

## Battle River School Division

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### Camrose Hospice Society supporting BRSD students in times of grief

Battle River School Division has received a \$3000 gift from the Hospice Society of Camrose and District, which has been used to create “grief kits” that will support local students.

There are a total of six kits – three of which are appropriate for elementary school aged students and three whose contents are meant for older students. The kits contain a variety of items from playing cards, puppets and building blocks to glitter, colouring books and puzzles.

Each kit is housed in a closed bin and is designed to be taken on a “grab and go” basis when a Battle River school experiences a significant event that causes grief for students, such as the death of a classmate or school staff member. Members of the BRSD crisis support team can pick up the ready-to-go bins on their way out the door and be immediately prepared to sit with students who are in need of a way to work through their emotions. The items may seem simplistic, but they are all important in supporting students to deal with their feelings of confusion and sadness.



*Christie Badry and Bill Harder with grief kit items.*

“Play is the language that kids use to express their emotions,” according to Christie Badry, BRSD’s Coordinator of Division Supports and Services. “All of the items in these kits provide a focal point and a safe way for kids to be with others when they are struggling with their feelings.”



Andrea Dyck, who oversees the division’s Mental Health Capacity Building program, adds that “everything in these kits will help students in a time of grief. All of the items are age appropriate, of interest to kids and selected to specifically avoid any triggers of trauma.”

The school division is very grateful for both the donation and for the ongoing partnership with the Hospice Society and its Program Coordinator, Bill Harder.

“We wouldn’t have the ability to create these kits within our limited budgets,” Andrea explains. “So we very much appreciate this generous and thoughtful gift.”

*At left, Andrea Dyck demonstrates a relaxation item from one of the grief kits.*

“Our collaboration with the Hospice Society has helped transform the way we serve students in times of loss,” adds Christie. “Their support has helped us learn and grow in our skill.”

Bill Harder is very pleased the Hospice Society was able to make funds available for the creation of these kits. And though everyone hopes the items will never have to be used, he says that, on the day the kits are needed, it will have been an honour to help ensure they are available.

“The long-term impact is both dramatic and negative when children experience a significant loss that isn’t addressed in a healthy way,” Bill says. “Our goal is to support the students – and the adults around them – to have a healthy experience.”

Bill is also very pleased the Hospice Society is able to fund such a concrete and valuable project, thanks to donations received last year. The funds were raised through community donations at the time of the Humboldt Broncos crash in the spring of 2018 and were earmarked for child and youth grief support.

“It’s such a generous and thoughtful gift,” says Andrea. “What a perfect way to ensure something good comes out of tremendous sorrow.”

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*For more information*

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