



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 1:00AM
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Coast Mental Health Announces Fourth 2008 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient Trisha Baptie named as recipient in Social Adversity category

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 8, 2008 – Coast Mental Health announced the fourth of six award recipients of a 2008 Courage To Come Back Award. **Trisha Baptie of Burnaby** has been named as the 2008 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Social Adversity category. Recipients in the remaining two categories will be announced weekly leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 8th.

On January 22, 2007, a murder trial began in New Westminster that would hold the world's attention for months. An unlikely reporter sat in the courtroom, Trisha Baptie, in her first assignment as a "citizen correspondent" for online news magazine Orato.com. Trisha is not a reporter, so why had she agreed to cover this terrible story? Because she knew that she easily could have been one of the accused's victims. Trisha knew several of the missing women and her story is in many ways a remarkable tale of personal courage and persistence to escape their fate.

Raised in a violent and abusive home, Trisha was placed in foster care at 12. She quickly learned that alcohol and drugs seemed to provide an escape, and by 15 she was out of school and already in her first rehab facility trying to break free. It didn't take. By 17, she was a mother for the first time. Over the next decade, Trisha's life spiraled out of control and, getting her escort license at 18, she would ultimately end up working the streets in Vancouver's downtown eastside. By then, she was pregnant with her second child, seriously drug addicted, and the survivor of many violent relationships. It seemed as if Trisha was destined to be just another sad statistic.

Being a mother, however, was the one thing Trisha could really hold on to. Making a different life for her kids than she had had. Showing them a better way. When an outreach volunteer smiled at her one cold October night in 2000, she didn't turn away as she had so many times before. It was too cold out to say no, so she accepted the hot chocolate that was given with a smile that warmed Trisha to her core and seemed to say "I am happy you're here." This was the first helping hand that had been reached out to her in years. Trisha began to think, for the first time in a long time, that it was possible to change her life for the better. To change her children's lives.

It wasn't easy. Trisha struggled to stop using drugs, stop drinking, get out of the cycle of violence and hopelessness. She had many milestones to reach – getting a social insurance number, finding a safe place to make a home for herself and her children (which would soon number 3) – and through it all fighting the temptation to escape her problems the only way she had ever known. She had to learn how to trust, how to function in a different social paradigm, how to believe she could be accepted in it. Day by day, with the help of a new circle of support, through triumph and temptation and setback, she fought on. In 2005, she successfully completed the Humanities 101 program at UBC and proved to herself that she could not only set unimaginably difficult goals, she could achieve them.

"Making changes doesn't always feel good, it requires a certain amount of discomfort and sacrifice," Trisha says. "You need to look into the future and envision the benefit you will reap by making sacrifices one good decision at a time."

Through it all, Trisha has not forgotten those she left behind and continues to reach out to women living in the DTES, offering help where she can so they, too, can overcome poverty, prostitution, drug addiction, and life on the streets. Congratulations, Trisha. Coast is proud to have you as our 2008 Courage To Come Back recipient in the Social Adversity category.

Trisha Baptie named as recipient in CTCB Social Adversity category

Trisha will receive her Courage To Come Back Award at the 10th Anniversary gala dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, May 8th. For tickets, call 604-675-2327 or purchase online at www.coastmentalhealth.com

About Courage To Come Back:

The Courage To Come Back Awards celebrate people who have valuable lessons to share as they have courageously battled back from illness, adversity or injury. Through Courage, British Columbians are acknowledged for their accomplishments, positive attitudes and willingness to give back to their communities. Awards are given in six categories including: mental health, physical rehabilitation, medical, addiction, social adversity and youth.

About Coast Mental Health:

The Coast Mental Health Foundation (CMHF) was formed in 2001 to raise funds for community mental health services and to educate the public about the needs of people with a serious mental illness. Since 1974, the Coast Foundation Society (CFS) has been providing high quality housing, employment programs, social opportunities and other community mental health services for people with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Through presenting the stories of six amazing recipients each year at The Courage To Come Back Awards, Coast Mental Health Foundation strives to offer hope to all those suffering from illness, adversity or injury and demonstrates that all people have value and dignity regardless of the illness, adversity or injury they have faced.

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