Thanks to the initiative of students at the University of Guelph, our first Friendship Bench was installed on April 7th, 2017 in Branion Plaza. The Friendship Bench [1] is part of a national campaign designed by the Lucas Fiorella Friendship Bench organization, and it serves as a permanent, physical, and year-round reminder to students to take a moment out of their day to sit, breathe, and talk (or think) about their mental health and that of their friends. It’s intended to inspire peer-to-peer conversations about mental health in order to reduce stigma and encourage more students to seek help. The bench features a plaque that links students to yellow is for hello .org [2], which provides links to mental health support services on and off-campus. It also lists the #YellowIsForHello hashtag, which connects students to each other and positive support messages through social media.

To date, Friendship Benches have been installed at many secondary and post-secondary institutions across Canada. Ultimately, the intention is to decrease and eventually eliminate the number of suicides and suicide attempts occurring among Canadian students between the ages of 14 and 25 by:

- Encouraging peer-to-peer conversation about mental health among students in order to drive greater awareness of the disease and threat to students, recognition of the symptoms, and knowledge of the prevention and support services available;

- Connecting more students to available on-campus and in-community mental health resources both as a preventative measure (for new students who may be at risk) and support measure (for those suffering); and

- Educating students and parents about the causes and signs of the various forms of mental illness so that students may be more aware of their own mental health and that of their friends.

Stay tuned for opportunities to contribute to future fundraising campaigns in support of the installation of additional Friendship Benches on the University of Guelph campus!