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Smilezone transforms rehab spaces for local children

RED DEER – Some of the area’s youngest rehabilitation patients have a new reason to smile when they come for treatment with Children’s Rehabilitation Services.

Children’s Rehabilitation Services at the 49th Street Community Health Centre today opened the first Smilezone in a local Alberta Health Services (AHS) facility. Donated by Smilezone Foundation, with support from sportscaster Ron MacLean and his wife Cari, the Smilezone includes colourful murals, sensory development equipment and kid-friendly technology.

“The generosity of the Smilezone Foundation and the MacLean family will have a lasting impact on the children and families who rely on Children’s Rehabilitation Services,” says Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Health. “Through the Smilezone, what has historically been a relatively blank space is now one of inviting colours and warmth that provides a much more enjoyable experience for children when they attend for treatment.”

“The Smilezone is an excellent enhancement to the Children’s Rehabilitation Services space here in Red Deer, and I’m thankful for the community support and donations that made this possible,” adds Jason Stephan, MLA for Red Deer-South. “These vibrant and interactive spaces create a more welcoming healthcare environment, which is important for young patients and their families.”

Sandi Sebastian, Director of Women and Children’s Health and Children’s Rehabilitation Services with the AHS Central Zone, says the renovations have revitalized the space. “The bright colours and designs are fun and create inviting spaces for children and families. We’re grateful to Ron and Cari MacLean and Smilezone for such an amazing gift,” she says.

Designed to improve the experience for children and families when they come for appointments, the Smilezone has transformed the waiting room, hallways and therapy spaces utilized by Children’s Rehabilitation Services.

With a focus on the early years and early intervention, care and support are provided to young patients and their families from a variety of specialists, including audiologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists and early childhood intervention providers. Services provided can be related to developmental or medical conditions, and can include help with motor development, mobility, eating, feeding and swallowing, communication, and connections to community resources and services.

“Smilezone Foundation is delighted to bring joy and comfort to the young patients at Children’s Rehabilitation Services in Red Deer,” says Scott Bachly, co-founder of Smilezone Foundation. “Our goal is to create spaces that not only support the healing process but also bring smiles to the faces of children and their families. We are incredibly thankful for the generous support from Ron and Cari MacLean, which has made this transformation possible.”

In recognition of the support from the MacLeans, nods to Ron's years as both a hockey player and referee and his career as a sportscaster are featured prominently in the reception area.

"Cari and I grew up in Red Deer, so this community holds a special place in our hearts," says Ron MacLean. "It means the world to us to contribute to a project that brings hope and positivity to children and their families during challenging times. We have been long-time supporters of Smilezone Foundation because we believe in their mission to create positive and uplifting environments for kids in healthcare settings. It is our pleasure to support this Smilezone transformation at Children's Rehabilitation Services that makes a real difference in the lives of young patients."

Smilezone Foundation is a registered charity in Oakville, Ont., committed to improving the lives of children receiving medical treatment at health facilities across Canada. In 2012, founders Adam Graves and Scott Bachly were approached to make a financial contribution to the construction of a local hospital. Through partnerships with hospitals, community centres and other organizations, Smilezone creates accessible, fun, and therapeutic environments where children can heal and thrive. Smilezone has transformed 400 spaces into Smilezones across Canada, benefiting over 83 communities and reaching more than 340,000 children annually. For more information, visit www.smilezone.com.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Our mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. Our current focus is on reducing emergency department wait times, improving EMS response times, increasing access to surgeries, and improving patient flow.

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