



Halton Learning Foundation

Eliminating Financial Barriers to Education

2015 - 2016 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



Creating a Culture of Caring

“I believe that the culture and environment of a school comes before achievement.”

“The Halton Learning Foundation and its supporters – by funding school grants and assistance for students in need – complement the work taking place in our schools by helping to create a culture of caring and inclusiveness. This is the kind of school environment that helps kids pursue their dreams, passions and goals, throughout their schooling and beyond.”

**Stuart Miller, Director of Education
Halton District School Board**

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Changing Lives: How \$595 Altered One Student's Direction

The odds have always been stacked against Max*. His father abandoned Max and his brother when they were young, and the boys grew up in poverty in one of Canada's most prosperous cities. His mom works hard, but her paycheque is barely enough to cover food and rent. Max's older brother made some poor choices, dropped out of school and is now in prison.

Despite the incredible challenges in his life, Max has always been a great student who managed to make the honour roll every year in high school. As graduation loomed in 2016, Max's teachers encouraged him to apply for college. But he faced an immediate financial barrier: he didn't have the application fee. The school reached out to the Halton Learning Foundation for help. HLF stepped in and provided \$95 so Max could submit his application.

Next came some wonderful news. Max was accepted into his program, meaning he would be the first person in his family to attend post-secondary school. His teachers got busy researching scholarships and bursaries and helping Max access the Ontario Student Awards

Program to help pay for his post-secondary pursuits.

Then came another financial hurdle: Max did not have the tuition deposit. Through our scholarship program, HLF was able to help once more, providing Max with a small scholarship that he used to cover the tuition deposit.

"It really means a lot to me that I didn't have to abandon my goal of going to post-secondary school thanks to the (funds) provided to me by HLF," says Max. "Although it's expected for our parents to be the ones to provide for us and set money aside for our educational funding, there are many unfortunate students, such as myself and many others who do not have that opportunity."

His teachers confirm that without HLF's support, Max would not have gone to college. Today, Max is learning new skills and is well on his way to a career with potential. For less than \$600, HLF helped change the trajectory of one young man's life!

**(name changed)*

In Their Words...

"Thank you for helping me get new winter gear. I now feel more confident because of how I fit in with everyone else."
(student)

"I am a single mother of a wonderful boy. His school told me about your awesome program and I was so happy for the opportunity. I was able to buy fall/winter clothing and shoes for my son and also food as we needed. Thank you so very much for the help and support."
(parent)

"I don't know how to thank you or tell you how much your help means to me and my boys. We have been so short on food lately and relying on food banks when I can get there. I just want you to know we all appreciate this so, so much ... thank you for your kindness."
(parent)

"Life hasn't exactly been easy for me so far. But thanks to support from my school and family, I have grown from a troublesome young kid to an aspiring doctor. Thank you so much for your generous scholarship. I consider it a great honour and a reward for all my hard work. I look forward to achieving wonderful things..."
(scholarship recipient)

"I just wanted to say thank you for the gift cards. They really helped with getting groceries that will help me be able to stay in school and focus on finishing. Mum has been really sick and this takes a load off her mind."
(student)

"I used to be wearing sweaters and a windbreaker to school and was freezing, but now I have an actual winter jacket, scarf, gloves and boots. I no longer feel like the weird kid in a sweater when it's -10."
(student)

Eliminating Financial Barriers to Education 2015 - 2016

750

students received emergency funds of \$107,000* for food, clothing, school supplies.

100

students given the chance to participate in field trips and school teams.

58

schools received \$114,000 for initiatives to engage kids in learning.

65

students received a post-secondary scholarship.

*(includes \$7,500 worth of coats donated by Mountain Warehouse)



"The grant from HLF has aided in the reading development of some of our youngest readers."
(principal)



"Thank you HLF. The new equipment empowers students to participate in musical performances around the school. It has been so nice to see our students perform with such confidence in front of their peers..."
(teacher)

Partnering with the Community



Raising awareness of HLF. Former WWE wrestlers Tiger Jeet Singh Jr., (second from left) and his father Tiger Jeet Singh, were appointed HLF's first-ever Ambassadors. The "Tigers", who have their own foundation, are helping to spread our message about the need to eliminate financial barriers for students with a wider audience.



Coats for kids. Volunteers helped pack and distribute more than 400 winter coats donated to HLF by Mountain Warehouse. For students who have never had new, warm winter gear, the coats have been treasured gifts. "Our refugee student from Iraq was very happy to pick one this afternoon. He picked the green one and I can tell that he is loving it :)"



I learned that being too close to train tracks is really dangerous and putting stuff on the tracks could harm a lot of people. Taking on train tracks is also not safe the train can come at any time so that's why you shouldn't hike on the tracks. If the train blows it whistle that means that the train is trying to scare people/animals off the track.

Working together to keep students safe. In partnership with CN and Operation Lifesaver, HLF facilitated rail safety information sessions at 10 HDSB elementary schools. Thanks to these sessions, more than 7,000 students have learned how to stay safe near train tracks.



Responding to the Community's Changing Needs

Message from the Chair

The Halton Learning Foundation (HLF) began at the turn of the 21st century as a small charity with one simple goal: to support the schools and students of the Halton District School Board.

Since HLF's inception 17 years ago, much has changed in the region of Halton: community and school populations have diversified and nearly doubled in size, the cost of housing has increased faster than incomes, and the precariousness of work has proliferated. These changes and more have resulted in a school population in which nearly 6,000 students -- about 1 in 10 -- live at or near the poverty line and face financial barriers to their education.

At the same time, local and global economies have become more dynamic, making it critical that students have the skills, education and training to prepare them for the technology- and knowledge-based jobs of today and tomorrow.

In response to these changes, HLF has begun an ambitious journey to double our support for students and schools by the year 2020. To achieve this goal, it's critical to raise HLF's profile to ensure more people are aware of who HLF is, why our services are needed, and how the community can make a difference by

helping students stay in school and realize their full potential.

Last spring we unveiled a bold new logo that incorporates our mission in order to help audiences better identify HLF and our role. We began to share more of our stories and impact in the media, on social media and with community groups, and we reached out to new partners across Halton. With the help of a generous donor we were also able to launch a new website that makes it easier to share HLF's story online.

We have already begun to see the results of these efforts. HLF was fortunate to welcome many new corporate partners last year. Our story has been profiled in local papers, on radio and television more than a dozen times. And, for the second year in a row, HLF was nominated for a Business Excellence Award in the Not-for-Profit category by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce.

There is so much more to do, as demand for HLF's support continues to grow. I have been honoured to be involved with the Halton Learning Foundation as a director and board chair, because I know that HLF is making a difference in students' lives every day. Our board and staff look forward to sharing our message with new audiences, and working with like-minded individuals and corporate partners to ensure no student in our community is left behind because of financial barriers.

David S. Grant, Chair of the Board of HLF

Spotlight on our Donors



Principal Sean Marks: HLF Has Direct Impact on Students

Sean Marks seems puzzled when asked what prompted him to become a teacher. He simply knows it was his destiny.

"I don't think I chose it; I was always a teacher," says Sean, who has spent 20 years with the Halton District School Board as a teacher and administrator.

Currently the principal at Glen Williams Public School in Halton Hills, Sean is philosophical about the role he and his colleagues play in the lives of students. He believes teachers help students develop the knowledge, skills and attitude to prepare them for the person they want to become. "We don't create the person within; we simply help remove the obstacles that allow the person to emerge," he says.

One obstacle he strongly believes in removing for kids is the financial barriers faced by at least one in 10 students of the Halton District School Board. For that reason, Sean has been a longtime supporter of HLF through payroll deduction.

He's seen the direct impact of HLF's support on students and families -- from kids who had the opportunity to play sports they couldn't otherwise take part in, to families of students with special needs who received funds "that helped them breathe" for a while.

Sean relates the story of one family of three students whose father passed away several years ago. The students' mother had to go back to school in order to re-enter the workforce, and it was a tough time for the family emotionally and financially.

"With support from HLF we were able to help those kids through a difficult time," says Sean. "Today, that mom is working, the kids are doing well and they are starting to go off to university."

Sean believes this story illustrates there can be long-term impacts from a seemingly small helping hand. For kids who otherwise might not participate in school life, "we as educators have the opportunity to help them feel supported and engaged. We have to meet the primary needs of our students before we can meet their academic needs, and HLF helps us do that."

Sean also sees great value in HLF's support for school initiatives that help engage kids in learning. Teachers apply to HLF for grant funding to supply everything from tech tools and musical instruments to playground equipment or even sensory rooms for kids with special needs.

"That grant funding can change the whole culture or wellness of a school," believes Sean. "Just like families, schools have needs that could simply not be met without the support of the Halton Learning Foundation."

Cogeco Halton: A True Community Partner

Most people know Cogeco as an Internet, TV and home phone provider. But to many local organizations across Halton, they are so much more! Cogeco is a tremendous supporter of dozens of community groups, including the Halton Learning Foundation.

HLF has been fortunate to partner with Cogeco for several years, benefitting from both their financial support and the opportunity to build awareness of HLF through interviews and profiles on Cogeco TV and online.

Glenda Lloyd, Cogeco's Communications and Community Relations Manager for Ontario, says working with community partners on behalf of Cogeco is the most rewarding part of her job.

"Cogeco believes it's a privilege and a responsibility to help our local communities, and the Halton Learning Foundation is a natural fit with our core values," explains Glenda.

"What most impresses me personally is how HLF can discreetly help children facing economic barriers have greater opportunities for a better education."

Some of the stories have particularly resonated with her, such as a student who wasn't able to pay the fee for his college application, or the child who would have missed her class trip to a play based on a book they were studying in class. With HLF's support, both students were provided with opportunities they would otherwise have missed out on.

"There are literally hundreds of other examples where children were able to be included because of the help provided by HLF," says Glenda.

She wishes more people were aware of the many ways HLF helps students in our community through emergency financial support, scholarships and resources for schools. As economic times get tougher, Glenda believes there will be an even greater need for the kind of assistance HLF provides.

"I can't imagine anything more important to support in our community than children and their education."



Cogeco TV interviews HLF executive director Lesley Mansfield.

Our special thanks to the following donors:

CN | Chudleighs | CWA Foundation | Maple Lodge Farms Foundation | RBC Foundation
Siemens Canada | Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation | York Trafalgar Homes

All about HLF

The Halton Learning Foundation is a registered charity whose mission is to enrich educational opportunities and eliminate economic barriers to learning for students of the Halton District School Board (HDSB).

HLF partners with community members and organizations to:

- Help the estimated 1 in 10 students of the HDSB who face financial barriers to their education. By funding school supplies, food, clothing, school transportation and extracurricular activities, we help kids fit in at school and fully participate in their education.
- Provide enriched learning opportunities for all HDSB students through school engagement grants that support arts and music, healthy active living, mental health initiatives, media literacy, and environmental education.
- Provide scholarships, awards and bursaries that enable graduating students to pursue post-secondary education or apprenticeships.

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2050 Guelph Line,
Burlington ON L7P 5A8

Charitable registration #:
88997 5223 RR0001

