

Update: Mental Health

# With employee and public support, corporate mental wellness foundation delivering results

Canada Post's goal of raising \$2 million for the cause of mental health is within reach thanks to outstanding support from Canadians and the company's retail employees across the country.

Donations given at post offices in October during the company's annual six-week campaign raised more than \$1 million for the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health.

"Employees at retail outlets are committed to this issue, and by asking for donations, they're also helping to raise awareness and change attitudes," said Cindy Daoust, Canada Post's manager of the Cause of Choice program.

The foundation was established in June 2008 with two primary aims: to build capacity in

the frontline organizations that support the many individuals and families affected, and to raise awareness about mental illness.

The foundation has delivered on those goals with gratifying success: Canada Post customers, employees and suppliers had already raised more than \$2.5 million in its 2008 and 2009 campaigns.

"We have made a contribution all Canada Post employees can be proud of," said Ms. Daoust. "Mental illness affects one in five Canadians and almost every Canadian family. With 59,000 employees and nearly 6,500 post offices across the country, Canada Post is ideally positioned to champion a cause that touches nearly every Canadian. We're succeeding because our

employees have embraced this issue and Canadians have responded to our request for help."

For the non-profit organizations that receive grants of up to \$65,000, the foundation's efforts make it possible to fulfill goals that are otherwise out of reach.

"When you tell an organization that is struggling to make ends meet that they've been selected to receive a grant, the gratitude is humbling," says foundation chair James Roche. "The individuals who make up those organizations are giving so much of themselves to the cause, and it is exhilarating and validating to know we're making a difference."

The foundation set a goal this year twice as high

as the initial campaign in 2008 because the needs are so great.

"We've had to turn down many worthy groups that have told us of growing waiting lists, under-staffed crisis lines and mentally ill people in their communities who are going without the

assistance they urgently need," says Mr. Roche.

"The support Canadians give Canada Post's retail campaign is critical," says Mr. Roche.

"In our society, mental illness is not something we talk about very much; we still have a long way to go in terms of accepting it in the same manner as cancer and other diseases. Yet it affects families, organizations and communities probably more profoundly than any other illness because it can be so disabling for so long. Canada Post employees are engaging Canadians in a conversation about mental illness, and that's very important."



Fundraising by Canada Post employees has brought the company close to its goal of raising \$2 million for their cause of choice. Canada Post employee Wayne Stremel (top right) biked across Canada this summer raising \$50,000 for the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health. Dave Smith (right), founder of the Dave Smith Treatment Centre in Ottawa, visits the post office for a special delivery from Canada Post. The grant will enable the centre to provide a proactive case management program to addicted youth for the first three months following discharge from a residential program or outpatient treatment centre. PHOTOS: CANADA POST

online? visit [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca) for more information.

## Mental Health Association calling for psychological safety in workplaces

Organizations such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board have done a great job of making employees safe from physical harm – but there is still work to be done to ensure psychological safety, say experts.

"It is the right of every single employee," says Lorne Zon, CEO of the Canadian Mental

Health Association, Ontario. "We expect psychological safety in our schools and communities, and we should be able to count on it in the workplace."

Hallmarks of psychologically safe workplaces are the promotion of employees' psychological well-being and the avoidance of negligent, reckless or intentional harm to employee mental health, he

says. "We're finding that employees are becoming much more attuned to this from a risk management perspective – because there are a number of legal cases out there looking at this subject – and as a productivity issue."

An understanding of why what you do is important – as well as feelings of autonomy and control – support productivity

and are critical elements of psychological safety, says Mr. Zon. Conversely, "If employees don't feel safe speaking to their managers or co-workers, because they're afraid of recrimination, the workplace is not psychologically safe and productivity will be affected."

In support of these aims, the CMHA provides 14 programs

across Canada, as well as online tools, that employers and individual can access to ensure a mentally healthy, psychologically safe work environment. "We're developing a national program, so the whole suite of programs will be available to any employer, tailored specifically to their needs," says Mr. Zon.

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