

Rising Generation Social Hub aims to forge valuable connections

Pressure is all around us, from managing money to coping with stress.

But a new initiative from the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA-YRSS) aims to help youth between the ages of 19 and 29 build the tools they need to forge ahead and forge valuable bonds at the same time.

The Rising Generation Social Hub is a new spin on the CMHA-YRSS' youth programs, focusing on that in-between group of young adults.

Hosted in partnership with the Aurora Public Library, it is, as the name suggests, a social group, but one which also offers guidance when needed.

"This is something really special for young people just getting together," says Brian Major, a Peer Support Worker for the CMHA-YRSS who is actively involved in the program, adding that fostering and rebuilding these social connections was particularly important in the aftermath of the isolation brought on by the global pandemic.

"It is just breaking out of the isolation that so often people face and making new friends and getting together in a space they feel like they have some ownership of it. It's rewarding to see people enjoy themselves in something that is pro-social and actually quite healthy," Major continues. "One of our slogans is 'Mental Health for All' and I would say that all of us, whether we have a mental illness or not, can benefit from being in an environment where mental health is promoted. We're trying to change the focus away from necessarily mental illness and more towards mental health things like learning and grounding techniques, learning how to cope, and that applies not just to people with severe mental illness but to the general public as well."

Meeting monthly, this quarter offers plenty of chances for youth in this demographic to connect, share, and build skills.

Their next session on January 24, which will be held at the Aurora Public Library, is focused on grounding and coping techniques.

"I have been trained in mindfulness-based stress reduction and different techniques that young people have to ground them and cope with stress and stressors in their lives," says Major. "In February, we're looking to do arts and crafts with a lot of different options and we will be providing a lot of opportunities to do different sorts of arts and crafts that will be up to the participants to decide what they like and what they want to do. They would be those things where people have the freedom to explore, look at what other people are doing, and try something they perhaps have never tried before. In March, we're looking at basic budgeting, and it is a combination of a social time with stuff that is fun and exciting, but also quite practical, too."

"I know during the pandemic and afterwards, I think a lot of youth have gone through periods of isolation and, certainly in the lockdown, disconnection with people their own age. This kind of initiative is a place where people can get together. We often see at the group people start exchanging phone numbers, going out for a coffee afterwards, or what have you."

As an agency, the CMHA-YRSS "has to be there for the community" and "respond to what is happening," Major adds.

For more information about the Rising Generation Social Hub, and to register for any or all of the next three sessions, visit www.eventbrite.ca/e/the-rising-generation-social-hub-tickets-767775054857?aff=oddtcreator.

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