

NEWS

HEALTH

Marathon cyclist cited for fighting mental illness stigma

Michael Schratter, a Vancouver school teacher who is cycling solo around the world to fight the stigma associated with mental illness, is the first recipient of an award named for revered mental health advocate Dr. Nancy Hall.

The Nancy Hall Public Policy Leadership Award was presented last week to Schratter in Kelowna during a national mental health conference.

Schratter is a unique choice for this award, which recognizes individuals who have influenced mental health policy. It might otherwise go to an academic or a health policy expert, but Schratter is aiming to make a world-wide impact on mental health care public policy.

His understanding of mental illness has been forged through his own experiences. He has lived with depression, and attempted suicide at his lowest point.

He has been diagnosed with hypomania, a form of bipolar disorder as well as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

In a bid to foster greater awareness of mental health issues and help empower people dealing with mental health challenges, Schratter has embarked on his Ride Don't Hide cycling journey that began on Aug. 1, 2010, with the goal of cycling 40,000 kilometres around the world.

His objective is to shatter the stigma around mental illness by speaking openly about his own battle with mental illness with people he meets in public gatherings, through the media and via his web site www.ridedonthide.com.

He has raised more than \$42,000 for youth and children's programs for mental health, and hopes to raise at least \$100,000 by the time he is done. Schratter interrupted his Ride Don't Hide mission to fly into Kelowna to accept the award.

He is now back on the road, pedalling from Thunder Bay on the final leg across Canada. After crossing six continents and 30 countries, he may face his greatest challenge to complete the ride to Victoria without encountering winter conditions in the mountain passes on

the way to the coast.

David Hall, brother of Nancy Hall, said Schratter's response to his mental health challenges has been inspiring. "Unable to accept the stigma that continues to linger around mental illness," Hall said, "he has taken it upon himself to get on his bicycle and pedal around the world to spread the message that mental illness is a disease like any other."



DOUG FARROW/CONTRIBUTOR

MICHAEL SCHRATTER is cycling solo around the world to raise awareness of mental health issues.

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DAYS of CARING

United Way and the Okanagan Valley Pregnancy Care Centre wish to thank the following individuals for helping to place the names of hundreds of babies (whose parents received support from OVPCC) on the wall of their newly renovated gathering space.

Amy Bloomfield and Hannah Egan... Thank you to Katrina Glen of Dare to Be

from Kelowna Christian School

Okanagan Valley Pregnancy Care Centre invites everyone to join them for an Open House to celebrate their 5th Anniversary.

Friday, September 23

Noon - 6 pm (cake cutting at 3 pm)

201 - 2622 Pandosy Street

If your non-profit organization has a project, or your organization is interested in volunteering for a Day of Caring, please contact Avril Paice at 250.860.2356 or email avril@unitedwaycso.com

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