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Guelph's Noah Irvine, 17, wins national award for mental health advocacy

Noah Irvine lost his mother to suicide when he was little and later lost his father to mental health issues

CBC News Posted: Dec 08, 2017 2:02 PM ET | Last Updated: Dec 08, 2017 3:13 PM ET



Noah Irvine, third from left, was one of four winners for the Samara's 2017 Everyday Political Citizen Under 30 contest. He received his award Thursday. (Yvonne Su/Twitter)

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A Guelph teen has been nationally recognized for his work in mental health advocacy, for sharing the stark reality of what can happen if mental health concerns go unaddressed.

Noah Irvine lost his mother to suicide when he was little and later lost his father to a drug overdose, related to his ongoing mental health struggles.

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"It's definitely is a big achievement," he told CBC News. "Considering how much work, time and effort I've put into this cause, it's a good feeling."

Irvine made national news for sending letters to 338 Members of Parliament about his experience this past summer and only received 40 replies.

To this day, Irvine said about 100 MPs have responded to his original letter.

He then began to call MP offices across the country to find out why they didn't respond. Irvine then received calls from cabinet ministers and MPs and even met with the Health Minister.

News of his efforts continued to grow until it reached the Prime Minister's office. Irvine received a call from Justin Trudeau himself to talk about his idea for a Mental Health and Addictions Secretariat in the PMO and creating a national suicide prevention strategy.

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Irvine said he's also received a letter from the Queen of England.

Recognized for his effort

Now, Irvine has won an award for his work in mental health awareness.

He is one of four winners in the under 30 age category of Samara's 2017 Everyday Political Citizen contest, which was awarded Thursday.

"I started this in February of this year with very minimal political response for my call to action and to know that just in the last three months so much has taken off and I've done so much." he said. "In knowing that...it's really incredible that I was able to win this award."

This is the first time in award's five-year history that four candidates tied for first place.

Irvine has no plans to slow down. He said he's been keeping in touch with local mental health agencies and adds that he sent out a letter to all provincial health ministers along with the federal health minister to continue his work in mental health awareness.

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