

For Immediate Release

BARRIE WRITER COMBATS POST-CONCUSSION SYNDROME BY JOINING CIRCUS

BARRIE, October 31, 2017 – Barrie resident, writer Catherine Kenwell shares her unique story of recovery from a devastating mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Step Outside Your Comfort Zone*, being released October 31.

Kenwell was days short of her 50th birthday when she was struck in the head. While most of the physical symptoms eventually subsided, she suffered from post-concussion syndrome, which resulted in cognition problems and clinical depression.

“I had little clue as to why I felt the way I did...until I was very ill, no one had ever warned me or explained to me that I might experience severe mental, emotional and cognition challenges,” Kenwell says. “My story highlights just one aspect of the post-concussion experience.”

As a long-time runner, Kenwell knew that physical exercise was key to helping with mood disorders. She decided to test her physical limits and ability to focus by joining a circus school, choosing to study and perform on lyra (aerial hoop).

Kenwell laughs, “So at age 50, menopausal, depressed and brain-injured, I did what any woman would do: I joined the circus!”

She believes the circus saved her life. “I was seriously depressed, under the care of doctors and psychologists,” she says. “I felt like my life was falling apart, but when I showed up to class and jumped up on my hoop, I regained confidence and mental strength. My classmates and coaches were wonderful and encouraged me, but even they didn’t fully appreciate the depths from which I was climbing.”

Five years later, she hopes her story will help spread the word about the psychological, cognitive and emotional effects of mTBI. She also encourages others to consider alternative, particularly physical pursuits when dealing with mood disorders.

Kenwell left a 30-year career in corporate communications to return to Barrie, where she now works at Barrie Olive Oil and is responsible for the company’s social media and blogs. She continues to write both inspirational non-fiction and short horror, and is a qualified mediator focusing on restorative justice. She also recently earned certification in brain rehabilitation after injury.

In Ontario annually, there are about a half a million people living with a brain injury. Approximately 18,000 new cases are reported each year, although many injuries go unreported. More than 90 per cent of people with brain injuries have trouble with concentration, making decisions and memory, and more than 75 per cent have trouble with depression and anxiety. (Ontario Brain Injury Association, 2012 report).

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