



- [Home](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Courage To Come Back Awards

[Courage 2010 >](#)

[Courage Partners >](#)

[Media >](#)

.....
These are the stories of The Courage To Come Back Awards. Each year six people are honoured for their courage to **overcome and recover from illness, injury or adversity.**

[Click year below to view more recipients:](#)

[2009](#)

[2008](#)

[2007](#)

[2006](#)

[2005](#)

[2004](#)

[2003](#)

[2002](#)

[2001](#)

[2000](#)

[1999](#)

The Courage To Come Back Awards – May 6, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver Hotel

Reception: 5:30 pm, Dinner and Program: 6:15 pm

Join hosts Jill Krop and Kevin Evans at the 12th Annual Courage To Come Back Awards Gala.



Jill Krop



Kevin Evans

Tickets are SOLD OUT

The annual Courage to Come Back Awards recognize abilities, celebrate differences and give centre stage to six British Columbians who have overcome illness, adversity or injury, and reach out to help others in our province. They are our loved ones, our neighbours, our friends, who have faced seemingly-insurmountable odds and who have come through with courage, strength and a drive to give back.

Awards are given to one individual in each of these six categories: Addiction, Medical, Mental Health, Physical Rehabilitation, Social Adversity and Youth. By presenting their stories each year at The Courage Awards, Coast Mental Health strives to offer hope to all those suffering from illness, adversity or injury.

Recipient

Recipient in Youth category



VANCOUVER, B.C. May 3, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the final of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. 10 year old Fahreen Mapara of Pitt Meadows has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Youth category. The Courage Awards gala will be held Thursday, May 6th.

Feisty, determined, courageous,

Photograph by: Les Bazso, PNG

helpful, enthusiastic are just a few of the words used to describe ten

year old Fahreen Mapara.

Fahreen was born six weeks prematurely with a trache-esophageal fistula, a serious condition that causes her to aspirate food or drink into her lungs. She spent the first six months of her life in hospital undergoing many surgeries, which paralyzed her vocal chords, epiglottis and swallowing muscles. She went home with a permanent tracheotomy for breathing, a permanent gastrostomy tube for feeding, and a nurse in attendance. There she thrived and developed beyond all medical expectations.

Already determined before she was three, Fahreen gradually learned how to swallow, to chew and to manipulate her food with her tongue. For a short time she was able to enjoy eating ice cream or her favourite 'mac and cheese' lunch, but recently the doctors told her she would have to stop eating indefinitely as she was still aspirating into her lungs.

She started learning sign language at four years old. Then with the help of her nurses and speech therapists - and her determined spirit – she learned to speak in spite of her paralyzed vocal chords. Now she is eager to join into conversations. As the youngest child in a family whose native languages are Gujarati and Kutchi, Fahreen attends ESL classes as well as speech and language support.

Fahreen has courageously faced many challenges in her short life. Several times a year she has to fight chest infections. Each time she has changed schools, she has had to overcome rejection from both her peers and adults, who question her abilities or who feel awkward around her – the tubes, unusual sounds as she tries to speak, her feeding routines, her inability to participate in many of the childhood activities like swimming or sleepovers. She carries a backpack and pump to deliver her nutritional formula while she watches other children enjoying their treats.

But Fahreen has learned to move on from disappointment and rejection. Her naturally sunny nature and willingness to help wins people over. She doesn't complain about her medical problems or expect special treatment or attention; instead she reaches out to others, particularly those younger than herself. Her teachers say she is always the first to offer help in class or in other school activities such as welcoming new students, volunteering in workshops, accompanying younger children on field trips. This year, she is helping present a workshop on "Language and Identity: Embracing and Honoring Diversity." She will share with other students her experience of what it is like to be immersed in an unfamiliar language and culture. Fahreen also volunteers at her mosque and helps with younger children on her visits to Children's Hospital.

With determination, courage and optimism, she faces new challenges with a smile and a joke and finds a way to succeed. This year, she has learned to play the recorder and to skate, and has recently earned a yellow belt in martial arts.

Fahreen is an inspiration to her peers, medical team and teachers. One teacher says, "Fahreen is a perfect model of work ethic for my own children." In accepting this Coast Mental Health 2010 Courage To Come Back Award, Fahreen says, "I treat everyone the way I want to be treated."

For more on Fahreen Mapara, follow [this link](#) to the Province article.

 [Fahreen spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Recipient in Physical Rehabilitation category



Photograph by: Les Bazso, PNG

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 26, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the fifth of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. Mark Audio Ash of Vancouver has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category. The remaining recipient will be announced next Monday, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

Mark Ash's family moved to Vancouver from Russia when he was 14. He completed high school in Richmond and entered Vancouver's music scene in the early '80s. He studied bass with jazz legend René Worst, toured Canada and the US throughout the '90s with the rock band Shy Thunder, recorded a number of albums and has opened for bands including Mr. Big and Blue Oyster Cult. From '91 to '97 Mark owned and operated the New York Theatre on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. He led a successful life, marrying and having two beautiful children, but also struggling with addiction and depression: slowly his health was declining.

In 2001, Mark was seriously injured in a car accident. Partially paralyzed, unable to walk, talk or care for himself in any way, Mark spent three months in hospital. Mark's prognosis was so poor that his family took power of attorney and sold all his assets. His relationship disintegrated and soon he lost his will to live. He was put on suicide watch. For six months, he attended GF Strong Rehabilitation Center as an outpatient but eventually was told there was nothing more that could be done for him. Mark's family was unable to care for him and he was put in a group home.

That is when Mark took his recovery into his own hands. He joined a Canadian Mental Health Association recreation and then their Pathways Clubhouse work program. He began taking computer courses at a disability centre so that, even though he couldn't hold a pen, he could produce the program's newsletter. Mark was rebuilding his life from the very basics up with limited mobility, limited hand movement and speech difficulties. He certainly couldn't play guitar any more, a fact that broke his heart, but he did purchase a keyboard and at first just with one finger began making music again. He eventually re-obtained his driver's license and helps others by driving the clubhouse van on outings and when people are moving household.

Making friends and working helped Mark improve his speech, and he soon joined both winter and summer disabled sports associations. He joined a gym, working out every day to improve his strength, balance and coordination. Every day he pushed himself, researching exercises on the Internet that would help him improve his fine motor skills. Mark used everyday scenarios to help improve his balance and more. This included riding the sky train without holding on, eating dinner with chopsticks, and chewing gum to strengthen facial muscles and his tongue.

Mark gives back to the community in a number of ways. He is an extremely talented musician who shares his talents generously: teaching, performing, songwriting and recording. His new music has been played in clubs in both Vancouver and Toronto, One of his songs "For your Love" was included in a compilation CD by the Vancouver Adaptive Music Society (VAMS). Mark also volunteers at the VAMS studio at GF Strong, tutoring stroke victims and brain injury patients and facilitates "Wellness through Music" programs at Pathways and Vancouver Headway Centre. With his new band "Reality

Check” made up entirely with Pathways members, Mark has played many community events. He also spends time volunteering at the Richmond Food Bank.

Today Mark is well on his way to recovery, making music and playing bass again. “Music was my doctor” Mark says. “In accepting this Courage Award, I hope to be able to inspire others to explore music as a means of overcoming their own struggles in life.” Coast is proud to have Mark Audio Ash as its 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category.

For more on Mark Audio Ash, follow [this link](#) to the Province article.

▶ [Mark spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Recipient in Medical category



Photograph by: Jenelle Schneider, PNG

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 19, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the fourth of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. Cindy Thomsen of Chilliwack has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Medical category. The remaining recipients will be announced over the next two Mondays, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

Over the course of only one day in February 2006, Cindy Thomsen went from feeling a little unwell to

having her world turned upside down. She had been under the weather for a few days but had put it down to stress and carried on. Her husband, whom she had met in sobriety 6 years prior, had, after suffering a serious workplace injury himself, relapsed into using drugs and alcohol. This had put huge emotional and financial strains on their family, Cindy in particular who was still working to maintain her sobriety. She had felt tired that day; by dinner time was quite delirious. Her husband took her to emergency. All she remembers was answering a few questions before losing consciousness. She had fallen into a coma.

Cindy had contracted a rare strain of pneumonia. Because her spleen had been removed many years prior, her body wasn't able to fight the virus easily and she developed septicemia – blood poisoning. Her chance of surviving that first night was put at only 10%. Her family gathered at her bedside, not knowing if she would awaken. Within hours Cindy's hands, feet and face had become “bacterially burned.” The tissue was blackened and dead. Doctors weren't sure how far the septicemia had travelled – there was a serious risk of organ damage, even brain damage.

Attentive hospital care and medication began to work. Ten days later Cindy regained consciousness, but awakened to an entirely new world for herself and her family. She was transferred to a burn unit as her wounds required the same gruelling, painful care as any severe burn. Because of the bacterial burning, Cindy's hands and feet were amputated, she had lost most of her nose and lips because of the severe tissue damage. She was unable to talk or eat. Thus began long months of rehabilitation, prostheses, learning to walk and talk and eat again.

Returning home, Cindy was reliant upon home care aides to help her with the most basic daily

activities. Unfortunately, her relationship further disintegrated and she made the difficult decision to leave her marriage. Despite everything, Cindy was determined to recover and to overcome these devastating setbacks. She started attending her AA groups again, and began to volunteer on the very burn ward where she had spent so many weeks. Who better to understand the trauma patients were undergoing? Cindy modeled strength and perseverance despite her physical, emotional, spiritual and mental setbacks.

Four years on from that night, Cindy has a passion for life and courage that are an inspiration to all who know her. She continues to have a positive attitude and gives back to her community in a wide variety of volunteer capacities, including her work with burn victims and amputees. Currently she is training to walk in the Burn Fund Walk/Run.

Coast is proud to have Cindy Thomsen accept this Courage To Come Back Award. Cindy says, "I am humbled and truly honoured to be receiving this award. Thank you for the opportunity of telling my story, so it may give others the faith and courage to carry on."

For more on Cindy Thomsen, follow [this link](#) to the Province article.

 [Cindy spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Recipient in Social Adversity category



Photograph by: Arlen Redekop, PNG

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 12, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the third of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. Myrna Cranmer of Vancouver has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Social Adversity category. The remaining recipients will be announced over the next three Mondays, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

On Myrna Cranmer's fifth birthday, she was taken by her family and placed in the infamous Alberni Indian Residential School where she remained for 10 years. It was the beginning of a nightmare for the young girl, who eventually ran away.

At 15, Myrna went to Vancouver. She landed in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and quickly became addicted to the drugs and the lifestyle. Myrna was arrested, put in jail and had to appear in court many times in her pursuit of drugs. This continued for many years with various charges ranging from trafficking and many others involving violence.

For years Myrna's loving family watched her struggle, never knowing if they would see her again. Her sister, Valerie would go to skid row, hoping to catch a glimpse of Myrna, to make sure she was still alive. Jeannie, another sister – who nominated her for this award – recalls walking past a bar and spotting Myrna inside. She was with Myrna a few minutes before a fight broke out and Myrna ran from the bar, covered in blood.

For 27 years Myrna lived on Vancouver's streets, using drugs, going to jails and courts. In 1994,

Myrna entered a detox facility, once again. After 26 days, she entered Turning Point, a recovery house. She was on hard drugs for the majority of her life and her mind and body did not know how to function without them. Clean and sober, she could not put a sentence together. She persevered and, four months later left the recovery house and went to live with her sister, Jeannie.

Starting again in midlife wasn't easy. Receiving welfare, Myrna went to Lucas Centre to finish high school and completed her GED in 1996. She then enrolled at Langara College and then the University of British Columbia. In 2001 she received a BA from UBC and in 2004, a MA in Anthropology from Simon Fraser University.

Today Myrna's life has come full circle. She is an Outreach Worker with the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre where she used to frequent as an addict. She is part of a Harm Reduction team with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. She has happily reconnected with her loving family and built strong bonds with her many nieces and nephews. She reaches out to women who are living the life she used to lead and doing the things she used to do. She advocates for women who have no voice and stands beside them. Most of the women know about her past but Myrna stresses, "It isn't my job to reform them. I only try to be of service to them."

Myrna is pleased to accept this Courage To Come Back Award to honour her own struggles and those of the women who she works with. "I hope that by accepting this award, women may understand if I can do it, they can, too"

Congratulations, Myrna. Coast Mental Health is proud to have you as our 2010 Social Adversity Courage To Come Back Award recipient.

For more on Myrna Cranmer, follow [this link](#) to the Province article.

▶ [Myrna spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Recipient in the Mental Health category



Photograph by: Ric Ernst, PNG

VANCOUVER, B.C. April 5, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the second of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. Theresa Duggan of Vancouver has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Mental Health category. The remaining recipients will be announced over the next four Mondays, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

Theresa Duggan didn't start out in life intending to be an inspiration, a motivator, a role model to others. But that is exactly where she is today due to her ability to rise above a series of blows that would have stopped most people in their tracks.

Raised in a troubled home, at a very early age a neighbour began sexually abusing Theresa. Although she attempted to get help, none was available and as soon as she could she left home for Toronto. For more than a decade, Theresa led a highly-successful life, working at a prestigious job, going to college, and living in a loving, stable relationship. In 1986, she began experiencing cluster migraines.

Her physician prescribed painkillers and she quickly became addicted. Her attempt to quit the pain medication cold-turkey landed her in a psychiatric ward with mania and psychosis.

Unaware of the true nature of her illness, Theresa left her relationship and entered into a brief liaison with an abusive man. Soon they were expecting a child; however, when the man attempted to strangle her while she was pregnant, Theresa left him and moved to B.C. Her daughter was born with life-threatening allergies. Struggling to care for her chronically ill baby, living on social assistance, Theresa began abusing painkillers and alcohol. She experienced wild mood swings from debilitating depression to manic spending sprees. Various groups and programs helped her conquer her addictions to alcohol and prescription drugs, but she continued a pattern of medication abuse that is, sadly, typical of individuals with a mood disorder: she would take her medication, feel better, stop taking medication because she felt better, get very ill, be hospitalized, re-start her medication...it was a nightmare treadmill she couldn't step down from.

Throughout it all, Theresa focused intently on raising her child to be the best individual she could be. Even in her most unwell moments, her only concerns were for her young daughter. She put in place detailed plans for her daughter's care if Theresa became ill and unable to care for her. She volunteered her free time, as well. She began a clothing exchange for single parents in the housing cooperative where she lived. She started and ran a community kitchen collective there, as well. Empathetic and caring, even in her darkest times, Theresa reached out to others and gave back.

In 2006 on her daughter's birthday, Theresa quit smoking for good. It was as if a cloud had lifted from her life, and the jolt of energy she felt was unlike anything she'd experienced. She began co-facilitating the smoking cessation group that had helped her quit, talking about her experiences to other individuals with mental illness. She quickly learned she was an excellent public speaker. Theresa joined a vocational program for job readiness and placement, and, after 18 months there, landed a job at the very place she had come to for help.

Today, Theresa is the only trained full-time mental health Peer Support Worker in B.C. Daily she works with clients who are on their own road back from the depths of mental illness, helping them to move through what she has personally struggled with for so long. Her co-workers describe her as exhibiting 'a fantastic professionalism...she is non-judgmental, joyful, warm and generous'. She and her daughter, now 17, have a close loving relationship. Her daughter says, "I have watched my mom go through the darkest shadows to be motivated and successful. She is funny, inspiring, friendly and much, much more."

In accepting this Coast Mental Health 2010 Courage To Come Back Award, Theresa says, "Miracles continue to happen in my life on a daily basis. I'm just along for the ride."

For more on Theresa Duggan, follow [this link](#) to the Province article.

 [Theresa spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Recipient in the Addiction category

VANCOUVER, B.C. March 29, 2010 – Coast Mental Health announced the first of six award recipients of a 2010 Courage To Come Back Award. Starr Peardon of Coquitlam has been named as the 2010 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Addiction category. The remaining recipients will be announced over the



Photo Credit: Glenn Baglo – PNG

next five Mondays, leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 6th.

Today in the Greater Vancouver area there are three successful recovery homes for women who are in conflict with the law, dealing with addiction, leaving the street, on probation or parole, or who are serving conditional sentences. They are places where lost and dispossessed souls can find recovery, growth and new purpose and meaning to their lives. These women are often the hardest to help: they have been in and out of prison many times, in and out of detox, in and out of trouble of every kind. These safe havens would never have

been if it were not for the vision and tenacity of one remarkable woman: Starr Peardon.

Starr's was an inauspicious beginning. Born in Nanaimo into a poor family of 12 children, her parents struggled for years with drug addiction and alcohol abuse. She was taken periodically out of school to care for her younger siblings as her parents spiraled further downward. Home was often a violent and dangerous place to be and soon Starr, now in her early teens, began to turn to drugs and alcohol herself for a quick fix, a relief from the unrelenting pain.

Like many others, Starr ended up living on the streets, her 2 children taken from her. She was using full-time, making frequent trips to Vancouver to buy drugs to sell back in Nanaimo - she was her own best customer. Addicted to heroin and cocaine, committing crimes to obtain the money to purchase the drugs was her full-time job. A cycle of violence, homelessness and addiction began that would last for 10 years of her life.

Eventually Starr added armed robbery to her list of crimes, and was caught, tried and sentenced to prison. This "enforced detox" period allowed Starr the first glimpse of clarity she had had in years. Praying with the prison chaplain one day, Starr felt a great peace descend on her, a feeling she'd never known before. Unfortunately, it was not enough to keep the young woman off drugs or out of trouble, and she as soon as she was released on parole, she was back in the downtown eastside getting high and committing more robberies. But that one glimpse of peace had given her a sliver of hope and, unknown to her, planted a seed that was to grow. Suddenly, her former lifestyle didn't feel right any more.

In 1994, Starr checked herself into detox and, when her treatment was over, voluntarily returned to prison to complete her sentence. Once out, she began volunteering with organizations working in the very neighborhoods that had been the scene of so much of her trouble. Undaunted, she resisted the temptation to return to drugs and the street life. Inside her a dream had begun of a recovery house for women just like she had been, a place that would welcome and serve those women deemed too difficult to handle. But who would give money to her? Uneducated, with a less-than-commendable track record, who would place their trust in her?

Through extremely hard work, persistence and constant faith, Starr's dream began to take shape. In 2000, she formed her nonprofit society and opened the first of three recovery houses, staffed by

women who had been in the same situation as those they were trying to help. In the past decade, the Talitha Koum Society has helped hundreds of women recover their lives. Graduates of the program have a success rate of over 70% one year after graduation.

Accepting this Courage To Come Back Award, Starr says, "I am truly humbled to be nominated by all the people who have been part of my life in the past 16 years. Without their support, prayers and guidance, I would not have the honour of receiving this award. Most importantly, however, I would not have had the chance to see the beauty in each woman I have had the pleasure of serving."

For more on Starr Peardon, follow this [link](#) to the Province article. For more information about the Talitha Koum Society, please email info@talithakoumsociety.org

▶ [Starr spoke to John Ackermann at Courage sponsor News1130.](#)

Fahreen, Mark, Cindy, Starr, Theresa and Myrna will receive their Courage To Come Back Awards at the 12th Annual Gala Dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, May 6th. For tickets, call 604-675-2328 or [click here to purchase tickets.](#)

[Nominations](#) | [Recipients](#) | [Partners](#) | [Media](#) | [Buy Tickets Online](#) | [Home](#)

.....

[Coast](#) | [Programs & Services](#) | [Coast Mental Health Foundation](#) | [Coast Social Enterprise Foundation](#)

© 2003-2010 Copyright Coast Mental Health
[Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

