



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

NEWS RELEASE

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Ride Don't Hide's 5th Anniversary: Thousands Join the Movement to Fight Mental Illness Stigma

June 26 marks this milestone birthday – ridership and fundraising up 30% as more people come out of the shadows.

Vancouver, BC – On June 26, Canada's national bike ride for mental health, Ride Don't Hide, celebrates its fifth birthday, and a projected 8,000 riders will join the party.

Since the inaugural ride in 2012 in BC, the event has seen a 70% increase in the number of riders and raised over \$2.5 million for mental health programs. Last year, for the first time, the annual ride hit over the \$1 million mark for the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). And this year, it's predicted that number will exceed \$1.5 million.

"There's an essential reason Ride Don't Hide has become CMHA's foremost community fundraising event," says Bev Gutray, CMHA BC's chief executive officer. "It's an act of courage and commitment from so many, who aren't going to allow a mental illness, either their own or that of someone they know, to keep them in the shadows. And what better way to come out of the shadows than going for a ride on a summer day with hundreds of new friends?" adds Gutray.

Ride Don't Hide was inspired by Vancouver teacher Michael Schratte, who in 2010-2011, cycled 40,000 kilometres around the world to share his personal story and to show that having a mental illness doesn't prevent you from following your dreams. Michael has said that he was "banishing stigma one pedal at a time," and that has become the rallying cry of the thousands inspired to join the ride in increasing numbers every year.

"It's extraordinary and inspiring to see how many Canadians are joining the movement," says Dr. Patrick Smith, CMHA's National CEO. "The ride has grown from a local event into one spanning 29 communities across the country. Canadians are biking together with firm purpose, to raise awareness and funds so that people affected by mental illness will no longer have to hide."

The first Ride Don't Hide event in 2012 saw two rides in British Columbia raise \$85,000. Each year those numbers have grown, with last year's event bringing together more than 6,000 people at 27 rides across Canada, raising \$1,165,834.

Last year's ride saw the national momentum powering Ride Don't Hide start to grow. More and more people are seeing the need to banish the stigma around mental illness. There was a 71% increase in the number of riders over the previous year and a 54% increase in total raised to fund mental health programs.

The 2016 goals for both riders and pledges are ambitious, but this year's ride is well ahead of last year on some key fronts. As of June 1st, 3303 riders have registered, an increase of 30% over last year. So far the ride has raised \$456,132 – also a 30% increase over last year. And the number of teams registering is also up—408 over 342 in 2015.

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“Each year we get amazing feedback on what a fun and empowering event Ride Don’t Hide is,” says Gutray. “Each community event has its own unique flavour, but across the map people are coming back year after year and bringing their friends, families and colleagues. We are ready to come together to banish the stigma for good. And it’s about time!”

To learn more and sign up for your local Ride Don’t Hide event on June 26 visit ridedonthide.com.

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To interview an organizer or a rider in your area, please contact:

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About the Canadian Mental Health Association:

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA helps people access the community resources they need to build resilience and support recovery from mental illness. Visit the CMHA website at www.cmha.ca today.