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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## URGENT APPEAL

### 5,489 Ottawa students are in need of back-to-school assistance!

August 20, 2024

Ottawa, ON –

Believe it or not, students are about to return to school! Since 2011, [The Caring and Sharing Exchange](#) has provided thousands of children in need with backpacks filled with school supplies through their [Sharing in Student Success program \(SISS\)](#), and this year is no exception. Shopping for school supplies is a luxury that many families cannot afford. This program aims to relieve parents of this financial burden, providing their children with the tools to succeed in their education on equal footing with their peers.

**There are almost 5,500 children who have requested back-to-school assistance from the Caring and Sharing Exchange. This represents an overwhelming growth in the need of over 30% for the second year in a row. They are 75% of the way there and are reaching out to the Ottawa community to ask for immediate support so that they can send every student on their list back to school equipped to succeed.**

“The rising cost of living over the past several years have been challenging for everyone, but for those who were already struggling financially, like the families on our list, they have been truly daunting,” said Cindy Smith, Executive Director of the Caring and Sharing Exchange. “We want to give the children of these families something to look forward to as they begin the new school year. A new backpack full of supplies may not seem like much, but to a child who would otherwise go without, it makes all the difference!”

Through bulk buying and their relationship with retail partners, the Caring and Sharing Exchange spends one-third of the retail cost of a backpack complete with school supplies, which means they are able to triple donation dollars to their SISS program. The Exchange also improves the efficiency of back-to-school assistance city-wide through their innovative Coordination Service.

“We save the community money every year through our Coordination Service, which helps us eliminate hundreds of duplicate applications for back-to-school assistance,” Cindy explained. “We work with nearly 200 agencies and organizations across Ottawa that offer similar support, reinvesting duplicate dollars to help the next child on our list. Over the last 5 years, this service has saved the community almost \$646,000.”

**For those wishing to support the program, donations can be made online at [www.CaringandSharing.ca](http://www.CaringandSharing.ca).** If you have school supplies to donate, please contact the Exchange directly at [info@caringandsharing.ca](mailto:info@caringandsharing.ca). For more information on the organization's most-needed items and where to donate, please visit their website: [www.caringandsharing.ca](http://www.caringandsharing.ca).

#### ABOUT THE CARING AND SHARING EXCHANGE

*The Caring and Sharing Exchange* serves Ottawa families facing economic hardship through their holiday and back-to-school assistance programs. Through their unique Coordination Service, the Exchange works with hundreds of its local agency partners to cross-reference clients and eliminate duplicate applications for assistance. Funds saved by eliminating these duplicate applications are then redistributed into their programs, to serve even more people. Over 31,000 individuals living in Ottawa accessed their programs in 2023.

– 30 –

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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