

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Woman Selected for National 'Face Mental Illness' Campaign

(Thunder Bay, ON. October 1, 2009) The Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) has selected Thunder Bay's own Raija Begall for their National Mental Illness Awareness Week Campaign (October 4-10, 2009). Raija was chosen as one of five faces representing recovery from mental illness. St. Joseph's Care Group nominated Raija for her efforts to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues as part of its 'Youth with an OPEN mind' program.

Last year, Raija authored a book with support from St. Joseph's Care Group called, *Breaking Up with ED* about her struggle with an eating disorder (ED) and how she came to terms with mental illness. Raija says, "By sharing my story with others, I hope to bring mental illness out from the shadows and encourage my peers to seek help when they need it."

As a kick-off to Mental Illness Awareness Week 2009 in Thunder Bay, Raija is reading excerpts from her book to Hammarskjold High School students today. St. Joseph's Care Group is helping Raija distribute her book to schools throughout Northwestern Ontario. *Breaking Up with ED* is also currently for sale at Chapters Bookstore in Thunder Bay.

Nearly one in five Canadians is affected by mental illness, yet a persistent stigma prevents millions from getting the help they need. The continuing theme of Mental Illness Awareness Week - Face Mental Illness - is designed to change that. Raija's experience is proof that through proper diagnosis, treatment and awareness, people with mental illnesses can lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) is an annual national public education campaign designed to help open the eyes of Canadians to the reality of mental illness. The week was established in 1992 by the Canadian Psychiatric Association, and is now coordinated by CAMIMH. The Thunder Bay Mental Health Network is coordinating activities in the city including a screening of the film, *The Soloist* to Confederation College students and the 'Brainwaves Coffeehouse' celebrating the talent of people struggling with mental illness.

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St. Joseph's Care Group is accredited with Accreditation Canada and provides services in complex care, rehabilitation, mental health and addictions, long-term care and supportive housing. Community programs are provided at Frank Murphy Community Centre.

St. Joseph's Care Group has approximately 1700 employees and over 400 volunteers. With an annual operating budget of \$125M, SJCG is the fifth largest employer in Thunder Bay. To learn more about SJCG, visit the web site at www.sjcg.net