

Youth input vital to improving mental health in Atlantic Canada

Seeking participants for a Youth Leadership Program at the ASI Forum promoting child and youth mental health, August 19 -22, 2018 in Charlottetown, PEI

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 6, 2018

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI – A regional program is seeking energetic young leaders who are passionate about youth mental health promotion.

Atlantic Canadian youth between 18 and 25 years old are encouraged to apply for the 4-day ASI Youth Leadership Program, which will bring together at least 20 young changemakers from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, to speak up – and speak out – about mental health issues in their communities. Together, they will help to reshape how mental health is perceived and addressed throughout the region.

The Youth Leadership Program, to be held August 19-22 at UPEI in Charlottetown, PEI, is an initiative of the Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities (ASI), and will involve youth leaders in key aspects of the 2018 ASI Forum, which has a theme of *'Let's Act Together! Developing a whole society approach to promoting child and youth mental health'*.

Now in its fifth year, the ASI Youth Leadership Program has been continually strengthened by participant feedback, and is designed by a committee that includes youth and representatives from organizations serving youth. Hillary Abbott, Coordinator of the 2018 youth program says, "Having a youth voice present at ASI is so important because we believe that nothing should happen for us, without us. There is nothing quite like the energy that is generated by young people coming together to make positive change."

Youth selected for the program will begin with leadership training designed specifically for their demographic, and continue the week by participating in the Forum along with representatives from fields such as: government, education, health care, justice and community development. Their suggestions will be used to strengthen the 'Call to Action on Promoting Child and Youth Mental Health' that was created last year.

TD returns for the third year as Title Sponsor of the ASI Youth Leadership Program, which has a unique intergenerational aspect. Youth are given an equal voice at the table allowing policy makers and community leaders to appreciate the value of youth voices and consider youth perspectives when developing policies and programs. A participant from last year's program commented, "The youth are the whole reason everyone came together. They belong there. They were very engaging and well spoken, and those with lived experience were phenomenal teachers to professionals."



Past participants have represented diverse communities and a wide range of experiences as leaders and mental health advocates. Many delegates have been actively involved with youth councils; others empower their peers through art and music, or are creating new initiatives to improve awareness and mental health literacy.

Young leaders with an interest in mental health promotion and inclusive social change are encouraged to apply. Those selected from all four Atlantic provinces will have their travel and expenses covered. Applications will be accepted until June 11.

Registration for the ASI Forum, August 20-22, is open to everyone. Early Bird rates are available until June 30. Youth Leadership Program and Forum details can be found at www.asi-iea.ca.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PHOTOS & INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:

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