lifestyle changes, prevent relapse and make the most of family and other supports. To ensure a “human touch,” the site will also feature videos of people with lived experience and professional experts sharing their tips for recovery and wellness. One set of videos, featuring dietitians or personal trainers, will focus on the role of healthy eating and exercise in managing mental illness and supporting people’s recovery. Through confidential online journaling

and mood charting, the site will also allow people to create custom action plans so they can track their progress toward the goals they set for themselves. The site will be free to use, fully accessible and provide for privacy, security and confidentiality.

While the exact launch date in May has yet to be decided, anyone interested in learning the latest about the website can stay tuned through the MDAO website at www.mooddisorders.on.ca, or via e-mail updates by contacting jenniferf@mooddisorders.on.ca.

Dates to Keep in Mind!

- April 18-19, 2011** Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC) webinars
- May 5, 2011** Mental Health and Physical Activity Roundtable



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