



Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**artsPlace receives funding from Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation
to support arts program focused on student mental health**

Canmore, AB - artsPlace will offer programs that support student mental health thanks to a \$9,600 donation from the Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation. In collaboration with Right From The Start (RFTS), the programs will be offered at Banff Elementary School, Elizabeth Rummel School, and Lawrence Grassi Middle School. New programming will help students relieve stress and anxiety, boost self-esteem, improve confidence, and combat isolation.

"The Pauw Foundation is about building a more vibrant, active, and healthy community. Using art to strengthen emotional conversations is brilliant. We're fortunate in the Bow Valley to have organizations like artsPlace to bring these ideas forward," says Cathy Geisler, Executive Director, Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation.

The grant supports a program that brings together representatives from artsPlace, RFTS, and teachers from Canadian Rockies Public Schools division. Together, the team is in the early stages of designing an arts-based program that aligns with the curriculum and focuses on the skills and interests of different teachers and age groups.

"Everyone needs help sometimes," says artsPlace Programs Director, Nicole Fougere. "Over these last two years we have all learned a lot about how to care for our emotional wellness. This program helps children learn mental wellness concepts in a way that is both creative and heartfelt. It is fun, engaging, and offers students much-needed stress relief."

RFTS promotes positive mental health by addressing a diverse range of topics including anxiety, self-esteem, social skill development, and managing emotions, all while supporting positive behaviour management.

artsPlace artist, Libby Amber Pryor, has been collaborating with RFTS Success Coach, Megan Jennix to develop the program. The students first meet Libby online for arts instruction, and then Megan takes them outside to connect with nature. This winter, they have been taking rubbings of tree bark and tree stumps and using those textured papers to create works of art.

"Nature has its different seasons and cycles, just like people do," says Pryor. "By looking at nature, we can learn mental wellness strategies to care for ourselves. It's important to have a balance between rest time and being active in our lives. Same with our emotions. It's okay if we feel sad one day, and then feel differently the next. It's only natural."



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“Mental health programming that is integrated within our day to day learning helps everyone; students, their families, and our dedicated teachers. It forms a relationship between the art experts at ArtsPlace, the mental health coaches in the schools, and the teachers,” said Geisler.

In 2021, the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation exceeded \$1 million in grassroots donations to organizations in the Bow Valley for the first time. For 2022, a budget of \$1,400,000 was approved for disbursement to community initiatives that meet one of three pillars: Active Lifestyles, Education, and Community Building.

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About the Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation

Established in 2013, the Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation is a private foundation in Banff, Alberta, Canada. Funded by the profits of Banff Caribou Properties Ltd. and Banff Lodging Company, the goal of the Foundation is to reinvest in Banff and the Bow Valley by supporting projects that contribute to a more active, vibrant and happy community.

About artsPlace

artsPlace is a vibrant, welcoming space where Bow Valley residents and visitors can gather to discover, explore, and celebrate the arts and culture through a full range of classes, workshops, camps, live performances, films, exhibits, and community events. artsPlace is operated by the Canadian Mountain Arts Foundation, a registered charity, and operates independently from the Town of Canmore.

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