

*For Immediate Release*

February 24, 2023

## **EICS Offers Beacon of Hope to Ukrainian Refugees**

*Sherwood Park, AB* - In recognition of the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, students and staff across Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) are joining together to fundraise in support of Ukrainian refugees and other refugees that are welcomed by Catholic Social Services (CSS).

Called Beacon of Hope, this EICS fundraising drive has a particular focus during the Lenten season to fundraise for support and services that will be offered to Ukrainian refugees. Since the invasion began on Feb. 24, 2022, EICS has welcomed more than 50 Ukrainian students throughout all of our schools.

"Our Catholic faith calls for us not just to serve the students in our schools, but to serve our larger communities," said EICS Superintendent Paul Corrigan. "Beacon of Hope is an opportunity for us to continue to support these newcomer families, and by extension offer additional support outside of school to our Ukrainian refugee students."

Donations through Beacon of Hope will be used by CSS to fund emergency accommodation, meals, winter clothing, transportation, and school supplies.

"Amid their personal journeys of fleeing Ukraine and moving to a foreign country, it's critical that Ukrainian students feel safe, at home, and welcome in their new community. These students and families have been a blessing to us in Elk Island Catholic Schools. Combined with other initiatives that our schools have held to support refugee students from Ukraine over the last year, we pray that Beacon of Hope will offer more solace for those who need it," Corrigan said.

Catholic Social Services estimates that it responds to as many as 60 calls a day from newcomer Ukrainians who are seeking assistance. Most of these newcomers are women and children who have fled the war in Ukraine in search of an opportunity to rebuild their lives. More than 2,500 Ukrainian refugees have been assisted by CSS in the last year – many of them needing emergency accommodations after arriving with few personal belongings and no access to funding. Another 2,300 refugees from other countries have also been assisted by CSS since March 2022.

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*EICS, part of Alberta's publicly funded education system, is committed to developing educational opportunities in the context of Gospel values. EICS is dedicated to providing quality, faith-based learning environments to students of any background and faith, where their skills are nurtured and celebrated by dedicated, caring staff.*

For more information or to request an interview, please contact:

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