



Seven New Smilezones Unveiled at Hay River Regional Health Centre, Marking Smilezone Foundation's Northwest Territories Debut

Hay River, N.W.T. - October 28, 2026 - The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority (HRHSSA) is bringing more comfort, colour and moments of joy to children and families visiting the Hay River Regional Health Centre with the unveiling of seven newly transformed Smilezone spaces throughout the facility as part of Smilezone Foundation's latest build.

Located across key areas of the Regional Health Centre, including hallways and exam rooms within the Primary Care Department, Public Health and Specialty Clinics, the new Smilezones are designed to create brighter, more welcoming environments for children and families as they access care.

Made possible through the generous support of the Ewout and Lynn Heersink Family Foundation, the new spaces feature engaging, uplifting environments designed to help create a greater sense of comfort and ease for children and families throughout their healthcare experience.

The project also marks an important milestone for Smilezone Foundation, bringing its mission to create brighter spaces that help ease anxiety and stress to the Northwest Territories for the first time.

"Every child deserves to feel a sense of comfort and joy when they enter a healthcare environment," said Smilezone Foundation Co-Founder, Scott Bachly. "These new Smilezones are about transforming everyday spaces into places that feel more welcoming and remind children and families that even during a healthcare visit, there is always room to smile."

The seven new Smilezones build on Smilezone Foundation's ongoing work to transform healthcare and community spaces across Canada. By bringing colour, creativity and thoughtful design into areas where children receive care, Smilezone aims to create environments that feel less clinical and more inviting for children, families and healthcare teams.

"Every child deserves to feel welcomed and comfortable when visiting any health facility. We are grateful to the Heersink Family Foundation to have chosen our Health Centre to be the first in the Northwest Territories to receive a Smilezone for the children accessing our services for their care. Our hope, through this collaboration, is that children visiting the Hay River Regional Health Centre will feel comfort and joy while receiving their much-needed care from our dedicated staff." Dale Snow, Chief Operating Officer

With its first Smilezones now open in the Northwest Territories, Smilezone Foundation continues to expand its reach across Canada, helping create brighter, more welcoming spaces where children and families can feel comfortable, supported and, most importantly, have a reason to smile.

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 centers, and other organizations, Smilezone creates accessible, fun, and therapeutic environments where children can heal and thrive. The Foundation has transformed 500 spaces into Smilezones across Canada, benefiting communities in all ten provinces and reaching hundreds of thousands of children, parents, health care workers and families. For more information, visit www.smilezone.com.

ABOUT HAY RIVER HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY:

HRHSSA is a dedicated team of nearly 250 health and social services professionals, support staff, and volunteers committed to promoting wellness, preventing illness and injury, and providing high-quality care to approximately 6,000 residents in Hay River and surrounding communities. Services are delivered across multiple sites, including the Hay River Regional Health Centre, Woodland Manor Long-Term Care Facility, the Supportive Living Services Campus, and the Náydı Kúé Building. Our programs range from acute and long-term care to Public Health, Home Care, Social Services, Community Counselling, and Healthy Families programs. The Hay River Regional Health Centre provides a broad range of clinical, surgical, diagnostic, and emergency services, supported by modern facilities and specialized care spaces designed to meet the diverse needs of our region. Together, we are committed to delivering accessible, compassionate, culturally respectful care that supports the health and well-being of our communities.

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