

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Physical activity is proven to be “an important support on one’s recovery path” (Kwik, Fall 2010, p. 18) from mental illness. Many research studies show physical activity can improve quality of life, physical health, reduce physical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes as well as alleviate mental health symptoms (Kwik, Fall 2010). Many of the medications used to assist recovery from mental illness, such as beta-blockers for anxiety disorders, have a weight gain side effect which may also be balanced by physical activity.

Kari Ala-Leppilampi, who suffered from severe anxiety and depression used physical activity as a therapeutic means of coping with his mental illness and changing his life in a positive direction. A decade ago, Ala –Leppilampi used drugs and alcohol as a means to deal with his illness, he was slowly killing himself. Today, he has lost 45 pounds and he is a triathlete, who has competed in Kona, Hawaii, the Boston Marathon, and countless other races. Ala-Leppilampi regards running has saved his life. “Mental illness can leave you in a sea of instability, and (running) is one stable thing in my life”, (Chappell, iRun, Jan. 2009).

Search Community Mental Health Services has been providing its members programs that promote physical fitness, emotional well being, and positive mental health. Search for Fitness is one of those programs.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Search will start a new round of Search for Fitness for its consumers. Search for Fitness will consist of a variety of lifestyle enhancing programs involving the mind, body and spirit. To name a few programs offered by Search include: aerobics, aquafit, step-class, nutrition and diabetes workshops.

Search for Fitness will run for eight (8) months, January to August 2011. Any Search consumer is eligible to participate. Consumers may sign up after January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 if spots are available. For inquiries please contact Kayla Reynolds, Activity Staff, at (519) 245-0120 ext. 241.

