



Strong Start to reading™

"Making a difference in the life of a child"

This year's tournament charity partner is Strong Start, a children's charity that has a special legacy relationship to the Hallman family. Their mission is to work through community-wide partnerships to help children learn to read. Strong Start started as a grassroots community project in Waterloo Region in 2001, and has grown into a fully-developed organization, offering several early literacy programs. What started in one school with hand-made games and activities has grown to reach children in over 240 schools and community centres across Waterloo region and the counties of Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk and Wellington.

All children read. This is Strong Start's vision. Strong reading skills acquired early set a child on a path for success not only in school, but in life. Many young children, approximately 1 in 4, struggle with reading and as a result all areas of study are affected. They lose confidence and their self-esteem suffers. That is why it is so critical to catch them early, before they get discouraged and disengage from school.

Strong Start's Letters, Sounds and Words program engages thousands of community volunteers each year, who they train to work one-on-one with children in senior kindergarten and grade one at the first sign of them struggling with their reading. This fun, game-based program gets measurable results in academic achievement and boosts confidence and self-esteem as these young children begin to see themselves as successful learners.

School readiness is also critical to a child's early success in reading. However, some children are disadvantaged when starting school, primarily children from low income families and children who are learning English as a second language. Strong Start's Get Ready for School program runs in 16 community centres across Waterloo Region and provides 44 two-hour classes to help these at risk preschoolers develop vocabulary, letter sound awareness and classroom readiness behaviours. This program is achieving transformational results at a critical time in the children's development.

"When you give a gift to help you children learn to read you give a gift over and over as their confidence builds and they have success in school and in life."

~Machelle Denison, Executive Director

For more information about Strong Start, its programs and their impact please visit www.strongstart.ca

