

December 19, 2017

## RVH opens regional Child and Youth Mental Health program

Earlier today people from across the region, including Ontario's Minister of Children and Youth Services, Michael Coteau, packed Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre's (RVH) auditorium to celebrate the opening of the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health program.

The new regional program features an eight-bed inpatient unit which will care for 300 troubled young people each year, as well as a comprehensive day program which will provide an additional 3,000 outpatient visits annually. RVH has partnered with the Simcoe County District School Board and will have a teacher onsite during the 2018-'19 school year to ensure patients don't fall behind in their studies. Since 2015 the health centre has also operated a regional Urgent Consult Clinic in its Emergency department to identify and assess youth at risk.

"We know one in five young people suffers from mental illness yet, until now, North Simcoe Muskoka was the only region in Ontario that did not have a hospital-based child and youth mental health program," says Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO. "A child's mental health is just as important as their physical health and they deserve the same quality and access to support. RVH will begin accepting patients into the program this week, easing the burden for troubled youth and their families. This is very good news for our region."

Today's emotional celebration featured Zach Hofer, the remarkable 13 year-old who raised \$100,000 for RVH's program through his "Zach Makes Tracks" fundraising trek from Barrie to Ottawa. His mother, Shelley, also shared her personal struggles with mental illness.

"Seventy per cent of mental health issues emerge in childhood or adolescence. Youth in our region suffering acute mental health issues, such as suicidal behaviour, psychosis and severe depression will now have quick access to specialized inpatient services for stabilization and treatment," says Dr. Eric Mulder, RVH Chief of Psychiatry.

The RVH Foundation funded the unit's \$5 million construction and equipment costs through its highly-successful \$25 million Hearts and Minds campaign.

RVH is making significant strides in improving access to healthcare. In December it opened a new 36-bed Transitional Care Unit to address surging patient volumes and in early-January will begin providing advanced cardiac services through its Simcoe Muskoka Regional Heart program.

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### Quotes:

"Over the last five years, the Ontario government has been working to improve services for children and youth with mental health needs through Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. We are committed to creating more coordinated and responsive mental health services for children, youth and their families. Inpatient facilities, such as the new Child and Youth Mental Health program at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, are a vital part of our system. I'm pleased that the children and youth of North Simcoe Muskoka will now have better access to the services they need, closer to their homes."

**Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services**

“Helping children and youth get the right mental health supports can be key to a safe, healthy and happy future. With RVH’s new Child and Youth Mental Health Program, families in the region will be able to access effective treatment and care, when and where they need it.”

**Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care**

“Bringing quality mental health services for youth to Barrie has been a priority of mine since being elected, and I am thrilled that this new program is opening. I want to thank Janice Skot, the entire team at RVH, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for making this a reality. Our government knows the importance of expanding mental health services across the province, and making it available to all who need it.”

**Ann Hoggarth, MPP Barrie**

“The opening of the Simcoe Muskoka Child and Youth Mental Health program is such an important event in the history of child and youth mental health. The work and commitment of everyone involved has been amazing and reflects the significant collective impact that a community can make.”

**Glen Newby, CEO New Path Youth and Family Services.**

#### **Cutlines:**

**Media 1-** The Honorable Michael Coteau (centre), Minister of Children and Youth Services, and Ann Hoggarth, (centre right), MPP Barrie, were given a very warm welcome when they arrived at Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre for the opening of the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Program. On hand to greet them was Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO, Zach Hofer (centre front) of ‘Zach Makes Tracks,’ members from the New Path Family and Youth Services as well as the always-enthusiastic members of RVH’s Blue Brigade.

**Media 2-** The official opening of the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Program was marked by a ribbon ceremony with (left to right) Dr. Eric Mulder, RVH chief of Psychiatry; Jeff Lehman, Mayor, City of Barrie; Ann Hoggarth, MPP Barrie; Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO; Gerry Marshall, Warden, Simcoe County; Zach Hofer; The Honorable Michael Coteau, Minister of Children and Youth Services; Shelley Hofer; David McCullough, chair of the Hearts & Minds campaign; Doug Frost, 2<sup>nd</sup> vice chair, RVH Board of Directors; Glen Newby, CEO New Path Family and Youth Services; and John Byles, chair, RVH Foundation Board of Directors.

**Media 3 –** Zach Hofer (centre) of ‘Zach Makes Tracks’ joins the IntegratedARTS students from Innisdale Secondary School following the opening ceremony for the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Program. The students, along with Lauren and Darius McKoy, from Harmonix Music Studio assisted with the opening program.

To view a video highlight of the event please click image



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