



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00AM  
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010**

**Coast Mental Health Announces  
Fifth 2010 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient  
MARK AUDIO ASH named as recipient in PHYSICAL REHABILITATION category**

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*VANCOUVER, B.C. April 26, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the fifth of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. **Mark Audio Ash of Vancouver** has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category. The remaining recipient will be announced next Monday, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.*

Mark Ash's family moved to Vancouver from Russia when he was 14. He completed high school in Richmond and entered Vancouver's music scene in the early '80s. He studied bass with jazz legend René Worst, toured Canada and the US throughout the '90s with the rock band Shy Thunder, recorded a number of albums and has opened for bands including Mr. Big and Blue Oyster Cult. From '91 to '97 Mark owned and operated the New York Theatre on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. He led a successful life, marrying and having two beautiful children, but also struggling with addiction and depression: slowly his health was declining.

In 2001, Mark was seriously injured in a car accident. Partially paralyzed, unable to walk, talk or care for himself in any way, Mark spent three months in hospital. Mark's prognosis was so poor that his family took power of attorney and sold all his assets. His relationship disintegrated and soon he lost his will to live. He was put on suicide watch. For six months, he attended GF Strong Rehabilitation Center as an outpatient but eventually was told there was nothing more that could be done for him. Mark's family was unable to care for him and he was put in a group home.

That is when Mark took his recovery into his own hands. He joined a Canadian Mental Health Association recreation and then their Pathways Clubhouse work program. He began taking computer courses at a disability centre so that, even though he couldn't hold a pen, he could produce the program's newsletter. Mark was rebuilding his life from the very basics up with limited mobility, limited hand movement and speech difficulties. He certainly couldn't play guitar any more, a fact that broke his heart, but he did purchase a keyboard and at first just with one finger began making music again. He eventually re-obtained his driver's license and helps others by driving the clubhouse van on outings and when people are moving household.

Making friends and working helped Mark improve his speech, and he soon joined both winter and summer disabled sports associations. He joined a gym, working out every day to improve his strength, balance and coordination. Every day he pushed himself, researching exercises on the Internet that would help him improve his fine motor skills. Mark used everyday scenarios to help improve his balance and more. This included riding the sky train without holding on, eating dinner with chopsticks, and chewing gum to strengthen facial muscles and his tongue.

Mark gives back to the community in a number of ways. He is an extremely talented musician who shares his talents generously: teaching, performing, songwriting and recording. His new music has been played in clubs in both Vancouver and Toronto, One of his songs "For your Love" was included in a compilation CD by the Vancouver Adaptive Music Society (VAMS). Mark also volunteers at the VAMS studio at GF Strong, tutoring stroke victims and brain injury patients and facilitates "Wellness through Music" programs at Pathways and Vancouver Headway Centre. With his new band "Reality Check" made up entirely with Pathways members, Mark has played many community events. He also spends time volunteering at the Richmond Food Bank.

Today Mark is well on his way to recovery, making music and playing bass again. "Music was my doctor" Mark says. "In accepting this Courage Award, I hope to be able to inspire others to explore music as a means of overcoming their own struggles in life." Coast is proud to have Mark Audio Ash as its 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category.

*Mark Audio Ash named as recipient in CTCB Physical Rehabilitation category*

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Mark will receive his Courage To Come Back Award at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, May 6th. For tickets, call 604-675-2328 or purchase online at [www.coastmentalhealth.com](http://www.coastmentalhealth.com)

**About Courage To Come Back:**

The Courage To Come Back Awards celebrate people who have inspired others as they have courageously battled back from illness, adversity or injury. Through Courage, British Columbians are acknowledged for their accomplishments, positive attitudes and willingness to give back to their communities. Awards are given in six categories including: addiction, medical, mental health, physical rehabilitation, social adversity and youth. Recipients are chosen by volunteer panels of community leaders and category experts.

By presenting the stories of six amazing recipients each year at The Courage To Come Back Awards, Coast Mental Health strives to offer hope to all those suffering from illness, adversity or injury and demonstrate that all people have value and dignity. At Coast, our clients with a mental illness show tremendous courage in their daily lives. In our housing facilities and service centers, a community of people strive to overcome illness, adversity and stigma, and we strive to support their recovery. Their triumphs, like those of the Courage Award recipients, motivate and inspire us.

**About Coast Mental Health:**

Since 1972, Coast Mental Health has been providing high-quality housing, employment programs, social opportunities and other community mental health services for people with serious and persistent mental illnesses. We know that people with a mental illness can and do recover. Our services include:

- Mental Health Resource Centre – 500 Active Members, 220 meals served daily
- Homeless Outreach program serving approximately 60 people per month
- Coast Clubhouse - 400 Members, 80 Meals Served Daily, 80 Jobs Weekly
- Community Homes – 12 Houses, Over 120 Housed in Vancouver and Burnaby
- Supported Housing - ~650 Housed
- Coast Cottages - 50 Housed
- At Home/Chez Soi - 100 Housed by 2011
- Coast Transitional Housing - 44 Housed
- PACT Employment Services - 160+ Served Annually
- Coast Social Enterprises - 20 Employed
- Financial Trust Program - 350+ Served

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