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Grapevine Group chairperson Debbie Guzowski, Scott Alman of Altman Partners, and Sandi Winner of Mackay Regional Mental Health Network.

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Funds help battle suicide, stigma of mental illnesses

TWO local mental health and suicide support community organisations will benefit from \$11,500 in donations from the Mackay Foundation.

Mackay Foundation chairperson Scott Alman said the Grapevine Group and Mackay Regional Mental Health Network were both recognised as positive contributors to the community and were deserving recipients of the funds.

"The Mackay Foundation recognises that mental illness and suicide prevention are both extremely important issues within the community," Mr Alman said.

"The distribution of funds to these groups will not only ensure valuable programs continue to run, but also helps to raise awareness of these issues within the wider community."

Grapevine Group chairperson Deb Guzowski said the funds would enable the organisation to implement the HelpAMate Grapevine Sports Challenge.

"The program offers volunteers, captains and coaches in the sporting community professional training in suicide alert-

ness," Ms Guzowski said.

"Friends often provide a strong support network, and leaders in the sporting community offer immediate access to this network.

"Recent studies show that one in 17 Australians will consider suicide within the next 12 months.

"As such, we feel that one in 17 people in the community need the skills to recognise warning signs and respond accordingly, and this program educates people to do so."

Sandi Winner, of Mackay Regional Mental Health Network, said the funds would help the organisation fund the Wellness Multimedia Art Project, a unique recovery program for those suffering a mental illness.

"This project will be facilitated via the Mental Illness Fellowship North Queensland's Day to Day Living Program in Mackay," Ms Winner said.

"The project will offer the opportunity to find hidden talents and encourage the recovery process through the creation of art projects.

"Importantly, the program

encourages participants to engage with the community, which in turn helps to reduce the community stigma and perceptions that are associated with a mental illness."

The Mackay Foundation mainly focuses on building a large body of funds, which is invested for capital growth and investment income.

It distributes the investment income to worthy causes and projects every year.

These donations were in addition to another \$15,000 that the Mackay Foundation has provided to a range of local groups and causes throughout the year.

Mr Alman thanked all businesses and individuals who had donated to the Mackay Foundation.

"Without your support, these organisations would not have been able to receive these worthwhile donations," Mr Alman said.

To make a donation, or for more information, phone the Mackay Foundation on 4911 4349 or visit www.mackayfoundation.com.au.

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