

HEALTH: Monday forum marks Eating Disorders Awareness Week

Eating disorder survivors share stories

BY DAWN LIERSCH
STAFF WRITER

Miriam Streiman used to eat two large pizzas, a loaf of bread, a box of cereal and a package of cookies in one sitting. Then she would make herself vomit up to 25 times a day to ensure she didn't gain weight.

At one time, a meagre 95 pounds hung on her five-foot, five-inch frame and her heart rate dropped to a dangerous level. Her body was so sickly, her hair fell out when she showered.

Streiman was destroying her body but, for a long time, was convinced she was completely in control, even when she was throwing tantrums, losing friends and letting her school work suffer.

Finally, Streiman realized bulimia was controlling her.

"It's an obsession, it's an addiction. It's almost like there were two personalities: the sick Miriam and the real Miriam," Streiman said. "The sick Miriam was gaining control."

Streiman, an 18-year-old Thornhill resident, will participate in a forum on anorexia and bulimia Monday at 7 p.m. at the York Region headquarters in Newmarket. The event was organized by the York Region Eating Disorders Community Coalition to mark Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

The evening will include personal stories from people recovering from eating disorders and information on where to get help.

Dawn Langstroth, the daughter of singer Anne Murray, will be displaying artwork that depicts her battle with anorexia, while Richmond Hill resident Todd Orvitz will tell of his fight with anorexia.

Winners of the body image art contest from York Region high schools will also be recognized at the event.

Event chairperson Edith Burch said she felt there was a need for a forum since eating disorders are prevalent.

Statistics from the National Eating Disorder Information Centre show 90 per cent of women are dissatisfied with their body, 80 per cent have dieted by age 18 and 15 per cent have many eating disorder symptoms.

"In a society obsessed with appearances, it is no wonder that self-starvation and bingeing and purging are the weapons of warfare against the self," Burch said.

Dr. Leora Pinhas, the forum's moderator and director of the eating disorder program at York County Hospital, stressed more has to be done to address eating disorders.

"It's a widespread illness and there aren't a lot of support services and treatment services. People are dying from this," she said.

But panel member Viola Fodor believes there is hope. After struggling with severe bulimia and depression for 15 years, Fodor is now healed and is a psychotherapist in Campbellville. She is author of *Desperately Seeking Self: An Inner Guide Book for People with Eating Disorders*.

Fodor believes a key to healing is to develop an inner strength and to realize an eating disorder is a result of a deeper problem.

"It's important to acknowledge that there is a problem here and, rather than getting bogged down by it, reach out for help. You need someone who can help you to be stronger inside, not someone who claims to have the magic answer."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

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of the Year award.

This distinction, presented annually at the United Way's annual meeting, goes to a community volunteer who has demonstrated an ongoing, hands-on commitment to volunteerism in the spirit of Doug Lear, a long-time employee at Allstate, whose outgoing nature and spirit helped many over the years.

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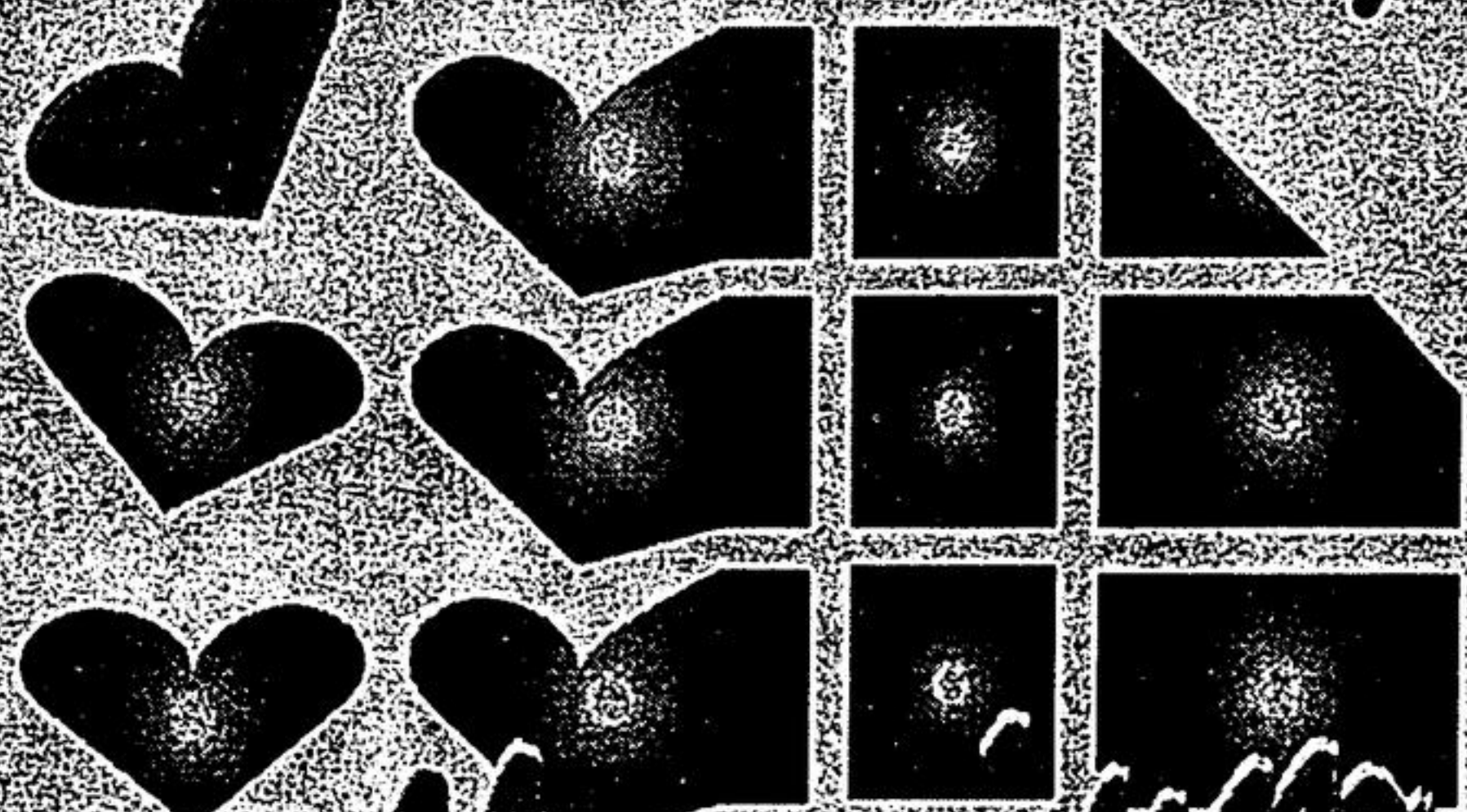
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