

Workman Arts Project at CAMH(2009)

The Workman Arts Project Inc (WA), a not for profit charitable arts organization working in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, is a health promoting initiative that facilitates personal, as well as community resiliency through the arts. WA provides instruction, studio space, employment opportunities, partnerships and presentation venues to clients of CAMH and those who have had experiences with the mental health and addiction system. WA strives to achieve both individual and broader community health by supporting new and emerging artists that have experiences with mental health problems, while aiming to raise the public profile of mental health issues.

Most people would agree that having a friend and a job are two determinants that are important to promoting individual health. For WA members, participating in WA programming helps to meet these needs. Lisa Brown, Executive Director of WA, speaks of how friends are often made as social connections develop through classes and productions. Brown attributes these connections to the fact that the topic of discussion in most programming is not mental health or addiction. Instead, Brown states, "We focus on the art, developing ability and building a community of support".

Participating in WA activities has also led to job opportunities for many members. Last year, WA provided 363 training opportunities to its 250 members. In addition, since WA employs its artists, last year \$70 180 was earned by 75 members through commissions, engagements and sales. In addition, the structure of the training programming and work is useful to promoting personal wellness. As one past participant noted, "It (WA) gives me structure when I am going through a crisis".

At the broader community level, since its inception in 1988, WA has also worked to reduce stigma through its community-based presentations and partnerships. WA reaches thousands of people annually through several key arts events which include:

- Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival which showcases the work of filmmakers whose art explores madness and addiction.
- Being Scene and annual year art exhibition featuring approximately 60-80 works by new, emerging and established artists who have received services from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

In the near future, WA will continue to strengthen its efforts to raise awareness around mental health. One past project that will receive continued support will be the theatrical production of Edward the "Crazy" Man. Edward the "Crazy" Man is a play that touches on issues like schizophrenia and homelessness in a manner that is accessible to young audiences and adults alike. The aim of this play, which was first staged in June 2008 is to assist children, their families, and educators in developing a better understanding of mental health problems and creating a context for discussion. After receiving positive feedback from its first staging, WA hopes to take this production to new audiences in upcoming years.