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Media Release

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Milton youth make an impact during library's "Do the Survey" workshop Oakville Library to offer virtual event June 10

Milton, ON – Young people in Halton want to feel safe and be able to voice their concerns without risk of harm – and they had the chance to do just that during a unique virtual Halton Youth Initiative event hosted by the Milton Public Library June 1.

Ninety Milton teens logged on for the Zoom meeting facilitated by MLP's Teen Services Librarian Lisa Portelli and Halton Youth Initiative project coordinator Lily Viggiano. During the 90-minute session, which was presented as part of MPL's Teen Advisory Group workshop series, participants were asked to define what "wellbeing" means to them. In addition to feeling safe and having a voice, responses included "to be healthy both mentally and physically and have a good mindset," "feeling safe and comfortable in all aspects of life," and to experience "equity and quality of people and health."

The goal of the workshop was to support registrants as they completed the Halton Youth Impact Survey, which is led locally by Our Kids Network with the support of UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) at the University of Waterloo, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the Medivae Foundation. Data from the survey, which is open to all young people 9 to 18 years-old in Halton Region until June 14, will be shared with more than 50 community organizations and agencies that develop programming and supports for youth and families.

An enthusiastic team of Our Kids Network youth ambassadors, Diya Deepu, Leah Minkovich, and Shrena Sribalan, were on hand to lead breakout groups and answer questions as the participants worked their way through the survey, which takes approximately 25 minutes to complete. After the breakout sessions, Viggiano issued a challenge.

"I have a call to action – our mission: if you could contact five friends to share the survey with, we can turn 90 students into 450 students in one night," she said.

Students in high school who take the anonymous survey and share it with their peers will receive two volunteer hours. As well, everyone who completes the survey can enter to win a one-year Conservation Halton Family Membership or one of 200 Tim Hortons gift cards. Children 9 to 13 years-old must have a parent or guardian consent; those 14 to 18 years-old can consent for themselves.

Our Kids Network hopes to engage as many children and youth in Halton Region as possible. More than 1,100 surveys have been submitted so far; the aim is to increase that number in the coming weeks. Events like the one hosted by Milton Public Library will help.

“I thank the Milton Public Library for spearheading this experimental activity and bringing together 90 students from Milton,” said Viggiano. “It’s truly incredible and has set the stage for how community partners can help in data collection. And, it’s a real testament to how, when we use our strengths, really magical things can happen. As the facilitator for the Youth Impact Ambassadors, it’s really been an honour helping Halton youth have their voice heard and create a toolkit of resources that will be shared region-wide.”

For Portelli, the “Do the Survey” event was a good fit with MPL’s workshop series.

“The work that the Halton youth Initiative and Our Kids Network is doing to give youth in our community a voice is so important,” she said. “Youth need platforms just like this to share their thoughts and their ideas, and to be heard. They have many valuable things to contribute to their community, and to see youth leading and inspiring each other was so important for the future of our community.

“It was such a privilege for Milton public Library to be part of the event and to work with OKN and HYI to help foster that.”

Oakville teens will have a chance to make their voices heard during a second virtual event, which will be hosted by the Oakville Public Library from 4-5 p.m. on June 10. Halton Youth Ambassadors will provide support during the session, and participants will receive volunteer hours. Registration is online at <https://opl.libnet.info/event/5199119>.

To find out more, or to take the survey, visit <https://ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Halton-Youth-Impact-Survey>.

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To arrange media interviews with an OKN representative or a Youth Impact Survey Ambassador, please contact Beth Williams, Communications Manager at 905-630-5263 or beth@ourkidsnetwork.ca. For more information on OKN, visit ourkidsnetwork.ca.