



August 19, 2025

High River General Hospital unveils four new Smilezones to brighten care for children and families

Transformed spaces bring joy, comfort, and therapeutic benefits to patients in High River.

High River, AB – High River General Hospital is proud to announce the unveiling of four newly transformed Smilezone spaces at the hospital. Located in the Laboratory, Emergency Department, Day Surgery and Maternity Clinic waiting room areas, these spaces are designed to ease the stress of medical visits for children and their families.

Generously supported by the Heersink Family Foundation, this project marks another milestone in Smilezone Foundation's mission to create cheerful, therapeutic spaces in healthcare facilities across Canada. Since 2012, Smilezone has transformed over 450 spaces in 96 communities, impacting hundreds of thousands of children annually.

"These new Smilezones are more than just a fresh coat of paint – they are designed to spark joy, reduce anxiety, and create a sense of calm for young patients during difficult moments," said Scott Bachly, Co-Founder, Smilezone Foundation. "We are incredibly excited to partner with High River General Hospital to bring the Smilezone experience to families in Alberta. This wouldn't have been possible without the incredible generosity of the Heersink Family Foundation, whose support has helped us create spaces that will have a lasting, positive impact on children and families in this community."

Each of the four areas has been thoughtfully transformed with vibrant murals, interactive play features, sensory elements, and comfortable seating. Research shows that environments designed with colour, imagery, and interactive engagement can significantly reduce fear, improve mood, and even support faster recovery for children in medical care. Smilezones aim to create spaces where kids can be kids even while undergoing treatment. They provide emotional comfort and help families feel supported during challenging times.

"We are grateful for the generosity of the Heersink Family Foundation for this donation," said Eliane Domingue, Site Manager, High River General Hospital. "These changes will help enhance the patient experience now and for years to come."

About Smilezone Foundation:

Smilezone Foundation is a registered charity in Oakville, Ontario 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 450 spaces into Smilezones across Canada, benefiting over 96 communities and reaching hundreds of thousands of children, parents, healthcare workers and families. For more information, visit www.smilezone.com.

About Alberta Health Services:

Alberta Health Services provides a range of healthcare services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Our mission is to provide excellent, patient-focused healthcare 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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