



-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

The Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health Announces the 2016 Champions of Mental Health

(Ottawa, Ontario) April 7, 2016. Today, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) officially announced the winners of the *Champions of Mental Health Awards* for 2016. The annual *Champions Awards* celebrate individuals and organizations whose outstanding contributions have advanced the mental health agenda in Canada in the past year.

“Each year the decision process is heart breaking as there are many exceptional candidates to choose from,” stated Fred Phelps, CAMIMH Campaign Chair 2016. “We are astonished by the remarkable contributions of individuals and organizations in the service of mental health across the country.”

CAMIMH will host the gala celebrating the recipients and recognizing their hard work on May 3rd, 2016 in Ottawa. The celebration is presented by Bell as part of the Bell Let’s Talk mental health initiative.

The winners of the 2016 *Champions of Mental Health Awards* are:

Community (Individual): Curtis Bishop’s personal journey is truly one of hope. Curtis spent several years of his life on the streets of Toronto living with mental illness. Curtis benefited from the support of a housing agency, Houselink Community Homes, where he found empowerment and took up the unofficial role of advocate for those who still struggle.

Community (Organization): The Centre d’expertise Marie-Vincent (CEMV) is a non-profit organization that provides services to sexually abused children, aged 12 and younger, as well as their families. By bringing together medical, police, psychosocial, social and legal services under one roof, the CEMV aims to optimize interventions with these children by minimizing the stress caused by these different procedures and facilitating coordination between the various groups of professionals.

Media: Erin Anderssen is a Senior Feature Writer at The Globe and Mail and has drawn astounding attention to the lack of accessible mental health care in Canada. As lead author of The Globe’s Open Mind series on improving mental health research, diagnosis, and treatment, she exposed the urgency of improving Canada’s mental health care system in a very public way.

Research/Clinician: Dr. Heather Stuart is a Professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, with cross appointments to the Department of Psychiatry and the School of Rehabilitation Therapy at Queens University. She has been fighting to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness since the late 1990s. Dr. Stuart’s main research interests are in psychiatric epidemiology and mental health services. She works to describe and understand the experience of stigma from the inside – from the perspective of people who have a mental illness and their families – with the goal of reducing the stigma and ensuring that those who experience a mental illness can get the help and support they need. In February 2012, Dr. Stuart became the first Bell Mental Health and Anti-Stigma Research Chair.

Parliamentarian: The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Superior North (Ontario) and Minister of Status of Women, served as Executive Director of the largest homeless shelter in Thunder Bay prior to entering politics. In her work, she focused on the social determinants of health and called on the federal government to better address issues around social housing, mental health, substance

abuse and harm reduction. Minister Hajdu is also a former member of the Board of Directors for Alpha Court Mental Health Services.

Workplace Mental Health: Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores) is a teaching hospital specializing in providing a range of services for those struggling with complex or severe mental illness in a Recovery oriented environment. The organization is passionate about supporting the mental and physical well-being of the employees who carry out this important work every day. In 2013, it was an early adopter of the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, a project led and championed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. As part of implementing the Standard, an Integrated Wellness Plan was created. It has five pillars: Harm Prevention; Health Promotion; Resolution of Occurrences of Harm; Organizational Culture and Sustainability and Continuous Improvement. In 2015, Ontario Shores integrated the Psychological Health Index into their Employee Opinion Survey. The results give them insight into how they are doing in achieving a psychologically safe workplace and inform action plans aimed at continuous improvement.

The Sharon Johnston Champion of Mental Health Award for Youth: The Bishop Ryan’s Celtic Circle Student Leadership Club is a group of students from grades 9 to 12 dedicated to bringing awareness to mental illness. For the past three years they have focused on reducing the stigma around mental illness and promoting the importance of an inclusive community. Through their own lived experience and passion to help others, students in the group have earned prestigious recognition and awards at the local, provincial and national level.

“We are extremely proud to honour such outstanding individuals and organizations who truly make a difference in reducing the stigma associated with mental illness. Their commitment and devotion to mental health are an inspiration for all Canadians,” concluded Phelps.

Tickets and tables for the gala are on sale now! To purchase tickets for the awards please visit camimh.ca. The *Champions Awards* are a success each year thanks to the generous support of our corporate sponsors, in particular Bell Let’s Talk, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Lundbeck Canada, Innovative Medicines Canada.

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Established in 1998, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is an alliance of mental health organizations comprised of health care providers and organizations representing persons with mental illness and their families and caregivers. CAMIMH’s mandate is to ensure that mental health is placed on the national agenda so that persons with a lived experience of mental illness and their families receive appropriate access to care and support.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

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