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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2013HLTH0060-000626  
March 27, 2013

Ministry of Health  
Vancouver Coastal Health,  
Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver – Burnaby  
Branch, Sodexo Canada

### **New café aims to brew up awareness about mental health**

VANCOUVER – Health Minister Margaret MacDiarmid today announced a partnership that has created a local mental health supported employment program that is helping people who are recovering from mental illness to gain the support and confidence needed to work again.

“Employment is one of the ways that we feel connected with our community,” said MacDiarmid. “The supported employment program at Willow Bean Café is helping to remove the stigma of mental health issues and letting people who are recovering from mental illness know that they have an important role to play in their neighbourhood.”

The supported employment program at the Willow Bean Café in Vancouver General Hospital is a partnership between Vancouver Coastal Health, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver – Burnaby Branch and Sodexo Canada, a food and facilities management company. This program allows employees to learn valuable social and employment skills, while continuing to be able to access mental health supports and receive a regular paycheque.

“It’s common for some individuals recovering from mental illness to have a hard time finding and maintaining employment because of the stigmas associated with mental illness,” said Laura Case, director of Mental Health and Addictions at Vancouver Coastal Health. “The Willow Bean Café is an opportunity for these individuals to gain practical work experience in a supportive and accepting environment while continuing to receive whatever support they need in their recovery.”

“Mental health consumers often struggle to obtain employment in a healthy environment that is responsive and understanding to their mental health needs and the additional support that may be required,” said Michael Anhorn, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver – Burnaby Branch. “The Willow Bean Café addresses these difficulties providing assistance and opportunity to both learn and grow, ultimately creating hope.”

Currently, six mental health clients are employed at the café as baristas and work alongside an employment support co-ordinator to learn various skills including teamwork, accepting constructive criticism and goal-setting. Clients interested in working at the café must submit a resume and participate in a competitive interview process held by Sodexo, who manages the café and its employees.

“We’ve always been committed to promoting and embracing diversity within the organization, and employ a variety of individuals with mental and physical disabilities,” said Dean Johnson, president of Sodexo Canada. “We’re proud to participate in this initiative and support mental health issues across Canada.”

“This inclusive employment program nicely complements other initiatives underway by government to improve the hiring landscape, especially for people who are considered to have barriers to employment such as mental health,” says Social Development Minister Moira Stilwell. “The more we can do across-government to facilitate appropriate training and support people in their quest to find meaningful work, the better.”

One hundred per cent of profits made at the café will go back to fund mental health programs at the Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver – Burnaby Branch. It is anticipated that participants will transition to other employment opportunities within a year.

### **Learn More:**

Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver - Burnaby Branch: [www.vb.cmha.ca](http://www.vb.cmha.ca).

Vancouver Coastal Health: [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

Sodexo Canada: [www.sodexo.ca](http://www.sodexo.ca)

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