

## PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

FGTA AGM June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

It has been another busy year for From Grief to Action, with members of the board representing the family voice in a great variety of forums.

To begin, a rare opportunity occurred in late October when board member Judy Robertson received an invitation to meet with Premier Clark in her Vancouver office to share her personal story along with information on From Grief to Action. Mikaela Mamer and Leslie McBain accompanied Judy in this meeting. Premier Clark subsequently gave an interview with Global news and covered many of the points the three invitees had made. Further to this, Judy was asked, along with other BC representatives, to join Premier Clark in Ottawa for a meeting and news conference prior to the Opioid Summit on November 18, 2016. Judy met with Minister Philpott, Minister Goodale and MP Bill Blair on Parliament Hill where Judy provided the Ministers with copies of the FGTA Coping Kit. Premier Clark opened the news conference, then turned it over to the media for questions. The media coverage was extensive with a quote from Judy stating: "Robertson looked out at the reporters and said – 'It could be anyone - it could be your child'."

Much progress in BC has been made this year by the newly established B.C. Centre on Substance Use (BCCSU), led by Dr. Evan Wood. In reaction to the opioid crisis in BC, the provincial government allocated \$10 million for the creation of the BCCSU. In the months leading up to the establishment of the Centre in April 2017, Dr. Woods led a number of "knowledge holder" sessions. These sessions were divided into three groups that included families, people with lived experience, and treatment providers. Members of the FGTA board have been actively involved with the family group. Recently, Nichola Hall, one of the founding members of FGTA, was appointed to the BCCSU advisory board as the family representative.

As a result of the very sad outbreak of overdose deaths in the fentanyl crisis, a variety of task forces have been set up by the provincial government and are managed through the BC Centre for Disease Control. LEICA (Life Experts for Inclusive Collaborative Action) is a group comprised of individuals with lived experience and local service providers who provided input on task force questions. Board member Cari St. Pierre sits on the task force for treatment on FGTA's behalf.

Members of the board also participate in a variety of committees including the BC Alliance on Mental Health and Addictions, the Community Alliance Initiative, Vancouver Coastal Health's Family Advisory Committee, and the Youth Alcohol and Drug Agencies group. At the recent Family Advisory Committee Conference, the focus was on housing and FGTA hosted a table with brochures and copies of the Coping Kit.

Board member Tabitha Montgomery organized the International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) Vigil and Rally last year in Vancouver in solidarity with other events happening world-wide. It was held on August 31 at Robson Square to bring public health awareness and support to all areas under the cause of overdose prevention and safety.

Tabitha will again be organizing IOAD this year at the Vancouver Art Gallery's new North Plaza. It will be an early evening event that will include participants from all areas of addictions and mental health in the Vancouver lower mainland.

FGTA published their 2017 From Planning to Action document in the run up to the provincial election. This was sent to representatives of all parties, and FGTA commit to following up with whoever forms the next government, to ensure that our recommendations stay on the table. The document strongly recommends the requirement of a continuum of care that includes concurrent disorders and a holistic approach to treatment. Copies of this document can be found at the front table.

An important part of FGTA's mandate has been our communication to the public. Our website continues to be updated with relevant news stories on addiction, as well as highlighting new resources as they become available. FGTA's Coping Kit continues to be downloaded by individuals around the world as it provides valuable information and support for families who are struggling in dealing with addiction. The Canadian Council on Substance Use has recently contacted FGTA to pull together a focus group which will be considering a similar booklet that would be available on a national basis.

In the next couple of weeks a second meeting of the BC Overdose Action Exchange will be held. FGTA members will continue to stress the need for prevention and treatment as well as increased harm reduction measures. Tragically, the emergency is still with us, despite huge efforts on the part of the health care system to address the problem. Our hearts go out to all those families who have lost members to this tragedy. FGTA will continue to do our best to work on your behalf.

Later in our AGM we will be recognizing Jennifer Johnson, who is the Executive Director of Central City Foundation. Thanks to a huge amount of dedication on her part, as well as by past FGTA Board members, Susie and Rob Ruttan, the youth residential treatment centre at The Crossing in Keremeos, which was closed in March 2015, is now open again.

Now called Ashnola at the Crossing, the facility took in its first residents in March 2017. The program is providing treatment support to youth and young adults, aged 17-24, challenged by addictions. The youth treatment centre is operated by Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS). Central City Foundation owns the Crossing facility and is providing it rent-free to PHSA and BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services (BCMHSUS) who fund the program. FGTA was recognized at a celebratory event put on by Central City Foundation, for the central role it played in the early stages of getting this youth treatment centre off the ground.

In closing it has been very heartening to see two new groups of family members come forward – “MUMSDU” and “Mums Stop the Harm”. It has been advantageous to work with these two groups on various committees to raise our voices even louder. Recently FGTA added their voice and signed a joint letter urging the Provincial Government to commit all taxes raised from the legalization of marijuana to go towards badly needed substance use treatment and prevention.

Thank you