



## NEWS RELEASE

### *Over 40 organizations selected to participate in hiking program to improve youth mental health in Ontario*

**February 24, 2016** — Forty-one community organizations across Ontario have been selected by the Canadian Mental Health Association to deliver an innovative hiking program for youth who are at risk of, or experiencing, mental health issues.

Beginning in early spring 2016, the Mood Walks for Youth in Transition project will support community agencies to plan, implement and evaluate hiking groups that promote physical activity in nature as a way to improve both physical and mental health.

The participating agencies serve a wide range of youth needs and populations, including aboriginal youth, students, homeless youth, sexual assault survivors, and youth at risk of or living with mental illness. Mood Walks sites are located in communities across Ontario — from Ottawa to Windsor, Toronto to Thunder Bay, and many places in between. For a complete list of participating organizations, or for more information on how to get involved as a community partner or volunteer, visit [www.moodwalks.ca](http://www.moodwalks.ca).

The project is led by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, in partnership with Hike Ontario and Conservation Ontario, with funding from the Government of Ontario. Mood Walks staff will provide training and support to participating agencies to help them launch educational hiking programs for youth, connect with local volunteers and community resources, and explore nearby trails and green spaces.

CMHA Ontario is delighted by the overwhelmingly positive response from agencies interested in leading a Mood Walks program, and equally pleased with the number of individuals and community partners who have stepped forward to support the success of this project. Earlier this month, Coleman Canada generously donated over \$5,000 in backpacks and essential safety gear for hike leaders at participating agencies.

All Mood Walks participants will have the opportunity to receive Safe Hiker training from proud partner Hike Ontario, a non-profit charitable organization that enables trail associations and hiking clubs to operate, and encourages walking for recreation, transportation and health.



# MOOD WALKS



“We are delighted to support training for people with mental health challenges to engage in hiking and experience the many positive health benefits that time in nature can bring,” said Tom Friesen, President of Hike Ontario.

Youth at participating agencies will be encouraged to explore local green spaces and conservation areas as well as take part in Conservation Ontario’s 2016 Healthy Hikes campaign.

“Stepping into nature has many known health benefits and Conservation Ontario is thrilled to support Mood Walks for Youth in Transition,” said Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario.

“This is an important initiative that connects youth experiencing mental health challenges with opportunities to participate in guided hikes at some of Ontario’s best conservation areas.”

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ontario, is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to making mental health possible for all.

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*Mood Walks for Youth in Transition will support new hiking groups in the following Ontario communities:*

Atikokan  
Brampton  
Brantford  
Burlington  
Combermere  
Guelph  
Hamilton  
Kingston  
Lindsay

Little Current  
London  
Midland  
Muncey  
Nipigon  
Oakville  
Oshawa  
Ottawa  
Owen Sound

Parry Sound  
Peterborough  
St. Thomas  
Sault Ste. Marie  
Scarborough  
Sundridge  
Sutton West  
Thorold  
Thunder Bay

Timmins  
Toronto  
Victoria Harbour  
Whitby  
Windsor  
Waterloo

