



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CAMIMH Hosts 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Champions of Mental Health Awards Gala

OTTAWA, May 3, 2017 – Today, as part of Mental Health Week, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) hosts the fifteenth annual Champions of Mental Health Awards Gala in Ottawa. Each year, CAMIMH selects a group of Champions through a national nomination from the public to identify and recognize Canadians who have made an outstanding contribution to mental health in Canada.

“We are delighted that once again, Her Excellency Sharon Johnston will be joining us for the Champions of Mental Health Awards Gala,” said CAMIMH Campaign Chair, Fred Phelps. “We were overjoyed to rename the youth award in her honour in 2015 to recognize her outstanding and continued contribution to mental health. We are also very proud to honour this year’s Champions, and to recognize their achievements in making a difference in the mental health community and for those who live with mental illness.”

The Champions of Mental Health Awards are a key component of CAMIMH’s annual awareness campaigns and are made possible through the generous support of presenting sponsor Bell Let’s Talk.

“Congratulations to each of this year’s Champions of Mental Health for their dedication to helping Canadians living with mental illness, and the incredible impact they have had on increasing awareness about mental health,” said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let’s Talk. “Bell Let’s Talk is proud of its continued support for CAMIMH and the Champions of Mental Health Awards, as they recognize these outstanding individuals and organizations for their leadership in helping to end the stigma around mental illness in Canada.”

CAMIMH is also pleased to welcome special guests the Honourable Scott Brison, President of the Treasury Board of Canada, and Bruno Guévremont, retired Royal Canadian Navy Diver, Team Canada Captain at the 2016 Invictus Games and Bell Let’s Talk ambassador, who will be the evening’s emcee.

### Here are our 2017 Champions of Mental Health:

**Community (Individual):** Following the tragic loss of his son to suicide, Brian Hansell was moved to make a difference in his community and create the Paul Hansell Foundation in memory of his son. Wanting to create a way to encourage people to have more meaningful conversations, Brian used his experience as an entrepreneur to create ConvoPlate, a series of plates that are passed along to encourage dialogue about mental health. Since its launch, the ConvoPlate has led to hundreds of passes, thousands of conversations, and an estimated \$300,000 raised.

**Community (Organization):** Stone Hearth Bakery opened in Halifax in 1982 with a simple goal of providing meaningful training and employment opportunities for individuals 19 years of age and older who were living with mental illness and experiencing persistent barriers to employment. Each year, approximately 65 people participate in the bakery program where, under the guidance of certified bakers, they are provided an opportunity to work in a commercial bakery while gaining employment experience, work skills and self-confidence. Stone Hearth Bakery is committed to helping the community, reinvesting all proceeds back into learning and training opportunities.

**Media:** Arms Bumanlag is CTV Windsor’s Weather Anchor and also works as a radio talk show host on AM800 CKLW. On air, and on social media - where he has an extensive following, Arms openly shares his struggles with anxiety. He shatters the stigma around mental illness as an advocate for the mental health community, volunteering his time as an ambassador for the Sole Focus mental health campaign.

**Researcher or Clinician:** Dr. Phil Tibbo has a long history of supporting the mental health community through his leadership, research and advocacy. Throughout his career, Dr. Tibbo has studied psychosis, particularly in youth and early intervention services. His work led to a large philanthropic donation, forming the Bebensee Schizophrenic Research Unit when he was in Alberta, and he was named the first Dr. Paul Janssen Chair in Psychotic Disorders at Dalhousie University in 2008. Dr. Tibbo's community involvement also includes Board Member of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada and Chair of the SSC Foundation, and President of the Canadian Consortium for the Early Intervention in Psychosis.

**Parliamentarian:** Celina Caesar-Chavannes is a proud supporter and member of the mental health community. For many years she has been an advocate for the mental health and addictions community, working with the Civic Action organization, and speaking at events from high schools and universities to CTV's Power Play and CBC's Power and Politics. She has been vocal about her own personal experience with mental illness and is passionate about bringing awareness and education on mental health issues to marginalized communities. Her work for the mental health community can also be noted in her passionate advocacy for the recently announced federal funding for mental healthcare.

**Workplace Mental Health:** Through his work as a registered social worker and public servant, Todd Lyons hosts a podcast for and about public servants. While the podcast addresses a variety of issues, including gender violence, diversity and conflict resolution, there is a recurring theme of mental health and mental illness throughout his work. His work has been promoted by the Clerk of the Privy Council, and has launched the careers of some of his guests as mental health speakers.

**The Sharon Johnston Champion of Mental Health Award for Youth:** Despite her selective mutism, Lauren Whiteway has become a vocal advocate for her condition, which is a severe form of anxiety that causes someone to be unable to speak in certain social situations. Through her blog and video series, she has reached tens of thousands of people around the world, with a distinct focus on her own community. She also created a Facebook group to increase awareness and connect parents with children who have selective mutism in Atlantic Canada. A recipient of the YMCA Peace Medallion and the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award, Lauren's work is taking off! This year, Lauren began speaking at local high schools and the youth psychiatric unit at the local hospital to share her journey with mental illness, not only to increase selective mutism awareness, but also to reach out to others who may be struggling with mental illness.

The *Champions of Mental Health Awards* are made possible through the generous support of our sponsors: Bell Let's Talk, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Lundbeck Canada, Innovative Medicines Canada, and Impact Public Affairs. To learn more about CAMIMH's campaign and the winners, please visit: [camimh.ca](http://camimh.ca)

-30-

*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.*

**To learn more about CAMIMH's campaigns, please visit [camimh.ca](http://camimh.ca) or contact:**

Emily Gale

Emily@impactcanada.com

Phone: (902) 599-2059