



the Caring
and Sharing
Exchange

People helping people since 1915



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

URGENT APPEAL

Massive increase in registration leaves 850 children on waiting list for assistance

Ottawa, ON – August 17, 2016 – For the last five years, the Sharing in Student Success (SISS) program of the Caring and Sharing Exchange has been working hard to provide hundreds of children in need with a grade appropriate stuffed backpack, complete with all the school supplies recommended by the boards of education. For three years in a row this program has been able to help every child on its list, but **this year the program has seen a record 33% increase in requests and they are now facing a daunting waiting list.**

“Right now, we are able to help 1,250 children, which sadly still leaves us with more than 850 children on our waiting list,” said Cindy Smith, Executive Director of the Caring and Sharing Exchange. “Last year we were able to help all 1,582 children who turned to us for assistance, **but with 2104 children on our list this year we won’t be able to help everyone without the community’s help.**”

Through its coordination service, the Caring and Sharing Exchange works with many community agencies in an attempt to ensure there is no duplication of assistance citywide. This service makes sure that individuals aren’t being helped twice, and that in turn funds are distributed to as many families as possible.

“By collaborating with other agencies in the city, we detect hundreds of duplicate applications annually, which allows us to redistribute the funds to the next family on the list, while saving the community money,” explained Smith.

Request numbers have been largely impacted by the recent influx of refugees

The Somali Centre for Family Services requests backpacks from the SISS program for its clients, and they have seen a massive leap in requests that they feel has been caused by the influx of Syrian refugees. Last year, the centre requested assistance from the Exchange for 63 children, and this year their number is nearly five times that, reaching nearly 300 children. **They reported that upwards of 97% of the children on their list are Syrian newcomers.**

“We had anticipated the possibility of a jump in our requests this year due to the Syrian refugee crisis, but we had no way of knowing just how big of an impact this would have,” said Smith. “With the community’s help, we hope to once again provide every child in need with the support they need to return to school on equal footing with their peers, ready to learn!”

Donations can be made online at www.CaringandSharing.ca or by calling 613-226-6434. Donations of school supplies are also being accepted at several Ottawa Public Libraries. Visit the charity’s website for more information on where to donate and the supplies that are most needed.

The Caring and Sharing Exchange helps Ottawa families facing economic hardship during the Christmas and back-to-school seasons. The Coordination Service verifies the names of clients registered by hundreds of local agencies, in order to eliminate duplicate applications and redistribute funds accordingly.

For more information about the organization and its programs, or to make a donation, please call 613-226-6434 or donate online by visiting www.CaringandSharing.ca.

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