

Dufferin County launches mental health series for local businesses

By Paula Brown, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dufferin County's economic development team, inDufferin, is launching a free mental health series to help support the local business community.

The seven-part mental health series called Stress, Survival, & Showing Up consist of various events, workshops, and resources led by mental health specialists from the agricultural, food and beverage, and creative therapy sectors, who will discuss topics such as mental health, stress management, and uncertainly and emotional safety in the workplace.

It's no secret that the pandemic has taken a serious toll on people's mental health these past months, and Dufferin County's workforce is no exception, said Karisa Downey, manager of economic development for Dufferin County. This series will address the ways COVID-19 is affecting the mental health of business owners, agriculture professionals, and their employees to create space for these groups to feel heard and supported, and offer tangible resources as well as expert insights on how to cope with what they're experiencing.

The Stress, Survival, & Showing Up series will kick off on Sept. 28, with a virtual panel talk from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. discussing the current state of mental health in the workplace. Moderated by local Psychotherapist and founder of Art as Therapy, Rapinder Kaur, panelists at the event will include Hassel Aviles, executive director of Not 9 to 5, Lauren Van Ewyk, lead facilitator for Do More Ag, and Susan Freeman of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

Meghan Watson, a mental health consultant and founder of Bloom Psychology, will also be hosting an event on Oct. 26 discussing how to cultivate an emotionally healthy workplace.

Throughout the series, virtual workshops hosted by Art as Therapy, Not 9 to 5 and Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety will be available to business owners and agricultural professionals free of charge.

Just as COVID-19 has changed the way we operate at work in the interest of staying safe, so too is it changing the way we look at mental health, said Kaur. Our psychological health is just as important as physical health and it needs to be take really seriously.

Registration for the Stress, Survival, & Show Up series is now open with limited spaces. The event will run from Sept. 28 until November.

For a complete list of detailed events and workshops or to register for the free series go to www.dufferincounty.ca.