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Singers, politicians come together for mental health awareness at Kanata high school



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A Grade 11 Canterbury High School student shared a stage with a motivational Toronto singer and a Disney actress to open up about her own struggles with mental health Monday.

Hannah Brunson, 17, told nearly 800 students from four Ottawa high schools how she overcame her on and off battle with depression at an event at Earl of March Secondary School in Kanata.

The event marked National Child and Youth Mental Health Day Monday and the start of Mental Health Week.

Brunsdon said she battled with depression for several years, but it wasn't until Ottawa Senators assistant coach Luke Richardson's daughter Daron took her own life in November 2010 that she did something about it.

"My mom said after Daron died, 'you might be suffering from depression,'" recalled Brunsdon on stage Monday. "I was embarrassed about it."

But then she started to talk about it and it felt good to do so, she said.

"It made it feel ok and it broke down the stigma for me and my friends," she said.

Toronto recording artist Errol Lee entertained students with a motivational hip hop performance on stage alongside his break dancing crew.

Olympic medalist Elizabeth Manley also shared her experiences with mental health and Disney actress and singer Jasmine Richards sang her song You Have the Power, which she made after Ottawa high school student Jamie Hubley took his own life last year.

Hubley was openly gay at his Kanata high school and had been suffering from depression.

Proceeds from Richards' song on iTunes (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/album/you-have-the-power-single/id525038409?ls=1>) were donated Monday to the Youth Services Bureau's mental health services.

Hubley's father, Coun. Allan Hubley, Mayor Jim Watson, and police chief Charles Bordeleau also attended the event.

Kareem Ibrahim, student council president at Earl of March, said Monday's event can open doors for discussion about mental health.

"It allows students to better understand what's really happening in their communities and with their peers and their colleagues that they're not even aware of at the moment," said Ibrahim.



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