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## Sun Life Financial donation to Laurier community outreach program will address childhood health issues

WATERLOO – Sun Life Financial has teamed up with Wilfrid Laurier University in the fight against obesity and chronic disease and has committed \$500,000 to launch a community outreach program to improve activity levels and nutrition in youth and their caregivers as a way to prevent and manage type 2 diabetes.

The Sun Life Financial Centre for Physically Active Communities (the centre) will offer low-cost or free programming to children and youth who are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes and other chronic conditions in high-priority neighbourhoods (lower income, immigrant and First Nations communities).

Health-care experts in Laurier's Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education will work collaboratively with families to change habits and improve physical-activity levels, nutrition and knowledge around diabetes prevention. The centre will offer group and individual support and guidance on nutrition, physical activity, and behaviour modification. Programs will be administered by an exercise physiologist, behavioural specialists and nutrition specialists.

"Engaging in this partnership with Sun Life to enhance the health and well-being of our communities reinforces the long and positive relationship we have shared for many years," said Laurier President and Vice-Chancellor Max Blouw. "I am very pleased that we have come together again to contribute to public health in this important and timely project."

The centre will also engage Laurier's undergraduate and graduate students in delivering physical activity programming and conducting research. Through the centre, Laurier's students, faculty and researchers will gain a stronger understanding of how to improve the overall health-related quality of life for community members.

"We want to inspire people in the community to lead healthy, active lifestyles to help prevent chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes," said Paul Joliat, assistant vice-president, philanthropy & sponsorships, Sun Life Financial. "The centre gives at-risk children and their caregivers the foundation and knowledge they need to make healthier choices, which can ultimately help reduce the number of people developing type 2 diabetes both now and in the future."

"Sun Life's contribution to the centre will empower us to expand and enhance our physical activity programming, attract high-quality researchers eager to conduct research at our centre and positively impact the lives of children and youth in our community," said Pam Bryden, chair of Laurier's Kinesiology & Physical Education Department. "The contribution will undoubtedly help us reach our goal of inspiring healthy lives through physical activity. The true beneficiaries of this new centre, however, are the children and youth of the community who will have barrier-free access to a wide range of physical activity programs."

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Diabetes and prediabetes is a serious health concern in Canada. One in three Canadians is currently affected by diabetes or prediabetes. The good news is that in 90 per cent of cases, people impacted by the disease can prevent it and/or delay its onset through healthy eating and exercise.

Since 2012, Sun Life Financial has proudly committed over \$17 million to diabetes awareness, prevention, care and research initiatives around the globe.

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