

The Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health Announces the 2017 Champions of Mental Health

(Ottawa, Ontario) April 3, 2017. Today, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH) officially announced the winners of the *Champions of Mental Health Awards* for 2017. The annual *Champions Awards* celebrate individuals and organizations whose outstanding contributions have advanced the mental health agenda in Canada in the past year.

“We are now in our fifteenth year of the Champions of Mental Health Awards, and we continue to see amazing contributions to mental illness awareness and to the mental health community year after year. This year is no exception,” stated Fred Phelps, CAMIMH Campaign Chair 2017. “All of the more than 200 nominees inspire us to continue supporting mental health across the country.”

CAMIMH will host the gala to celebrate and recognize the 2017 recipients for their leadership in mental health on May 3rd, in Ottawa. The gala will be presented by Bell Let’s Talk with Bruno Guévremont, retired Royal Canadian Navy Diver, Team Canada Captain at the 2016 Invictus Games and Bell Let’s Talk ambassador, as the evening’s emcee.

The winners of the 2017 *Champions of Mental Health Awards* are:

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 the Windsor Weather Anchor with CTV Windsor and 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. Arms shatters the stigma around mental illness and is an advocate for the mental health community and 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.

"It is a privilege for us to honour the outstanding work of these individuals and organizations who, every day, help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Their dedication to and passion for mental health is an inspiration for all Canadians," concluded Phelps.

Tickets and tables for the gala are on sale now at 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 and 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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