

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Power of Community: United Way of Cass-Clay, Burgum Foundation and Public School Districts Collaborate to Expand On Site Mental Health Services to Students in Rural North Dakota throughout 6 School Districts

Hunter, ND – On Tuesday, December 4, representatives from United Way of Cass-Clay, Burgum Foundation and six school districts in rural North Dakota gathered at Northern Cass Schools to announce a collaboration to expand mental health services for students in rural North Dakota. What began as a pilot project in Northern Cass Schools to provide services one day per week during the 2017-2018 school year, has now grown to an initiative that provides services one to two days per week in six school districts in rural North Dakota during the current 2018-2019 school year. The mental health services are made possible from collaborative financial support from United Way of Cass-Clay, Burgum Foundation and the local school districts.

Speakers and attendees at the event included:

- Kathryn Helgaas Burgum, First Lady of North Dakota
- Cory Steiner, Northern Cass Schools Superintendent
- Katie Itterman, Burgum Foundation Executive Director
- Thomas Hill, United Way of Cass-Clay Community Impact Director
- Superintendents and educational leaders from Northern Cass, Central Cass, Kindred, Hillsboro, Milnor, and Wyndmere Public Schools

In response to the growing behavioral and mental health needs of students in our local rural school districts, United Way of Cass-Clay has partnered with Burgum Foundation and school superintendents to provide mental health services on site to students in three schools in Cass County: Northern Cass, Central Cass and Kindred School District. In addition, Burgum Foundation is partnering with an additional three schools in greater North Dakota: Hillsboro, Milnor, and Wyndmere Public School Districts to provide mental health services on site to students in rural North Dakota. The partnership will impact a total of six rural school districts throughout North Dakota serving more almost 3,300 students. The goal is to increase access and remove barriers for students needing services by bringing a mental health professional on site within the school from one to two days per week throughout the school year.

“We are so thankful for United Way of Cass-Clay and Burgum Foundation. We know that bringing mental health services onsite to our schools is instrumental in connecting students to the services they need, and benefits the community by increasing access to and awareness of mental health services and resources,” said Cory Steiner, Northern Cass Public School Superintendent.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, up to one in five kids living in the U.S. shows signs or symptoms of a mental health disorder in a given year. In a school classroom of 25 students that may mean five students may be struggling with the same issues many adults face such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse.

The First Lady of North Dakota, Kathryn Helgaas Burgum, joined representatives from United Way of Cass-Clay, Burgum Foundation and the rural school districts to announce the expansion of services throughout rural North Dakota, and acknowledged the mental health services as key factors in prevention.

“Thank you to United Way of Cass-Clay, Burgum Foundation and our school districts for leading the way to increase access and remove the barriers for students and families in our state to access mental health services. Ensuring local students in rural North Dakota have access to mental health services on site at their schools is an integral piece of eliminating the stigma of mental illness and addiction in North Dakota. Healthy families, communities and businesses are key factors in prevention - providing access to mental health services for students K-12 supports the prevention of addiction,” said Kathryn Helgaas Burgum, First Lady of North Dakota.

Locally, according to the North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior survey:

- 1 in 4 kids in North Dakota is struggling with a mental health issue
- Nearly 1 in 10 kids in North Dakota has attempted suicide
- Only one-third of students in North Dakota feel comfortable talking to an adult about how they feel

The collaborative investment will allow for a licensed and trained therapist from The Village Family Service Center to be on site at the school to one to two days per week to provide additional services to students outside of the scope of the school counselor's' role and abilities. The mental health professional will impact both the students and families needing mental health support. By providing services in the schools, the barrier of transportation is eliminated for students to access mental health services - students no longer need to interrupt their school day and miss valuable educational time to travel to the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo metro community to receive services, and in addition, parents do not have to leave their place of employment to transport and support their child, therefore impacting local workforce across rural North Dakota.

Two of United Way of Cass-Clay's Bold Goals are to Prepare Children to Succeed and Help Individuals Be Independent. Collaborating with funders and educational leaders to provide mental health services on site within our rural school districts will prepare children and students to be successful in school and provide a foundation of support for independence and future success as members of our community and society.

For more information about the mental health services provided, please contact your respective public school district. For more information about the collaborative partnership visit unitedwaycassclay.org or call 701-237-5050.

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