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Local McDonald's owners lend a hand when it's needed most

LONDON, Ont. – Four local McDonald's restaurant owners joined forces to raise money in support of youth mental health and the wellness of our heroes of health during the COVID-19 pandemic. In lieu of McHappy Day, the 14 London McDonald's locations were selling 'Support our Heroes of Health' bumper stickers for a \$5 donation, which got the buyer a free coffee or tea and a bumper sticker to show their support. The promotion ran for the month of May and raised \$32,000, which was donated to London Health Sciences Foundation (LHSF).

The proceeds will support both the healthcare workers at London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) through London Health Sciences Foundation (LHSF) COVID-19 Response Fund and LHSC's First Episode Mood and Anxiety Program (FEMAP), which is an early intervention and treatment program for youth between the ages of 16 and 25 with early onset mood and anxiety disorders. The drive to support FEMAP is one that hits close to home for the local franchisee owners. Roughly 75% of the McDonald's staff in London fall within the 16 to 25-year-old age range that FEMAP serves.

Jason Lessif, a local McDonald's Franchisee, says there are countless examples of staff members going through difficult times and with the added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concerns for staff mental health and wellbeing are rising.

"These are strange and difficult times that we are currently trying to navigate. As franchisee owners, we wanted to show our staff that we are dedicated to supporting mental health and wellbeing during this difficult time and to support the front-line workers at the hospital," says Jason Lessif. "With McHappy Day being postponed and the idea of a bumper sticker put forward, we decided to join in and support how we could. The community was incredibly generous and willing to donate to help the cause."

As of right now, McHappy Day has been postponed until the fall, with a date still to be confirmed. At that time, the proceeds from McHappy Day will be split between FEMAP and Southwestern Ontario Ronald McDonald House. The continued support for the youth mental health program is a priority for the local restaurant owners, knowing how many staff could be impacted by mental health disorders.

"While we have received tremendous support for our COVID-19 Response Fund, the community has also stepped up for other important programs such as FEMAP", says John MacFarlane, LHSF's President and CEO. "Through our amazing partnership with McDonald's over the past year, FEMAP has been able to start expanding their services to help more youth, more quickly. Each donation is making a huge difference in the lives of the youth in our region. We are truly grateful".

For more information on London Health Sciences Foundation, please visit hsf.ca. For more information on FEMAP, please visit lhsc.on.ca/femap-first-episode-mood-and-anxiety-program/who-we-are

About London Health Sciences Foundation (LHSF) is a [Canada Revenue Agency](#) registered charity accredited by [Imagine Canada](#) linking our community and health care experts - including physicians, allied professionals, researchers, staff and educators - together in pursuit of medical excellence at [London Health Sciences Centre](#) (LHSC) and [Lawson Health Research Institute](#) (Lawson). Established to strengthen LHSC's ability to provide the highest quality health care for patients in Southwestern Ontario and beyond, LHSF offers opportunities to support discovery and innovation in research, education and patient care at our hospital. To see how donations enable extraordinary care, visit [lhsf.ca](#).

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