



The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Of Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 3, 2019

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The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, in partnership with the Tribal Education Department, Mt. Pleasant Public Schools and Shepherd Public Schools, are the recipients of a Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration grant: Project AWARE.

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan (SCIT) is pleased to announce that they are the recipients of a \$9,000,000 5-year grant award from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Project AWARE is 100% funded by SAMHSA with the primary goal of implementing a trauma-informed school model to serve youth and their families. The SCIT will partner with The Saginaw Chippewa Academy (SCA), Mt. Pleasant Public Schools (MPPS) and Shepherd Public Schools (SPS) to administer services provided by the grant. Trauma-informed services and practices, Mental Health First Aid and Crisis Intervention skills will be taught to school staff and community members to increase mental health awareness and care for students and self. Project AWARE Coordinator Kehli Henry explains, "This project will be transformative because it addresses the needs of students, families and employees at a number of levels. It is also a unique opportunity for all of the organizations involved to work together to support our youth, and create a shared plan for the future."

Jennifer Verleger Superintendent at MPPS shares, "The Mt Pleasant Public Schools are thrilled to partner with the SCIT for the Project AWARE Grant. Through this amazing grant, our staff and schools will be better prepared to meet the needs of all of our students and families. The entire Mt Pleasant community will benefit from this collaboration. Our district is proud to be a part of Project AWARE and is grateful to the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe for the opportunity." Schools and communities will collaborate on a mental health action plan for youth to identify further needs in the community and develop universal trauma-informed policies and procedures. Superintendent of SPS Steve Brimmer states, "I am very excited and thankful that Shepherd Public Schools is a part of Project Aware. We will be hiring three additional counselors for the district that will allow us to focus on the mental health of our student population. This partnership with the SCIT to provide additional mental health services will have a huge impact on our students and our community. We are very grateful for the collaborative efforts of the SCIT."

Project AWARE will provide additional staff for all three school systems. The AWARE Project Coordinator/SCIT Community Project Manager will oversee grant guidelines, requirements and implementation. Mt. Pleasant and Shepherd Community Project Managers will build strong relationships between schools, mental health providers, businesses, and community members. The SCA, MPPS and SPS will hire additional counselors to support mental health services within the schools and build relationships with providers to better serve students. Finally, a SCIT Behavioral Health School Based Consulting Clinician will work as a liaison between public schools and the SCIT to support Tribal students and assist with development

of partnerships. Tribal Education Director Melissa Isaac explains, “The key to Project AWARE is fostering resilience by strengthening relationships through building community. The positive impact Project AWARE will have on the mental health and wellness of all of our communities will be significant. I am thankful to the leadership of MPPS and SPS for their enthusiasm in joining these efforts as we strive to contribute to a healthier place to live and raise our families.”

For more information on the announcement please contact Erik Rodriguez, Interim Public Relations Director at (989) 775-4076 or at erodriguez@sagchip.org.

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