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This is your brain on display

Art project aims to raise awareness and funds for Baycrest Health Sciences

Soon, the brains will be among us.

In Union Station, we will see a brain moulded of chicken wire, set on a pedestal, luminous butterflies emerging from the silver tangle.

In the Distillery District, along Gristmill Lane, we will find a sky-blue brain dotted with colourful cows that appear to drip down from a swirl of white clouds.

Floating in the reflecting pool at Nathan Phillips Square, look for a glistening black brain splotted with blue, red, green and white, an artist's representation of how it feels to emerge from the bleak darkness of depression into a world of colour and light.

These are just three of 100 sculptures of the human brain that will be placed at more than a dozen Toronto locations this summer. Each is created by an artist or well-known Canadian, including Peter Mansbridge, Wayne Gretzky and Kurt Browning, who incorporated skate blades into his piece.

The outdoor art exhibit, which runs from Tuesday to Aug. 31, is called The TELUS

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Go to brainproject.ca to find out where the brains will be displayed.

Health Brain Project and its aim is to raise awareness for brain health and money for Toronto's Baycrest Health Sciences. In 2016, its inaugural year, the project raised more than \$1.3 million for research projects and patient care at Baycrest.

The artists involved — some applied to be a part of the exhibit; others were invited — were each given a standard brain sculpture made of compressed polystyrene to turn into their own unique creation using whatever materials they liked, from paints to puzzle pieces, clay to metal. Several artists opted to fashion their own brain without the supplied model. All are displayed in a protective case.

Erica Godfrey, co-founder and co-chair of the project and board member at Baycrest Foundation, says the art exhibit is a win-win-win experience for all involved.

The artists get to showcase



“It's a progression, a journey through the darkness.”

Photographer Lindsai Hollend on her brain sculpture



“Delicate Egg” by Leanne Kolly and “Mind Chaining” by Roger Edwards are two of the 100 brain sculptures that will be on display. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

their work outside traditional galleries, expanding their audience. The funds raised — from corporate and private sponsors, online donations and from the sale of sculptures at the end of the exhibit — help researchers, patients and clients at Baycrest.

“It gives us all something to enjoy and it gives everyone a chance to consider how important it is to care for their own brain,” Godfrey says. “Younger people assume we don't have to worry about brain health now. But we need to get the awareness out there that this affects everyone, not just those 65 and older. Every single person should care about the aging brain.”

Dr. William Reichman, president and CEO of Baycrest,

agrees that people of all ages — especially those in middle age — need to focus on their brain health to ward off diseases, such as Alzheimer's, stroke and Parkinson's disease.

Reichman recommends regular physical exercise, eating a Mediterranean-style diet that includes cold-water fish, dark green leafy vegetables and berries, among other foods, and taking on new challenges, such as learning a language or musical instrument, as ways to maintain brain health.

“Just as we work to keep our heart healthy, we need to focus on our brains and recognize what we can do throughout life to make our brains as healthy as possible.” TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE