

York Catholic students and Board provide hope for refugee families



By Angela Gismondi

The York Catholic District School Board community opened its hearts and wallets to help refugee families in need this holiday season.

York Catholic's (YCDSB) 105 schools were busy over the last few months raising funds for Project Hope, the Archdiocese of Toronto's Emergency Refugee Resettlement Campaign. The initiative was launched in September with the goal of raising \$3 million within 100 days so that 100 refugee families could be resettled within the Greater Toronto Area.

Schools held a variety of fundraisers and refugee awareness events to raise funds. The total amount raised throughout the Board was almost \$70,000.

As Christmas approached, Patricia Preston, Director of Education for the YCDSB and Carol Cotton, Chair of the Board, presented Arthur Peters, Director of the Development Office at the Archdiocese with a cheque for \$69,802.48 at the York Catholic District School Board's Catholic Education Centre in Aurora. Prior to the cheque presentation, the band from Father Michael McGivney Catholic Academy in Markham performed Christmas carols for the crowd.

The students were the key to the success of the fundraisers, Cotton stated.

"This project opens our hearts to where we're supposed to be at this time of year," said Cotton. "Our Board is known for its strong passion and dedication to helping others. Social justice, compassion, hope and unity are prevailing themes taught and practiced in our Catholic schools every day and is reflected in the amount of money raised by our schools."

Preston said the students not only raised money, but also awareness for the resettlement of refugees.

"Our entire York Catholic family came together and truly embraced this initiative," said Preston. "The spirit of giving and charity is alive and well in all of our catholic schools. We want to extend a warm and welcoming hand of friendship to the new families who will be joining us."

Peters thanked the Board for its effort and generous contribution towards the cause.

"Thank you very much to the York Catholic District School Board community for everything you have done to support this important project," said Peters, adding York Catholic has made the largest contribution of money for Project Hope among the six

Catholic school boards that fall within the Archdiocese of Toronto. ?This will help us bring families to our Archdiocese so they can enjoy a life of freedom.?