



September 14, 2015

**Media release**

**Dewson School Refugees Welcome launches Sponsorship Campaign and Challenge – Can 1000 schools start the process to sponsor refugee families this month?**

When school started last week, the Dewson School community decided to come together and take action on the refugee crisis.

Families and staff were surveyed about whether the school community should sponsor a refugee family. The answer was a resounding ‘yes’. Within 36 hours, almost three-quarters of families had responded – 310 responses in a school of four hundred families.

83% of respondents want our school community to sponsor a refugee family. 82% were willing to make a cash donation towards the goal of raising \$30,000, and fully one-third were interested in getting more involved with fundraising, communications and providing hands-on settlement support. Dewson’s goal is to raise \$30,000 in 30 days, starting Wednesday.

“The school community responded with a sense of urgency to the current refugee situation,” said parent organizer Kelly Gallagher-Mackay. “We hope that it will soon be easier to sponsor a refugee, but our school will do what it takes to make this happen.”

Other schools are also starting to take action. “Given what we see and hear in the news today, we believe that 1000 schools across Canada could make the same commitment before the end of September,” says Gallagher-Mackay.

The group has launched a website, <http://schoolswelcome.wix.com/dewson>, to provide information and support to other school communities considering sponsoring a family. Other schools can sign up and share their own process. They have already learned of one other school – the Grove -- that has raised \$25,000 to sponsor a family.

There are 15,500 elementary and secondary schools in Canada.

Trustee Ausma Malik comments, “Schools are at the heart of our neighbourhoods, and serve as vital community hubs. Having a school community -- like Dewson – participate in supporting refugee resettlement is both inspiring and a natural fit.”

Principal Janice Robinson expressed her support, saying, “The staff and students at Dewson Street Public School practice support for each other within our local community each and every day. This endeavour - to sponsor a refugee family - is so exciting since it demonstrates so clearly to students how a community can come together to provide that same care and assistance on the world stage.”

Teacher Ben Yanchyshyn commented “real-world tie-ins help make it much more meaningful when we teach the curriculum about human rights and the importance of getting involved in your community.”

Alexandra Kostyk from Lifeline Syria comments, “It is so important that a wide range of civil society groups get involved in showing that Canada is ready to resettle a large number of refugees to deal with the urgent refugee crisis. It is a great idea for school groups to be part of this effort.”

**For further information:** Kelly Gallagher-Mackay  
416 436 4161 [kgallagher-mackay@sympatico.ca](mailto:kgallagher-mackay@sympatico.ca)

**Website:** <http://schoolswelcome.wix.com/dewson>