



# | news release

## **For Immediate Release**

Tues, May 29, 2018

### **ACCESS Open Minds Chatham-Kent A “Youth Wellness Hub Ontario” Site Grand Opening, Friday, June 1, 2018**

**CHATHAM-KENT: May 29, 2018 – Please Join ACCESS Open Minds Chatham-Kent (ACCESS OM CK), a first in Ontario youth mental health program designed by youth, for youth, in celebration of its 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary with a Grand Opening of their permanent location at 140 King St. W from 3-5pm.** In addition to this celebration, ACCESS OM-CK has also received official status as a Youth Wellness Hub Ontario (YWHO) site, and is among the first of the official 10 YWHO sites across the province. Chatham Kent is not only leading the way for youth mental health care in Ontario, but also across the country!

The Grand Opening is an extremely exciting time for the team, who has been waiting over 3 years for a permanent home having persevered through several interim location changes while awaiting the opening of its official hub. Dave, a Youth Advisor explains “It was well worth the wait, When we had the sneak preview of the space last week, we were in awe, all of us, some of the team were in near tears, it was more than what we had ever imagined.” Often, mental health care is considered the forgotten child of the healthcare sector. This is not the case at the ACCESS Open Minds CK site. “The site is extraordinary! It is an amazing space to collaborate with our youth and families, and to continue with important work we are doing to develop services to address youth mental health concerns. When you walk into the space, right away, you feel that this is a unique and special place that really gets what youth want,” Rebecca Prince, the Coordinator of ACCESS OM CK explains. “There is a look and feel of positive energy, that we know is an important first impression for youth to feel welcome, valued and engaged.”

ACCESS OM CK would like to acknowledge the two developers who have been instrumental to the success of this initiative. Beginning in May 2016, Everlast, led by Victor Boutin, was kind enough to provide us with donated space at the old YMCA on King St. He and his team went out of their way to accommodate us. This early start was critical in our ability to demonstrate that CK is committed to ensuring youth and families in need, get support right away. More recently, we have worked closely with JP Contractors on the 140 King St site. They have been phenomenal to work with. “They really took this project to heart and treated it like their own” Kris Lukings, Project Mgr. describes. “Right from the beginning, they expressed their excitement to being part of such a hallmark program, and in several instances when we thought of cool and funky things to do, but determined it was out of budget, they were kind enough to donate labour and material themselves, just to make it look perfect.”

This innovative mental health delivery hub aims to connect youth and young adults, aged 11 to 25 years with mental health services, all under one roof. ACCESS Open Minds is a pan-Canadian research network the first launched under Canada’s Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR). It is jointly funded through a partnership between the Canadian

Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Graham Boeckh Foundation. This unique, \$25 million dollar research initiative is setting up and evaluating the impact of youth mental health hubs in 14 diverse communities across Canada. Both ACCESS OM and YWHO share the goal of developing and evaluating an evidence-informed, sustainable and scalable model for mental health service delivery that positively impacts and “transforms” youth mental health outcomes in Ontario and throughout Canada.

Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (CKHA) and the Canadian Mental Health Association Lambton Kent (CMHA LK) established a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) in 2015, which initiated the co-design for both the physical and virtual spaces of ACCESS OM CK. This dedicated group of volunteers between the ages of 11 and 25 shared their experiences and participated in activities to explore the emotions and barriers youth face. Chaz Langford, 17, a member of the YAC, expressed his desire to change youth mental health outcomes. “I’m proud to see what we’ve accomplished in Chatham-Kent in the past 2 years, and really want to see the momentum continue, to bring awareness to mental illness and eliminate the stigma. I hope spaces like this will continue to pop-up across North America, because it’s a serious issue facing society right now.”

In Canada, one-in-five people experience a mental illness in their lifetime. 75 per cent of mental health problems and illnesses begin prior to the age of 25, and more than 50 per cent begin between the ages of 11 and 25. Unfortunately, adolescents and youth face some of the biggest barriers in accessing healthcare help, as existing services are designed mainly for younger children and older adults. ACCESS OM CK seeks to help youth who are experiencing all mental health difficulties, from those of the mildest forms to the most serious mental illnesses. Youth and their families have clearly communicated their dissatisfaction with their experiences in accessing fragmented and siloed services at a time when they need it most, often going door to door to various agencies, which rarely communicate with each other, if at all. ACCESS OM CK is designed to eliminate this frustration, and bring youth mental health service providers including partners in the housing, education and social services together, to recreate a youth mental health service delivery model that reduces that navigating and promptly offers services that address their mental health needs. A model that makes sense!

ACCESS Open Minds youth mental health services are available at 14 sites throughout Canada, with Chatham-Kent hosting the first and only site in Ontario. With a record of accomplishment of research excellence, innovative solutions and collaboration, CKHA and CMHA LK’s integrated model, has built a strong network of partners in research and clinical practice. It was through these experiences and relationships that the two organizations were invited into discussions about the creation of the ACCESS OM Network in 2013. “Chatham-Kent’s deep commitment to youth mental health services is providing a role model for communities across Canada,” said Ian Boeckh, President of the Graham Boeckh Foundation.

“As one of the 12 sites across Canada, we in Chatham-Kent are extremely fortunate to have an opportunity to lead the way in transforming youth mental health services in our community. Over the past 3 years, our community members, including service providers, educators, youth, families and concerned community partners, including committed service clubs such as Rotary, have invested hundreds of hours in working together and challenging the status quo. This commitment has established a network of individuals who have united in a cause that is very near and dear to our hearts. There is synergy, refreshed partnerships and a strong community commitment to our CK youth and their families. It’s a privilege to be part of something that we consider will be a true game changer,” said Alan Stevenson, CEO, CMHA Lambton Kent.

This initiative implements new, proven approaches to identify youth who are in need of services and provide them with quality, timely and appropriate care by accessing a pan-Canadian network that unites patients, family representatives, policy makers, service providers and community organizations. “Programs for Early Intervention in psychosis have

shown that early intervention is the key to improve clinical and social outcomes for youth with serious mental health problems,” said the project’s Nominated Principal Investigator Dr. Ashok Malla. “ACCESS Open Minds is breaking new ground in that young people experiencing the whole range of mild to serious mental health problems will now be able to consult a youth-friendly service designed through collaboration between youth, families and service providers and access a trained professional at sites like Chatham-Kent without a referral, be evaluated within 72 hours in a setting that is suitable for them, and receive *customized* care quickly if they need it.”

ACCESS OM CK and YWHO will bring additional youth mental health resources to the community with local partners that include:

- Canadian Mental Health Association Lambton Kent
- Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, Mental Health & Addictions Program
- Chatham Kent Children’s Services
- Chatham-Kent Police Service
- Mobile HELP Team
- Family Service Kent
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
- Lambton Kent District School Board & St. Clair Catholic District School Board
- ESC LHIN Mental Health & Addictions resource nurses providing services in primary and secondary schools

For more information, visit ACCESS Open Minds Chatham-Kent’s official website: [www.accessopenmindsck.ca](http://www.accessopenmindsck.ca) and <https://youthhubs.ca>

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To arrange an interview please contact:  
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