The Heart of Friendship

Under the theme “My mental health is part of me, but does not define me”, highlights people living with mental health problems. Living with schizophrenia for almost twenty years, I was the only French speaker to be on the provincial promotional posters, representing my county, whose objective was to raise awareness and give people hope and prevent suicide. This project promoted by students at the University of Fredericton who had to deal with mental health problems.

Journalist Christine Thériault from Madawaska met me for an interview regarding this promotion, entitled “René Plourde considers himself a winner in the game of life. »

Christine Thériault: Give us an overview of what you were going through before being diagnosed with your schizophrenia. » I was sick and I didn't really understand what was going on with me. I lived without a diagnosis or treatment and the situation worsened to the point where I had to be hospitalized because I attempted suicide. When I realized I was sick and surrounded by people who wanted to help me, I realized I had to do something. I started to understand that I had to do my part.

Christine Thériault: “Today, how do you live with this illness? » It wasn't always easy, because I had to try several medications and be hospitalized 23 times. The right medicine could never be found and I was always suffering from the illness. Finally, the professionals offered me a medication, (Chlozaril) and even though it was risky, I decided to take my chance and I tried it. Today I realize that I made the right decision, because I feel much better and I am active. I am happy in my activity, which makes me feel good.

Christine Thériault: “You are passionate about the arts, how has this helped you in your journey? » I believe this is what helped me overcome obstacles. It's been a while since I've drawn and...

…did not draw and a person who draws and who, like me, suffers from schizophrenia, Joanne Galland, came into my life. This good friend knew that I had already drawn and asked me to draw her a drawing. She was persistent and I figured the only way to stop hearing about her was to comply with her request. It was thanks to her that I started drawing. My favorite medium is pencil. This hobby has done me really good. Drawing allowed me to present exhibitions, participate in the provincial exhibition “Image en Tête”, meet people, make friends, etc. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to be appreciated by people, which makes me feel good. One thing is certain, I don’t regret having drawn a drawing for Joanne. We had the chance to collaborate on the creation of joint works.

Christine Thériault: “You are also active within your community. Could you explain to us how? I became Vice-President of the Link Activity center, currently an advisor, at the Link I write thoughts on a board, which allows me to transmit messages and help people. I am also inviting him to the suicide prevention committee, Director in the Edmundston Madawaska Community Integration Association for the disabled, advisor on the Autonomy service (Promo).

Christine Thériault: “Why did you agree to join the my definition campaign? » First of all, it was the community worker from the Canadian Health Association of NB, Josée Martin, who told me about this project. It made me happy to accept this proposal. I’m really proud and it’s good for my self-esteem and if it can help other people, so much the better!

Christine Thériault: “What are the reasons that encourage you to continue your journey and enjoy life? » I know that there are people in need who are really suffering, especially in mental health, who are in darkness, who are having difficulty getting by, and more than a word of encouragement, I consider myself lucky to get out of it...

…to come out of being happy and being able to say that I love life. Learning that I had schizophrenia was a new beginning and a source of motivation to not give up, keep moving forward and trust the people around us to help us. Besides, I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who want us well.

Other than medications (Chlozaril) and the arts (Drawing), the Bible was a great resource in my mental health journey. On the Autonomy committee, I met an interesting person, Sr. Céline Letourneau, who asked me to draw a drawing, that of a heart with a hand holding out a yellow rose and this gave birth to the Heart of Friendship. I added the thought, “It pleases God the heart that shares.” » I gave this one at Christmas time as a free gift to a friend. Two weeks later she returned it to me at Lien and no longer wanted it.

This person often told us that she lived in fear. I would have liked to share positive words with him from the Bible. I had in my hand a book on the promises of the Bible, with different themes such as overcoming your fear, overcoming your worries, need to experience joy, need for peace, etc...I surely had a word of encouragement for her, but I never saw her again. Living in Le Lien for several years, with friends in mental health, I understood that they too could benefit from the words of the Bible. It was then that the project The Heart of Friendship was born, 156 King James verses, 156 Tob verses, total 312 in triplicate for a total of 936 pucks, ready to be drawn and a prayer kit, according to Ré.

When Yahshua (Jesus) was preparing to leave his friends, he said to them: “It is profitable for you that I go away. When I am at the right hand of my Father in heaven, I will send you the Helper who will be with you always, until the end of the world. He will console you, comfort you, instruct you, and guide you into all truth. » Thank you comforter Spirit of the living God for accompanying us. Accomplish your work among us.

Today, we have the chance, the privilege and the interest to hear God speak to us through his word inspired by his Holy Spirit! We have the right and the desire to listen to it and to be attentive as well as obedient to it, the invisible is present.

I met an interesting person, faithful, loyal and kind in all truth, this friend is God. When I was a child and I looked in the mirror, I admired myself and said to myself, I love you. I was fulfilling God’s commandment which is, love your neighbor as yourself. So let me tell you, I love you, believe me. I want to see you all with me in the Kingdom of God, where Peace, Joy, Love reigns or Christ and mother Mary triumphant and bursting with light in the Kingdom of Heaven welcome us. Thank you for being present and participating in the Heart of Friendship and finally “I am a winner in the game of LIFE”. I love you. Ré