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Manley hosting event for mental health

LAURA SHANTORA NELLES, THE SUDBURY STAR
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TONY CALDWELL Former Olympic figure skater Elizabeth Manley poses for a photo at Elizabeth Manley Park in Ottawa last summer.

Elizabeth Manley will take to the ice in Ottawa for the first-ever Manley & Friends ice show to raise awareness and funds for two Ottawa-area charities that benefit teen mental health initiatives, Youth Services Bureau and Do it for Daron on Jan. 26.

Manley suffered from depression as a teen and wants to help others who may be in the same position.

"Mental health carried a real stigma years ago, and I took the path of reaching out and asking for help," she said. "Nowadays, some teens are taking the wrong path. I want to raise awareness and tell kids if something is bothering them, don't be afraid to tell someone. Tell mom, speak out, and don't be afraid that you're going to be a bother to people.

"I go to high schools and speak with kids about mental health and bullying. It's a passion for me because I've been there. I've left schools with kids crying and thanking me. I want them to know it's OK to speak up. If I can change one kid's life, it's all worth it."

Local pairs skater Meagan Duhamel, of Lively, and her partner, Eric Radford, will take part in the event. Other skaters include Joannie Rochette, Elvis Stojko and Nancy Kerrigan.

"When I called all my friends and asked if they would be a part of this, they all said yes," Manley said. "So once I got the talent, I decided to go ahead with it. This is going to be the first one, but I'm hoping someday to take it on the road and be able to benefit other charities.

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