

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Amid COVID-19, Local Baker Whips Up *Cookies for a Cause* in Support of Mental Health

Youth mental health advocate & baker *Nicole Henderson raises over \$2,000* for mental health services at IAM

Thursday, June 4th – Toronto – Since the pandemic hit this spring, the Institute for Advancements in Mental Health (IAM) **saw calls to its provincial mental health support line jump by 353%**, most of them related to COVID-19. Like many charities, they were also hard-hit financially.

“When the pandemic hit, like with most organizations, we took a financial hit yet made sure we adapted quickly to continue supporting clients and families. We moved to offer our mental health services online and over the phone. Just over two weeks ago, Nicole reached out to us via our Instagram channel looking to see how she could help support us. It turns out she found IAM while researching some mental health support options online,” says Ania Jones, Manager, Communications, Public Relations & Marketing at IAM. “Nicole started her campaign *Cookies for a Cause* to raise funds and awareness on the impacts on mental health during the global COVID-19 pandemic. She was looking to support an organization that had the same goals. And so, the *Cookies for a Cause* in support of IAM was born. Nicole’s giving spirit, generosity, authenticity and humility was so refreshing – you don’t find this sort of thing every day,” she says.

“*Cookies for a Cause* is a way for me to do something I love to do - baking, while raising funds and awareness about a topic I’m passionate about - mental health. During the pandemic, I’ve seen and felt the effects of isolation and social distancing, both personally and on those closest to me. I’ve found that it’s easy to feel like you’re losing yourself, whether it be the loss of your job, not being able to see loved ones and an overwhelming sense of uncertainty. I always find when I feel like I’m losing myself a good place to start is by helping others. Doing something selfless gives you a sense of purpose and a feeling of being a part of something bigger than yourself. “I think that’s what we’re all craving: to feel connected in some way shape or form, especially while we can’t physically be together. *Cookies for a Cause* allowed me to connect with people who might need a friend and to bring even just a small piece of joy to someone’s day,” says Nicole.

Launched on May 21, 2020, *Cookies for a Cause* in support of IAM has surpassed its campaign fundraising goal of \$2,000 with a whopping 400 cookies baked and delivered within the GTA, and some supporters from out of the area donating in solidarity. Because of the overwhelming response, Nicole Henderson is keeping the campaign page open for a few extra days for anyone who still wishes to support.

View the *Cookies for a Cause* campaign video here: YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/FAeh0VOgu-E>

To support *Cookies for a Cause*, please visit:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/nbtxs-cookies-for-a-cause>

IAM is more than **70% donor funded** and like many charities, its operations were drastically impacted by the pandemic. Yet since the pandemic hit in March, **demand for services has gone up exponentially**. At the same time, critical fundraisers the charity relies on to fund operations were either cancelled or moved to

an online option, impacting fundraising potential tremendously. The need is real, and support is needed to keep going. Find out how you can support IAM at www.iamentalhealth.ca.

About Institute for Advancements in Mental Health (IAM)

The Institute for Advancements in Mental Health (IAM), formerly the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, is a community-based mental health organization with a 40+ year history in mental health services. Inspired by what innovation can do in community mental health, we created IAM in 2020 to be agile and flexible in responding to the needs of those we serve. Putting people (not diagnosis or illness) first, we wanted IAM to help even more people impacted by mental illness, thereby expanding our service offerings beyond schizophrenia and psychosis while remaining a pillar of support to our clients. **We are also the home to Canada's first community-based mental health innovation platform** where we co-create services to improve the quality of life for people who use them. With a bold vision to redesign society for better mental health and drawing on our vast experience in serious mental illness, IAM aims to change society's relationship with mental illness.

About IAM's Support Services

IAM's support line is staffed by a team of mental health counsellors who provide 1:1 care, system navigation and resources for those living with or impacted by mental illness. Whether you're dealing with increased stress and anxiety due to the pandemic, other life event or are experiencing challenges related to a mental health or addictions issue, they are here to help! Reach out confidentially to one of IAM's counsellors at **1-855-449-9949** or email IAM at support@iamentalhealth.ca. The line is open from 9-5pm weekdays, with extended hours until 7pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

To view a lineup of virtual sessions offered at IAM, please visit:
<https://www.iamentalhealth.ca/Media-Events/Events>

For more information, or if you wish to interview Nicole and an IAM representative, please contact:

Media Contact:

Ania Jones

Manager, Communications, Public Relations & Marketing

Mobile: 416-819-8542

ajones@iamentalhealth.ca