

Peel Children's Centre Raises \$61,000 for Children's Mental Health Services in Peel Region

On Saturday, November 24, Peel Children's Centre (PCC) welcomed 180 guests to the Mississauga Grand Banquet and Event Centre for its annual Evening of Hope Gala and Auction, presented by Bell. The event raised more than \$61,000 in support of PCC's high quality, free and confidential mental health services for children, youth and their families. The theme for the night was *Laughing Matters* and comedian Susan Stewart delivered a stand-up performance that emphasized the importance of maintaining a sense of humour in the face of life's challenges. Bell also presented a cheque for \$25,000 in support of PCC's programs and services, courtesy of the Bell Let's Talk Community Fund.

Following a warm welcome by PCC CEO Humphrey Mitchell and CTV *Your Morning's* Kelsey McEwen, a mother, Ali, and son, Max, took to the stage to share their story. Ali and Max spoke about the help they received through PCC's telephone-based counselling program, Strongest Families.

Max shared that he began to struggle with severe anxiety in high school, causing him to isolate himself from friends and stop attending school. Through the Strongest Families program, Max met weekly with a counsellor by telephone to work on specific strategies to help him cope, all from the comfort of his bedroom. The counsellor also provided support to Max's family. Over time, Max set and achieved several goals (like getting his driver's license) and learned how to use practical coping skills to help minimize anxiety's impact on his life. "It took us awhile to realise this journey wasn't about getting the 'old Max' back," Ali shared. "Feeling better is all about the 'new Max' and the new confidence that comes from successfully utilizing the toolbox of skills we have developed together a family."

Other highlights from the evening's program included a special address from Bell Community Affairs Regional Director, Lena Demarco, who reaffirmed Bell's commitment to mental health and a stigma-free Canada; live and silent auctions; and the opportunity to take home an air travel package generously donated by the Air Canada Foundation. Guests were also invited to sponsor a PCC child by purchasing a stuffed toy, sold by Matching Sponsor Scotiabank's employee volunteers. Local singers Alex Medeiros and Bianca Melchior provided delightful musical entertainment.

At the close of the evening, PCC CEO Humphrey Mitchell expressed his sincere gratitude to everyone in attendance for their dedication to PCC. "PCC's Vision is for a caring community working together for children and youth, and your support tonight is an important part of achieving our Vision and making a difference in the lives of children, youth and families who are struggling with mental health-related challenges." Mitchell also thanked the many volunteers who contributed to the event's success.

PCC is a fully accredited, not-for-profit children's mental health agency. Since 1985, PCC has provided a continuum of mental health services to more than 4,300 children, youth and their families annually. To learn more about PCC, please visit our website, www.PeelCC.org. To learn more about next year's Evening of Hope, please visit www.PCCEveningOfHope.com.

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