

Newsletter

2011

The Finnish Association for Mental Health
(FAMH)

Pentti Arajärvi, President of the FAMH:

The promotion of mental health is a cornerstone of a welfare state

Dr. Arajärvi, who was appointed President of the Finnish Mental Health Association in autumn 2010, considers the promotion of mental health to be a key issue for the future of Finnish society.



Pentti Arajärvi, President of the FAMH

Poverty is the most notable single risk factor for mental health. Rising inequality and poverty among citizens, as well as social exclusion, also threaten the welfare society, since they make it economically more difficult to take care of people.

“Mental well-being is both the prerequisite for and achievement of the Nordic welfare state,” says Arajärvi. Mental disorders, along with weaker access to and availability of mental health services, erode the welfare society, especially in the long term.

Dr. Arajärvi is particularly worried about the social exclusion of citizens. “Exclusion results among other things from mental health disturbances, alcohol and drug abuse and child neglect. Preventing these is both humanly and economically effective and productive.”

He also believes we should hold on to the idea of everyone being kept on board, everyone paying and everyone receiving. “The Nordic welfare state includes the notion that all of us are helpless sometimes, but no one is helpless all the time. Nobody is left behind,” says Mr. Arajärvi.

Mr. Arajärvi, Doctor of Laws, is professor of Social Welfare Law and Legislation of the Educational System at the University of Eastern Finland, and adjunct professor of Social Law at the University of Helsinki. He has worked as committee member, researcher and committee counsellor in many projects. He has also published books and articles, as well as held many honorary positions. Arajärvi’s doctoral dissertation dealt with the appropriateness of income support. ☺

Marita Ruohonen, Director of the FAMH

The human perspective in services is crucial

Finns are healthier than before and enjoy a good quality of life. Nevertheless, socio-economic differences related to health, livelihood and well-being have increased. The main factors reducing the quality of life include unemployment, retirement due to disability, living on income support, as well as a low level of education.

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Experiences of loneliness

One in every five Finns interested in voluntary mental health work

According to a survey commissioned by the Finnish Association for Mental Health, around 20 per cent of Finns show an interest in voluntary mental health work. If those currently involved in voluntary activities are included in the figure, the number rises to 25 per cent. Voluntary work attracts clearly more women than men, and interest is greatest among 25-to-49-year-olds.

While interest wanes with age, older age groups are already the ones most actively involved in voluntary work. Voluntary activities are slightly more popular in big cities than in smaller towns.

Voluntary work of interest in middle-income groups

Professional status has some bearing on the issue, seeing as the interest in voluntary work is greatest among clerical and managerial employees, those in a leading position, as well as students. Voluntary mental health work generated the least interest among unemployed people.

Interest increases with the level of education. Of those with a polytechnic or university degree, 25 per cent indicated an interest in voluntary work. Gross



Photo: Jarmo Vuorinen

household income also appears to make a difference, with the highest and lowest income groups showing the least interest. Interest is greatest among middle-income groups.

Obstacles include lack of time and own life situation

For women, the main reason for unwillingness to engage in voluntary work was lack of time or an unsuitable life situation. Lack of interest or not feeling at home with mental health work do not seem to be of importance, since only five per cent say the field is of no interest. In turn, 14 per cent of men are not interested, and nearly half quote lack of time as the reason for their reluctance.

This is the European Year of Volunteering. FAMH's theme for the year is "You are Needed – Join and Volunteer".

Tarja Heiskanen

While back, the Finnish Association for Mental Health charted people's experiences of loneliness. Approximately 80 per cent of the 280 individuals participating in the survey said that they were lonely. Most of them experienced loneliness in negative terms as something imposed on them.

The experiences of loneliness among men and women differed somewhat. For women, loneliness was first and foremost a need to be useful for someone, to process feelings with someone and longing for the mother's role.

On the other hand, for men, loneliness meant lack of friends and longing to belong in a group of friends. Men became isolated more often than women and often felt lonely even in their hobbies.

Loneliness was a source of anxiety, robbed the sufferers of self-confidence, made coping more difficult and deprived them of future prospects. However, people also noted many ways to control their loneliness: hobbies, belief in things working out in the end, physical activity in nature or city, joining peer groups, volunteer work and online discussion forums.

This year, the Finnish Association for Mental Health has focused especially on young people's loneliness. The young people's resource-oriented peer groups offer them an opportunity to discuss challenges and questions related to themselves, adolescence, coping and networks of family and friends.

Professionally supervised group activities are based on the idea of reaching young people while it is still possible to tackle and affect loneliness. The goal of groups is to find new perspectives and approaches to one's own situation and to boost self-confidence.

The Finnish Association for Mental Health's young people's groups have been one of the recipients of the proceeds from the Common Responsibility Campaign this year. The campaign focused on the prevention of young people's loneliness. The Common Responsibility Campaign is the major annual fund-raising campaign organised by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Tarja Heiskanen

New e-mental health service to be launched

FAMH introduces a new online self-help tool for traumatic crises



Photo: Ellen Tuomaala

The Finnish Association for Mental Health project has developed a new self-help programme on line, SELMA, to help people overcome traumatic crises. Currently in the piloting phase and after further development, SELMA will be launched for real use in autumn 2011 at <http://www.e-mielenterveys.fi>.

Latest form of the SOS Crisis Centre

SELMA is designed to help people to cope with shocking events. The road to recovery lasts eight weeks. SELMA is the latest form of crisis work adopted at the SOS Crisis Centre.

The self-help programme for traumatic crises has been implemented in a learning environment. Programme participants read about different topics and deal with their crises by writing. The programme also includes three telephone conversations with a crisis worker.

Support for individuals family and friends

The e-mental health site also provides information about crises, mental health disorders and help-seeking. The site has different sections for younger and older people. In addition to Finnish, information is available in English, Russian, Somali and Sorani.

Topics contained on the site talk for instance about following challenging situations in life:

- When do children and adolescents need help,
- suicidal thoughts,
- how to treat depression,
- depression in the elderly,
- how to cope with grief,
- coping with and how to support in crises,
- what mental health services are available,
- recovering from mental health disorders,
- what to do if meeting people causes anxiety.

The site is particularly useful for people seeking help for themselves or for their loved ones. Different forms and providers of care are listed under a single heading.

Dedicated sections for adolescents and the elderly

The sections for adolescents and the elderly are written with the target group in mind. Topics for adolescents include e.g. disappointments, nervousness and school bullying. The section for the elderly, in turn, discusses issues such as retirement and maintaining one's functional capacity. The section also contains information about different forms of service, such as informal care and nursing homes.

To serve immigrants, information is also available in English, Russian, Somali and Sorani (Kurdish). The different language versions also talk about immigration as a mental adjustment process. ☐

*Pinja Nieminen, Project Manager
E-mental health project*

FAMH in the Sharewood.org online service

The Finnish Association for Mental Health has nearly 1,200 supporters in the new promising Sharewood fundraising service. So far they have collected some €2,037 for the Association. To donate funds, users simply on line click on the ads of co-operation partners.

The FAMH has been involved in the online community since 2010. Service users themselves choose the organisations they want to donate assets to. Sharewood is free for users: the assets donated to organisations come from the companies advertising on the site. Regular prize draws are also arranged for users.

Apart from the FAMH, many other organisations and companies are also involved in the online service, which can be found at Sharewood.org. ☐

Guild activities boost the occupational well-being of entrepreneurs

The Finnish Association for Mental Health conducted a three-year project, the *Well-being Guild of SME Entrepreneurs*, from 2008 to 2010. The goal was to develop a model for professionally supervised peer networks, suitable for entrepreneurs' needs and use of time, in order to boost the mental well-being of entrepreneurs in the Uusimaa region and help them to cope at work.

The project grew out of a concern about the ability of SME entrepreneurs to cope at work and in their free time. The working capacity and mental well-being of entrepreneurs come under particularly great strain in SMEs, where much of the time and resources go to running the company, and leisure and holidays may be impossible due to a lack of time or opportunities.

"Entrepreneurs must deal with financial insecurity, the obligations and responsibilities of work, as well as the feeling of being left alone. SME entrepreneurship can involve a very real trap of loneliness and coping," explains Eila Okkonen, PhD, who is in charge of the project.

Power from peer support

To achieve its goals, the project offered a short training period and professionally supervised guild activities for peer support. Training focused on topics related to mental well-being and coping, such as survival methods, occupational well-being, loneliness and losses of entrepreneurs, resources, as well as risks to coping.

The actual core, though, lay in guild group activities, in which expert and peer

support were used to develop participants' self-knowledge, stress management skills and ability to handle loneliness. Guild groups were supervised by teams of two, consisting of an experienced entrepreneur and an expert in mental well-being. The peer network supported its members, while the supervisory team assisted the group process and treatment of topics. Research surveys and group interviews were used to evaluate activities.

Support for entrepreneurs' problems

"While entrepreneurs felt they benefited from the training offered, they found guild group activities to be especially useful. Group discussions focused on coping and on problems related to everyday life and work. This helped entrepreneurs understand their own coping and identify any risks related to mental well-being. One of the most effective and feasible ways to learn to understand yourself is to reflect on your own situation through that of others. Peer support is ideal for this purpose," says Okkonen.

The goal is to establish the training- and peer support-based guild model as a tool supporting the well-being of entrepreneurs all around Finland. Project experiences and research results show that SME entrepreneurs need support for maintaining their mental well-being and coping with their work. Guild activities will be expanded to Eastern Finland, Lapland and Western Finland in 2011. ☺

Pauli Pesola



Photo: Jarmo Vuorinen

Well-being Guild of Entrepreneurs 2008-2010

The guild project was carried out by the Finnish Association for Mental Health from 2008 to 2010.

The project grew out of a concern about the ability of SME entrepreneurs to cope at work and out of the wish to provide entrepreneurs with means to maintain their mental well-being.

The guild model contained training and activities for 3 peer groups of some 10 people, and lasted for 12 months. ☺

Project “Pieces in Place” helps adolescents at risk of social exclusion



Photo: Stock.XCHNG

In summer 2010, the Education Centre of the Finnish Association for Mental Health and five of its co-operation partners jointly launched a project called “Pieces in Place”, *Palaset kohdalleen*. Focusing on multidisciplinary family therapy for adolescents with behavioural and substance abuse problems, the project aims to prevent social exclusion.

Multidisciplinary family therapy combines different approaches, including cognitive behavioural and family therapy, motivational interviewing as well as network activities. Not as a form of therapy itself it does not require employees to have an education in therapy.

Internationally, the model has been found to be an effective and successful. In Finland the familiarity of the practices involved and the need for new methods support its implementation.

Helping adolescents in cross-disciplinary networks

The period of work with adolescents lasts from four to seven months and is arranged in a network formed by the adolescent, his/her parents, sisters and brothers and other close relations.

Meetings are usually arranged at the adolescent’s home or in other everyday environments instead of office facilities and consulting rooms.

The method provides a safe framework for children and adolescents dealing with difficult life situations, as well as for their family, friends and helpers. New elements in the method include clear responsibilities and cross-disciplinary co-operation.

The number of children and adolescents at risk of exclusion has grown alarmingly in Finland, with around 1,000 new adolescents annually. Placement outside the home and mental health disorders are specifically related to the risk of being permanently excluded from education and working life. This also increases the need for new, well-functioning methods.

The “Pieces in Place” project received funding e.g. from the concert tour held in connection with the Finnish Medical Association’s 100th anniversary. The autumn 2010 tour collected assets for substance abuse and mental health work conducted among children and adolescents. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala

OVI supports immigrants

The FAMH’s OVI project (2007–2011) offers mental health information to immigrant associations and people with an immigrant background. The project involves five immigrant organisations: IRTY, the Iraqi employment association; FARO, the Association of Russian speakers in Finland; Monika, the Multicultural women’s association; as well as Berde and the Somali League of Finland, both of which have a Somali background.

Many immigrants need new coping methods to replace those left in their home countries. Experiences and emotions related to immigration may also weigh on people’s minds. There are still a great number of prejudices related to mental health, many of them based on the concepts and practices of the country of origin.

What is needed is more fact-based information about mental health and services, as well as about immigrants’ own views of mental health. The OVI project has offered training and networking, strengthened the resources of immigrant organisations and increased cultural understanding and tolerance. ☐

Sari Nyholm
Project Manager, OVI project



Photo: Ellen Tuomaala

Arlene Vetere is a well-known pioneer of anti-domestic-violence work in Europe.

Arlene Vetere brings a new method to Finland for dealing with violence

The Education Centre of the Finnish Association for Mental Health has launched a new education programme for therapists working with domestic and interpersonal violence. The instructor is Arlene Vetere, PhD in clinical psychology, from the UK, an antiviolence pioneer, who has developed the model.

The systemic and integrated model for dealing with domestic and interpersonal violence deals with all the parties involved. “Whereas earlier models usually focused on the victim or perpetrator, the new model takes into consideration the entire network of human relations between the parties,” tells Vetere.

Safety as a main issue

“At the beginning of treatment, safety and its construction are the main issues. Safety as well as responsibility for it are discussed, and the parties commit themselves to breaking loose of violence,” Vetere continues.

In addition to families and therapists, the work involves a “stable third”, a person who is trusted by the family acquainted with the situation and also knows about violence. Examples of a “stable third” include a family friend, a familiar social worker or the grandmother. Children do

not take part in treatment until safety has been ensured.

Violent interactions are analysed

“The interactions in which violence took over are discussed in great detail with therapists, and the participants jointly analyse what really took place. What kinds of emotions were involved at the moment? What set off the violence? In what words was violence explained or justified?”, Vetere says. Alternative solutions in similar situations are also rehearsed.

Breaking the cycle of violence is only the beginning of therapy. It is followed by the actual work, which aims to heal deep wounds and rebuild trust – and maintain it in the future.

The FAMH Education Centre has designed the programme in co-operation with the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters. The twelve-month pilot training is attended by 24 professionals from different parts of Finland. They are trained and experienced social and healthcare professionals and family therapists, having a long carrier with violence-related clients. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala

Further information:

Arlene Vetere & Jan Cooper:
Domestic Violence and Family
Safety. Whurrpublishers, 2005

FAMH’s awarded early rehabilitation assessed to have a good impact

For more than 15 years, FAMH’s early rehabilitation department has arranged professionally led peer support groups for people who have experienced traumatic events and difficult life situations. The goal has been to prevent illness and crises from drawing out, to enable the sharing of emotions and experiences with peers, as well as to support the functional capacity and survival methods of participants.



Photo: Jarmo Vuorinen

From left, **Antti Mykkänen**, chairman of the board of the Rehabilitation foundation, hands over the medal to **Reija Narumo** and **Outi Ruishalme**, from the SOS Crisis Centre.

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FAMH's awarded early rehabilitation assessed to have a good impact

Acknowledgement of important work

In spring 2010, the Early Rehabilitation Department was awarded the Rehabilitator medal, which is annually granted by the Rehabilitation Foundation. Granted for the nineteenth time in 2010, the medal was awarded to FAMH for the important work it carries out in Finland.

An evaluation survey conducted by the Rehabilitation Foundation was published in December. According to the results, the FAMH's early rehabilitation has a clearly

positive impact on the functional ability and general well-being of participants.

Improved quality of life and well-being

The survey assessed the impact that early rehabilitation models and methods had on the functional ability and quality of life of rehabilitation group participants, as well as on their own experience of their physical condition and well-being. Furthermore, the survey looked into the significance that participants gave to early rehabilitation experiences.

According to participants, peer support and joint discussion of difficult topics were the biggest benefits from group work. Many rehabilitants said they could not have found corresponding support elsewhere.

Overall, FAMH's early rehabilitation work was considered to have a good impact. According to the evaluation survey, early rehabilitation is one way to expand the participatory rehabilitation work carried out in the third sector. ☐

Pauli Pesola

National Mental Health Event defined mental health as a corner-stone of the national economy

The National Mental Health Event, Mieli 2011, focused on the theme "how to raise our children in the future". The speakers of the event created a multifaceted overview on a complex topic.

As one of the speakers, Kristian Wahlbeck, Research Professor, pointed out that mental health problems are pretty much overshadowed by questions of physical health among public health issues. However, mental health is one of the main features of the economy and workforce.

Experts were especially worried about the mental health of adolescents. Behavioural problems and substance abuse are the most common mental health disorders among young people. Professor Mauri Marttunen and Leena Ehrling, PhD in Social Sciences, emphasised the significance of versatile treatment and

commitment to it. Examples of effective treatment include cognitive psychotherapy and different types of combination treatments that integrate individual, family and network activities.

Ehrling gave a presentation on the multidimensional family therapy (MDFT) model, which is one of the most thoroughly researched and most effective forms of combination treatment. A single employee taking responsibility for the entire treatment process makes work easier and reduces interruptions in the information flow. The FAMH launched MDFT training in Finland in spring 2011.

Greetings from the Rinkeby school in Stockholm, Sweden, were presented by

the school's rector, Börje Ekstrand. Ninety-seven per cent of the school's pupils come from an immigrant background. Thanks to persistent work, the previously ill-reputed school has successfully improved school satisfaction and learning results. Work has centred on three key objectives: students' good skills, social competence and health. Activities were based on the principles of sufficient resources, transparent rules and clear management.

The 2011 mental health event in Vaasa was attended by more than 150 mental health professionals, decision-makers and researchers. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala

The Mental Health Pool influences mental health issues in Finland

The Mental Health Pool set up by the Finnish Association for Mental Health comprises four national mental health organisations, 12 mental health professionals' organisations, as well as the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the last two in the role of expert members.

The common goal of the pool is to promote public mental health and improve the situation of the people requiring mental health services as well as the mental health work customers and their families.

Throughout the year 2011, key issues for the Mental Health Pool have been the inclusion of elements important to mental health in the new government programme and monitoring of the implementation of the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work. Views and wishes have been discussed with the responsible ministers and other decision-makers.

The Pool influences mental health policies also by commenting on topical issues related to the promotion, care and rehabilitation of mental health. The fundamental document for the pool is the good care principles approved by all its member organisations. Among other things, special attention has been paid to deficiencies in the mental health services for those over 65, on which a request for statement was made to the Chancellor of Justice. ☐

Recommended cornerstones of proper treatment

The Mental Health Pool has drawn up a list of ten items that form the foundation for proper treatment of mental health patients.

1. The patient is treated as a whole.
2. The characteristics of mental health disorders must be identified and taken into consideration.
3. Treatment must be easily, rapidly and conveniently accessible to people of all ages.
4. A goal-oriented treatment and rehabilitation plan is drawn up and monitored in co-operation with the patient and family members.
5. Outpatient care is the primary option; institutional care flexibly supports and supplements it, if required.
6. Psychotherapy paid by KELA is offered to those who need it.
7. Treatment is comprehensive: it also ensures housing, school attendance, studies, work opportunities and basic income, as well as treatment in the patient's mother tongue.
8. Family members and other close relations must also get the support and treatment they need.
9. The experiences of service users, family and friends are taken into account when planning services and evaluating quality.
10. Treatment must be evidence-based and support the active participation of patients, their family and friends. ☐



Photo: Eeva Mehto

The Common Responsibility Campaign 2011 in fight against the loneliness among young people

The Common Responsibility Campaign is Finland's largest annual citizen fundraiser. It helps those in need both in Finland and in developing countries.

This year the theme of the campaign is loneliness among adolescents. Donations help young people in Finland and Mozambique. With part of the campaign proceeds the Finnish Association for Mental Health combats adolescents' loneliness.

With the proceeds, the FAMH will arrange peer support groups around Finland. The groups emphasising mental resources of every human being offer young people the opportunity to discuss challenges and questions related to themselves, adolescence, coping and networks of family and friends.

Professionally supervised group activities are based on the idea of reaching young people while still possible to tackle loneliness. The goal of groups is to find new perspectives and approaches to participant's own situation and to boost their self-confidence.

Peer support groups for lonely adolescents will be arranged at least in Helsinki, Turku, Oulu and Kuopio. The objective is to establish the successful "Find your own Story", *Löydä oma tarinasi*®, group model around Finland and to involve the greatest possible number of children and adolescents in need of support. ☐

The FAMH's
new advocate,
rock musician
Ville Liimatainen:

“Tough situations
can be overcome.”



The Finnish Association for Mental Health got its first public advocate, when Ville Liimatainen, soloist of a band called Flinch, took on the task. The FAMH signed an agreement with Ville and his brother and manager, Tommi Liimatainen, in November 2011.

Ville has talked about his problems and depression openly in public, received help and survived. These days he is doing

well, which is why he wants to advocate the activities, help and support offered by the FAMH, especially among adolescents. In his role as supporter, Ville the rocker talks about his own survival story, the importance of seeking help and his membership in the Association.

He emphasises the importance of early intervention in crises and difficulties. Ville got the support he needed from

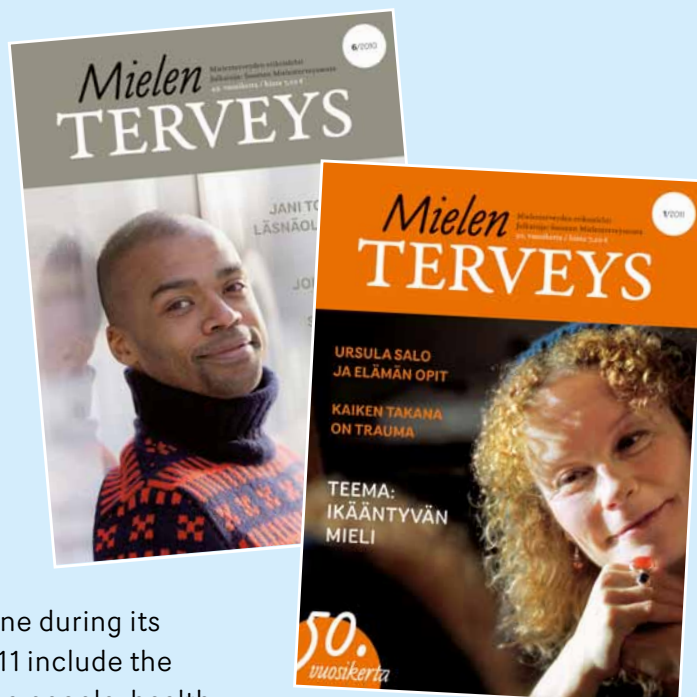
mental health services, but also from his own brothers. In addition to the youngest brother Ville, the musical trio includes Jonne Aaron, lead figure of the band called Negative, as well as Tommi Liimatainen, who acts as manager of both bands.

Ville and Flinch will perform at the Helsinki Railway Station on the World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2011. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala

It has been 50 years since
the launch of the Finnish Association
for Mental Health's own magazine.

MIELENTERVEYS, published six times a year, is a specialised magazine aimed at decision-makers and professionals both in social and healthcare services as well as the education sector who need mental health information in their work. It is also a magazine aimed at people interested in their own development, coping and well-being.



50.
year

Themes of the magazine during its anniversary year in 2011 include the mental health of ageing people, health in the media, online counselling opportunities, from loneliness to togetherness, new trends in psychotherapy and mental health at school.

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Services must take the human perspective into consideration

Loneliness is a problem

Marita Ruohonen, Executive Director of the FAMH, believes that feelings of usefulness and belonging to a community are some of the most important building blocks of a good life. “Loneliness, however, is turning into one of the biggest problems of our time. It may be a lifestyle chosen consciously, but very few make such a choice. The majority of lonely people hope to see a change in life.”

Preventing depression

Depression and its prevention are frequently discussed topics in Finnish society. The reduction of depression-related disability was the objective of the nationwide MASTO project. The project produced best practices and collected information on

ways to prevent long sick leaves, help people stay at work and facilitate the return to work after a sick leave.

“We should now focus on working ability instead of disability. People’s coping at work needs to be supported, as does their working ability,” Ruohonen emphasises.

Single-entry-point principle

The proposals made in the national plan for mental health and substance abuse work, *Mieli 2009*, are now being put into practice in Finland. Some of the main reforms include the implementation of a single-entry-point principle in the service system, as well as the value shown for and concretisation of expertise gained through users’ own experience.

“We are dealing with big challenges, since Finland is also undergoing a municipal reform and we recently got a new Health Care Act, in addition to which market-orientation is rapidly gaining



Marita Ruohonen
 Executive Director of the FAMH

ground in social and health services”, says Ruohonen.

Ruohonen emphasises that the FAMH, in its role as an NGO, considers the human perspective to be of paramount importance and believes it is crucial to develop services in order to curb rising inequality and secure high-quality education, social and healthcare services to all Finnish residents.



Tarja Heiskanen

Giving friends a call on World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2010

On World Mental Health Day, arranged on 10 October 2010, the Finnish Association for Mental Health reminded people of the importance of caring for others. It was an ideal time to pop round and visit friends or get on the phone to call your mum, grandfather, aunt, friend or relative.

Mental health and looking after family and friends were the two messages conveyed to thousands of rail travellers at the main event held at the Helsinki railway station. The FAMH employees positioned themselves by the platforms to distribute information, talk with people and listen to what they had to say.




Photo: Jarmo Vuorinen



Photo: Jarmo Vuorinen

The floor of one of the entrance halls was covered with dozens of metres of paper, where anyone could write an issue delighting or bothering them. Dance groups entertained passers-by, many of whom stopped to watch or even try a few steps.

Local mental health associations arranged numerous events around Finland, including seminars, lectures, well-being events, dances and panel discussions, in celebration of World Mental Health Day.

Awards were also granted for good mental health work. In Oulu, the award went to the best nursery school. The FAMH presented its annual award to Arto Halonen, a film director, for his biographic film dealing with a mental health patient. 

Ellen Tuomaala

Mental Health Prize recipient Arto Halonen:

“Examples of being different are needed”

The Mental Health Prize, annually awarded by the Finnish Association for Mental Health, was this year presented to film director Arto Halonen.



Director Arto Halonen with the prize, a graphic print of a work by artist Kuutti Lavonen.

During his long career, Halonen has directed numerous documentaries and one dramatic film. His films have explored themes related to the human mind, such as being different, the straightjacket imposed on people by the society, assimilation in the masses and ease of manipulation. The spectrum of human fates has varied from the oppression of dictatorships to the seemingly boundless freedom provided by affluence.

Through his works, Halonen has always spoken for tolerance and acceptance of difference.


His latest feature film, *Princess*, premiered in 2010, was seen by 279,002 spectators – an amazing feat by Finnish standards. The film has a long history: Halonen got the inspiration for the film

from a newspaper article he read in 1995 about Anna Lappalainen, a schizophrenia patient at the Kellokoski hospital, who had named herself “Princess”. The film was scripted and prepared over several years.

The extras in the film also included numerous outpatients, for whom participation in the film was a significant opportunity. “Despite its difficult subject matter, audiences have embraced the film as positive and life-affirming,” says Halonen. “Also in the screening at the Kellokoski hospital, the patients felt that the depiction of their own sphere of life gave them strength.”

It was important for Halonen that a tolerance campaign was launched on the basis of the film. “The Princess campaign visiting schools discusses difference

using the media and social education. Depiction of reality is the most effective way to build tolerance, including among schoolchildren.”

The FAMH has presented the Mental Health Prize since 1994. The earlier recipients of the prize include for instance actor Jussi Lehtonen, dramaturge Outi Nytytäjä, poverty researcher Jouko Karjalainen, and the National Association of the Unemployed. 

Ellen Tuomaala

A Call Can Save campaign raised funds for a nationwide crisis helpline

The campaign A Call Can Save was launched in autumn 2010 to raise funds for a nationwide crisis helpline. Due to a lack of resources, 99,000 of 134,000 calls made went unanswered the previous year.

It was possible to make campaign donations by calling the donation number or by making donations online. Campaign collection boxes were making rounds in the major events organised by the Finnish Association for Mental Health. The campaign also appeared in Facebook, where it could be liked, shared information with friends and made available for all to join it.

In addition to raising funds, the campaign publicised the important work done by the helpline.

The campaign culminated on 10 April 2011 in the "Parhaat palat" ('Best Of') event at the Helsinki City Theatre. The unforgettable theatrical potpourri presented numerous renowned dancers, musicians and actors dancing, singing, reciting poetry, performing soliloquys and exhibiting their skills in acrobatics. The enthusiastic audience at the jam-packed theatre raised a lion's share of the funds raised during the campaign.

The campaign proceeds were an amazing 24,000 euros. The sum will be used to increase the on-duty times of the helpline and to train volunteers. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala

157,000 calls to the nationwide crisis helpline in 2010 – loneliness and anxiety hang heavy in the callers' minds

The nationwide crisis helpline of the Finnish Association for Mental Health received almost 157,000, 17 per cent more than the previous year. Less than 34,000 of the calls were answered.

The nationwide crisis helpline provides counselling in crises and difficult life situations. Anxiety and loneliness were the most common causes of calling; one-third called the helpline for these reasons. Other reasons for calls included psychological or physical illness, worry over a family member or a friend, intoxicants, suicide and sleeplessness.

Calls based on problems related to relationships, family and coping with everyday life also increased, says Susanna Winter, head of the crisis helpline. The newly unemployed and pensioners also called the helpline more than earlier.

Women made up 63 per cent of callers and men 37 per cent.

Callers receive help and relief

A caller survey carried out by the crisis helpline found that two out of three callers felt that they had received help. The callers got someone to listen, relief for their anxiety and some understanding of their situation. The helpline also provided practical support, including information about treatment facilities and guidance on where to find further help.

The helpline counsellors estimate that three out of four callers felt better after the call. However, for one in four, the call did not bring a significant change.

Last year, the crisis helpline was maintained by the Helsinki SOS Crisis Centre and 20 local mental health associations, 14 of which had their own crisis centre. Approximately 450 trained volunteers and crisis workers worked as helpline counsellors. Calls were increasingly answered by trained crisis helpline counsellor volunteers. ☐

Ellen Tuomaala



A Call Can Save campaign poster activates people to donate money for important work. Image: Aino Ahtiainen.

The Finnish Association for Mental Health is a non-political, voluntary public health organisation founded in 1897. It is the world's oldest mental health association and a founding member of the World Federation for Mental Health.

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