

## **Mental Health Awareness Week: October 6-12, 2008**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Make Your Mark For Mental Health:**

#### **Mental Health Awareness Week**

**October 6 – 12, 2008**

Mental Health Awareness Week kicks off on October 6 this year, with “Make Your Mark For Mental Health” as the theme.

The Mental Health Foundation, who organises the annual event, says the theme is all about taking action, working with friends, family and work colleagues to promote wellbeing, celebrate difference and value diversity.

“We all have a role to play in making our mark for mental health,” says Judi Clements, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation. “We can start by making good mental health a priority in our lives, which is just as important as looking after our physical health. In fact, the two are quite strongly linked.

“In the workplace, employers should be looking for ways to reduce stress and work with employees to promote wellbeing. For those experiencing mental illness, we’d like to see the health sector focusing on recovery rather than symptoms, and for mental health service users themselves to feel empowered to lead that recovery.”

With one in five New Zealanders experiencing some form of mental illness in any one year, the Foundation also hopes that people will be encouraged to talk about their own recovery journeys, in order to inspire others.

Sophia Elise, Manager of the New Zealand Art Guild, is one person who has decided to speak publicly about her experience of post-natal depression. Sophia was one of 88 artists who contributed to ‘Reach Out’, a collaborative Guild artwork which has been used as the main image for Mental Health Awareness Week this year.

“It really illustrates the importance of making connections,” Sophia says. “The one thing I wished I had been able to do when I had post-natal depression was to reach out, to be able to tell people without fear of judgement.”

The Foundation is encouraging New Zealanders to speak up for diversity and social inclusion and realise that what they do makes a difference.

“We’d like to see people challenging any stigma and discrimination about mental illness they encounter, whether it’s at work, among friends and family, online, or in the media,” Judi Clements concludes.

Mental Health Awareness Week begins on Monday October 6, culminating on World Mental Health Day on Friday October 10; endorsed by the World Federation for Mental Health and marked in over 150 countries.

A calendar of events planned for the week throughout New Zealand and supporting information about the theme can be found at [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz) .

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