

Mental Health in Motion supports youth ? ?the urgent crisis of our time?



It's almost time to get in gear, hit the road, and support youth mental health programs in York Region and South Simcoe.

The Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) is hard at work planning Mental Health in Motion 2024.

One of the premier fundraisers for youth mental health in the community, Mental Health in Motion will take place Sunday, June 9, at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex.

Now in its ninth year, this year's event will see participants able to take part in a Walk or Run of 5 km, and cycling opportunities of 20k or 60k.

Whether you prefer a leisurely walk, an invigorating run, or a scenic bike ride, Mental Health in Motion has something for you, say organizers. Bring your friends, family, and co-workers let's make this event unforgettable.

Funds raised through this year's Mental Health in Motion will once again benefit youth mental health programs, particularly their MOBYSS (Mobile York South Simcoe) bus that provides services to youth where they live, such as pulling up to schools and recreation centres.

Rebecca Shields, President & CEO of CMHA-YRSS, underscores the importance of raising funds for youth mental health by describing it as the urgent crisis of our time.

I am more excited about this year's Mental Health in Motion than I have been in a long time. After the pandemic and everything we learned, we really needed to refresh the event and breathe new life into it, says Shields, noting that staff have been hard at work forging new routes to keep things fresh for returning participants. I think a big part of Mental Health in Motion is not just the fact we're raising money for a great cause but also erasing stigma. People want to come out and be together to show that mental health matters and they are supporters of mental health. We really want to focus on making it really visible and make people proud of the fact they are supporting and erasing stigma in our community.

There has been a significant amount of work done over the years to underscore the fact that mental health is health, but there is

still a lot of stigma that needs to be overcome. People who are facing a mental health issue worry about losing their jobs, feeling socially-isolated, or misunderstood over what is actually happening, says Shields.

"I think the youth mental health crisis is the urgent crisis of our time," she says. "MOBYSS is our Mobile Youth Health and Mental Health clinic for ages 12 and up and it goes to where youth are at - predominantly high schools. A youth can walk in, they can get all the kind of services from our nurse practitioner, a youth mental health worker or a peer. Maybe they're coming in because they have a health-related issue, but over two thirds are coming in with some mental health-related concern. This is where we help kids get fast access to the care we need and it covers [a wide] range.

"Sadly, every year we help people who are dealing with suicidal ideation and our team works really hard to help provide immediate support but also connect to ongoing care. Some youth are coming back for some counselling support around dealing with anxiety, depression, issues that you face around relationships, families, school, test anxiety. Some youth have issues where they have trauma they need support in dealing with - our team will connect them with the counselling and support they need and ongoing care. Our nurse practitioner is there to ensure it is a whole health approach because youth have the same health issues everywhere and sometimes they just don't have the access or maybe they're embarrassed talking about needing some sort of sexual health information or sexual testing, so that is what we're there to provide so no youth is left behind."

Money raised through Mental Health in Motion, Shields adds, "allows a kid who is in crisis or needs support to have immediate access to care."

"That makes a big difference. It is so important to really focus on our youth. I think the cause matters, it's a fantastically-run and well-organized event. We have been doing this for years and now with the experience of coming together, the energy you have feeling like you're part of that bigger momentum of erasing stigma, of promoting mental health, understanding mental health is health - creating that Caring Community that we all want to be part of is really important."

For more information about this year's Mental Health in Motion event, including how to register, collect pledges, or support a participant who has already registered, visit www.cmhainmotion.ca.

By Brock Weir
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