

Red Apple stays up late to help people living with mental illness and addiction

By Nate Smelle

Employees at the Red Apple department store in downtown Bancroft and across the country pulled an all-nighter on Friday, May 29 for its Darkness to Light challenge to defeat mental illness. In partnership with Canada's leading hospital for mental health, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Red Apple Stores Inc. is working to help raise awareness of the struggles people living with mental illness face on a daily basis.

CAMH is one of the world's leading research centres in its field. It combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental illness and addiction.

Store manager Jim Henwood hopes this new partnership between Red Apple Stores Inc. and CAMH will make it easier for people to talk about mental illness.

"There's no immunity to this disease... it's like cancer," he said.

"It's a silent disease in some ways too because a lot of people are suffering from it who don't want to talk about it. A lot of people are afraid to say that they have a problem because they think people will say they are crazy. It's a closeted disease."

Pointing out that one in five Canadians experience some form of mental health or addiction; and how youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are more likely to experience mental illness, Henwood emphasized the importance of this issue in every community.

Everybody has a story to share, he said, and it is through telling these stories that people can help educate one another.

"There is a real stigma around mental illness and it's unfortunate. Helping to get rid of this stigma is something that we feel is very, very important and we are proud to be a part of it."

Funds raised during the Darkness to Light campaign were donated to CAMH to help finance the latest research in treating and preventing mental illness and addiction, as well as educational initiatives to improve mental health care and improving access to care for those who need it.

"We have been the trusted neighbourhood store in small towns across Canada for over 20 years now and we are committed to supporting communities where our associates and customers live and work," said Eric Claus, president and CEO of Red Apple Stores Inc.

"We believe that mental health and addiction affects every one of us in some way and each of us have a story to tell. Darkness to Light is a cause that we are proud to support."

For more information on the Darkness to Light visit www.darknesstolight.ca. To learn more about the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health visit www.camh.ca.