

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

RE/MAX Sales Associates give GTA Kids Food for Thought

More than 70,000 children in the GTA going to school hungry everyday

Toronto, ON (September 4, 2007) – Since January 2006, RE/MAX Hallmark Realty Ltd. sales representative Carolyn Griffis and the REMAX Hallmark team have raised funds and rallied volunteers to bring nutrition programs back from the brink of closure in several local schools.

Since Griffis' involvement, the Student Nutrition Program has substantially increased the monthly budget and created a full roster of volunteers that prepare and deliver wholesome breakfasts and snacks each day, as well as volunteer in the classrooms. To date, over 90 RE/MAX Hallmark realtors contribute in excess of \$36,000 annually to the Student Nutrition Program. This has allowed her to expand the initiative to additional schools.

“It is simply about giving kids the opportunity to just be kids,” says Griffis. “The Student Nutrition Program is a critical part of these children’s daily nutritional requirements. It was utterly heartbreaking to know that so many were arriving at school without having food in their stomachs—in some cases, without dinner the night before. Teachers were sharing stories of children unable to focus and pay attention in class. Some couldn’t even keep their heads off their desks. It really hits home. Most of us have children of our own. The thought of them going hungry is unimaginable.”

In 2005, Carolyn was looking to help a single family in need when she was directed to a neighbourhood community resource center. The director mentioned a Student Nutrition Program that was in dire need of volunteers and funding. Today, Carolyn Griffis and the RE/MAX Hallmark team serve 1,400 meals and snacks each day, which translates into 7,000 weekly or 28,000 monthly at three schools. Their work has really allowed the kids to thrive. More students are coming to school on time, with fewer absences overall. Academic performance has increased and there are fewer behavioural issues.

“The response has been overwhelming and quite emotional,” says Durward Anthony, Nutrition Liaison Officer, Toronto District School Board. “Carolyn Griffis and the RE/MAX Hallmark team helped raise \$30,000 to build a new kitchen at the First Nations Public School so they could participate in the Student Nutrition Program. The school principal best summed up the impact of their efforts by exclaiming: “*Is she for real? Are these people for real? This is a dream come true!*”

The Toronto District School Board created the Student Nutrition Program in 1987 when it became apparent that many children were coming to school hungry everyday. At the time of amalgamation, there were approximately 111 programs reaching 13,000 students daily across the GTA. Today, there are over 490 programs reaching over 89,000 students daily across the GTA. It is estimated that 7,000 additional children require a nutrition program this coming school year.

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The main sources of funding for the Student Nutrition Program comes from the province, the City of Toronto and corporate funding through The Toronto Foundation for Student for Success. Parents also raise funds through contributions and fundraising events. The demand for the Student Nutrition Program is growing at an alarming rate, but the funding is not keeping pace. As funding decreases the nutritional density of the meals lessen.

“Currently, Municipal and Provincial funding combined only provides an average of 24 cents per day – not enough to buy a glass of milk,” says Mena Paternostro, Coordinator, Student Nutrition Program, Toronto District School Board. “That underscores how vital a role volunteers play in the success of the schools’ nutrition programs. They are its lifeblood. An enthusiastic, reliable team of committed volunteers—as in the case of RE/MAX Hallmark—will go a long way in making the Student Nutrition Program a success. But even more, it has an immeasurable influence in the ability of these children to succeed. They are not only nourishing bodies, they are nourishing young minds.”

Financial donations to the Student Nutrition Program can be made securely by calling 416-394-2115. Cheques can be mailed to ***The Toronto Foundation for Student for Success*** at 2 Trethewey Drive, 4th Floor, Toronto, Ontario M6M 4A8. The program is also seeking volunteers on an ongoing basis and private or corporate partners to help provide pro bono food and supplies. For more information, call the Nutrition Liaison Office, Toronto District School Board at 416 394-7303 or 416 394-7159.

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