



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inspiration Awards Gala to Celebrate Mental Health, Hope and Healing

OTTAWA – The Royal Ottawa Health Care Foundation is poised to host its best Inspiration Awards Gala yet, with a dazzling array of entertainment in store for the guests who attend this premier annual fundraiser for mental health research, programs and patient care.

Popular CTV personality JJ Clarke will have his hands full as MC, juggling performances by acrobats Aerial Silk, international dance troupe Malambo (formerly with Cirque du Soleil), Bianca Pittoors Jazz Trio, and everybody's favorite crowd-pleaser, the Johnny Vegas All-Star Orchestra.

Another highlight of the event is the presentation of the 2006 Inspiration Awards, handed out to members of the community who have overcome tremendous personal adversity to advance mental health reform or improve the delivery of services to patients and their families.

This year, Inspiration Awards will be given to a husband and wife team who turned their son's battle with schizophrenia into a call to action to start a support group so people coping with mental illness have a place to go where they are welcomed and respected.

An Inspiration Award will also be presented to a young man who overcame a mood disorder to counsel others on ways to add meaning to their lives by coping with their illness through alternative therapeutic approaches such as meditation.

A third Inspiration Award will be handed out to a parent of a child diagnosed with schizophrenia who has devoted decades to volunteering in the mental health community, and was instrumental in shaping police training and protocol for dealing with people with mental illness.

A unique community Inspiration Award will be presented to the City Editorial Staff of the Ottawa Citizen for demonstrating exceptional leadership in educating the public about mental illness and reducing the stigma surrounding it.

The Citizen was nominated by the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, who acknowledged the "enormous benefit the people of Ottawa get from having our major newspaper provide thoughtful, comprehensive and accurate reportage on mental illness."

"These Inspiration Awards winners are shining examples of ways we can openly and unapologetically

talk about mental health and meet the challenges of mental illness head-on," said Tim Kluge, President and CEO of the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group Foundation. "Whether it's raising awareness of the need for mental health reform in our society, helping patients navigate the health care system more successfully or supporting families in crisis, these award winners are truly inspiring," he said.

The Inspiration Awards Gala is one of Ottawa's premier social events, attracting hundreds of influential leaders from the business, political, public, and not-for-profit communities. Now in its eighth year, the Gala has raised just under a million dollars in support of mental health research, programs and services, and patient care.

The Royal Ottawa Health Care Foundation funds innovative research such as gene mapping of mental illness, the purchase of medical equipment, and specialized professional training for staff which ultimately improves patient care.

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**For more information,
please see the attached profiles of the award winners or
contact Kathryn Hendrick (613) 722-6521 ext. 6755, cell (416) 707-6665.**