



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

URGENT APPEAL: Local Charity Needs Help Providing Relief to City's Children **450 children in Ottawa are waiting for back-to-school assistance**

Ottawa, ON – August 16, 2017 – Every year, thousands of children in Ottawa start the school year without the school supplies they need to succeed. Since 2011, [the Caring and Sharing Exchange](#) has been providing backpacks and grade-appropriate school supplies to Ottawa children from families in need through their Sharing in Student Success (SISS) program. While registration for the program has closed for this school year, the organization is facing **the highest number of registrants the program has ever seen, and many children have been wait listed.**

“While we can help 2,065 of the children on our list this year, **we still have 450 children waiting for assistance,**” said Cindy Smith, Executive Director of the Exchange. “We are doubling our efforts to take as many children off our wait list as possible. **With 2,515 children requesting assistance this year, we need the support of the community to help every child in need** start the school year on an equal footing as their peers, ready to learn!”

The need for back-to-school assistance on the rise

In 2016, SISS saw a dramatic 31% increase in children registered for the program—an increase that was directly attributed to the influx of Syrian refugees. All last year’s registered children received assistance.

“It was truly amazing to see the community come together last year and help us meet the need,” said Cindy. “Although we did anticipate the need to be high again this year, we had no way of knowing what that increase would look like.”

In fact, **numbers for SISS have increased an additional 22% for 2017.** And while the Exchange collaborates with community agencies across the city to eliminate hundreds of duplicate applications for back-to-school assistance, the need continues to rise.

“Overall, we’ve noticed more and more agencies really feel programs like SISS are needed to help provide support and relief for families on tight budgets. We’ve seen such an increase in demand for back-to-school assistance in Ottawa the past two years,” Cindy explained. “We truly hope to assist every child registered on our list, so nobody is left behind.”

Donations can be made online at www.CaringandSharing.ca or by calling 613-226-6434 x5. Many branches of the Ottawa Public Library are also [accepting donations](#) of new school supplies until the end of September. For a more interactive way to give, the Exchange allows users to [purchase a virtual backpack online](#) to help supply a child with the school supplies they need for the year.

About the Caring and Sharing Exchange

The Caring and Sharing Exchange helps Ottawa individuals and families facing economic hardship during the Christmas and back-to-school seasons. Its Coordination Service verifies the names of clients registered by hundreds of local agencies to eliminate duplicate applications for assistance, redistributing funds to help as many families as possible.

- 30 -

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