THE CATALYST

Featured SPARKie: Elizabeth Anderson

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By: | Posted: August 5, 2020

> Sometimes all it takes to convince someone to register for a training program is an email invitation.

While the SPARK journey of Elizabeth Anderson may have started with a colourless vague sketch of what she wanted, her story continues to be the work of an artistic masterpiece. As the founder of BeingMentallyHealthy.com, Elizabeth is now a seasoned professional speaker. She started her career over 30 years ago for the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, Calgary branch. She is currently a professional speaker at the Speaker's Bureau of Canada and a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers. She has received recognition for her body of work; including the True Grit Award, Lt. Governor's Circle on Mental Health and Addictions, the Inspiring Albertan award from CTV. Elizabeth's dream is to deliver the hope of recovery for those living with mental illness through her own lived experience. The SPARK Knowledge Translation program was an important step along this journey.

SPARKie Profile
Name: Elizabeth Anderson
Organization: Being Mentally Healthy
SPARK Year: 2017

The ABCs of Being Mentally Healthy

Before applying to SPARK, Elizabeth sought to transform her adult colouring book, The ABCs of Being Mentally Healthy (© 2017), into a course to offer a more complete recovery experience. According to Elizabeth, "There is lack of information in primary care and other health settings on real-life recovery from the lived experience perspective." She named her course "Catching the Wind: Chart Your Own Recovery", with an overall vision for recovery principles to be taught in acute care and other therapeutic settings for people who have begun their care. SPARK offered her a blank canvas to create and realize her dream.

SPARKing Innovation

For Elizabeth, SPARK couldn't have come at a better time. She needed training in Knowledge Translation (KT) to support the transformation of her colouring book into a course so that it could be used effectively in recovery-based care. The journey to her success, however, wasn't as smooth as she would have hoped. After receiving the email link to register for SPARK in 2016,

things didn’t go exactly as planned for Elizabeth. “I didn’t get in the first time. I applied again the next year and finally got in.”

Although she had developed the colouring book during that year, Elizabeth had difficulty implementing it within the therapeutic settings that she aspired to reach. A past attempt to present her course idea to medical professionals was unsuccessful. “They couldn’t see the vision.” She needed training in KT to help her transfer her knowledge into a practical course that medical professionals would adopt.

SPARKing Implementation

During the SPARK Summer 2017 session, Elizabeth was equipped with the tools she needed to implement her innovation. By learning the process of KT planning, Elizabeth was able to manage her project and support its uptake. She also found a sense of community during her SPARK program as she was able to network with other participants. This community was very important to her overall process. “It was a great group of people doing something creative with mental health.” She was encouraged because it showed her that, “a lot of people care about mental health.”

Elizabeth also used the SBARA (Situation – Background – Assessment – Recommendations – Ask) model from the program to help her speak about her course and its benefits in a way that medical professionals understand.

SPARK equipped Elizabeth with the ability to sketch out a plan that made sense, and a vision to continue to colour in and make the final touches on her innovation. **When asked what advice she would offer those interested in applying for SPARK, Elizabeth enthusiastically responded by saying, “I would tell people to apply!”**

Where is Elizabeth today?

Stay tuned for the next part of her story! Elizabeth used SPARK as a blank canvas to create and implement her vision. To Elizabeth, “You never know what you can create” unless you pick up the pencil and sketch out a plan.

Mental Health Commission of Canada
https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/
350 Albert Street, Suite 1210 Ottawa ON K1R 1A4
Tel: 613.683.3755 | Fax: 613.798.2989
mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca