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100 Women Who Care, Lethbridge group gives to U of L's Chess for Life program

The Chess for Life program at the University of Lethbridge received a boost of \$8,300 thanks to 100 Women Who Care, Lethbridge.

“We are incredibly grateful for this donation,” says Dr. Lance Grigg, an associate professor in the Faculty of Education and founder of the Chess for Life program. “The funds are and will be used for a number of expansion projects, including ongoing work with schools in Lethbridge and youth who are sentenced to Chess for Life by Alberta Justice. We offer the program here at the U of L, but we’re also looking at offering the program at two sites downtown.”

Chess for Life was the lucky recipient in a recent fundraiser by 100 Women Who Care, Lethbridge. Members hold four fundraisers a year and, each time, randomly choose three local organizations from those nominated by their membership. The three are invited to present to the group for five minutes and members then vote to determine the winning organization. Members donate \$100 each and the funds go directly to the chosen charity.

“The Chess for Life team was so passionate about their cause when they presented to us,” says Sandra Asuchak, who co-founded 100 Women Who Care, Lethbridge with Sharon Carruthers. “The program itself seems simple yet so powerful. It’s incredible how much a game of chess can help adults and children alike. I believe our members appreciated the fact that their donations would be going to a program that can help those similar in age to their children and grandchildren.”

Chess for Life was born in 2018 out of a conversation between Grigg and a local judge. Grigg brought up the possibility of learning to play chess as an alternative sentence for youth involved in the criminal justice system. The judge liked the idea and Chess for Life had its start. Initially, the program was set to run only until the end of May last year but it showed positive results and demand for the program grew.

The Chess for Life team, which consists of Grigg, Josh Markle and Riley Kostek, continues to work with 15 to 20 youth who are at odds with the law and offers chess instruction in five elementary schools in Lethbridge. Since September, the team has also been working with

students at Red Crow Community College at both the Lethbridge and Stand Off campuses. Tsuaki Marule is the lead instructor with that initiative. Since the program started, Grigg has been contacted by other jurisdictions, including Calgary, Edmonton and Houston, Texas, that are interested in Chess for Life. In addition, Grigg and the Chess for Life team are working with the Lethbridge Correctional Centre to get a chess program established there. The team, along with local schools, is planning the first ever Lethbridge Scholastic Chess Festival next spring.

“The program has grown amazingly,” says Grigg. “We’re really focusing on Lethbridge and area, making sure that is all solid and consistent. The probation officers have been absolutely fantastic.”

The local chapter of 100 Women Who Care has raised more than \$175,000 for 17 charities in the four years since the club was founded. The first 100 Women Who Care group was established in Michigan in 2006. Since then, 100 Women Who Care has become a worldwide initiative with more than 900 chapters that include women, men, people, kids and teens chapters.

Carruthers, whose father was a philanthropist, initiated the local club. She wanted to follow in her father’s footsteps and when she learned that Lethbridge didn’t have a chapter, she reached out to Asuchak.

“This city that we live in is unbelievably generous,” says Asuchak. “The sheer generosity of these women from the moment they come — they give \$100, they donate door prizes, they put money in to help with the refreshments — is just unbelievable.”

The investment is part of the U of L’s SHINE campaign and this partnership highlights the importance of the U of L’s connection to the community, specifically how expertise available at the University helps solve problems at the local level and beyond.

This news release can be found online at [100 Women Who Care](#).

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