



**CANADIAN MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION**  
**L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTE' MENTALE**

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Peggy Gillespie, Co-Director  
Family Diversity Projects, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1246 Amherst, MA  
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Dear Peggy,

November 12, 2003

Thank you for extending our contract with the Nothing to Hide photo-text exhibition. Each year in Canada, during the second week of October, we recognize Mental Illness Week. During that time, we hold an event to raise awareness of issues surrounding mental illness in our community.

In recognition of families who are living with mental illness, the Community Mental Health Network brought in the Nothing to Hide Exhibition. The show was exhibited at Lakehead University, Confederation College, Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital and Canadian Mental Health Association, Thunder Bay Branch.

I encourage you to review the comments in the exhibition guest book as they illustrate how well the show was received here. It proved to be an excellent educational tool in our community. In fact, the Canadian Mental Health Association used it as an example of public education activities during a review with one of our major funders. It really helped them understand the work we do in Thunder Bay.

Nothing to Hide introduced 20 families whose lives have been changed by mental illness. We appreciated the diversity of this project. The families represented were from varied racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds showing the viewer that mental illness has no boundaries.

When a debilitating illness, whether physical or mental, strikes a child, adolescent or adult, the whole family is affected. The difference with a mental illness is that it comes with the additional element of stigma and discrimination. The exhibition dispels common misconceptions around mental illness in order to decrease the stigma around it.

These stereotypes stigmatize, causing people to feel shame, preventing them from getting help for themselves or their loved one. The exhibition breaks down these stereotypes. It also provides encouragement for those experiencing mental health problems to seek help, while at the same time, giving them hope for recovery.

As you look at the photos and read the text, you don't know which person has the mental illness, leaving an important message with the viewer; mental illness doesn't have a particular face. Anyone can develop a mental illness. You, me, your child, your partner, friends, a CEO in a company, no one is immune to this disease.

This exhibition strips away the shame and secrecy of mental illnesses like schizophrenia, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Its greatest strength is that these families are not hiding, but they are inviting us into their world so we can have a better understanding of mental illness.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Books". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Joanne Books  
Education and Training Coordinator  
Canadian Mental Health Association