



# Mingle for Mental Health

## An Evening with Margaret Trudeau in Support of Youth Mental Health

STORY BY KIM WILLIS

THE RECENT STATISTIC OF A 143% INCREASE in attempted suicides by local youth shared by the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit came as no surprise to Dr. Patrick Smith.

Dr. Smith is a family physician and founding member of Stigma Enigma, a group of ten outstanding local citizens and former basketball players in Windsor who have a goal of raising awareness and reducing the stigma that inhibits most people with mental health issues from seeking help.

Over the last three years, Stigma Enigma has held successful fundraising events in support of Maryvale Mental Health Centre, a children's mental health treatment centre where children and teens experiencing very serious emotional and psychological distress can receive therapy and assistance from a team of experts.

This year Stigma Enigma is excited to have Margaret Trudeau as their keynote speaker at "Mingle for Mental Health" on November 12, 2016 at the Caboto Club. Tickets are \$150 each, or \$1,300 for a table of 10.

"For the last couple of years we have had fabulous speakers like Jordan Smith, Ted Ball and Michael Landsberg in more intimate settings. This year we wanted to attract a larger audience and raise much needed awareness about mental health," says Dr. Smith.

It is often the stigma associated with mental health that inhibits most people with mental health issues from seeking help.

Margaret Trudeau is a Canadian icon, celebrated both for her role in the public eye and as a respected mental-health issues advocate. From becoming a prime minister's wife at a young age, to the loss of both her son and her former husband, to living with bi-polar disorder, Margaret tirelessly shares her personal stories to remind others of the importance of nurturing the body, mind, and spirit.

In addition, Margaret is the author of four books, including her bestselling title, *Changing My Mind*, which charts her life's ups and downs, and her latest title, *The Time of Your Life*, which offers women an inspirational and practical approach to creating a healthy, happy, secure and satisfying future.

Dr. Smith has been in family practice for 33 years and says that mental illness affects a growing number of his patients.

"My practice has certainly changed a lot over the years. I now spend a greater amount of time counselling patients with mental illness because there is a vast shortage of psychiatrists available in this community. The waiting list is quite extensive and not everyone can afford a psychologist," states Dr. Smith.

The issue of suicide also hits very close to home for Dr. Smith. He has lost friends to suicide along with a niece and nephew who were both diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

"The stigma that goes along with mental illness is underestimated. The outcomes of not dealing with a mental illness can be death. We need to view mental illness as an illness and not a weakness."

In selecting Margaret Trudeau as this year's speaker, Stigma Enigma also hopes attention will include an examination of the overall funding of the mental healthcare system.

This is something that Connie Martin, Executive Director, for Maryvale intimately understands. For years Maryvale has faced funding cuts that have impacted service. Sadly, their needs have never been greater.

"We have definitely seen the need for our services increase over the last few years. Both bullying and cyber-bullying are big reasons that youth are turning to suicide," says Martin.

When it comes to completed suicides, the percentage of LGBT teens is exceptionally high.

Rocky Campana completed suicide at 23 years of age. He was a shining star, an achiever and proud to be gay. It is now apparent that he also suffered from depression. Since his death, Rocky's family has made it their mission to continue to deliver Rocky's message and make a difference in others' lives. They have held Run for Rocky, a successful fundraising run, for the last four years.

"The work many do in our community to help support mental health awareness is more important than it has ever been. Recent statistics released show that there has been a 143 percent hike in youth suicide locally. Bringing awareness to this issue and talking about mental health is vital for those suffering. Educating professionals in healthcare, parents and educators on what the signs are of someone considering suicide is important. Bringing in a high profile speaker like Margaret Trudeau, who has had a lifelong struggle with mental health, helps the community understand that you can struggle with mental illness but come out on the other side and lead a healthy life," says Nancy Campana, Rocky's mother.

Martin and her team at Maryvale are extremely grateful to have Dr. Smith as both an advocate and fundraiser.

"Dr. Smith intimately understands the work that we do at Maryvale. The Stigma Enigma events have raised enough money over the last two years to pay for a full-time therapist. This means that 50-75 children and youth are receiving treatment that would not otherwise be possible," states Martin.

"We are so excited to have Margaret Trudeau as the speaker this year to bring much-needed attention to youth mental illness and suicide. Suicide among teens is a neglected area of health care. They have so much life ahead of them, but they are unable to see it at the time."

In addition to raising funds for Maryvale, Dr. Smith has also established a scholarship at the Windsor campus of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University. Students going into psychiatry are eligible to apply.

Signs of suicide include: threatening suicide; talking about wanting to die, appearing depressed, sad or withdrawn; deliberate injuring; changes in mood, appearance or behaviour; and drug or alcohol abuse.

All threats of suicide must be taken seriously. Call 911 or go the hospital emergency department. The Community Crisis Centre offers a 24-hour crisis line for those ages 16 and over at 519-973-4435.

For more information about "Mingle for Mental Health," visit [stigmaenigma.ca](http://stigmaenigma.ca).