

Mental health gets major shot in arm from hospital foundation

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QUISPAMISIS • The Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, through MindCare, is providing \$357,000 in funding for mental health initiatives across New Brunswick.

Jeff McAloon, president of the foundation, made the announcement on Saturday afternoon at the qplex after

the 28th annual Investors Group Skate to Care, which contributed \$73,000 of the total donation.

“This is the largest funding announcement for mental health care that our organization has ever made, and we believe, if our research is right, this is the largest investment to mental health care the province of New Brunswick has ever seen,” he said.

The funding will be earmarked for

three core areas of mental health care. Of the \$357,000, \$143,000 will be used for professional development for mental health staff across New Brunswick.

“We need to support the mental health workers that look after our mental health needs.”

Another \$107,000 will go to the foundation’s transformational funding program, with that same figure being granted to 10 therapeutic or treatment

programs in the province.

MindCare is one of the five areas of care that the foundation supports.

The programs chosen range from Horizon Health Addictions & Mental Health Sussex to groups like Gentle Path, which will use the funding for a pilot project offering group therapy to clients who need help but have no

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YMCA's Rainbows Program one of many funding beneficiaries

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way to pay.

Others who received funding are Horizon Health Addictions & Mental Health Moncton, the YMCA of Greater Saint John, the Saint John chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association of New Brunswick, Fredericton's Partners for Youth, P.R.O. Kids, Saint John's SHARE Activity Centre, Sussex and Area Activity Centre, and Addictions & Mental Health Services in Saint John.

The groups had to apply and were selected by a committee. Jason Downey, chairman of the foundation's board of directors, said it's always a difficult choice.

"There's just so many good causes, so it just speaks to as well why we need to continue to raise more money because there's so many needs out there."

Shilo Boucher, president of the YMCA of Greater Saint John, said this funding will be used for their Rainbows Program, which helps kids and youths deal with their emotions.

"We continue to reach more kids and more schools and train more volunteers. MindCare and the foundation definitely see the value of the program," she said.

The program is approximately 20 years old, and Boucher said they see about 300 kids a year.

They've received funding from the government for the past few years. This year they're receiving \$20,000.

The donations come from a year's worth of fundraising, including events like Skate to Care and the Hospital Home Lottery. The announcement came on Saturday, and Downey said they're already looking ahead to next year's donation.

"We have some very aggressive goals for growth and giving back to the community."

He's keeping mum about next year's fundraising goal but said this donation is just the beginning. He just wants to continue to have an impact on the lives of those living in the community.

New Brunswick Premier Brian



Jeff McAloon, left, and Jason Downey unveil the funding amount the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation is donating to mental health initiatives in the province. PHOTO: KELSEY PYE/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Gallant was on hand on Saturday, saying the funding announcement fills him with hope.

"It's time that we make a very strategic, dedicated approach when it comes to our youth and mental illness."