

Medavie Health Foundation and YMCA Alternative Suspension partner to build mental resiliency for at-risk youth in Atlantic Canada

Moncton, N.B., March 17, 2014 – A funding partnership announced today between Medavie Health Foundation and the YMCA Alternative Suspension program will enable Atlantic Canadian youth suspended from school to make their time away from the classroom a more positive experience.

During an announcement event at the YMCA of Greater Moncton this morning, officials from the YMCA Alternative Suspension program, founded by the YMCAs of Quebec, announced a \$270,000 funding commitment from Medavie Health Foundation towards the initiative.

“With the strong support of the Medavie Health Foundation over the next three years, The YMCA of Northeast Avalon, Humber Community YMCA and YMCA of Exploits Valley can make a significant difference in the lives of young program participants,” said Jason Brown, CEO of the YMCA of Northeast Avalon. “Both the network of YMCAs in Newfoundland & Labrador and Medavie Health Foundation are committed to improving the quality of life of not only our youth, but the entire community. We look forward to strengthening this partnership and the program making a real impact on the youth of Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor and St. John’s by helping them to reach their full potential.”

Working in conjunction with school districts, YMCA Alternative Suspension supports youth during their suspension from school as well as their reintegration into the classroom by promoting personal development and autonomy, and transforming the individual’s time away into a more positive experience. The program focuses on the negative behaviour that leads to the suspension, which can be related to bullying, low self-esteem, anxiety from stress or other mental health issues.

“YMCA Alternative Suspension is an early intervention model that helps students build mental resiliency and healthy behaviours, which directly aligns with our Foundation,” said Pierre-Yves Julien, CEO of Medavie. “Working together with the YMCA, we’re pleased to partner on an initiative that helps young people develop coping skills and access support in leading fulfilling, productive lives.”

The three-year partnership with Medavie Health Foundation helps ensure that the YMCA can continue to provide its exceptional Alternative Suspension program in six Atlantic Canadian communities: St. John’s, Corner Brook, and Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L.; Moncton, N.B.; and Dartmouth and Glace Bay, N.S. These program sites were developed through implementation funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre of Public Safety Canada. The various school districts and the YMCA Associations are also providing funding support at each of the sites.

During the 2012-2013 school year, more than 330 students were referred to the YMCA Alternative Suspension program in Atlantic Canada. An evaluation of the program showed that it results in an 80 per cent short-term improvement for participants, with 50 per cent of that group continuing on a positive path to the end of the school year.

“The program delivers on such a multi-faceted spectrum in working with the youth, parents, educators and community partners,” said Kai Gosling, Program Youth Worker at YMCA of Greater Moncton. “Individual youth are encouraged to tell their story while being provided the skills to navigate through a time of adversity. The participants are empowered through gaining a new perspective, learning to accept help, new connections and relationships, as well as understanding that they are not alone.”

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About Medavie Health Foundation

Medavie Health Foundation is funded by [Medavie Blue Cross](#) and [Medavie EMS](#) as part of a long-term commitment to make a lasting impact in the communities where our employees and customers live and work. The Foundation is focused on two core causes of particular concern to Canadians – child and youth mental health and type 2 diabetes. It aims to bring organizations and communities together through collaborative multi-year partnerships and to support grassroots, community-based initiatives through an annual grants program. To date, the Foundation has committed almost \$4 million to single and multi-year grant and partnership programs, some of which have yet to be formally announced. For more information, visit us at medaviehealthfoundation.ca.

As a not-for-profit organization, Medavie Blue Cross is proud to commit an annual social dividend of 10 per cent of our net income to the Medavie Health Foundation.

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About the YMCA in Canada

YMCA Canada is a federation made up of 45 YMCA and 5 YMCA-YWCA Member Associations. Each of the 50 Associations within the Federation serves local community needs and is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. As a registered charity, YMCA Canada is dedicated to building healthy communities by nurturing the potential of children, teens and young adults, promoting healthy living, and fostering social responsibility in order to create lasting personal and social change. Collectively, YMCAs in Canada serve more than 2.24 million people in more than 1,000 Canadian locations each year. Our focus on inclusiveness and accessibility means we welcome people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities through all stages of life. Through YMCA financial assistance programs and the YMCA Strong Kids campaign, the YMCA is accessible to all. For more information please visit ymca.ca

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