

Songs to Recovery showcases the healing power of music



By Brock Weir

Music is very often something that comes directly from the heart and, from that source, can come a certain vulnerability.

But, for Melissa, an upcoming graduate of Seneca College's Social Work program, putting yourself out there, despite your vulnerability, can bring its own rewards.

Melissa, a member of the rock/pop band Ravyn Red, has been spending time over the last few months working with the Aurora-based Eating Disorders of York Region's Riverwalk Wellness Centres (EDOYR). Her link with the group was formed when she came to perform an acoustic set for EDOYR's clients and there was an instant connection. Through her continued involvement with the organization, she has come to put her musical talents to good use, preparing to perform in and organize the group's upcoming 'Songs to Recovery' concert.

Songs to Recovery, which is slated to take place March 14 at the Aurora Cultural Centre, is aimed to bring the community together for an afternoon of music celebrating the themes of love, overcoming challenges, and self-discovery, while showcasing the work of fledgling visual artists who have emerged through EDOYR's art therapy programs.

'My vision is to incorporate all different kinds of performers,' says Melissa, noting the inclusion of the up-and-coming band Soul in Motion. 'We will also have solo performers. It is going to be very open, and a very welcoming, supportive environment for everyone there to just express themselves.'

While the concert will also be a way for EDOYR to build awareness both of organizations and the spectrum of issues that fall under the term 'eating disorder', there is more to it than that, says Janice Morgante, Executive Director of EDOYR.

'It is a great way to get together. You can bring your family and friends, but you don't have to clean your living room, because we'll be hosting it! It is really about sharing the warmth, especially in this cold, chilly weather. Often we don't make time to be together and creativity is fantastic for helping us feel connected to our authentic self.'

'Whether we are creating the art or appreciating art, I think it is an experience that brings us closer to our feelings. We can take a rest from the busyness of our life and the world. Connection is very important.'

Beyond the concert, these connections will continue in myriad creative programs EDOYR has in store for the coming year. In addition to this event, Melissa will be co-facilitating 'Music As Expression', a weekly group held in their Aurora headquarters focusing on the health benefits of music. New groups are also getting underway shining a light on woodworking, 'TeleStory', a photography program, and 'Art of Living, with Dr. Victor Frankel, beginning in April on the theme of 'meaning-centred living'.

“It is not about the end product, it is not about the painting, it is about experiencing the emotions,” says Ms. Morgante. “We’re looking for connections, including what is universal, that we all experience and that is why with Songs to Recovery, it is for all of us. It is a community event, but it is also an opportunity for individuals in our program to share their art with family, friends, and the broader community.”

Songs to Recovery gets underway at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday, March 14, from 2 to 4.30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and available via www.edoyr.com, by calling 905-886-6632, or by emailing info@edoyr.com. For more information about the art therapy programs and other services offered by EDOYR, give them a call. Participation in art programs is contingent on referrals from EDOYR or Addiction Services of York Region.