



NEWS RELEASE

for immediate release

A Million Steps for Mental Health

March 13, 2023

Spending time outdoors is great for your mental health. One Meewasin Trail lover wants to raise awareness about the importance of getting out and active to support Meewasin and CMHA Saskatoon in the process.

Longtime Saskatoon resident and mental health professional, Frances Sreedhar, has spent countless hours enjoying the mental and physical benefits of walking in the Meewasin Valley, along the South Saskatchewan River.

“The importance of public green spaces and mental health has truly been illuminated over the past few years, and most of us can agree we are using the riverbank and the trails more than ever.” says Frances. Frances knows personally and professionally the benefits to spending time outdoors and is finding trail walks essential in maintaining her own mental health.

Meewasin’s data on trail visits support this, with 2.32 million visits being tracked in 2022, which is up 40% from 2019 which saw 1.65 million visits. This increase over the pandemic has not returned to pre-pandemic level, indicating demand will likely continue to grow and the need to keep up with capacity of residents and visitors.

Frances and her partners want to share her experience and these benefits with others. Her goal is to raise awareness as well as financial support for both the **Meewasin Valley Authority** and the **Canadian Mental Health Association Saskatoon**.

Her goal is to hit 1 Million steps on the Meewasin Trail by March 31, 2023.

She wants to raise 1¢ per step for organizations that support the mental health of the Saskatoon community. This equals \$10,000 to support both of these important organizations in a major way!

Frances is determined to spread her message by inviting the public to join her in improving their own mental well-being while supporting these two critical organizations. Frances encourages others to get out on the Meewasin Trail, to challenge themselves and others to set and track an activity goal, and to share, request or gather donations and direct them to the organizations directly.

If you would like to get involved, please visit the [initiative’s page](#).

Faith Bodnar, Executive Director of CMHA Saskatoon, expresses her support of the initiative, “We are extremely lucky as a community to have access to the river valley to help support our physical and mental health. This natural jewel is a place we can reenergize and recharge and support two important organizations.”

Andrea Lafond, CEO of Meewasin, had some words of gratitude to share with the community, “From the entire Meewasin Team, we want to thank Frances for including Meewasin in her leadership, to share through action, that community and outdoor physical activity is crucial to positive mental health outcomes. We are humbled that she has chosen to fundraise for both Meewasin and CMHA - Go Frances!”

Contact Andrea Lafond at Meewasin at (306) 665-6887 or meewasin@meewasin.com for an interview, questions or concerns.

Contact Faith Bodnar CMHA Saskatoon at (306) 220-5201 or fbodnar@cmhasaskatoon.ca for any questions regarding CMHA Saskatoon programs and services.

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About Meewasin Valley Authority

The Meewasin Valley Authority exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between human use and conservation by:

- *Providing leadership in the management of its resources;*
- *Promoting understanding, conservation and beneficial use of the Valley; and*
- *Undertaking programs and projects in river valley development and conservation, for the benefit of present and future generations.*

There are 67 square kilometers of land and over 105km of established trail, which has seen up to 2.32 million trail visits per year, in the Meewasin Valley. The area also features sites that help people to connect to nature through experiences such as Beaver Creek Conservation Area, the Northeast Swale, Saskatoon Natural Grasslands, the River Landing Spray Area, and the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @Nutrien Plaza. Meewasin is a non-profit organization that relies on donations and volunteers for sustainability. To get involved or learn more visit www.meewasin.com

About Canadian Mental Health Association – Saskatoon Branch

The Canadian Mental Health Association Saskatoon Branch was established in 1948. We have grown and changed over more than 70 years, providing community based, mental health services and programs. We are members of the provincial and national CMHA federation. Our vision is “mental health for all”. To learn more about what we do, to get involved or to access services, please visit us at saskatoon.cmha.ca

We are located on Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional territory of the Cree People and the Homeland of the Metis Nation.