



CANADIAN MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

1200-1111 Melville St., Vancouver, V6E 3V6  
Tel: (604) 688-3234 or 1-800-555-8222  
Fax: (604) 688-3236  
www.cmha-bc.org

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: February 17, 2005

### **Canadian Mental Health Association Launches Art Book on Depression by Vernon artist**

VANCOUVER – The Canadian Mental Health Association is proud to announce the release of *Responding to the Call*, an adult picture book to help those suffering from depression understand what Vernon artist Suzan Milburn calls ‘a gift’.

The full-colour art book features drawings by Milburn, an artist who prior to her depression had never drawn anything in her life, weaved together with a narrative by the author about what the ‘gift’ of depression feels like from the perspective of those living with it.

“The book follows the process of sensing something's wrong to realizing your over your head to self-learning to acceptance,” says Milburn. “In my deep depression, I found that I couldn't read, watch TV or even have a conversation longer than ten minutes without my brain seizing up. What I could do though was paint. And so I painted for hour after hour and continue to do so. Because it's hard to focus or concentrate when you're depressed, being able to look at images has been very helpful for me—and I hope it'll be for others as well.”

“CMHA is proud to support Suzan and this book,” says Bev Gutray, Executive Director of CMHA BC Division, “It's not often that someone comes to us with something that has the power to change lives the way this book does. Suzan took her depression and made something positive with it that could help many others. You can't see mental illness but Suzan makes you see it—the pain, the struggles, the hope, the resilience, even the humour. There is nothing like it available.”

The book will be officially launched at an evening event on Tuesday, February 15th at CMHA's Vernon branch at 3100 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 7:00pm. Author and artist Suzan Milburn will present her book, share her journey of recovery, as well as be available to sign copies after the launch. Media is invited to attend the launch.

The book is being distributed free of charge through CMHA branches in BC, rehabilitation clubhouses for people with mental illnesses, art therapy schools, art therapists in BC, training programs for mental health professionals, depression support groups across BC, outpatient psychiatry programs and to mental health centres throughout the province. It will also be promoted heavily through branches during Mental Health Week in May. It is also CMHA's hope that the book can become a beautiful and inspirational coffee table book that any organization or household outside the mental health and art-therapy fields would be proud to display.

“I realized by writing this book that depression isn't just an ‘illness’ but really a gift given to certain people to help them understand more about themselves, their families and their surroundings. It can make you a stronger person,” Milburn says.

Funding for the production and distribution of 3,000 copies of this educational resource has been generously provided by gaming revenue through the Province of British Columbia.

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#### **Provincial Media Contact:**

Mykle Ludvigsen  
Public Education and Communications Officer  
Tel: 604.688.3234