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Paul Ranger Demystifies Depression

Ex-NHLer captivates student audience at TAMI Summit

"I remember what it was like to be a kid and the challenges that are presented. I've noticed that the quicker you can tackle mental health, the easier it is to deal with, manage and defeat," says former NHL hockey player, and the event's keynote speaker Paul Ranger, as he talks with a room full of over 150 students at the TAMI Summit at Ontario Shores.

At the TAMI Summit (Talking About Mental Illness) students in Grade 6-8 listened intently as Ranger candidly discussed his challenges, shame, and road to recovery as he learned to manage the symptoms of his depression.

Ranger, who stands at 6'3" and well over 200 pounds played six seasons in the National Hockey League. On this day, he shares his message of courage and not being afraid to talk with a

friend or someone you know may be struggling with mental health. All because he knows too well what it was like to be that friend in need of help.

While playing in the NHL, Ranger experienced his own struggles with depression and stepped away from the game to get well. His departure was high profile and shrouded in mystery when he left the Tampa Bay Lightning in the 2009/2010 season. He then spent three years away from

the game he loved to get well.

"This issue affects me personally and professionally, like it does so many other people," says Heather Hawco-Gray, a Supervised Alternative Learning Youth Worker with the Durham District School Board who helped to organize the TAMI Summit. "I've lived with someone who was depressed and I know the impact it has not only on the person suffering, but on those people that love, care for and live with loved ones experiencing mental health issues."

"TAMI gives kids an opportunity to speak with people about mental illness. There are so many kids out there who are struggling with their mental health. We know that one in five are struggling and we know that the work we do is decreasing stigma. We want to increase kids' knowledge and awareness around mental health. We want them to think about the initiatives they can start in school to promote positive mental health. We want them to know that hope and recovery are possible," says Hawco-Gray. Bringing in speakers like Paul Ranger and having him tell his story, a story kids can identify with, brings true meaning to what TAMI is hoping kids get when mental health and mental illness are discussed.

"It is important that you always act with courage. If you notice that your friend is struggling, talk to them about it. It only takes one little act to get that person help." - Paul Ranger

"It was a very inspirational. I found it really motivating knowing someone has overcome the challenges of depression," explains Connor, a Southwood Park student attending TAMI. "I think that I'm not alone. There are people I can talk to and it will be okay."

Kayla, a fellow student from Southwood Park agrees with Connor. "I've gotten that everybody has their own story. Just because someone looks like they're okay, it doesn't mean that they are. I just hope that I'm a little more educated on mental health and that others can realize how to help one another."

Summit organizers bring students to TAMI to raise awareness. The hope is that enhancing awareness at a young age will actually enable students to support their peers in getting help.

In wrapping up his message to students, Ranger says, "It is important that you always act with courage. If you notice that your friend is struggling, talk to them about it. It only takes one little act to get that person help."

This TAMI event was a special one as Ranger's message was filmed by TSN to update



their documentary 'The broadcast later this year. Mystery of Paul Ranger' to be

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