

# Self-harm rates among teens high in Halton Hills

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Adolescence and early adulthood are also the times in which many symptoms of mental illnesses arise.

From 2013 to 2015, the rates of emergency department visits for mental illness was the highest among girls aged 15 to 19 across the region. Of the 2,929 ER visits across the region for women suffering with mental illness, 730 of those were for anxiety, 621 for depression and 575 for substance disorders.

Men had only a slightly lower rate, with 2,800 visits, the majority of which were related to substance abuse.

Emergency room visits for mental illness crises in children and youth have grown by over 45 per cent across Canada from 2006 to 2014 and hospitalizations for girls that are self-harming has spiked by over 110 per cent in that time.

"Self-harm is a coping strategy," said McGregor explaining that the role of mental health professionals is to get to the root causes of this behaviour.

While she doesn't know why Halton Hills would have a higher rate of self-harm over other municipalities in the region,

she says many factors can be at play.

"Traditionally, north Halton has been particularly underserved," she said, in terms of access to mental health services.

In the entire region, she says wait times for a psychiatrist can be as long as nine months.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has started offering free drop-in counselling on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Hillview Active Living Centre.

For parents, McGregor says there are warning signs to look out for if they think their child is suffering with mental health issues.

A change in mood, behaviours and friend circles can indicate challenges. Red flags of self-harming can be mood changes, curious cuts or injuries, or wearing long sleeved or turtle-neck clothing as well as engaging in risky behaviour.

"We typically think of self-harm as people cutting themselves," she said, explaining that denying one's self food also classifies as harm.

For more information about mental health services in the region contact CMHA Halton Hills at 519-853-9793 or visit Halton.ca.

## Green light for Cruise Night

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Rest easy, the keys to Cruise Night have been passed on to new drivers.

As Independent and Free Press columnist Ted Brown lamented in his weekly missive in early April that Georgetown's popular Cruise Night gathering each Thursday night between late May and September was in jeopardy of shutting down unless a new

organizing group could be found, some Georgetown car buffs have stepped forward to keep the event going at Nashville North in Norval.

Just having purchased a Mustang GT this past winter in part to attend Cruise Night, the author of the Ted Bit column was concerned when organizers Mike and Lynne Boyd, along with Bill and Sharon Gower and a number of others, said they couldn't continue on again

this year.

To the rescue comes a group led by Mike and Allison Farrugia, who have assembled a team of volunteers to carry on the two-decade tradition, which has generated just shy of \$50,000 in donations to the Georgetown Hospital Foundation since the late Scott Moore in 2000 at Halton Tire (R&R Auto Service).

The first Cruise Night of the season is slated for May 31, weather permitting.



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