

# \$260,000 for Valley programs from Children's Health Foundation

Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island announced today that it will invest \$3.2 million in community-driven healthcare programs that support children, youth and families from Victoria to Port Hardy this year—the largest ever annual investment of its kind.

The Foundation's 2017-18 funding commitment includes more than \$260,000 for programs that directly support Comox Valley families, including a new baby support program for parents of newborns, the John Howard Society of North Island's KidStart mentoring program and funding for a brand new family advocate role with the Comox Valley Child Development Association.

"Children may be only 25% of our Island's population, but they're 100% of our future," says Bill Snell, chair of the Foundation's board. "With this in mind, we're incredibly proud to be investing in 55 projects and programs that will significantly impact how care is de-

livered to more than 32,000 kids across every community on Vancouver Island."

As the fastest-growing issue for youth, mental health emerged as the number one priority for the Foundation this year, resulting in nearly \$570,000 of funding for 17 youth-focused mental health resources.

"One in eight Island kids have a mental health issue that, without early support, will impact their development and success—yet only one in five of these kids are able to access mental health services right now," says Veronica Carroll, CEO of the Foundation. "We're working to change this reality as quickly as possible."

The ability to find, understand and access community-based healthcare options also surfaced as a major support gap for Island families this year. As a result, the Foundation has earmarked nearly \$300,000 of its total investment to fund eight specialized 'navigator'

consultant roles across the Island that will assist families in building care plans for their children.

"As a long-time champion for care as close to home as possible, the Foundation has a rich history of identifying and raising funds to address children's health issues on our Island as they emerge—from polio in the 1920s to mental health today," says Snell. "This year's record-setting investment in Island kids is a testament to our continued partnership in this important, ever-changing work."

"The eve of our 90th birthday felt like the perfect opportunity to make a historic investment in the future health of Island kids," says Carroll. "Our path forward is all about stretching—about imagining what's possible for the future—and then working with our donors and partners to make these dreams a reality for every kid in every single Island community."

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