Mood for Thought

Mood Disorders Ottawa

Since 1986

Newsletter

AGM Special Edition | Fall 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the Special Edition newsletter recapping the highlights from our Annual General Meeting (AGM), celebrating our achievements, and outlining our future goals. Over the past year, Mood Disorders Ottawa has continued its commitment to providing identity-affirming, peer-led support and community connection.

Note: *Complete meeting minutes will be formally distributed at the 2027 AGM. This newsletter provides a condensed overview of key discussion points and achievements from this year's meeting.*

📢 Important Update: New MDO Contact Details

Please update your records! As part of our administrative updates to save costs and streamline operations, Mood Disorders Ottawa has updated its official mailing address and phone number:

- **NEW Phone #**: 613-974-6902
- **NEW Mailing Address**: Suite # 203, 11-300 Earl Grey Drive, Ottawa, ON, K2T 1C1
- **Website**: https://www.mooddisordersottawa.ca/ ***(Unchanged)***
- **Email**: info@mooddisordersottawa.ca ***(Unchanged)***

MDO Programs & Events November and December 2026

Connect, and Celebrate with Mood Disorders Ottawa!

Welcome to Mood Disorders Ottawa's November and December 2026 calendars!

The month of **NOVEMBER** brings our regular virtual and in-person programs, in addition to:

- The launch of the **Handmade Treasures Fundraising Auction** on November 1st,
- Virtual Fall Ball on November 1st,
- Movie Meet on November 17th,
- Board meeting on November 11th,
- Speaker's Night on November 29th,

DECEMBER includes several opportunities to connect and celebrate.

- Holiday Dinner on December 8 (For members only-advance registration required),
- Movie Meet on December 15,
- Speaker's Night on December 18,
- Virtual Winter Ball on December 20,
- Virtual Drop-in on December 25th,
- The **Handmade Treasures Fundraising Auction** concludes on December 18.

Please consult MDO's website for program details, registration information, as well as any holiday schedule changes. All times are Eastern.

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MDO's AGM and the Board

📌 Anual General Meeting (AGM): Governance & Purpose

An **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** is a mandatory yearly gathering where a charitable organization, like MDO, brings its members together to review the past year, discuss finances and programming, make decisions about future priorities, and vote on its leadership. It serves as a vital bridge between organizational leadership and the community it serves.

Why the AGM Matters to MDO

- **Staying Legitimate:** Fulfills mandatory legal requirements for registered charities, maintaining MDO's official status and operational accountability.
- **Financial Transparency:** Openly demonstrates how money was spent, reports on program outcomes, and builds essential trust within the community.
- **Member Representation:** Ensures every active, registered member has a democratic vote and direct influence over MDO's organizational direction.
- **Strengthening Community:** Connects volunteers and supporters, celebrates shared accomplishments, and fosters meaningful dialogue around local mental health support.

📊 2026 AGM Snapshot & Highlights

On **September 20, 2026**, MDO reached a key milestone by holding its **first-ever hybrid AGM**, accommodating members both in-person and online to ensure accessible participation.

Attendance Summary

- **In-Person Attendance:** 12 attendees
- **Online Attendance:** 11 attendees
- **Total Participation:** 23 participants, representing **16.5%** of active membership

Key Agenda Items Addressed

To guide MDO into the coming year, the meeting covered several critical governance and operational updates:

1. Approval of updated organizational bylaws.
2. Celebration of MDO's accomplishments and program successes over the past year.
3. Presentation of a brief financial overview.
4. Formal recognition of MDO's dedicated volunteers.
5. Review of Organizational Objectives and Strategic Action Plans.
6. Official Board of Directors elections.

📈 Year in Review (2025–2026): Growth, Connection, & Impact

The past year marked a vibrant period of growth and adaptation for MDO, characterized by expanding program numbers, new specialized groups, and strengthened community presence.

Key Milestones & Program Reach

- **40th Anniversary Celebration:** Commemorated four decades of community service with a special storytelling sharing circle, where past and present members reflected on MDO's legacy and peer support impact. https://www.mooddisordersottawa.ca/_files/ugd/8acf11_075284fc4cf043ce9d5f91db06315e09.pdf
- **Program Participation:** Recorded **370+ total registrations** across 17 distinct programs (including Pathways, Support Squad, WCC, and Mindfulness).
    - *In-Person Support Groups:* Attendance expanded significantly from an average of 8 to 14 participants per group.
    - *Virtual Support Groups:* Maintained strong engagement, averaging 22 weekly attendees.
    - *Social Connections:* Weekly *Mugs Up* and *Creative Connection* events averaged 6 participants across a total of 3 weekly sessions.
- **New Specialized Groups:** Established identity-affirming spaces by launching a Moms' Peer Support Group and an LGBTQIA+ Support & Connect Group.
- **Speaker Nights:** Hosted community educational sessions, including workplace accommodations (April 2025) and yoga for mental health (February 2026), reaching up to 36 participants.
- **Social Gatherings & Movie Meets:** Hosted holiday drop-ins, a summer picnic, a Holiday Dinner and virtual events. Introduced a regular In-Person Movie Meet (held every 3rd Tuesday since Feb 2026), replacing the previous movie gift card program.
- **Website & Digital Reach:** A comprehensive website refresh led to over **18,500 page views** and **9,000 unique sessions**.

- **Volunteer Engagement**: Hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Event. Developed a structured orientation for new volunteers. Created self-directed learning modules for peer support facilitators. Maintained a 100% volunteer-run organization, with new volunteers supporting both administrative and program activities.

Community Partnerships & Venue Support

- **Ottawa Hospital (Civic Campus):** Extended a vital partnership providing MDO free access to a conference room 3 nights per week.
- **Psychiatric Survivors Ottawa:** Generously shared, free of charge, a conference room to allow MDO to host its Volunteer Appreciation Event.
- **CMHA Partnership Conclusion:** Concluded 30 years of discretionary funding support from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) in 2025–2026. MDO extends deep gratitude to CMHA for decades of foundational support that helped sustain many core programs.

Fundraising & Financial Resilience

- **Fundraising:** A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who joined **Mood Disorder Ottawa's 2nd Annual Walk-A-Thon**. We surpassed our goal and raised close to **$6,500**. To all volunteers, walkers, and donors: your support funds in-person activities, helps members connect and grow, and enhances our recovery and virtual peer programs. Thank you for being part of this journey; your generosity means a lot.

- **Grants & Coaching:** MDO continues to benefit from an Ottawa Community Foundation grant, providing valuable coaching to develop a long-term, sustainable fundraising strategy. Applications for new grants (including Bell Let's Talk) were also submitted.

Here are some of the participants from the Walk-A-Thon at Andrew Haydon Park on October 3, 2026: From left to right in the picture: Hugo, Danielle, Justine, Mylene, Heather, Roman, an unnamed individual, Nancy, and Neil. Additional attendees not pictured include Grace, Garrett (Grace's boyfriend), Julie (Danielle's sister), and other anonymous participants.

Administrative Efficiency

- Transitioned phone and mailing systems, reducing operational overhead by **$250 per year**.
- Updated internal bylaws to establish member meeting quorum at **10% of eligible voting members**.

🤝 Volunteer Spotlight: The Heart of MDO

For over 40 years, Mood Disorders Ottawa has operated as a **100% volunteer-run organization**. Every group facilitated, event planned, and administrative task completed relies entirely on the compassion and dedication of community volunteers.

Volunteer Roster & Roles

NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS TO MDO
Alex S.	Board Member, Program Facilitator
Carrie H.	Board Member, Grant Writer, Communications
Catherine W.	Grant writer and Movie event facilitator
Champ C	Program Facilitator, Peer Facilitator
Charlotte R.	Peer Support Facilitator
Chris R.	Board Member, Peer Support Facilitator
Danielle P.	Newsletter Writer, Round Table, Peer Support Facilitator, Outreach
Gerry W.	Board Member
Grace M.	Peer Support Facilitator
Heather Z.	Special Event Volunteer
Joanne L.	Board Member
John P.	Peer Support Facilitator, Program Facilitator
Justine M.	Program Facilitator, Board Member, Guest Speaker
Kim H.	Program Facilitator
Laura C.	Program Facilitator
Lucie P.	Board Member, Program Facilitator
Maxwell H.	Board Member
Mylene P	Treasurer /Board Member, Program Facilitator
Myriam C.	Program Facilitator
Nancy R.	Board member, Graphics, Peer Support and Program Facilitator

NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS TO MDO
Neil C.	Secretary/Board Member, IT and Communications, Peer Support Facilitator
Ro D.	Peer Support Facilitator, Board Member
Sheila H.	Program Facilitator
Solomon H.	Peer Support Facilitator
Yvan L.	Phoneline Operator and Communicator, Board Member

🗳️ Board of Directors Election

MDO's Board of Directors guides the organization's governance, strategic decisions, and community outreach.

Election Framework & Acclamation Rules

- **Nomination Process:** Active, paid members may nominate themselves or others prior to or during the AGM.
- **Acclamation:** Because the board accommodates up to 13 members and the total number of candidates (10) was equal to or less than available spots, all nominees were elected simultaneously by acclamation.
- **Mid-Term Opportunities & Resignations:** Members may express interest and join vacant board spots at any point during the year. Serving terms are flexible, and members may step down if necessary.

Meet Your New Board of Directors

1. **Ally (Aliria):** Joined the Board after the AGM, driven by a desire to give back to MDO, which significantly supported her recovery. Aims to contribute particularly through grant applications.
2. **Catherine**: Long-time board member (since 2007, with breaks) with deep expertise in community outreach and member support.
3. **Gerry**: Rejoined board in February 2026. Brings lived experience and prior peer facilitation background to the board.
4. **Justine**: Joined board in June 2026. Brings extensive experience in youth mental health, postpartum support, creative programming, and community health.

5. **Maxwell:** Board member for the past year. Provides governance insight drawn from experience as president of Carleton University's Student Association.
6. **Mylene:** Treasurer and returning board member. Credited with driving MDO's successful return to in-person programming.
7. **Nancy:** Long-standing board member who served as Program Coordinator and has been the Chair since Fall 2025. Focus on expanding peer support and nurturing inclusive, community-driven initiatives.
8. **Neil:** Secretary, IT/communications lead, and board member since 2020. Manages member correspondence and website administration with promptness and personal care.
9. **Philip**: A returning Board member, dedicated to promoting peer support and fostering an inclusive, welcoming environment within the organization.
10. **Ro (Roman):** Joined the Board of Directors in spring 2025. An active facilitator in both WRAP and peer support programs. Their motivation stems from a commitment to cultivating a diverse and inclusive environment for the entire community.
11. **Steven**: Former board member rejoining with lived experience in sobriety, addiction recovery, and homelessness
12. **Yvan:** Long-time MDO volunteer and board member. Brings lived experience and peer facilitation skills.

Executive Board Members

The new Board met for the first time on Wednesday October 15th 2026. During this meeting, they appointed the new board members into the executive positions The people who hold the Board's executive positions are:

- **Chair**: Nancy R.
- **Vice-Chair**: Neil
- **Treasure**: Mylene P.
- **Secretary**: Maxwell H.

Invitation to Board Meetings

The Board meets on the **second Wednesday of each month (7:00 PM – 9:00 PM)**.

If you would like to become a board member or observe a board meeting please contact info@mooddisordersottawa.ca.

🚀 Looking Ahead: Goals & Strategic Opportunities

During the AGM, members collaborated to identify core priorities for the upcoming year to ensure MDO remains sustainable, welcoming, and responsive to community needs.

1. Expand Community Outreach & Partnerships

- Collaborate with local Ottawa organizations to share mental health resources and expertise.
- Increase visibility at community festivals, outreach events (e.g., Department of National Defence, WOW festival), and revitalize the official MDO YouTube channel.
- Target outreach to underrepresented groups while maintaining strong connections with existing members.

2. Enhance Programs & Digital Access

- Expand identity-affirming spaces and balance in-person and virtual support offerings based on member feedback.
- Implement interactive website capabilities, including a live volunteer opportunities board and direct video hosting for program introductions and meditations.

3. Sustainable Fundraising & Grants

- Secure recurring and new grants through annual applications to United Way, Bell Let's Talk, and provincial/federal sources.
- Leverage ongoing fundraising coaching provided through the Ottawa Community Foundation partnership.
- Involve volunteers with grant-writing expertise to research and submit applications.

4. Volunteer Recruitment & Facilitator Support

- Develop a structured volunteer strategy emphasizing flexible, one-off, and ongoing volunteer roles.
- Expand self-directed learning modules and mentorship for new peer facilitators.
- Reinstate the **Facilitator's Round Circle** to give facilitators a dedicated space to share strategies, exchange ideas, and build connection.

🤝Thank You

Thank you to all members who support Mood Disorders Ottawa with your annual membership.

Your commitment does more than help sustain our organization financially—it gives you a voice in shaping MDO's direction and ensures our vision, resilience, and sustainability. Every membership helps guide our community and keeps MDO strong. We are truly grateful for your support.

📬 Get Involved-Volunteer Opportunities

Whether you wish to facilitate a support group, assist with administrative work, contribute to newsletters, or join the Board of Directors, your involvement helps sustain our community.

- **Contact Email:** `info@mooddisordersottawa.ca`
- **Website:** Visit us online to explore open roles, fill out a volunteer form, or learn more about upcoming support groups.

Source of image:
https://www.pickpik.com/sunset-snow-autumn-winter-wintry-cold-128942

Word Search

Based on Words Found in this Newsletter

A A C C E S S I B I L I T Y O
P C O S V R M A D V O C A C Y
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Growth

Sustainability
Participation
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Engagement
Outreach
Diversity
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Accessibility
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