

Foundation donors eliminate barriers for students

There's excitement in the air as the new school year brings so much to learn and so many opportunities for students.

We've seen them these past few weeks — students smiling and chatting with their friends as they head off to school with their fresh school supplies, stylish backpacks, new shoes, clothes and coats.

However, not all students share this experience. For many, basic resources and necessities, including school supplies, proper-fitting clothing, winter coats, shoes and daily lunches are simply not an option.

This is where Halton Learning Foundation's Eliminating Barriers Fund lends much-needed, rapid assistance.

In Halton, approximately 10 per cent of school-aged children live below the poverty line. The Eliminating Barriers Fund financially assists students in need to keep them engaged in and able to attend school.

A student in need may be going through an emergency situation like parental unemployment, escape from abuse, house fire, family illness or injury, etc.

Last school year, donors to the Halton Learning Foundation helped more than 1,200 Halton District School Board students through the Eliminating Barriers Fund.

As one principal says, "You can't take away some of the baggage that kids carry... but you can take away the split running shoes, the no winter coat, the hungry feelings they come to school with."

On behalf of the following students, their families, and the hundreds of other students that donors assisted last school year through donations to the Eliminating Barriers Fund, we thank you. (Their names, schools and specifics of their situation have been altered to protect their privacy.)

"JJ" was struggling to survive. After his family abandoned him, JJ was faced with finding lodging, supporting his basic needs, taking on a part-time job and continuing school. The cost of living was a struggle and he had to take on additional hours at work just to get by. His increased work hours impacted his attendance and put JJ at risk of dropping out — and he was only 1 year away from graduating. The Halton Learning Foundation stepped in to provide funds for basic necessities including hygiene items, food, and clothing. On September 3, 2013, JJ started his final year of high school.

"CK" now 'fits in' with the other children. As



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PAT WRIGHT

one of five children living with a single disabled mother who lived with domestic violence and abuse, CK needed help. Her clothes were far too small, she was walking to school without a winter coat, boots or even a hat. Her principal reported back to the Halton Learning Foundation that CK wouldn't wear any new clothing, except the winter coat, until after the holidays, so others would think that she had received them as gifts.

"S and K" were hungry, so hungry that they would sneak food away from their classmates when they weren't looking. Their teacher spoke with the principal who connected with the girls' mom. Their mom shared that she and her daughters had left the family home earlier that week due to domestic violence and that she hadn't yet secured a job. Funds were tight and she was doing her best to make ends meet. S & K's principal contacted

the Halton Learning Foundation that same day and the foundation provided funds for groceries for the family.

The Halton Learning Foundation is the means for everyone in the community to support quality education for Halton District School Board students by providing emergency help for students in need, engagement funds (e.g. literacy, numeracy, arts and music, healthy active living, technology, and environment programs), and scholarships.

Visit www.haltonlearningfoundation.ca for more information.

The Halton Learning Foundation's 10th annual Celebrat10n Fundraiser, featuring Jully Black in concert and a Super 10 Raffle, will be held Thursday, Oct. 17.

For Celebrat10n event tickets, contact the Burlington Performing Arts Centre at (905) 681-6000 or go to www.burlingtonpac.com.

For Super 10 Raffle tickets, contact the Halton Learning Foundation at (905) 335-3665, ext. 53388, or trottn@hdsb.ca.

Pat Wright, CFRE, is executive director of the Halton Learning Foundation.



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