

MEDIA ADVISORY

August 22, 2016
For Immediate Release

Volunteers to stuff hundreds of backpacks for Ottawa's children in need

On Tuesday, August 23rd, join the staff of *the Caring and Sharing Exchange*, Mayor Jim Watson and kind volunteers from corporate supporters as they come together to stuff backpacks to be distributed later this week. This year, Westgate Shopping Centre is once again generously providing the space for the event.

The Caring and Sharing Exchange **is aiming to help more than 2,000 children through its Sharing in Student Success program**, which helps ensure students return to school with their heads held high. This year they have seen a 33% increase in requests for assistance, largely due to the influx of Syrian refugees. Currently the number of children registered with the program is 2,104, although as the first day of school approaches **more than 300 children are still left on the waiting list.**

“Just last week our waiting list was more than 850 kids, but thanks to the community’s help, this number has dropped significantly,” said Cindy Smith, Executive Director. “As donations continue to come in, we are feeling very optimistic about the chances of eliminating our waiting list this year.”

- What:** Staff, volunteers, and Mayor Jim Watson will stuff backpacks for children in Ottawa. These backpacks will be distributed to families in need across Ottawa.
- Where:** Westgate Shopping Centre, 1309 Carling Ave, Ottawa ON
In the vacant storefront next to Kardish Health Food Centre
- When:** Tuesday, August 23, 11:00 a.m. – *At this time Mayor Jim Watson will be arriving at the event.*
- Why:** One in five children in Ottawa is currently living in poverty. This program helps provide children from families in need with dignity by allowing them to return to school on equal footing.

Please help us eliminate our waiting list!

Thanks to the generous support of Bell, CAA North & East Ontario, Giant Tiger, Hill+Knowlton, Innovapost, Lumentum, Ottawa Community Housing Foundation, Ottawa Public Library, Staples (Carling Avenue), Telus, Twice Upon a Time, Quickie and many individual donors across the community, more than a thousand children will be receiving a backpack filled with school supplies this year. However, with September approaching fast there are still many children who will not be receiving any assistance through this program.

Donations for school essentials can be made at CaringandSharing.ca or by calling 613-226-6434.

The Caring and Sharing Exchange is also the home of the 100-year-old Christmas Exchange Program, which helps families in need during the Christmas season. Its Coordination Service verifies names of clients registered for both programs by hundreds local agencies in order to eliminate duplicate applications and redistribute funds accordingly to help more families.

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