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## RVH celebrates one year anniversary of the regional child and youth mental health program

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) recently celebrated the one year anniversary of the much-needed Simcoe Muskoka Regional Child and Youth Mental Health Program.

“A child’s mental health is just as important as their physical health and they deserve the same quality and access to support,” says Janice Skot, RVH president and CEO. “We know one in five young people suffers from mental illness yet, before we opened this program, North Simcoe Muskoka was the only region in Ontario that did not have a hospital-based child and youth mental health program.”

Since this new regional program opened, 409 young people facing a serious mental health crisis have been admitted to the eight-bed inpatient unit. They have been provided with the help they need by an interprofessional care team that includes: a child and youth psychiatrist, psychologist and workers, registered nurses, a social worker, and recreation therapists. It was estimated the inpatient unit would care for 300 young people each year and already the program has surpassed that projection.

Here is what one family had to say about the care they received:

*“Recently our child was a patient on the Child and Youth Mental Health Inpatient unit at RVH. It was probably one of the most difficult times for our family. We cannot even imagine what this experience would have looked like if this unit did not exist at RVH. Having access to the care that our child needed so close to home made the impact of this situation on our family that much more bearable.”*

In addition to the inpatient unit, a comprehensive Day Program was opened in September, a partnership with the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB). The focus of the Day Program is to provide academic and mental health services for high school students unable to attend regular classes due to a diagnosis of anxiety or depression. So far seven students have enrolled in the Day Program.

Since 2015, the health centre has also operated a regional Acute Outpatient Service in its Emergency department to identify and assess youth at risk.

“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, now have quick access to specialized inpatient services for stabilization and treatment,” says Dr. Eric Mulder, RVH chief of Psychiatry.

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