



**Canadian Mental  
Health Association**  
*Mental health for all*

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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# Colin's Dad Rides Solo across Canada for Mental Health

***To honour his son, Rick Wituik rides thousands of kilometres and hears a hundred stories on his way to participate in Ride Don't Hide on June 26***

**Brandon, Manitoba** – It's the people—the riders, the volunteers, the fundraisers and families—who make the greatest impact at Ride Don't Hide, the Canadian Mental Health Association's (CMHA) foremost national participatory fundraising event of the year.

Yes, it's about raising money for mental health programs—this year's goal is \$1.5 million. But it's also about people determined to bring mental illness out of the shadows where it has been lingering for so long. This year, 8,000 people will participate in 29 rides across Canada on June 26, and each will be riding with a compelling story, either their own or that of a family member or friend.

People such as Rick Wituik of Middlesex, Ontario, who is cycling across Canada to help deal with his grief over the loss of his son Colin who died by suicide two years ago this spring. Colin would have turned 23 this year. Deepening the tragedy, Colin's best friend took his own life 10 months after Colin.

The grief Rick feels is still very much with him, especially at this time of year. That's why Rick decided not only to join Ride Don't Hide, but to go for a 2200-plus kilometre bike ride to honour Colin and his friend.

Rick started his ride May 25 in Golden, BC. He's now on his way through Ontario and will finish on June 26 as he joins his team *Colin's Tour de Friends* for the Ride Don't Hide event in his home town of Middlesex, Ontario.

The ride has taught him a few indelible lessons:

- Never mind the prevailing westerlies. From day one, the wind has been in his face.
- "The comments I'd heard about the prairies being flat aren't exactly true – the hills aren't as steep, they just last for kilometres."

Alone on wind-swept highways where bicycles wouldn't normally be seen, Rick says, "When people see the bike, they want to know what's going on and when I tell them, they want to share their own stories. I must have talked to 100 people, and their stories are incredible."

"Most of all, I'm learning just how many lives are impacted by issues relating to mental health. The need for more services to address mental health issues is greater than I ever imagined," he said from the side of the Trans-Canada Highway, 40 kilometres west of Brandon, Manitoba

Rick doesn't make a big deal about what he's doing: "I'm just a factory worker, an ordinary Joe."

"Without the bike I'm just a 54-year-old stranger drinking a bottle of Gatorade, but the bike and my journey creates the conversation," he adds.

## **People Power at Ride Don't Hide**

The bike creates the conversation for so many people involved in Ride Don't Hide, starting with the ride's founder, Vancouver school teacher Michael Schratte, who rode solo 40,000 kilometres around the world in 2011 to get the conversation – and the ride – going.

Michael's determination lives on in Rick Wituik, and people like Vancouver volunteer Andrew, who shares his powerful struggle with schizoaffective disorder while training to ride his first ever 20 kilometre bike ride of his life on June 26, via his blog on the Ride Don't Hide website.

People like Toronto's Judy Brunton, who's given over her lawn to Ride Don't Hide lawn signs and is determined to raise more than \$20,000 for CMHA's mental health programs.

Then there's former NHL goalie Clint Malarchuk, whose memoir, *The Crazy Game: How I Survived in the Crease and Beyond*, became a bestseller for its honest retelling of his heart-wrenching life-story, which includes living with a mental illness, alcoholism, PTSD, and surviving an attempt to take his own life. Today, Clint dedicates his time and energy to help end the stigma around mental illness. This year, Clint will join the Ride Don't Hide event in Halton, Ontario where for \$10 people can try to score against one of the NHL's greats.

Shawn Antoski, former NHL left winger, who played for eight years before a horrific car crash ended his career, will speak to cyclists about experiencing – and surviving – depression. Shawn will join the Ride Don't Hide Peel Region-Caledon Hills Ride Don't Hide event.

Rick, who now has an even greater understanding of the spirit that pedals Ride Don't Hide, will end his journey at the Middlesex event averaging just under 100 kilometres a day, but it's the hundred conversations about mental health that he will cherish the most.

Learn more and sign up for Ride Don't Hide on June 26 at [www.ridedonthide.com](http://www.ridedonthide.com).

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**If you'd like to learn more about some of the thousands of human stories that make up Ride Don't Hide, please contact:**

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and we'll direct you to one of the riders or ride co-ordinators in your community.

### **About the Canadian Mental Health Association:**

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a national charity that helps maintain and improve mental health for all Canadians. As the nation-wide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA helps people access the community resources they need to build resilience and support recovery from mental illness. Visit the CMHA website at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca) today.