

Media Release



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For immediate release

Benji's birthday wish

Benji is not your average 15 year old- this year he is dedicating his birthday to raising funds and awareness for mental health in his local community.

"I've always wanted to give back to the community and raise money, but I've never really known where to start with it," Benji said.

Benji is turning 16 on the 28th of January and is asking friends and family to donate to charity instead of purchasing gifts to celebrate his birthday.

"This year when people were asking me what I wanted, I realised that I didn't really want anything for myself. I already have everything I need, so I thought I'd use my birthday as an opportunity to try and raise funds for something that I believe is really important- mental health research, education, prevention and treatment," Benji said.

Mental health is a cause that is close to Benji's heart, having struggled with his own mental health and seeing the impact of mental illness on other people close to him.

"Mental health is a big thing in my family and the bad stigma that surrounds mental health can make it really challenging for people who are struggling. I feel like, if you tell people you have depression, they think you're faking it or being dramatic, but if you don't tell anyone, then it can't be bad enough. It leaves people feeling like it's better to just deal with it alone which is not helpful.

"I want to highlight the fact that it's okay to be struggling and it's okay to reach out if things are tough. By raising money and awareness on my birthday, maybe people will be more comfortable reaching out to their friends, family and organisations that can help," Benji said.

Donations can be made for the Black Dog Institute through Benji's fundraiser page:
<https://www.facebook.com/donate/232252784344143/>

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Media Contact: Media are invited to contact Samaritans Communication Team on 4960 7100 or 0438 475 772 to organise a photo or interview opportunity.