

## **Parents turn grief for son into aid for youths; Mental health resource hub opens at B.C. Children's Hospital, thanks to Ginny and Kerry Dennehy**

Vancouver Sun  
Thursday, August 28, 2008  
Page: B1 / FRONT  
Section: Westcoast News  
Byline: Pamela Fayerman  
Dateline: VANCOUVER  
Source: Vancouver Sun

VANCOUVER - When their 17-year old son, Kelty, committed suicide several years ago, Ginny and Kerry Dennehy pledged to channel their grieving and recovery into helping others to boost awareness, research and education about mental health problems.

Through the Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation, the Whistler parents have raised \$3.2 million since 2001.

Their latest project is now open at B.C. Children's Hospital, in the form of a one-stop resource hub where parents, children and health professionals can find information and links to services throughout the province.

Apart from helping patients obtain faster diagnoses and treatment, the centre's mandate is to help break down stigmas associated with mental health problems. "It's a centre where patients and their families can find their way through a maze, to help them get encouragement, first of all, and then get them started in the process of finding the appropriate help at the right time," Ginny Dennehy said in an interview Wednesday.

"It's the most terrifying thing when you, as a parent, have a child say, 'I can't go on.' We thought we were doing everything possible for Kelty. If a service like this existed back then, we would have used it," she added.

Seeing the centre open now is part of the Dennehys' vision for "desperately needed" improved mental health services for B.C. children.

A 2002 study by researchers at Simon Fraser University found that about 15 per cent of B.C. children -- nearly 150,000 -- are affected by mental health disorders, including substance abuse.

So far, the Dennehy Foundation has disbursed \$2.67 million of the \$3.2 million raised.

The Kelty Resource Centre to which the Dennehys contributed \$450,000 over three years (with matching funding from B.C. Mental Health and Addiction Services), provides telephone consultation, face-to-face help, e-mail exchanges, peer support, printed, electronic and online materials, and help with navigating mental health support systems.

Connie Coniglio, director of the health literacy program for B.C. Mental Health and Addictions Services, said the centre does not provide treatment, but will help families and youth "find treatment options."

"We have an inventory or index of mental health services in all communities and we will link people to those mental health teams, services and agencies," she said. "We are also hoping doctors use our service if they are wondering where to send patients."

The Dennehys contributed \$1 million through their foundation to the new mental health building at Children's Hospital, located at the old Shaughnessy Hospital site, which is thought to be the only freestanding facility dedicated to youth mental health in Canada.

They also donated \$500,000 to the University of B.C. and Vancouver General Hospital Foundation to help fund a chair in depression research, a post now occupied by Dr. Allan Young.

As well, they donated \$450,000 over five years for a long-term study on the biological roots of depression in children.

Recently, the foundation held a golf tournament, gala event and music concert in Whistler to raise another \$270,000, Ginny Dennehy said, adding, "People are totally committed to the cause and we are getting huge cooperation from community sponsors."

Prince George child psychiatrist Dr. Rachel Boulding said the Kelty Centre will be useful as a place to start finding information.

"The biggest challenges facing children and families dealing with mental health and substance use disorders can be trying to decide if they need help, and what kind of help they need. Many parents don't know if what they are experiencing is normal or not," she said.

[pfayerman@vancouver.sun.com](mailto:pfayerman@vancouver.sun.com)

#### THE KELTY RESOURCE CENTRE

- 4500 Oak Street (near the intersection of West 30th Avenue and Heather Street)

- Room P3-302, Vancouver

- Phone 604-875-2084

- Toll Free 1-800-665-1822

- e-mail: [kellycentre@bcmhs.bc.ca](mailto:kellycentre@bcmhs.bc.ca)

- website: [www.bcmhas.ca/keltyresourcecentre](http://www.bcmhas.ca/keltyresourcecentre)

- Days and hours of operation are dependent on call and visit volume in the initial stages of operation.