



Social Justice Matters



March 21, 2016

Principal of Edmonton Christian High School
14345 McQueen Road,
Edmonton, AB T5N 3L5

Dear Darren Oskoboiny,

RE: Acknowledgement of Acts of Service by ECH Teachers & Student Volunteers
With the Syrian Refugee Fundraising Event on March 19, 2016

I write to express my sincere gratitude for the amazing volunteer efforts of your staff including Grace Jewett, Rob Priestly and Wes Boonstra and many wonderful students. Alongside some very capable Syrian refugees, Grace & Rob and students of the Foods and Fashions class prepared an authentic Syrian meal this past Thursday and Friday. Wes Boonstra and a team of 10 student volunteers then served this meal and clean up afterwards at our fundraising event held on March 19, 2016 at Trinity Lutheran church.

In January I asked Grace if she would be interested in having her classes participate in preparing an Syrian meal with refugees I had met, who had experience as food caterers and restaurant owners in their home country of Syria. She enthusiastically said yes and gave everyone the confidence that we could do this. Her leadership and guidance in the classroom created an efficient working environment, but even more so, a spiritual one that created an opportunity for her students to participate in our fundraising efforts and serve and support Syrian refugee families being privately sponsored in Edmonton. Rob's experience cooking in commercial kitchens at Youth for Christ camps in the past was a tremendous help in setting an example for the students.

At our event this past Saturday, Wes Boonstra arrived with ten eager students to serve the 170 guests at our event. We could not have pulled off this colossal undertaking without them. They worked efficiently and cheerfully to help in the final food preparations, keep the food replenished in the buffet line, clear tables, as well as serve coffee, tea and dessert. Wes and some of the students went way beyond the second mile to ensure the dishes were done and helped other volunteers put everything away. The following day he returned all the kitchen pots, pans & bowls to the school.

A number of times while working alongside your staff and students, I marveled at what an amazing attitude they all had. They were cheerful, confident, willing, and motivated to serve. They all beautifully embraced the servant attitude of Christ:

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

If I could give them all a medal, I would. When I was parking on Friday in front of the school as I arrived to work with the Syrians, Grace and her students, I saw this bumper sticker on the car in front of me which read:

"Kindness is my religion" Dali Lama

Although the purpose of our event was to raise money to sponsor a Syrian family coming to Edmonton and also to send humanitarian aid through MCC to the refugee camps, the spirit of our event, ultimately, was to show kindness and compassion to those who have lost everything.

I want you and Edmonton Public Schools to know how thankful and proud I am of your staff and students that they gave so abundantly towards making our event a huge success. We exceeded our fundraising goal and everyone's expectations. I don't know who all the students were who were involved, but I would be pleased if this letter and an acknowledgement of their teacher would serve as a reference in their future endeavours.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jan Hardstaff', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Jan Hardstaff
Event Coordinator for:

Social Justice Matters
Refugee Response Collective