



Photo by Andrew Johnson

Supporters of the Ellie Project and Bella Ever are from left, Daryl Kramp, MP for Prince Edward-Hastings, Jo-Anne Albert, mayor of Tweed, Tammy Latchford, owner of Bella Ever After, Katie Marlin, creator of the Ellie Project, and Shawn Antoski, ex-NHL player and mental health advocate.

Breaking down the stigma around mental health

By Andrew Johnson

Downtown Stirling was mostly devoid of traffic on a blustery Saturday afternoon. Snow covered most of the roads going in and out of town and visibility was under one kilometre.

That didn't stop the people from into Bella Ever After, a women's clothing boutique store. They were joined in the sunlit room, congregating around racks and stands filled with jewelry, dresses and hats, scarves and accessories, to celebrate the third anniversary of its inception, which is no small feat for any small business.

But that wasn't the main reason why a gathering of friends and family, local media and politicians were there that day. They were also celebrating the launch of a new local initiative to raise awareness of mental health issues.

The Ellie Project is the brainchild of Tweed resident and Western University graduate Katie Marlin, who was diagnosed with an eating disorder during her time at university, and it kicked off that afternoon.

"My struggle began in my first year of university. Living away from home, it was

easy for me to hide my struggle. How could anyone possibly understand something I didn't understand myself? I went to a clinic in London, Ont., where I was diagnosed with depression and EDNOS (Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified), which is a growing diagnosis because it doesn't fit into a clear-cut category."

She would later enter a program where she took part in discussions with others suffering from similar illnesses and later entered in a day-treatment program at the London Health Sciences Centre.

"This program truly saved my life. It helped me to see how so many other individuals were going through the same struggle I was. Asking for help is one of the hardest things to do when dealing with mental illness, especially when you believe that nothing is wrong."

Since graduating, she has decided to turn her attention to helping others who suffer from unseen mental illnesses.

"The aim of the Ellie Project is to raise awareness about mental health and eating disorders," said Marlin, during her speech. She was receiving recognition and praise from Jo-Anne Albert, mayor of Tweed who was there representing the

County of Hastings.

Supporters of the Ellie project are encouraged to purchase an "Ellie," a silver necklace featuring an elephant pendant hand-crafted from forks, making each one unique. It also utilizes the irony of using what was once an eating utensil to help support those suffering from eating disorders. The elephant represents the "elephant in the room," in other words, the stigma surrounding mental health.

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Ont., one of the leading facilities in Canada dealing with eating disorders. One of the reasons for this donation, along with the fact it is renowned for its treatments, is the centre's services are not covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. Marlin said she hopes these donations will help others who suffer from eating disorders like hers.

The "Ellies" will be sold at Bella Ever After, run by Tammy Latchford, who herself suffered from depression and anxiety after a car accident nearly 10 years ago. She has since endeavoured to make her store a place where there's always someone to talk to, and more importantly, to listen.

"The heart of this store is based upon

the message that every woman is captivating. Every woman is unique. I feel we are constantly being told how we're supposed to look, how much we're supposed to weigh, and I think if we were all supposed to look like Barbie, we'd have Mattel stamped across our heads. I want women to feel comfortable and feel welcome."

But it's not just about women, said Latchford.

"Mental health doesn't care if you're male or female, how tall or short you are, what tag is on your clothes, what car you drive. It affects us all.

"Last year alone in Tweed, we had two suicides of young people and in Stirling, two others. So mental health is an issue and we need to get the word out."

Latchford said that's far too many for two small communities, and just one more reason to get the word out about mental health.

Daryl Kramp, Conservative MP for Prince Edward-Hastings, touched on the federal government's efforts to tackle mental illness before awarding Latchford with a scroll recognizing her commitment to the community.

"For so many years, mental illness was

regarded not as the fact that you're sick. The fact remains it is, of course, one of the most debilitating challenges we face as a society today...It literally costs the economy billions of dollars."

Kramp acknowledged the Mental Health Strategy for Canada, an initiative set forth by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which is funded by Health Canada and is the first of its kind.

"We finally now have a mental health strategy. We certainly don't have all the answers yet, but it takes a whole group of people to come up with a lasting, long-term solution to mental health issues in this country."

The strategy broadly highlights the need for better access to help for those who need it, treatment for those suffering and prevention for those who may be susceptible to mental illness.

Currently, it is estimated that the total number of 12 to 19-year-olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, in their lifetime, one in five Canadians will suffer from mental illness, which in 1998 cost the health care system more than \$7.9 billion.

Microbrewers taking a stand against the Beer Store's promises

By Nakita Krucker

Microbreweries across the Quinte area are standing united and refusing to accept The Beer Store's recent announcement stating it will be opening up ownership to all Ontario-based brewers.

"The changes they've announced are just a publicity stunt," said Peter Law, marketing director at Barley Days Brewery in Picton.

The announcement came shortly after Premier Kathleen Wynne revealed her desire to dismantle The Beer Store's current monopoly, and a recent investigative story by Toronto Star reporter Martin Regg Cohn, revealed the details on a secret deal made between the LCBO and The Beer Store. According to the report, that deal means the LCBO will not sell beer in packages larger than a six-pack.

On Monday of this week, Wynne took the idea of beer being sold in convenience stores off the table in a short statement at her Don Valley West riding, however she did add that changes would be coming.

The local brewers say they are holding off until the spring budget from the provincial government is released in the hopes that some positive changes will come.

"I think it's smoke and mirrors. I think they know that their so-called reign is coming to an end soon," insisted Chris Greasley, brewer at Gateway Brewing Company in Trenton. "I mean they've

been running what I consider an illegal monopoly for years."

Until this announcement, The Beer Store was a privately run operation, originally Canadian owned and intended to work as a co-operative for all Ontario brewers. However, since 1995, this retailer has come under the ownership of three major foreign-based breweries, Molson-Coors, Anheuser-Busch InBev and Sapporo.

"The monopoly needs to be removed from the hands of the competitors," said John Graham, owner and head brew master at Church-Key Brewing Company. "Their sudden Trojan Horse gift is not sincere."

Law said the current system is not good for anyone.

"The Beer Store is really set up to sell beers for the foreign-owned companies that run it. Their recently announced changes don't effectively open up the market for craft brewers.

"The way things have been and the way they will continue to be with these token changes is a bad deal for consumers and for taxpayers and a very good deal for the multinationals that control the Beer Store."

Local Quinte brewers are considering their own ideas on what changes could come in the near future.

"I would like to see a model of off-sales where the already licensed restaurant and pubs could sell to the home consumer. This puts the sales into a licensed pre-existing network



Photo by Nakita Krucker

Chris Greasley is one of the brewers at Gateway Brewing Company in Trenton, Ont. who is unsatisfied with the offer from The Beer Store last month future.

that already have established relationships with brewers," Graham said.

"A craft beer store, where there

are no big boys; it's just craft beers from that region," said Greasley. "I would like us to join the rest of the world."

Florists prepare for their big day

By Marissa Tiel

With Valentine's Day quickly approaching, Belleville florists are hard at work preparing for the big day.

"Valentine's Day is basically the biggest day in the industry," says Audrey Hoard, manager of Quinte Floral Designs.

For many shops, planning begins early in January when flower orders are placed with growers and wholesalers. Red roses are most in demand, followed by lilies and gerbera daisies in white and red.

This year, Valentine's Day falls on a Saturday so office deliveries aren't as likely to happen. Hoard says she expects sales to be slightly lower than normal this year.

Florists will rely more on foot traffic. "We usually get a fair amount of in-store purchases," says Hoard. "But we still have a lot of deliveries going out."

In 2012, about 9.8 million dozen roses were imported to Canada, coming mostly from Colombia and Ecuador. They're fed through wholesalers before reaching storefronts. And even then, the flowers will go through a cycle of care to make sure they're in optimal health and look good before they finally come to sit in a vase on your sweetheart's table.

This process starts early and almost a week before the big day, at Flowers By Dustin on Front Street, Teresa Dewal is hard at work preparing greenery for bouquets and fresh cuts. She pulls fistfuls of eucalyptus out of a giant

bag and sorts the pieces into long and short, trimming ends off as needed. Dewal started at the business in the fall.

"I like being creative," she says. "Who doesn't like flowers? Flowers are great to work with."

Dewal works in the back with owner Rebecca Burlington. They are prepping products to have out on the floor for easy pickup in the days leading up to Valentine's Day as well as the day itself.

While Valentine's Day is the single busiest day of the year for florists, Mother's Day and Christmas are also big sale times, with purchases being more spread out.

Walmart Canada's Valentine's Day survey estimates that Canadians will be spending an average of \$177 this year. Chocolates are most popular, but Burlington says she finds that people will often buy their gifts in groups — flowers and chocolate, possibly a plush bear.

While the planning started early this year, Hoard from Quinte Floral Designs says she takes the week one day at a time. "It's a male-oriented spending day. It's hard to plan for because most men don't plan ahead," she says.

The same rings true at Flowers by Dustin, where Dewal and others will continue preparing to have the most options out on the floor for Saturday. That will be key to minimizing stress for customers and staff alike. "In our experience men tend to be a little more last minute," says Burlington. "So it does make for sort of a hectic day."