

Push-Up Challenge is new way to get moving for mental health

Are you looking for some motivation to keep at some of your New Year's fitness resolutions while helping the community at the same time? Well, some simple moves to strengthen your core can make a big difference in core mental health programs in York Region and South Simcoe.

The Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) is set to participate in The Push-Up Challenge, Canada's largest mental health and fitness event, which runs from February 11 to February 28.

Through the Challenge, participants will be tasked to complete 2,000 push-ups, representing the approximately 2,000 lives lost to suicide each day around the world.

Pledges collected by the participants will stay local, supporting critical care mental health services and programs in the community, with a particular focus on youth mental health.

The Push-Up Challenge is a national fundraising event and we're joining Canadians all across the country in an extraordinarily difficult [task]. Sometimes we need to challenge ourselves to do something that is really hard for something that is meaningful to raise money for local services, says Rebecca Shields, CEO of CMHA-YRSS. Sometimes we do the hard things because it reminds us how important it is.

This Challenge was first initiated in Australia by people who lost someone they loved to suicide, Shields notes, and has since spread around the world.

The CMHA-YRSS' participation in the Push-Up Challenge replaces what has previously been one of their flagship fundraisers for their programs and services, Mental Health in Motion, which they are looking back on as a success story spanning more than a decade.

I think all events have a good life span and we really wanted to try something different, says Shields. The incredible supporters, donors, and volunteers have been so great over the years, but we really felt it was time to refresh our event strategy. We wanted to be part of this national event and we felt we really couldn't do both, so this was a really exciting opportunity for us to work with all of our branches across Canada and do something that is really important together for mental health.

For us, we always support where the funds are needed the most, says Shields, noting their mobile mental health unit for youth, MOBYSS, will benefit from these funds. Other youth programs, and recreation opportunities for people of all ages living with really serious, persistent mental illness, to have a chance to do something they otherwise wouldn't be able to do will be supported.

If push-ups aren't right for you, however, you can still be involved. In addition to sponsoring a participant or group, people can register for sit-ups, squats, or other alternative exercises and you can also aim for 50 per cent of the push-up target if 1,000 sounds more inviting than 2,000.

What's important, notes Shields is keeping eyes on the goal.

I love a good goal and I'm going to be joining our Board's team and we'll do it together to raise money for CMHA, she says. As last year was the last year with Mental Health in Motion, this allows me to ask friends who supported me in that physical activity to support me in this physical activity, so we can continue to support the really important programs and that's motivation enough.

For more on the Challenge, visit www.thepushupchallenge.ca/home?lightbox=/register-select&utm_term=cmha-62.

By Brock Weir