

HALTON LEARNING FOUNDATION EXPERIENCING INFLUX OF REQUESTS FOR STUDENT NEEDS

VERONICA APPIA
vappia@metroland.com

Halton Learning Foundation receives a lot of tough phone calls about students in need across the Halton District School Board, but ends them all with one simple answer: "Yes."

Whether it's a student in need of five dollars for a class baking initiative, or someone who is escaping a dangerous home environment, executive director Lesley Mansfield says as soon as HLF members receive a call from a principal, they make it a priority to get the students exactly what they need - and fast.

"We say yes to every request and try to turn them around within four or five hours," Mansfield said.

This year, she says the foundation has been experiencing an influx of requests for individual students, through HLF's Eliminating Barriers program.

Since September, HLF

has provided support for 170 students across the school board, a 30 per cent increase over this time last year.

While Mansfield says it's difficult to pinpoint the reasons for this increase, she knows there are even more students out there who need the help.

"We know the poverty rate in Halton is 10 per cent, according to the Halton Poverty Roundtable," she said. "That means about 6,400 students in the board."

The Eliminating Barriers program provides students in need with up to \$250 per year for a variety of needs, and up to \$100 per year for field trips.

Mansfield says even the smallest contribution makes a difference for students.

"Ten dollars can get you to the zoo. Twenty-one dollars can get you to the farm," she said. "There are a lot of things that kids want to participate in, but



Halton District School Board's director of education, Stuart Miller, speaks at the HLF Benefit Bash fundraiser in 2017. This year's event will be held on Nov. 1 at the Oakville Conference Centre.

they may not be able to because their parent or guardian doesn't have the funds."

Along with this program, HLF offers school grants and student scholarships, which, like Eliminating Barriers, are funded

solely through donations from the community.

As Halton District School Board's only charity, Mansfield says the foundation has tailored its fund allocations to accommodate the growing number of student requests, provid-

ing \$209,000 to HDSB students over the past year.

"We were seeing a massive uptake in immediate student needs," Mansfield said.

"We did a bit of a shift in our office and we said, 'You know what? Our school

grants are important, but do you know what's more important? Getting the help to the students, when it's needed."

She says HLF also makes it a point to be transparent with donors to inform them about where their money is going, who it is helping, and the need for it in all areas of Halton.

"Poverty is not somewhere that is far, far away. Poverty is right here," she said.

"Whether you're in the Hills, Milton, Burlington or Oakville, it's there, it's huge and it's hidden."

To learn more about the Halton Learning Foundation, visit <https://www.haltonlearningfoundation.ca/>.

Halton Learning Foundation will be hosting its 15th annual Benefit Bash on Nov. 1 at the Oakville Conference Centre. For further information, visit <https://19904.thankyou4caring.org/2018-benefit-bash> (bit.ly/2pPeBll).

Milton Haunted House

mdhf

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Milton Mall

Money raised will go to the **Milton District Hospital Foundation**

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www.MiltonHauntedHouse.com

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