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TeachersLife

February is *Talk Today* Month across the Ontario Hockey League

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Toronto, ON – The Ontario Hockey League, in association with the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Teachers Life, are teaming up to raise awareness about the importance of mental health during upcoming OHL games throughout the month of February.

The awareness campaign is part of the ongoing commitment by OHL clubs, local CMHA Ontario Branches, and presenting sponsor Teachers Life, to implement *Talk Today*. Launched in October 2014, *Talk Today* provides mental health support to players and raises awareness about mental health and suicide throughout OHL communities.

“Since 2014 the *Talk Today* program has had a very positive impact in OHL communities, and has enhanced the playing environment for our student athletes,” said OHL Commissioner David Branch. “Nobody is immune to mental health challenges and we’re proud to continue our partnership with CMHA Ontario and Teachers Life in hopes that *Talk Today* can help end the stigma.”

A key piece of the *Talk Today* program has been to educate players about mental health and suicide. Players on all 20 OHL teams have received mental health training specific to suicide awareness called safeTALK. This training helps teach individuals the importance of talking about mental health, how to acknowledge signs of suicide, seek help when they’re in need of support, and connect others in need of support to suicide first aid resources.

“Thanks to the leadership and support from the OHL and Teachers Life, the *Talk Today* program continues to have a lasting impact,” said Camille Quenneville, CEO, CMHA Ontario. “Together we have been able to help educate players, coaches, staff and fans about mental health and suicide prevention, encouraging them to speak openly about these serious issues.”

Since its inception, *Talk Today* has made a sizable impact in the OHL with over 940 players, 284 billets, 99 coaches and more than 47 front office staff receiving mental health and suicide prevention training to date. The partnership has expanded to include a mental health awareness seminar as part of the OHL/OHF Under-15 Program of Excellence since April, 2015, and is in the second season of a partnership with all 60 teams across the Canadian Hockey League. In conjunction with Teachers Life for a second straight season, OHL clubs continue to work alongside their local CMHA Ontario Branches for in-school visits communicating personal messages about mental health and stress management.

“Teachers Life is proud of our sponsorship of the OHL’s *Talk Today* program,” said Mark Cummings, President and CEO of Teachers Life. “We know that mental health is a real challenge facing today’s youth. When these athletes share their personal experiences they become role models by demonstrating that it’s okay — and important — to talk about personal mental health. *Talk Today* is a great program as it embodies the principles of awareness, dialogue and a community-based approach to dealing with this important issue together.”

Talk Today awareness games will take place in all 20 OHL markets with the support of their local CMHA Ontario Branch. Presented by Teachers Life in 16 different OHL communities, fans can learn more about *Talk Today* and other CMHA programs and services at concourse displays, through public address and video announcements in venue, and look for mental health awareness messaging all month on social media using **#TalkToday**.

2018 OHL and CMHA Game Night Schedule:

February 2 at Guelph Storm with CMHA Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin
February 2 at Ottawa 67's with CMHA Ottawa
February 3 at Hamilton Bulldogs with CMHA Hamilton
February 3 at Kingston Frontenacs with CMHA Kingston
February 3 at Owen Sound with CMHA Grey Bruce
February 7 at Oshawa Generals with CMHA Durham
February 8 at North Bay Battalion with CMHA Nipissing
February 10 at Barrie Colts with CMHA Simcoe County
February 10 at Saginaw Spirit with CMHA Windsor-Essex County
February 11 at Sarnia Sting with CMHA Lambton Kent
February 15 at Windsor Spitfires with CMHA Windsor-Essex County
February 16 at Sudbury Wolves with CMHA Sudbury-Manitoulin
February 17 at Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds with CMHA Sault Ste. Marie
February 22 at Niagara IceDogs with CMHA Niagara
February 22 at Peterborough Petes with CMHA Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge
February 23 at Erie Otters with CMHA Niagara
February 23 at Kitchener Rangers with CMHA Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin
February 23 at Mississauga Steelheads with CMHA Peel
February 25 at London Knights with CMHA Middlesex
March 14 at Flint Firebirds with CMHA Windsor-Essex County
For more information about upcoming OHL and CMHA game nights please contact OHL clubs or the local CMHA Ontario Branch.

About Teachers Life:

Teachers Life is a not-for-profit federally regulated life-insurance company and North America's largest educator-owned fraternal insurer. Founded in 1939, Teachers Life offers a full suite of personal insurance products to address the unique needs of the whole education community including educators, administrators, support staff and their families.

As part of its commitment to the community, Teachers Life proudly supports a number of mental health initiatives, including TalkToday and Ready for Life, a unique mental health resource for educators. For more information, please visit www.readyforlife.ca or www.teacherslife.com.

About the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario Division:

Incorporated in 1952, CMHA Ontario provides community-based programs and services across the province to meet the needs of individuals seeking support with their mental health and addictions. Our 30 local CMHA branches are part of a community-based mental health sector which serves approximately 500,000 Ontarians annually.

CMHA Ontario actively contributes to health systems development by recommending policy options to improve the lives of all Ontarians. Through leadership, collaboration and the continual pursuit of excellence in community-based mental health and addiction services, CMHA works to achieve the vision of a society that embraces and invests in the mental health of all people. Visit www.ontario.cmha.ca to find a CMHA branch in your community

About the Ontario Hockey League:

The Ontario Hockey League is a proud member of the Canadian Hockey League which is the world's largest development hockey league with 60 teams in nine Canadian provinces and four American states. In addition to the OHL, the CHL is made up of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League and the Western Hockey League. Last season, more than nine million fans attended CHL games in the regular season, playoffs and at the Mastercard Memorial Cup. The CHL supplies more players to the National Hockey League and U Sports than any other league. For more information visit www.ontariohockeyleague.com.

Talk Today is a mandatory program that works in conjunction with the OHL's other league programs in areas such as drug awareness, health and safety education, respect for women, and has become an important piece of the league's 'Players First' guide.

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