

Push-up challenge helps educate community on mental health while fundraising

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The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Peel Dufferin has raised thousands of dollars in donations with a new fitness challenge that hopes to raise awareness about mental health.

Starting on Feb. 1, more than 370 residents from the Peel Dufferin region took up the challenge from CMHA to complete 2,000 push-ups over 23 days with the goal of raising funds for mental health services.

"We are proud to be part of this initiative," said Shawna Bailey, fundraising officer for CMHA Peel Dufferin. "We believe that it is another way to educate our community about mental health and physical activity."

This year was the first year the Canadian Mental Health Association brought forward the fundraising initiative. The initiative initially started in Australia seven years ago and has raised over \$36 million for mental health.

According to CMHA, over 49,000 Canadians from 330 communities challenged themselves to complete 2,000 push-ups for the 20 per cent of Canadians who will experience a mental illness each year.

The initiative raised over \$2.4 million for mental health nationwide, with over 44.8 million push-ups completed.

In Dufferin Peel, the competition raised over \$13,000 in funding, all of which will stay in the Peel/Dufferin community to directly help residents who may have mental health issues or substance use.

According to a 2022/2023 annual report from CMHA Dufferin/Peel, the local mental health organization served nearly 22,000 clients through their programs and service and received 58,772 crisis-based calls.

Speaking with the Shelburne Free Press, Bailey noted the importance of raising awareness and funding for local mental health services.

"Knowledge and awareness are getting better, but people still need the reminder that they are not alone in what they are experiencing. New services are being added all the time to help support our community, but everyone still needs to be encouraged to talk openly and honestly about mental health," said Bailey.

For more information about the services available with Peel Dufferin from the Canadian Mental Health Association, visit www.cmhapeeldufferin.ca.