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Health Minister marks Recovery Month with CMHA



By Brock Weir

Anne learned a lot about herself through The Humble Tiger.

Based on the book of the same name, the Humble Tiger is a three-week employment program spearheaded by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of York and South Simcoe that is used as a guide to self-compassion when returning to work.

?The emphasis of the program is on viewing ourselves and others with self-compassion and care as we move through times of challenge and personal growth,? shared Anne. ?I thoroughly enjoyed going through the program and discussing the concepts of the program with group members and with the course facilitators; so much so that I took the course a second time and got some new insights with regards to personal learning.

?This course, along with some of the other courses I have taken with the CMHA, have helped me slowly but surely regain the confidence and to set some goals to take the steps needed to work towards the achievement of those goals.?

As Anne shared her message of recovery to visitors to the CMHA last Wednesday morning, Health Minister (and Newmarket-Aurora MPP) Christine Elliott couldn't help but smile. Mental health and addiction are causes close to her heart and she joined Anne and the CMHA team to help mark Recovery Month and hear stories of clients who have found success through the myriad programs offered by the local agency.

?Recovery isn't a one moment in anybody's life,? said Rebecca Shields, CEO of the CMHA York & South Simcoe. ?It is really an ongoing journey. Sometimes recovery starts with the first small step of hope,

and sometimes recovery earmarks the end to a course of a program or the start of a new job, and it is a wonderful thing.

?Recovery is never a journey that is just straightforward. Often, we go back and we go forward, but why it is important to celebrate recovery is we have to recognize the work that goes along the way and take those moments to celebrate how far we've come. There are many challenges when we're dealing with mental health and addictions issues. There are barriers to care, the stigma that many of us face and there is also a lack of understanding, so the other reason why it is important to earmark this day and celebrate recovery is to remind ourselves of the hope, remind ourselves that people do recover from mental illness and go on to have exciting, productive and wonderful lives.?

From Ms. Elliott's perspective, taking the time to talk about recovery is a very important step.

There is a lot of ?misunderstanding,? she said about the challenges many people face, and this could stem from ?a lack of knowledge about the fact that people can recover.?

?They still need to check in from time to time, but it is really important to celebrate when those successes are made,? she said. ?I would like to thank CMHA York and South Simcoe for making this day possible and inviting me to join you. It really is an important issue to me. This event does play such an important role in raising awareness about mental health and addictions and it encourages people to share their stories as we're doing today.

?While everyone's journey to recovery is unique, by sharing experiences I hope those struggling with mental health and addictions realise they are not alone and there are supports and services out there to help you. We are committed as your government to doing our part. We are making addictions and mental health a priority and are investing in services that directly help people struggling with addictions, specifically this month, and their families.

?No one should have to wait for long periods of time to get treatment. They need services when they need them in a timely manner, but it is also important that people shouldn't have to be in crisis to be able to get the access to the services and supports that they need, so the reality is though that this is something that many vulnerable Ontarians face. There is often confusion about where to go and who to ask for services [but not here] because everyone knows Rebecca and her team. You're doing wonderful, wonderful work.?

The Health Minister noted that listening to people with ?lived experiences? is vital for a government creating policy that helps create a way forward and she reiterated that her government is ?committed to finding solutions so everyone is fully supported in their journey towards mental health

and recovery.?

?We are going to continue to listen as we continue to take action to transform our mental health and addiction service system. We are looking to innovative solutions to help develop this system that is going to meet the needs of all Ontarians and that's why discussions like the ones we're having here today are so important because they help us to find better ways to deliver more connected mental health and addiction service programs and I can say that here in York Region those innovative solutions are already being found ? in large part due to the CMHA and the work that you're doing here with your team.?