



**For Immediate Release
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SJSH Asking Local Schools for Help

(North Bay, ON) – St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School made a plea to all local schools at a press conference yesterday in hopes to raise \$40,000 needed to save the education of over six hundred Costa Rican students. Andy Hazelwood, leader of the school's Duke of Edinburgh program, said if the funds aren't raised, Sarchi North Elementary School will close its doors.

The school must undergo extensive repairs before September 2011 in order to continue serving students and operating as the largest school in the Valverde Vega county, where the average wage is under \$2.00 per hour. The timeworn school, built in 1930, suffered additional damage in an earthquake in October 2010 and in a tropical storm three weeks later.

When the Sarchi North Ministry of Health threatened to close the school, deeming it "deteriorated in 70 per cent of its physical structure", its Principal, Lorena Obando Matarrita, reached out to other education communities for help.

Hazelwood said the principal didn't immediately come to him for help because she felt he and the SJSH Duke of Edinburgh students had already done enough. The school has been helping that community for three years, bringing school supplies and doing renovations each visit. "When we learned what they were facing this time, there wasn't even a question about it in our minds," he said. "I can't think of anything better to do than to keep a school open for a group of elementary kids."

SJSH Principal, Debbie Piekarksi, made the official request on behalf of Andy and dozens of Duke of Ed students and volunteer staff in attendance. "We challenge all other schools in the area to assist us in these efforts," she said. "Let's get together as a district and make a difference for these students."

Representatives from Widdifield Secondary School's *Free the Children Group* attended the press conference to announce that their school will donate all funds from its annual dinner on May 12 – potentially upwards of \$2,500 – to Sarchi North Elementary School. Schools wanting to participate in fundraising efforts are asked to call 705-494-8600 or visit St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School.

Andy Hazelwood is 2011 inductee into the Nipissing District Human Rights Hall of Fame for his work as leader of the Duke of Edinburgh program at SJSH. He received his award at Wednesday's Evening of Applause.

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