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Former Senator Receives One of Five Coveted Inspiration Awards for Championing Mental Health

Annual Gala Celebrates Achievements in Reducing Stigma of Mental Illness in Our Community

OTTAWA – The Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health is presenting five coveted Inspiration Awards at its annual Gala event to extraordinary members of our community, including former Senator Michael Kirby, currently Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Now in its fifth year, the Inspiration Awards program is the cornerstone of the Foundation's efforts to raise awareness of the vital importance of mental health. A total of five Inspiration Awards will be handed out on March 6th to recognize personal triumph over mental illness, extraordinary achievement in the advancement of mental health, or exception dedication to helping reduce the stigma of mental illness.

"Perhaps unlike any other issue, mental health needs champions like the recipients of a 2008 Inspiration Award," said Tim Kluge, President & CEO of the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health.

"These are remarkable people who have demonstrated the courage to speak openly and unapologetically about mental illness, and have played a significant role in shining light on mental health and providing hope and motivation to many," said Mr. Kluge.

Mr. Kirby was the winner in the Community Category for his groundbreaking work as Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, which produced "Out of the Shadows", a comprehensive report that detailed the magnitude of mental health and addiction in Canada and made specific recommendations to transform mental health in this country.

The three winners in the Personal Category were Denise Linnay, David Mussivand, along with husband and wife team Gerri and Bruce Mulley.

Ms. Linnay was recognized for her tireless efforts to improve mental health care as an advocate for consumer survivors following her recovery from a decade-long battle with postpartum depression.

Mr. Mussivand was hailed as an example of how a person can live beyond the destructive force of a major mental illness and addiction to instead create personal recovery through the continuous exercise of courageous and challenging steps.

After their son was diagnosed with schizophrenia forcing them to relocate from Nunavut to be closer to treatment, the Mulleys established a unique personal shopping business that hired employees living with a mental illness, including their son, to help in their recovery.

Anie Belanger won in the Youth Category not only for her triumph over personal mental health issues, but for being a passionate voice for youth and only one of two young people nationwide to be asked to sit on the National Mental Health Commission of Canada's Child and Youth Advisory Committee.

One of the region's most exciting social events, the annual Inspiration Awards Gala is a key fundraising activity for mental health research, programs and patient care.

This popular evening combines culinary delights, unique entertainment, networking

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opportunities and a Silent and Live Auction featuring exclusive premium packages, as well as a raffle for a \$5,000 Holt Renfrew Shopping Spree.

“The funds raised through this unique event support leading mental health research and patient care,” said Mr. Kluge. “The more than 400 community and corporate leaders who come out to this event each year are a testament to the growing recognition of mental health as a critical health issue and one that is worthy of support.”

The Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health funds innovative research such as gene mapping of mental illness, the purchase of advanced medical technology, and specialized professional training for staff which ultimately improves care for residents across Eastern Ontario.

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For more information, please see the attached profiles of this year's winners, and to set-up an interview please contact:

Sue Riley at 613.722.6521, ext. 6719 or cellular at 613.798.3906

