FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More Focus on Mental Health this Welcome Week Thanks to MSU Efforts

HAMILTON - In preparation for this September’s Welcome Week festivities at McMaster University, the McMaster Students Union (MSU) has asked Welcome Week planners to provide more mental health training and preparedness for Faculty, Maroons, Residence and Inter-Residence Council (IRC) orientation representatives.

Traditionally, Residence Life staff members are given extensive training within the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) framework. However, orientation volunteers were not provided with the same level of training. Thanks to the work of MSU Vice President (Education) Huzaifa Saeed, the Student Wellness Centre has created a modified mental health training series entitled Mental Health 101, which will be available to all other members of the Welcome Week team. Mental Health 101 will give participants a better understanding of mental health issues and the prevalence of mental illness, along with the basics of QPR. The addition of Mental Health 101, in conjunction with the existing QPR training, will ensure more than 1,100 of the most influential student leaders at McMaster will now have greater awareness of mental health issues facing post-secondary students.

“The recognition and awareness of mental health issues within the student population is a growing concern on campuses across the country and I can say it is a serious concern for the MSU”, said Huzaifa Saeed. “The MSU is happy to be part of fostering a Welcome Week environment wherein more student leaders and campus ambassadors will be better trained and equipped to assist with the transition to university life. This commitment to mental health awareness will position McMaster as a trailblazing institution”.

QPR is geared at developing the skills and knowledge to identify and assist someone in crisis. QPR teaches what to say and do to possibly save a life. To be clear, QPR training is not a professional designation, rather it trains peer supporters and the like to help those in need to access professional mental health services and providers. The Mental Health 101 sessions beginning this Welcome Week will pick-up on this framework, and will add background knowledge and information.

Furthermore, the Student Wellness Centre has been developing a mental health module available via Avenue to Learn, McMaster’s online learning management system. It is the hope of the MSU that the online module will become required learning for all student leaders and campus ambassadors participating in Welcome Week.

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