



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Mental health combines with basketball at Sault College this weekend

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Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. – This weekend is all about mental health awareness on the hardcourts at Sault College.

The Sault College Cougars and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Sault Ste. Marie are teaming up to raise awareness about mental health during basketball games on Feb. 4 and 5.

The games will feature *Talk Today* swag, an info table with Sault College/CMHA supports, and special announcements in an effort to engage fans about the importance of positive mental health. Fans will also hear from various varsity athletes in student-made videos promoting mental health. <https://www.facebook.com/CMHASSM/videos/935595273238443/>

The initiative is part of *Talk Today*, one of the most comprehensive mental health programs for athletes in Canada.

“*Talk Today* has been a welcome addition to Sault College as students have been encouraged to discuss mental health more openly,” said Michelle Morley, Sault College Mental Health Champion. “These awareness games will only enhance the conversation.”

“We are so proud to be the first Ontario college to implement the *Talk Today* program. Sault College is committed to reducing the stigma of mental health problems, and supporting our students who are struggling. *Talk Today* is a great stride in accomplishing these goals, and we are so lucky to have the guidance and support of our local CMHA” said Morgan Levy, Supervisor, Counselling and Accessibility Services.

“It’s amazing to see student athletes so engaged with not only their own mental health, but encouraging others to do the same,” said Lisa Carricato, Mental Health Coach, CMHA Sault Ste. Marie. “Their commitment and leadership continues to be inspiring.”

Sault College became the first post-secondary institution to introduce *Talk Today* in September.

Student athletes and those in their support network at the college have received training in safeTALK, a three-hour accredited session that teaches individuals the importance of mental health and how to recognize persons with thoughts of suicide. In total, 148 athletes and 29 coaches and athletics staff received safeTALK training. Another three people received ASIST, which teaches people how to recognize individuals who are at risk and intervene to prevent the risk of suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

“We realize the importance of mental health in the students of today and through *Talk Today* we hope to give the student-athletes the opportunity to speak and to be heard,” said Scott Gray, Manager of Athletics and Ontario Colleges Athletic Association President.

The Cougars women’s and men’s teams host the Niagara Knights on Feb. 4 and 5 at the Health and Wellness Centre.

Saturday tipoff times are 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. for the women’s and men’s games, respectively. The same teams will hit the court Sunday at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Come out, catch great collegiate basketball, and support this great initiative. All donations collected for admission support the CMHA.

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About Sault College

The vision of Sault College is to provide a transformative life experience through empowering those who study with us to think and learn in progressive, innovative ways, including those we have not yet imagined. Sault College grants Ontario College certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, graduate certificates, and degrees to its graduates. The College is the largest deliverer of apprenticeship training in all of Northern Ontario. Educating over 2,300 full-time and 4,000 part-time students each year, Sault College has a significant economic impact on the community, with spin-offs in excess of \$158 million. Over \$1.8 million dollars in scholarships, bursaries and awards are distributed annually to students at the College. Located on the border to the United States and situated in the middle of three of the largest Great Lakes on the planet, Sault College is one of 24 publicly-funded colleges in the province of Ontario.

About CMHA Sault Ste. Marie

CMHA Sault Ste. Marie offers a number of services and supports to the community that *empower individuals, groups and communities to define, achieve and maintain a mental, physical, emotional and spiritual balance*. Whether individuals are experiencing a mental illness, have a family member or friend with mental illness, are a health care provider, an employer, or are seeking information, CMHA Sault Ste. Marie is available to help. CMHA Sault Ste. Marie is incorporated and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Funding for the programs and services is from many services, including the Northeast LHIN, the United Way, grants and donations.

For further information or to arrange an interview, contact:

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