

Perth Wildcats' Greg Hire Mental Health Week Ambassador for 2016

WESTERN Australia's peak body for community mental health, the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), in association with the Mental Health Commission and Lotterywest, are pleased to announce Vice-Captain of the Perth Wildcats, Greg Hire, as the 2016 Mental Health Week Ambassador. Hire will play in the Mental Health Week Opening Ceremony Perth Wildcats game on Saturday 8 October, promoting physical activity and belonging to a team as positive measures to protect our mental health. Hire will also feature at events throughout the state-wide awareness week from 8 to 15 October 2016.

Life could have been very different for the now the Vice-Captain of the Perth Wildcats who overcame his own once anti-social behaviour by being mentored. Hire is now helping other young people struggling with drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health issues, through being a mentor himself.

It was Hire's aspirations to be like his boyhood heroes – the Perth Wildcats that steered him to a better path. Hire started out at the Wanneroo Wolves basketball program where he was named SBL Rookie of the Year in 2006, followed by college in the US at Miles Community College and Augusta State University, to professional basketball contracts with the Wanneroo SBL and now, the Perth Wildcats.

Whilst Hire has achieved many feats on the court, it is his community work with at-risk youth which he is most passionate about. "I am fortunate to be in a position now where I can help others," Hire said. "There was a time there where my life could have gone down a different path".

"I struggled with negative thoughts as a young person and consequently my actions aligned with harmful behaviour to others and myself," he said. "Mental health issues surrounding young people are a huge concern in our society. Every week, young people take their own lives because it's a more preferable option than living with the pain and despair of poor mental health."

Suicide prevention, under the theme of 'Together We Can Save Lives', is a key theme for WA's 2016 Mental Health Week in association with Act-Belong-Commit; themes that Hire will be passionately advocating for in his role as ambassador.

WAAMH's President Alison Xamon said they were thrilled to have Hire on board as the Ambassador for the week. "It is excellent to see sportsmen like Greg using their

public profile to have a positive influence on the lives of people experiencing mental health issues,” Ms Xamon said.

Hire won a Pride of Australia medal in 2014 after saving two young lives through his charity work. “Knowing I was able to change the outlook of a person’s life to a positive one is something I cannot comprehend,” he said.

As well as his role as Ambassador for Youth Focus, Hire now run his own charity, A Stitch in Time, which provides a platform for at-risk kids experiencing mental health issues to connect with mentors and encourage more positive paths. Hire has recently returned from remote aboriginal communities in the state’s northwest where he used basketball to connect with at-risk youth while holding mental health workshops.

“It only takes one person to have an impact and change their lives, and I want to be that person.”

Tickets to the Mental Health Week Opening Ceremony Perth Wildcats game will be available to the general public soon via Ticketek. Unwaged mental health consumers and carers have been allocated tickets to the game. For more information, visit <http://mhw.waamh.org.au>



Fact File

- Mental Health Week runs October 8-15, 2016
- For more events and information, visit <http://mhw.waamh.org.au>
- In WA, Mental Health Week is co-ordinated by the Mental Health Commission in partnership with the Western Australian Association for Mental Health
- Act-Belong-Commit in association with Together We Can Saves Lives are the themes for WA’s 2016 Mental Health Week.

Peak body representing the community-based mental health sector in WA.
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- Suicide is a complex issue with multiple interrelated factors. There are, however, strong relationships between suicide, traumatic life events and mental illness. Mental health promotion programs such as Act-Belong-Commit contribute to suicide prevention by keeping people mentally healthy, building individual and community resilience and by preventing mental illness.
- Act can include keeping mentally, physically, socially and spiritually active, taking a walk, reading a book and getting creative. To Belong can include joining a club, volunteering, connecting with friends and family and getting involved in your community. While ways to Commit can include taking up a cause, helping a neighbour, finding your passion or learning something new.

2016 Mental Health Week Sponsors and Supporters

- Lotterywest
- Black Swan Health
- WA Primary Health Alliance
- MercyCare
- HelpingMinds
- UnitingCare West
- Rise Network
- Mission Australia
- St Bartholomew's House
- Southern Cross Care (WA)
- Neami National
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Anglicare WA
- Perth Theatre Trust
- ECU
- City of Perth

About WAAMH

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) was incorporated in 1966 and is the peak body representing WA's community-managed mental health sector and around 100 organisational and individual members. Our vision is that as a human right, every one of us who experiences mental health issues has the resources and support needed to recover, lead a good life and contribute as active citizens. WAAMH advocates for effective public policy on mental health issues, delivers workforce training and sector development, and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing. In 2016, WAAMH is celebrating 50 years of developing, promoting and representing the community mental health sector in Western Australia. Further info at www.waamh.org.au

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