

A promising project

Two Chinook's Edge schools are part of an innovative provincial pilot project that provides free menstrual products in school washrooms.

École H.J. Cody High School in Sylvan Lake and Innisfail Middle School are part of Period Promise, a United Way and Alberta government initiative involving 50 schools in the province. Staff in both schools were determined to take part, knowing that the cost of these products can create barriers for many students. Research shows that one in four Canadian people who menstruate say they have struggled to afford menstrual products for themselves or their children.

"I grew up in a home that experienced poverty and I remember the challenges I faced trying to obtain these products myself," said Jamie Fisher, an EA at H.J. Cody. "I figured there would be youth in our building who are likely struggling with this and I knew it would serve our community well. In some of my quick calculations, it costs about \$5,500 to fund the supplies needed from age 14-18. Those are huge and mostly invisible expenses for half of our students.

"Even just talking about it breaks down barriers. It has been empowering to see staff and students talking about the project. We are a compassionate and progressive staff, and our admin team is so open to all these big ideas."

The Period Promise provides dispensers, tampons and napkins in washrooms throughout the schools. Read the full Alberta government [media release here](#).

"We started this program over a year ago and it has opened doors to schools," said Chelsea O'Donoghue, CEO United Way Central Alberta. "Both of these Chinook's Edge schools reached out to us because they wanted to be part of the pilot project, so their engagement has been awesome from the very beginning!"



"When I asked Mike (H.J. Cody Principal, Mike Garrow) if I could have an awkward conversation with him, he only raised an eyebrow that I thought the topic of menstruation might be awkward for him!" said EA Jamie Fisher. "He was fully supportive and I am so grateful."

"We heard the report that one in seven Canadian students have either left school or missed school entirely because they didn't have access to period products, and we knew we had to be a part of this project," said Dana Schafer, Vice Principal of Innisfail Middle School.

"We hope by increasing access to these products that we normalize and destigmatize a natural part of life that half of our school population has to navigate through every month. This simple act of offering free products is creating a more inclusive, safe and caring community for our IMS Mustangs and everyone who visits our school."

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This week's Staff Health & Wellness profile is: [Bonnie Pickering](#), Division Office (People Services)