



FEELING YELLOW ?



THE KIND HEART BENCH PROJECT

We aim to focus on the issues that our learners deal with on a daily basis that affects their mental health, such as peer pressure and bullying. All learners, at some stage in their school career will experience a level of anxiety or depression at school.

The bench and chair both come from the tree - giving life, hope, love, kindness, saying you matter, this being the inspiration of The Kind Heart Bench Project.

Our Aims are to:

- To promote healthy mental health within our school – creating a narrative to what is causing the stress, anxiety or depression.
- To develop a mental health toolkit for students to help equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to deal with their day to day issues.
- To recognize when young people are at risk, or who are experiencing mental health issues and to provide guidance to these learners

The projects emphasis is that we as a society can be that pillar, that backrest, the armrests, coming alongside our learners who are bullied, feeling depressed, marginalized, or who feel forgotten.

This project aims to spread love, inclusions and kindness - creating a new narrative, cultivating the idea that change is possible, if we work together. We want our learners to know that they matter and that they are acknowledged.

The role out and launch at various schools, will include engagement with all role-players and potential partners, Principals, SMT, SGB, students, counsellors, Grade head and school social workers.

The Kindness Bench is a permanent installation which:

- will be placed in the school grounds, clearly visible, in an accessible space for the learners
- Be a permanent reminder to students to take minute of out their day to sit, breathe and talk about their mental health and that of their peers
- The placement of the Kind Heart Bench is a visual reminder to talk to and engage openly with one another, where you can sit down and talk to someone.

Yellow

Uplifting
Stimulating **PLAYFUL**
Enthusiastic
Adventurous Energy
SPONTANEOUS Illuminating
Mental Clarity **CHEER**
Attention Childish
Warmth Fresh
Optimism

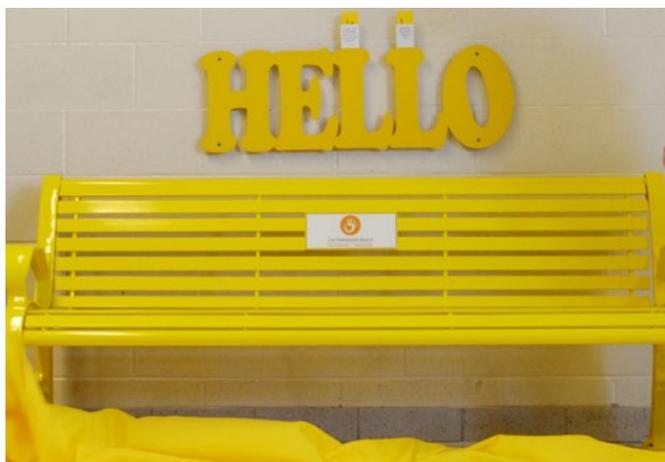
- The Kind Heart Bench offers a safe space, to connect with others, openly– sharing their stories and ideas.

When did it start?

The first bench – the yellow chair was placed at GSHS in 2014, it then gained momentum and more schools became recipients of the kindness benches which developed into gardens. The project has been discussed on national television, published in local magazines and spoken about on prominent radio stations.

The hashtag **#youmatter** will be used as part of the campaign to create awareness around the project. This tag will be added to school awareness campaigns to more peer-to-peer dialogue among students in their preferred social media channels.

It acts as a call-to-action to students to think about mental health and to check in with each other.



The Kindness Bench Toolkit

Judy Strikland from Hope House will assist in creating a 'Toolkit' to assist the peer guides.

The actions in this toolkit are intended to help address two goals:

- To normalize conversations about mental wellness. If we are going to be effective at minimizing the harm done by mental illness to individuals and communities, we need to have working language for what makes us healthy. The language we have inherited is often dismissive or shaming of individuals experiencing emotional distress or behavioural challenges and those with cognitive impairments. We can challenge this language in ways that are proactive, positive and engaging.

- To practice the self-expression and listening that these conversations require, knowledge of facts around mental wellness is only half the equation. We need to be willing and effective as people who express and as people who listen. The ability to self-express, tolerate functional levels of vulnerability and listen effectively to others is not merely a "checklist of skills." Relationship requires practice, as does finding one's authentic voice.¹

Within the setting of GSHS – our Peer Guides will focus on issues such as bullying and peer pressure.

¹ www.childrenscolorado.org. (n.d.). Youth Mental Health Toolkit | Children's Hospital Colorado. [online] Available at: <https://www.childrenscolorado.org/community/community-health/mental-health/mental-health-toolkit/> [Accessed 23 Mar. 2021].