



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Newfoundland and Labrador

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION – NL

CMHA-NL ANNOUNCES “**TICKLE SWIM FOR MENTAL HEALTH**”
AWARENESS/FUNDRAISER INITIATIVE



St. John's – The **Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland and Labrador** is today announcing the start of a new awareness/fundraiser called “**Tickle Swim for Mental Health**”. The event will feature a 5 km, Bell Island to Portugal Cove swim by St. John's City Councillor and local businesswoman Sheilagh O'Leary, in August 2013. The aim of the event is to raise awareness surrounding mental health issues in our province, and the inherent need for all of society to maintain good mental fitness; as we focus on our physical fitness. Sheilagh's swim across the tickle will require training,

confidence, and mental agility. Mental illness affects one in five Canadians, and yet all too often those who suffer remain marginalized. “**Tickle Swim for Mental Health**” will focus much needed attention on the universality of mental health issues, while helping to dispel the stigma faced by individuals and families dealing with its challenges.

“George Skinner, Executive Director of CMHA-NL commends Sheilagh on her courage and ambition in tackling this tremendous personal challenge, as well as her commitment to improving the lives of individuals and families tasked with the struggles of living with mental health issues. We all suffer from mental health problems to some degree at various times in our lives. Whether it's the daily struggle to juggle our work life balance or whether it's living with a debilitating mental illness. We need to prioritize these needs as we do our physical health. After all, there is no health without mental health! We wish Sheilagh the best of luck in her journey as she trains for her tremendous challenges ahead, and we thank her for joining us in our journey to improve mental health awareness and services across our province.”

“Sheilagh O'Leary states that the direct correlation between mental health and physical activity is well documented today by the medical profession. In my own personal life, I manage daily stresses through regular physical activity. I love the outdoors, and open water swimming has always been a passion of mine. To swim a channel is one of my bucket list items! Teaming up with the Canadian Mental Health Association is a natural fit, bringing awareness and attention to the issues of fitness and mental health. It is a great opportunity to challenge myself. I am both exhilarated and terrified by the thoughts of the crossing, but overcoming fear is a huge aspect of this initiative. So, the aim is to swim the Bell Island tickle in August of this year.

Sheilagh has two wonderful mentors in this pursuit; **TA Loeffler**, Professor of Outdoor Recreation at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and **Dr. Michelle Young**, renowned local Iron Man tri-athlete. Both women are living their dreams each day and inspiring others to do the same.

The Canadian Mental Health Association will gladly be accepting donations for those wishing to sponsor Sheilagh on her swim. Individuals or groups may donate to CMHA-NL by visiting <http://www.canadahelps.org/GivingPages/GivingPage.aspx?gplD=23457>

As the “Tickle Swim for Mental Health” initiative rolls out over the coming months CMHA-NL will be posting updates from Sheilagh O'Leary as she trains for her August swim. These updates will

be a tangible reminder to everyone of the need for all individuals to build and maintain their own fitness, both physical and mental.

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