



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Social Enterprise at the HOpe Centre provides innovative work opportunity

North Vancouver - January 12th 2015 - The HOpe Café is a new social enterprise venture established to provide employment opportunities for individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges.

The franchise, which is located in the Greta and Robert H.N. Ho Centre for Psychiatry and Education (HOpe Centre) at Lions Gate Hospital, is owned and operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), North and West Vancouver Branch. The café is a unique partnership between CMHA, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and Blenz The Canadian Coffee Company.

"Blenz is a very community-driven organization, so we are excited to partner with CMHA and VCH to launch the Blenz HOpe Café," says Ryan Paulson, spokesperson for Blenz Coffee. "The Blenz HOpe Café baristas are passionate about customer service and learning about Blenz, so we know that this venture will be just as much of a rewarding experience for us as it will be for them."

Gill Walker, an occupational therapist at the HOpe Centre, adds that many of the clients she works with often have difficulty finding appropriate, supportive work. "We do our best to support them but often it's a struggle to connect with the right employer," she says. "This café isn't about fixing people, but rather, creating a work environment that is inclusive and supportive."

The HOpe Café opened in December as mental health care programming and services moved into the HOpe Centre. The grand opening celebration will take place on Thursday, January 15th with an official cake and ribbon cutting at 1:30pm. Other events through the day will include tea, coffee and specialty hot chocolate sampling.

The CMHA hopes the Café will provide a warm, inviting space for all Lions Gate Hospital staff, visitors and patients to meet. "We also hope that this coffee shop will become part of the local residential community and that residents and working people in the neighbourhood will stop by and enjoy our products," says Sandra Severs, Executive Director of CMHA North and West Vancouver. "The building is beautiful and the food is wonderful. The HOpe Café is a great place to visit."

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