



For immediate release

## Media Release

### HWDSB Students Commit to Local and Global Change at Free The Children's We Day

**Hamilton, ON – February 9/10:** Canada's top inspirational leaders and performers spoke to more than 2,000 students from 80 public schools at **We Day**, an initiative brought to Hamilton by Free The Children, made possible by Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Students were empowered to make an even greater difference this year in Hamilton and around the world.

Energy filled the Hamilton Place Theatre as students listened to powerful messages of hope for those less fortunate, stories of individuals who overcame personal obstacles and examples of leaders who took action and inspired change. Host **Farly Flex**, humanitarian and host of Canadian Idol, opened **We Day** along with Founder of Free The Children, **Craig Kielburger**.

Local Hamilton talent showcased at **We Day** included **Todd Bender**, Founder of City Kids, **Mimi Shaw**, musician, **Harlan Pepper**, popular Hamilton band, and **Sapphire Singh**, environmental entrepreneur.

Feature presenters included award winning documentary film director and producer, **Peter Raymond**, former child soldier and Me to We speaker **Michel Chikwanine**, and Me to We motivational speaker **Spencer West**. **We Day** energizers included Me to We musician, and activist **Louise Kent**, Me to We speaker and magician, **Scott Hammell**, actress **Hannah Endicott-Douglas**, and members of the **cast of Degrassi: The Next Generation** who closed the show with a performance from their band **SoundSpeed**.

"We are pleased to work with Free The Children for the second year to bring **We Day** to students across the board. **We Day** teaches young leaders about social justice issues and leadership development allowing them to make local and global change within their communities," said John Malloy, Director of Education for Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

**We Day** is only the beginning. The event is placed at the beginning of the second semester at the high school level and mid-year at the elementary level for students to continue their journey to think critically about the world around them and inspire them to take action. For example, students will be involved in a variety of initiatives that have a direct link to student achievement and civic engagement. Such initiatives include:

- Awareness and fundraising campaigns for Free The Children's Adopt a Village program to build schools in Kenya, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, India, Sri Lanka and rural China.
- Volunteer and donations directed to The United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton
- Involvement in HWDSB's annual Social Justice Fair, a day designed to bring students together to raise their awareness of social improvement.
- Participation in the 10 by 10 challenge, a Free The Children initiative challenging students to raise \$10 for communities in the developing world and give 10 volunteer

hours to a cause they are passionate about. That \$10 can help adopt 10 villages, providing clean water, health, education and alternative income to 100,000 people.  
[www.freethechildren.com/getinvolved/10by10](http://www.freethechildren.com/getinvolved/10by10)

“Change for a better world *is* possible and today’s empowerment event is proof on that,” said Craig Kielburger, Founder of Free The Children. “Hamilton’s young leaders showed passion and fearless determination for social change and they have already made a real impact in the fight against poverty and exploitation of children. They truly are part of the generation we’ve been waiting for!”

Free The Children hosted **We Day** in Vancouver, Toronto and today’s event was for Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board students and educators. The event was made possible at no cost to students and schools through the support of The Hamilton Spectator, Nelson Education Ltd., Scotiabank, ArcelorMittal, and a number of other local contributors.

#### **About Free The Children**

Free The Children is the world’s largest network of children helping children through education, with more than one million youth involved in innovative education and development programs in 45 countries. Founded in 1995 by international child rights activist Craig Kielburger, Free the Children has a proven track record of success. Through the energy and passion of youth, Free the Children has built more than 500 schools around the world and it provides education for 50 000 children everyday. The organization has received the World’s Children’s Prize for the rights of the Child (also known as the Children’s Nobel Prize), the Human Right’s Award from the World association of Non-governmental Organizations, and has formed successful partnership with leading school boards and Oprah’s Angel Network. For more information please visit [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)

#### **About HWDSB**

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has a vision in which all students achieve their full potential. Embracing achievement, engagement and equity, the Board’s 5,000 staff strive to provide relevant, responsive education so that each of our 50,000 students become life-long learners and contributing citizens in a diverse world. With an operating budget of \$484.5 million, HWDSB is proud of the 114 schools that serve the communities that make up the amalgamated City of Hamilton, including Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek. For more information visit [hwdsb.on.ca](http://hwdsb.on.ca) or follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/hwdsb](https://twitter.com/hwdsb)

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**THE DAY WE CHANGE THE WORLD!**