

Lucky Duck sends kids to camp with Project Semicolon



By Nate Smelle

The team of tattoo artists at Lucky Duck Tattoos in downtown Bancroft has had their hands full over the last month after deciding to take part in Project Semicolon. The project began as a social media campaign launched by its founder, Amy Bleuel, to raise awareness and support for mental health by encouraging people to adorn themselves with a temporary or permanent tattoo of a semicolon. The idea came to her back in 2013 after she decided to have a small semicolon tattooed on her wrist in honour her father who sadly took his own life. The tattoo is meant to signify that the story of the person wearing it is not over.

Owner of Lucky Duck Tattoos, Lisa Bickert, heard about the campaign through Facebook and decided to get involved.

"I first posted this on our Facebook page a few weeks ago and it just took off," says Bickert.

"Our page had 3,500 views and 2,500 shares within 48 hours!"

Along with other guest artists she has tattooed 30 semicolons and raised \$1,265. All of the money raised from the campaign at Lucky Duck Tattoos will be donated to help send local kids to camp. The amount raised is enough to send 10 kids to Camp Can Aqua for a week of day camp. As someone who has worked with children and youth, and as a mother herself she understands the importance of "the camp experience" in helping improve the mental health of the next generations.

"Everybody who has come in here to take part in this campaign has told us they are getting their tattoo because they have their own experience with mental illness. Some of them are cutters who want to cover up their scars, others have told us of their struggles with depression and how they have been on meds all their life."

Everyone has their own story; Project Semicolon affirms that their story is not over. Talking about how mental illness has affected people's lives helps them cope with their own mental illness or that of someone close to them. It is time to erase the stigma, she says.

"Mental illness, anxiety and depression are everywhere," says Bickert

"I have had my issues with depression and anxiety due to certain events in my past. I think we all have. It's all how we deal with it and the options that are available for us to heal. Angie Rail of North Hastings Family Health Clinic helped both my son and I after we experienced a terrible event.

Julie Wiltshire from Bancroft mental health has helped our family also. Most of all the support of the community, friends and family has all made us stronger. Mental health is so important and needs to be spoken about. If we don't speak up it will remain a taboo."

It is indeed important to break the stigma surrounding mental health and the best way of doing this is talking openly about it.

Hopefully this will encourage those suffering with mental health illnesses to voice their feelings or, at the very least, seek treatment.

This could be things like [Nutra CBD olie](#)] or it could be counselling - whatever it is, the important thing is to acknowledge you need treatment in the first place.

Camp starts again next Monday Aug. 3 and on the following Monday, Aug. 17. For more information on how to send a child to day camp through Project Semi-colon or to donate contact Lisa Bickert at 613-332-1331, or Marty from Camp Can Aqua at (613) 339-2969. To learn more about North Hastings Children's Mental Health contact Julie Wiltshire at (613) 332-3807.