

NIAGARA FOUNDATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION DONATION SUPPORTS \$62,000 INVESTMENT IN STUDENTS DURING COVID-19

The Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education has stepped up to assist the Niagara Catholic District School Board in supplying wireless Internet access to students in need during the current COVID-19 school closure. The wireless Internet will be used with 130 new Samsung tablets purchased by the Board through an arrangement with Rogers Canada. These tablets, which are WiFi-enabled, represent a \$50,000 investment in students by Niagara Catholic, and will be delivered to students this week.

Jim Marino, Executive Director of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, said the Foundation's Board of Directors unanimously approved a \$12,000 donation - \$10,000 of which will be dedicated to providing Internet access, with the remainder dedicated to supplying grocery cards for families in need.

"Supporting students in need and the Niagara Catholic District School Board in its commitment to delivering the best Catholic education to its students throughout the year, and especially during these uncertain and trying times is the epitome of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education's existence and purpose," said Mr. Marino.

"Even during 'normal' times, the lack of nutrition and other essentials of daily life can be very worrisome for students in need. This situation is now compounded by the serious impact of COVID-19 on Niagara families.

"The Foundation recognizes it would be impossible to offer this financial support without the assistance of kind and caring individuals, organizations and businesses who make up a generous Niagara Region, and choose the Foundation as a charity of choice. As Executive Director, I know that Foundation President Peter Ferren and all board members join me in extending our deepest gratitude to all who support the Foundation every year, and for the excellence in Catholic education provided by Niagara Catholic. Please be assured that our thoughts and prayers are with everyone as we work together in our efforts to overcome one of the most difficult experiences of our lives."

Niagara Catholic's Director of Education John Crocco said both Senior Staff and the Board of Trustees were extremely touched by the Foundation's immediate offer of financial support for students.

“We believe that our schools are an equalizer in a student’s journey,” said Mr. Crocco.

“Throughout Niagara Catholic, students of all socio-economic backgrounds have the same opportunities for success. When it became evident that some Niagara Catholic students would struggle to successfully participate in teacher-led distance learning during the current school closures due to a lack of a computer device or access to Internet service at home, we immediately began searching for the best way to ensure students in need were not left behind due to a lack of access to technology through no fault of their own.

“When the Foundation heard about Niagara Catholic’s plan to invest approximately \$50,000 in WiFi-enabled devices for students, Mr. Marino immediately reached out to the Foundation’s Board, asking them to support this one-time donation to ensure that the devices work as they are meant to for students. When he contacted me to share the news that the Foundation would not only donate \$10,000 to cover the cost of the WiFi, but would also provide another \$2,000 to provide grocery gift cards for families struggling due to COVID-19, I expressed gratitude to him and the Foundation on behalf of the students who would be the recipients of the support during the school closures and was very proud to share the good news of the \$62,000 dollar investment in student learning with our Board of Trustees, Senior Staff, Principals and Vice-Principals and all staff of Niagara Catholic. Like me, they were touched by the Foundation’s generosity, and are deeply grateful for their unanimous decision to support students in this very difficult time.

We are also very grateful to the many individuals, business and industry partners who support the Foundation and Niagara Catholic. Without our donors, we would not be able to provide these extra supports for students during times of crisis, and throughout the school year.”

Chair of the Board Frank Fera also expressed his gratitude.

"The Niagara Catholic District School Board believes that all students have the right to the best education available, and we believe we provide that to students," said Mr. Fera. "By supplying students who may fall through the technology gaps with the tools they need to learn, we are acting on this very fundamental belief.

“On behalf of the Vice-Chair and the entire Board of Trustees, a heartfelt thank you to the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education for supporting our students. Your very generous donation ensures that all students will have a level playing field in these uncertain times.

“We would also like to acknowledge the very hard work of our Director, Senior Staff, principals, vice-principals and all school staff in bringing distance learning to life in a short time. Your adaptability, innovation and empathy is shown in the many ways you have supported, and will continue to support students, their families and each other, as everyone adapts to distance teaching and learning. And finally thank you to all of the students and families who have also worked very hard to adjust to learning and working at home. With faith, I am confident that we will all get through this together."

Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to approximately 20,000 students throughout Niagara, from Kindergarten through graduation.

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Contact: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer, 905.651.3818

