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# Leaders & Learners

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## Leading *Coast to Coast to Coast.*

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**CASSA-ACGCS**  
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

# Hitting a Home Run:

## A Partnership to Support Mental Wellness in Southern Saskatchewan

*Events hosted by River Street Promotions benefit the youth of Saskatchewan by raising money for mental wellness. Photos courtesy of Dustin Swanson.*



By Dustin Swanson and Amanda Olson, Prairie South School Division

**F**inding sustainable and practical ways to fund supports and initiatives that enhance wellness for students in schools is an ongoing challenge. However, in southern Saskatchewan, a public and Catholic school division have partnered with a local community organization and music promotion company, to ensure resources are available to support students in the region.

River Street Promotions is a non-profit group that hosts a large yearly concert at a historic baseball park in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to raise money for mental wellness in Southern Saskatchewan. This group, comprised of several community leaders, has helped raise more than \$135,000 in the last two years.

The concept to raise some money and support “essentially started with talking about our

own kids and the struggles that they were having, especially throughout COVID-19,” said James Murdock, one of the founding members of River Street Promotions. “We could see how it was changing them and affecting them. We all saw firsthand how it was changing our own children, so we thought, what can we do here to give some guidance and opportunities and how can we contribute as community members. We must realize that these children are going to be our future leaders and visionaries. Let’s try and help and allow them to navigate and get through some uncertain times.” River Street Promotions decided to partner and make funding donations to Prairie South School Division (PSSD) and Holy Trinity Catholic School Division that serve central southern Saskatchewan communities.

The funds support the school divisions focus on student Mental Health Wellness and are used to support both division-wide and individual

school initiatives. These initiatives build mental health wellness awareness, equip children and youth with mental health wellness strategies and tools, and provide students with opportunities to better their own mental health wellness and the mental health wellness of others.

PSSD is a large rural school division with a student population of 6,700 students across 39 different schools in south central Saskatchewan. Holy Trinity Catholic School Division serves a similar geographic area and has a student population of 2,368 across nine schools.

“The financial support River Street Promotions provides to the students in the school divisions is deeply appreciated,” says Amanda Olson, Superintendent of Learning for PSSD. “The events hosted by River Street Promotions raise awareness! They remind us that mental health wellness is just as important as physical wellness. They get people talking openly about mental health and this is helping

break down the stigma that can sometimes be associated with this topic.”

A few of our rural Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools brought together local community members to share tools and strategies using a learning fair format. During these fairs students engaged in interactive sessions on topics such as healthy relationships, personal learning styles, yoga, the benefits to our mental health when we engage in hobbies, physical activity and enjoying the outdoors, and the importance of physical health and fitness.

Many schools also elected to bring in guest presenters to share their expertise on various wellness topics ranging from resiliency to the impacts of social media on mental health. Speakers included Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, Darren Lang, Hannah Berger, and Paul Davis.

Other schools in the divisions used funding to create wellness inspired spaces within their schools and school grounds. For example, one school created seasonal outdoor activity stations to promote being outdoors, physical activity, collaboration, and socialization.

The Director of Holy Trinity Catholic School Division, Ward Strueby, believes that mental health is important for students because it can have a significant impact on



The poster for Homestead, a concert hosted at the historic baseball stadium in Saskatchewan each September.

their academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being. River Street Promotions has created a culture of understanding and support in each of our communities. Providing additional resources to our school division allows for school champions to develop events at their individual schools. Holy Trinity benefited from being part of a Mental Health Wellness Youth Conference with sessions on grief in the face of tragedy, self-talk, building a foundation for your mental health and ways to support individual

mental health. We look forward to building on this partnership in the years to come.

In April of 2022, River Street Promotions sponsored a high school student performance of several Nashville based artists who came to perform and share their personal stories of overcoming obstacles and persevering to achieve their dream of becoming a professional musician. Artists included Victoria Banks, Phil Barton, Jeff Cohen, Ty Hunter, and hosted by Joel Stewart.

Unique and creative partnerships are a great option to find supports for students. Both school division are deeply appreciative of the support River Street Promotions is providing to youth in southern Saskatchewan. To learn more about RSP visit [www.riverstreet-promotions.com](http://www.riverstreet-promotions.com). Tickets for Homestead 2023 are on sale now! If you are around the Moose Jaw area on September 9, 2023, feel free to email the primary author at [swanson.dustin@prairiesouth.ca](mailto:swanson.dustin@prairiesouth.ca) to be entered for a chance to win two free concert tickets. ○

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