

AMPLIFY!

Action Projects 2016/17 Summary

1. Mindfulness Day (Opeongo High School)

Youth that attended Amplify! 2016 planned a “*Mindfulness Day*” for their peers on May 9th, 2017 with an aim to improve mental health of students at Opeongo High School through activities that encourage mindfulness.

The day included:

- Keynote speaker, Craig Mackie from essentialchange that spoke to the importance of mindfulness
- Guest speakers provided mental health workshops in the afternoon and there were also sessions including: Yoga, Canine and Equine therapy, a drumming circle and more!
- Provided healthy food options and spoke about importance of healthy food to foster positive mental health.

2. Bear Creek Outdoor Experience Camp (Opeongo High School)

In June 2017 youth enjoyed an overnight experience at Bear Creek Outdoor Camp near Ottawa that was planned by a group of youth that attended Amplify! 2016 in effort to strengthen relationships with one another and to continue the development of leadership skills.

- Youth engaged in a variety of outdoor activities and received some certifications (ie. Leadership Activities, Low Ropes Course, Climbing Wall, Safe Canoeing, Wilderness First Aid, Leave No Trace Skills, etc.) with a focus on positive mental health.
- The camp tailored to youth needs, focusing on the importance of sustaining mental health & using outdoor activities to achieve this goal.
- The youth group shared that some students have never had the opportunity to attend a field trip of this nature, or an overnight field trip at all. This kind of trip is most often targeted to students who are involved in school clubs or sports teams, so this was an opportunity for students who often are excluded.

3. “Amplify! Club” (Fellowes High School)

Youth formed an “Amplify! Club” and through a series of different activities, excursions and events hope to raise awareness for adolescent mental health and well-being. To date:

- A group of youth in grades 9 & 10 participated in a team building day at Shaw woods.
- Created “Blessing Bags” filled with toothbrushes, mitts, gift cards, granola bars, etc. and shared the bags with the Shepherds of Good Hope in Ottawa. They are exploring a local group to share bags with at another time.

4. “Get Up and Rock Life (GURL)” (3 Doors Program)

Two youth co-facilitated 7 weekly sessions (2-3 hrs long) for girls 13-15 years old. The activities were comprised of skill instruction, personal stories related to physical activity/personal growth and an opportunity for youth to try a new activity they have not had the opportunity, confidence or means to do. The GURL project recognized the link between physical activity and mental health, and that when we are active, we tend to feel better about ourselves, our lives, and are more receptive to new challenges; When we are struggling emotionally, we tend to isolate ourselves, are less active, and doubt our abilities, and are less inclined to accept new opportunities

The following activities were provided across the county:

- Pembroke area – aerial yoga
- Barry’s Bay – Sledge Hockey
- Westmeath - Wheelchair Basketball
- Petawawa – Bubble Soccer
- Petawawa/Pembroke – Mountain Biking
- Palmer Rapids – Canoe & kayak
- Graduation event to be planned by GURL participants at the end of the program



5. **Safe and Inclusive Community** (Renfrew Collegiate Institute)

Focus was around education about the LGBTQ community and to create a safe and inclusive environment within RCI, where students recognize differences and celebrate them.

March was their awareness raising month when they held activities aimed around creating a safe and inclusive community:

- A guest speaker provided an all school presentation
- Posted and provide students with magnets and posters to support messaging
- Received approval to have a Gender Neutral bathroom at RCI
- Learned terminology of genders and LGBTQ community, ways of approaching differences with an open mind.

Indirectly youth hope to affect the underlying racism and stigmas that exist with our culture towards people in the LGBTQ community.

6. **Create A Smile** (Bishop Smith Catholic High School)

Bishop Smith was successful at receiving a Dare to Dream Grant from the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health.

- Offering a free art class to all students at Bishop Smith Gr. 8-12, one session per month after school (started in March & will continue into the fall)
- Before the actual painting/visual arts portion of the class, positive relaxation techniques (meditation, breathing, etc) to relax the body and mind were shared.
- Also incorporated simple ice-breakers and other activities that would encourage youth to form new friendships and support networks as well.
- Promoted program through school announcements, school website, posters, word of mouth, and social media.
- Youth will be able to use the relaxation techniques and new knowledge of creative expression as an outlet when they experience anxiety, loneliness, or other feelings that may negatively affect their overall mental health and wellness.