

Shining a light

BY KHALIL GARRIOTT ('04)

In certain parts of society, mental health can be a subject that's considered taboo. But we are all going through something in life that bothers us, and we all have our individual struggles.

With that in mind, JMU hosted an event in September in conjunction with the "We're All a Little Crazy" global mental health alliance that featured NHL great Theo Fleury and ESPN sports business reporter Darren Rovell, among others. The event helped shine a light on issues of trauma, mental health and vulnerability.

Fleury shared stories and anecdotes that resonated with student-athletes in attendance, and his willingness to be open and transparent about his life's journey helped show JMU students that it's acceptable and beneficial for them to do the same.


Theo Fleury, Stanley Cup champion and Olympic gold medalist:

- "I don't know where I'd be if I didn't find hockey."
- "Fourteen years ago, I had a fully loaded pistol in my mouth and I was ready to end my life."
- "I am in awe every day of people's courage."
- His father was an alcoholic and his mother was a prescription pill addict.
- As a child, he was raped 150 times over a two-and-a-half-year period by a former coach.
- He had anxiety, depression and panic attacks that led to his exit from the NHL.
- He battled a cocaine habit, was hardly sleeping and had suicidal thoughts.
- He made \$50 million in his hockey career—it's all gone now.
- He said he has discovered the purpose of his life: to help people heal from trauma.
- "Helping is healing. The more people I've helped, the more I've helped myself."
- "I want to be better today than I was yesterday. So I do something every day for my recovery."
- "I'm in therapy for the rest of my life, and I'm OK with that."
- "What separates the great athletes from the ones who don't necessarily make it is mental health."
- "I feel incredibly blessed and honored to be here at James Madison University to share my story. I just want to acknowledge James Madison for taking on this really important subject."



Fleury shares his struggles in order to help others with trauma and mental health issues.

Darren Rovell, ESPN sports business reporter and event emcee:

- "We've just started out, but what's amazing is there is momentum building inside of us."
- "People tend to talk about mental health when there's suicide. We're trying to change that."
- "It seems like there is a groundswell of more prominent people talking about mental health" (cited public figures Kevin Love, DeMar DeRozan and Carson Daly). 



To read more about the event, go to j.mu/samehere.

'We're All a Little Crazy has built a network of international athletes from the four major sports, as well as actors, media members, musicians, DJs and everyday people.'

—DARREN ROVELL,

ESPN sports business reporter and event emcee



The JMU Athletics Training Center at Sentara Park fills a training void when adverse weather conditions hit.

