

# Woman behind Wellness Project receives Canadian Mental Health Association award

By Jon Thompson  
Miner and News

“I nominate Liz Garrow because she started the Wellness Project in Kenora and since the group, I have been feeling much better with my depression and myself [sic] esteem and I owe that to Liz Garrow.”

The above was written on one of the overflowing number of support nominations for Garrow and the effort she coordinates to create social activities for people with mental disabilities. It was passionate responses like this one that allowed both Garrow and the project to take home the Canadian Mental Health Association Can-Help Award of Excellence. This year marked the first time that the award has been open to a person or an organization and the Wellness Project’s co-ordinator won on both counts.

“Liz is an awesome person,” says friend and colleague Lisa Vigfusson. “She has worked so hard to get where she is. She has spent countless hours working on this project. She’s so consumer oriented that people have gotten better because of what she’s created.”

The award is given annually to a social worker that makes a difference as a motivating factor for change in peoples’ lives. It was awarded at the ninth annual consumer and family conference for the Kenora-Rainy River region that was held in Fort Frances over the weekend, uniting 150 consumers and family members surviving with mental illnesses.

“It’s a great program in theory but unless you have a great person to do it, it wouldn’t work. She just has the personality for it,” complimented Maria Coleman, the community liaison worker for the Can Help program.

Garrow, who throws her whole self into her work, was touched. In her speech, she addressed the community celebration of the award. She recognizes that it takes everyone to make a program work, not just the coordinator.

“I believe in the program so much. I’ve seen the results and I’m so proud to be a part of it. The gratification comes out of seeing people getting better.”