

## Spreading Awareness, Reducing Stigma: Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health Introduces its Faces of Mental Illness for 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 18, 2016 - Today, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) announced the four Canadians selected for its annual *Faces of Mental Illness* campaign. CAMIMH received dozens of nominations, the most ever, from across the country of people living in recovery from mental illness.

"All of the stories that we have heard have been truly inspiring. It is so important to work on erasing the stigma associated with mental illnesses, and our nominees as well as all the other participants have done an extraordinary job at working towards that goal," said Fred Phelps, CAMIMH Chair. "Just the fact that they are willing to share their incredible stories with the public demonstrates a lot of courage, and we hope that they will inspire others to do the same".

Over the next year, the *Faces* will take part in events to educate Canadians about the realities of living with mental illness, and the effects that mental health has on the lives of all Canadians. The *Faces of Mental Illness* campaign is sponsored by Bell Let's Talk. The stories of the *Faces of Mental Illness* will be featured on posters and postcards distributed to Canadians across the country. Also, they will participate in a national media outreach campaign as well as mini-documentaries which will be shared with federal policymakers at a marquee event on the Hill during Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW), October 2 - 6. Spreading Awareness, Reducing Stigma is the theme of MIAW this year.

The 2016 Faces of Mental Illness are:

**Samuel Breau:** *An engaged leader and advocate since a young age, Samuel's journey towards recovery began during university. After moving from rural New Brunswick to Ottawa and facing the high expectations from school, scholarships and peers, Samuel became aware that he may be living with a mental illness, and subsequently sought treatment for a generalized anxiety disorder. Today, Samuel combines professional and personal experiences to deliver powerful messages that seek to reduce stigma and promote psychological health and wellness for all.*

**Andrea Paquette:** *After suffering greatly from her bipolar disorder, Andrea got help and decided to inspire others to share their personal stories by creating a website called bipolarbabes.com. With the launch of the website, she created supportive and impacting programs and founded the Bipolar Disorder Society of British Columbia, which is now named the Stigma-Free Society. Andrea encourages others to change their attitudes towards mental illnesses by explaining that while people can have a mental illness, they are not defined by their condition.*

**Dexter Nyuurnibe:** *An African-Canadian mental health advocate who understands the importance of breaking the gender stereotypes that define masculinity in order to erase the stigma associated with mental illnesses. He's shared his story many times, having presented a TEDx talk and at a joint session of the World Bank and W.H.O in Washington, D.C. He continues to speak up about his experiences of suffering from dysthymia and generalized anxiety disorder and recovery.*

[Type here]

**Stéphanie Fontaine:** *Stephanie understands the struggles of coping with a mental disorder, having bipolar disorder. Her successful experience in corporate workplaces while fighting towards recovery makes for a hopeful story. She put aside her career as an actuary to join Revivre, a non profit organization supporting self-management for people with anxiety and mood disorders in the province of Quebec. She reaches out to the public to make others aware not only that anybody can suffer from a mental illness, but also that anyone can recover from it.*

“By continuing to share their stories and paths to recovery with the public, the *Faces* help others to want to do more to erase stigmatization. They inspire many of us to seek help and to support loved ones with a mental illness, and they encourage more action on the part of policymakers,” continued Phelps.

To learn more about the campaign, or to order campaign materials, please visit <http://www.camimh.ca>. CAMIMH would like to thank their generous sponsors who make this campaign possible: Bell Let’s Talk, Lundbeck Canada Inc., The Mental Health Commission of Canada, Innovative Medicine’s Canada, and Impact Public Affairs.



*From left to right: Samuel Breau, Stéphanie Fontaine, Dexter Nyuurnibe, and Andrea Paquette*

-30-

*Established in 1998, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) is an alliance of national 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, please contact:**

Charlotte Webber  
Communications and Public Relations  
613-233-8906 | [charlotte@impactcanada.com](mailto:charlotte@impactcanada.com)