



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00AM
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2009**

Contact: Julia Zado
Director of Communications
D: 604-675-2342 C: 604-506-3095
juliaz@coastmentalhealth.com

**Coast Mental Health Announces
First 2009 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient
BECKI WYER named as recipient in SOCIAL ADVERSITY category**

VANCOUVER, B.C. March 23, 2009 – Coast Mental Health announced the first of six award recipients of a 2009 Courage To Come Back Award. **Becki Wyer of Langley** has been named as the 2009 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Social Adversity category. Recipients in the remaining five categories will be announced weekly leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, April 30th.

Today, Becki Wyer's friends and colleagues describe her as "warm," "lovely," "articulate and professional." They talk about a woman who makes a difference in peoples' lives and is a living example of courage and selfless giving. A far cry from who she was just a few years ago – homeless, ill, anxiety-ridden and living in Stanley Park.

Raised in an abusive household, by the time she was 8, Becki was violently cutting her arms and legs, banging her head, and scratching herself to try to dull her inner torment. At 14, she attempted suicide and was diagnosed with depression. It wouldn't be the last attempt, and it wouldn't be the last diagnosis. In her 20s, after years of muscle pain and joint stiffness, she was also diagnosed with fibromyalgia and myofascial pain syndrome, a severe and intermittent disability that strikes without warning or mercy. In mental and physical pain, Becki stopped showering, eating, and taking care of herself. She was always tired, easily stressed and sleepless. Isolating herself from her friends and community, she stopped working. She was barely functioning.

In desperation, Rebekah left her home and family, and for several months lived in shelters and on the streets of Toronto before making her way to Vancouver. Long months homeless turned into years, as Becki dumpster dove and picked bottles to buy food, slept on picnic tables and under a tarp in the woods. But even then, at her lowest ebb, her desire to help others was beginning to shine, and she volunteered at a soup kitchen on Vancouver's downtown eastside. In Vancouver she was offered help and housing, but was not yet ready to trust again. The cycle of mental illness and homelessness continued.

One night, disoriented and restless, Becki made her way to a park in Aldergrove. She doesn't remember much about this time, but does remember the kindness of a local RCMP officer who gave her coffee cookies and locked up her bike for her when Becki was taken to the psychiatric ward at a local hospital. Stable, warm and fed, she was finally able to accept the help she so desperately needed. Step by step, she gained strength and purpose, found a home, qualified for disability funding, and re-built her life.

Soon she had the need again to reach out and help other homeless – unwanted cats, her past giving her unique insight into their fear and mistrust. Then she began reaching out to her human counterparts, too. Now, Becki contributes to a number of organizations that help the disenfranchised in Langley and area: the Homelessness Steering Committee, the Memorial Hospital Psychiatric Outpatient Program SAFE Group, the Stepping Stones Society, the Fraser Health Mental Health Regional Consumer Advisory Committee and its Langley counterpart; the list goes on. In the eyes of her admirers, what is most outstanding about Becki is her gentle willingness to share her story so that others may be helped.

In Becki's words, "I hope that my story will inspire others and show that there is hope for recovery." Congratulations, Becki. Coast is proud to have you as our 2009 Courage To Come Back recipient in the Social Adversity category.

- more -

Rebekah Wyer named as recipient in CTCB Social Adversity category

Becki will receive her Courage To Come Back Award at the 11th Annual Gala Dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, April 30th. 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: mental health, physical rehabilitation, medical, addiction, social adversity and youth.

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.

Through 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 demonstrates that all people have value and dignity regardless of the illness, adversity or injury they have faced.

###