

## Mental health remains top priority for long-time CMHA donor Rappos



As the father of two teens, Aurora resident George Rappos knows the importance of mental health to youth and to have the opportunities to seek help when and where they need it.

It's a philosophy the Newmarket-based Desjardins insurance agent has held close to his heart for many years as a long-time supporter of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS), and this support has only gone from strength to strength with each passing year.

Beginning last fall on Giving Tuesday and concluding on New Year's Eve, Rappos helped the CMHA-YRSS raise a total of \$22,555 for local youth mental health programs. The funds raised was the result of his pledge to match, up to \$10,000, all donations made to the CMHA-YRSS during that time period.

"We are grateful to George for offering this opportunity for donors to double the impact of their gifts, and for the generosity of everyone who contributed to youth mental health programs, including MOBYSS, our Mobile Youth Mental Health Walk-In Clinic," said Catherine Matzig, Senior Director of Philanthropy for the CMHA-YRSS in a statement on January 24. "As a result of our Mental Health Doesn't Take a Holiday campaign, we are pleased to announce a total raised, including George's generous donation of \$10,000, of \$22,555."

The Mental Health Doesn't Take a Holiday campaign was just one way Rappos contributed to the organization in 2022.

The previous spring, he helped launch the nation-wide Insuring Our Future fundraising campaign in support of youth mental health programs in which the Canadian insurance industry was challenged to step up to the plate or the cause.

"The CMHA-YRSS challenged all local businesses, typically small businesses, in the York Region and South Simcoe area [to donate] and I said I'd match up to \$10,000 in donations if we can promote this campaign and see what comes about," Rappos tells The Auroran. "It went fairly successfully! We had some traction and I think we might be able to do it again come the end of the year and see if we can drive more funding to the CMHA because they do a lot of great work in our community."

Mental health is something that has been experienced in his family, he adds, noting that his own children have seen the toll that mental health can play on their peers, particularly at the height of the global pandemic.

"It's a larger issue in society," he says. "My biggest concern is psychologists are not covered under the universal health care system in this country, so for a family to try to get their young daughter or son assessed ? maybe they're acting out in school, maybe they're

not paying attention, maybe they're getting in trouble a lot ? a lot of families who live on the fringes of society don't have the economic and financial wherewithal to pay for the assessments. They might not have employer benefits to get these psychological assessments, there's a larger issue here in terms of how we deal with mental health, especially youth mental health, and getting to it earlier.

?We get a child in [their teens] and one day they're going to be in their thirties and still have mental health issues, and maybe not have an assessment or be diagnosed. Their personal relationships, business relationships, career relationships are not going to be where they want it to be. It is important for us as a society to make sure we get the help that these young people need early in their lives so that they can become functioning adults.

?It is extremely important we get to these people at a very young age because we need them. They are part of our future. We can't leave these people behind. We need to get over the stigma of mental health because if we don't then we're just going to all live in the shadows of our illness and that is not going to help anybody.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter