

**NCDSB STUDENTS AND STAFF LAUNCH FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN
FOR TSUNAMI RELIEF EFFORTS**

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board has launched a system-wide fundraising campaign to assist in the relief effort in South Asia. Each school community has been encouraged to initiate an activity to participate in this campaign. All funds raised will be directed to the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace.

In Englehart, Holy Family School has taken on a leadership role in the broader community by declaring the week of January 10th as "Holy Family Cares Week". Throughout the week, they will engage in fundraising and invite local businesses and other agencies to host a money jar in their establishment for the purpose of accepting donations. Prayers for the victims and their families will also be part of morning announcements.

In Cobalt, St. Patrick School has made an immediate commitment of \$750. The tragedy took on a particular meaning for students at this school, who sponsor a foster child in Thailand through World Vision. While they have been assured that he survived the tsunami, they wish to help rebuild his country. The entire school community has taken an active role in understanding the context of the tragedy and stepping up to help rebuild the affected regions. "Teaching staff have been encouraged to discuss the recent events and their relevance to the lives of the students, as they prepare to become citizens in the global community," stated Principal Val Drury. "It is very important for the students to realize their obligations towards supporting those in need throughout the world. It is our role as adults to nurture a sense of social awareness and compassion in our students.

In New Liskeard, students will be hosting a hot lunch, with all proceeds to be donated to the campaign. Students who attend English Catholic Central School in New Liskeard have lost family and friends in Sri Lanka in this tragedy. The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace was selected as the recipient charity for the fundraising because it is already working in the region where these individuals resided.

In Kirkland Lake, St. Jerome School will be holding a liturgical celebration on January 10 at 11 a.m.. Students and staff have been asked to donate a 'loonie' for the relief efforts. For their part, Sacred Heart School started their campaign immediately upon their return to class on Wednesday morning for the Save the Children organization. "As we have watched the disasters of the earthquake and the tsunamis in Asia, we are called in humility to give thanks for the daily gifts of water and food," stated Interim Administrator Susan Berlingeri in a message to staff. "In order to help our students share in the thanksgiving for the many gifts we take for granted and in order to afford them the opportunity to help in the worldwide effort to support the Asian people, we are embarking on a 'dime collection'. In our world, a dime can buy little, however, in Asia today it will buy a bottle of water and rice, the staple of many people." After only two days, the coins totalled a generous \$ 1051.45.

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In Iroquois Falls, St. Anne English Catholic School challenged the student body in a fundraising challenge. Principal Linda Pilgrim is proud of the concerted effort by students and staff to help the people affected by this disaster. "One student in particular, whose birthday falls this week, is asking for donations to the cause in lieu of personal presents," stated Pilgrim. "The atmosphere of caring is evident throughout the school. There is a lesson to be learned from the students' attitudes and generosity."

In Timmins, St. Paul School has already confirmed a \$500 donation from the pizza profits in January. In addition, teachers will be holding a bake sale on Monday with proceeds to the relief efforts. The school will also host a spaghetti supper on January 26. Sacred Heart School is holding a one-day blitz for a Principal's Challenge. The class raising the most money will receive the Principal's Cup, an esteemed prize within the school.

The Board office itself is also taking part in the fundraising, with Disaster Relief Fundraising Lunch for staff planned for Monday, January 10. The meal will feature some very basic dishes, representative of the limited food rations available to the survivors. The intent is to make everyone realize the challenges that will be faced by so many people for quite some time to come.

In addition to the fundraising campaign, the Board has designated Monday, January 10 as a Day of Prayer for all those affected by the tsunami international disaster. A moment of silence will be observed at 11 a.m. in honour of people of all nationalities who perished with the ravage of the tidal wave. All schools were asked to lower flags to half mast until further direction.

Director of Education Paul Toffanello ensured that each school community had access to resources to take action quickly in response to the tsunami disaster. "Sample prayers and other ideas on how to help children contextualize this tragedy have been provided to schools for use in the classroom," stated Toffanello. "Scenes of disaster have dominated news coverage, and it is natural that many students may have questions and concerns. Our goal is to help alleviate their fears by helping them to understand the tragedy and by guiding them as they discover ways that they can reach out to those in need not only in their local community, but on a global level. We must all work together in our prayers and sacrifices to help the victims of this disaster to the best of our abilities."

Moreover, the Northeastern Unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the union which represents teachers within our Board, will be donating ten dollars per member for a total of roughly \$1800 to the Free the Children organization. As the world's largest network of children helping children, Free the Children is responding by shipping essential medical and relief supplies to the affected areas to save lives. Every dollar donated to this organization will generate ten dollars in medical supplies through a special matching program.

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