



Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

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News Release

May 6, 2014
For immediate release

WCDSB Announces 2014 *Community Partner Award* Recipient

Strong Start programs have been a WCDSB fixture since 2004

Waterloo Region, ON – The students, staff and trustees of Waterloo Region's Catholic Schools proudly congratulate **Strong Start** – 2014 recipient of the **WCDSB Community Partner Award**.

QuickFacts

- ✓ Strong Start began as the vision of the late Waterloo Region philanthropist and business leader **Lyle S. Hallman** who believed strong reading skills acquired early in life would set a path for success in school and in life. He recognized that a community with strong literacy skills would enjoy greater social, economic and health benefits.
- ✓ Strong Start's goals are to:
 - Assist young children in learning initial reading skills;
 - Build community by encouraging those who live and work in the community to be involved in supporting its children; and,
 - Provide a meaningful volunteer opportunity.
- ✓ Strong Start began as a pilot community project in 2001 with volunteers using handmade games and activities to coach a small number of primary children in one school in Waterloo Region. The program now reaches more than 2,500 children annually. To date the program has helped more than 20,000 children learn to read and has logged more than 313,000 hours of volunteer time.
- ✓ Strong Start's programs are developed and researched in Waterloo Region. Once proven successful in both skill development and service delivery model, programs are offered to other areas of the province.
- ✓ Strong Start's 10-week **Letters, Sounds and Words** program is delivered by trained volunteers who work one-on-one with children in Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1 -- playing carefully designed games and activities. Using practice and repetition children in the program learn letter names, the sounds letters make, how to recognize words by sight and how to make words by blending the sounds. Currently the **Letters, Sounds and Words** program is being used in several other areas of Ontario.

Quotes

"We are honoured and thrilled to be receiving this award. We are so proud of our relationship with the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and quite humbled by this kind recognition".

~~ **Machelle Denison, Executive Director: Strong Start**

"When I volunteer in the Strong Start® program, I can work for 10 weeks with one child on something specific and see the child progressing as a direct result of my efforts."

Quality • Inclusive • Faith-based • Education
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-- Gillian, Strong Start Volunteer Coach

Related Links

[Strong Start Home Page](#)

[Letters Sounds and Words Program](#)

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board, representing more than 100,000 Catholic school supporters, operates 52 schools and five adult education facilities serving more than 40,000 elementary, secondary and continuing education students in Waterloo Region – continuing a 178-year tradition of quality, inclusive, faith-based education. Follow us on Twitter: **@WCDSBNewsWire - #WCDSBAwesome.**

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