

PRESS RELEASE

Police officers and Douglas patients hit the court for a friendly game of hoops

Montreal, Tuesday, May 8, 2012 – The Douglas Mental Health University Institute and the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) are proud to have joined forces to organize the basketball game of *Meet & Greet the Police* between police officers and people living with a mental health problem. Claude Trudel, Mayor of Verdun, and Lynne McVey, Executive Director of the Douglas Institute, conducted the official tip-off today at the Institute's Roberts Centre.

The Executive Director of the Douglas Institute believes that community partnerships are important in the fight against stigmatization. "I am very pleased that the Douglas and Verdun's police services are working together to tackle the stigma of people with mental health disorders. The combination of fun, collaboration and team sports will certainly lay the groundwork to make the next *Meet & Greet the Police* in September a success," stated Ms. McVey.

This friendly game teams up patients and police officers in a relaxed and safe environment. The goal of this activity is to break the ice and help participants get to know each other before they take part in the second *Meet & Greet the Police* to be held in September on the Institute's grounds.

Mayor Claude Trudel, who is also responsible for public safety and security on the Ville de Montréal's Executive Committee, is happy to encourage initiatives that create closer ties between police officers and citizens. "*Meet & Greet the Police* not only demystifies the role of police officers for the public, it also helps us better understand the reality of people with mental health problems. This type of event forces us to face the prejudices or misconceptions we may have. It is also a tool to develop better ways to communicate with these individuals and to serve and protect them as the full-fledged citizens they are."

Neighbours united in the fight against mental health stigma

Meet & Greet the Police is an initiative of Elizabeth Huk, a teacher at the Douglas Institute, and Sergeant-Detective Benoît Roberge of the SPVM. Launched in 2011, it became a great success and led to other participatory events for patients, such as a demonstration of equipment of mounted patrol officers, bicycle police, the canine squad and patrol cars.

This neighbourhood partnership is one more step towards demystifying mental illness, a goal that both organizations view as very important.

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Information and interview requests

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About the Douglas – www.douglas.qc.ca

The Douglas is a world-class institute affiliated with McGill University and the World Health Organization. It treats people suffering from mental illness and offers them both hope and healing. The Institute's teams of specialists and researchers continually advance scientific knowledge, integrate it into patient care, and share it with the community to increase awareness and thus eliminate stigma around mental illness.