



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00AM
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**Coast Mental Health Announces
Second 2010 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient
THERESA DUGGAN named as recipient in MENTAL HEALTH category**

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 5, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the second of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. **Theresa Duggan of Vancouver** has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Mental Health category. The remaining recipients will be announced over the next four Mondays, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

Theresa Duggan didn't start out in life intending to be an inspiration, a motivator, a role model to others. But that is exactly where she is today due to her ability to rise above a series of blows that would have stopped most people in their tracks.

Raised in a troubled home, at a very early age a neighbour began sexually abusing Theresa. Although she attempted to get help, none was available and as soon as she could she left home for Toronto. For more than a decade, Theresa led a highly-successful life, working at a prestigious job, going to college, and living in a loving, stable relationship. In 1986, she began experiencing cluster migraines. Her physician prescribed painkillers and she quickly became addicted. Her attempt to quit the pain medication cold-turkey landed her in a psychiatric ward with mania and psychosis.

Unaware of the true nature of her illness, Theresa left her relationship and entered into a brief liaison with an abusive man. Soon they were expecting a child; however, when the man attempted to strangle her while she was pregnant, Theresa left him and moved to B.C. Her daughter was born with life-threatening allergies. Struggling to care for her chronically ill baby, living on social assistance, Theresa began abusing painkillers and alcohol. She experienced wild mood swings from debilitating depression to manic spending sprees. Various groups and programs helped her conquer her addictions to alcohol and prescription drugs, but she continued a pattern of medication abuse that is, sadly, typical of individuals with a mood disorder: she would take her medication, feel better, stop taking medication because she felt better, get very ill, be hospitalized, re-start her medication...it was a nightmare treadmill she couldn't step down from.

Throughout it all, Theresa focused intently on raising her child to be the best individual she could be. Even in her most unwell moments, her only concerns were for her young daughter. She put in place detailed plans for her daughter's care if Theresa became ill and unable to care for her. She volunteered her free time, as well. She began a clothing exchange for single parents in the housing cooperative where she lived. She started and ran a community kitchen collective there, as well. Empathetic and caring, even in her darkest times, Theresa reached out to others and gave back.

In 2006 on her daughter's birthday, Theresa quit smoking for good. It was as if a cloud had lifted from her life, and the jolt of energy she felt was unlike anything she'd experienced. She began co-facilitating the smoking cessation group that had helped her quit, talking about her experiences to other individuals with mental illness. She quickly learned she was an excellent public speaker. Theresa joined a vocational program for job readiness and placement, and, after 18 months there, landed a job at the very place she had come to for help.

Today, Theresa is the only trained full-time mental health Peer Support Worker in B.C. Daily she works with clients who are on their own road back from the depths of mental illness, helping them to move through what she has personally struggled with for so long. Her co-workers describe her as exhibiting 'a fantastic professionalism...she is non-judgmental, joyful, warm and generous'. She and her daughter, now 17, have a close loving relationship. Her daughter says, "I have watched my mom go through the darkest shadows to be motivated and successful. She is funny, inspiring, friendly and much, much more."

In accepting this Coast Mental Health 2010 Courage To Come Back Award, Theresa says, "Miracles continue to happen in my life on a daily basis. I'm just along for the ride."

Theresa Duggan named as recipient in CTCB Mental Health category

Theresa will receive her Courage To Come Back Award at the 12th 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

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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