



THE PS43 FOUNDATION CANADA AND PENNY APPEAL CANADA INCREASE CAPACITY FOR SECOND COHORT OF CODING FOR CHAMPIONS PROGRAM

Pascal Siakam continues efforts in highlighting barriers within the technological divide in Toronto to ensure youth develop computer technology skills and confidence

TORONTO, ON — OCTOBER 27, 2021 — The PS43 Foundation Canada gets set to go bigger, announcing the continuation of the Coding For Champions program this month with an increase in the number of youth taking part in the initiative that provides students with electronic access to foster, teach, and strengthen the computer technology skills of young people in an effort to address the digital divide in Toronto.

"The more we look at the changes in the world, the root is always technology. I want to help young people see that they have a role to play in the advancement of technology no matter the barriers they face," said Pascal Siakam, founder of The PS43 Foundation Canada. "If I am in a position to help inspire the next generation of thinkers and assist them with resources, I feel very privileged to be able to do that, and this time with an even larger group."

After a successful launch in April 2021, Coding For Champions will see a 50 per cent increase in capacity for its second cohort of the program contributing \$100,000 towards the donation of 150 new fully equipped laptops that each student will get to keep upon completion of the program. This means 150 sixth to eighth grade students between two schools (Our Lady of Victory Catholic School and Charles E. Webster Public School) will have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of information technology, coding, and website building. The PS43 Foundation is thrilled to impact an even greater community with the increase in capacity and aims to empower the students to feel confident and prepared to work in a world of technological advances. The Coding For Champions program is supported by Penny Appeal Canada.

"In our conversation with Pascal and The PS43 Foundation, it was evident that supporting more kids across the GTA was important to help take charge of the digital divide in this area," said Talha Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer of Penny Appeal Canada.

On October 28, 2021, Siakam will make a safe, outdoor appearance at both schools to tip off the start of the second cohort. When the program first launched, Siakam was unable to visit the schools due to the pandemic and the Toronto Raptors move to Tampa, Florida for the 2020-21 NBA season. This time, the NBA champion is thrilled to be in attendance and meet the students firsthand.

"Interacting with the youth is very important to me," said Siakam. "I have missed the city, so being back in Toronto, meeting the students, and putting smiles on their faces, especially during what has been a difficult year for so many is amazing."

Technological equity is at the forefront of the program. A lack of materials, financial constraints, and time commitments are barriers students face when accessing digital literacy and coding education. Siakam and The PS43 Foundation Canada is committed to addressing these obstacles that have become even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is also committed to impacting communities throughout the city and the Greater Toronto Area.

Coding for Champions will take place between October and June 2022 through a 10-week engaging virtual curriculum, adhering to the health and safety protocols of the pandemic. The participating students have demonstrated a passion for coding and were selected by the school principals.

The PS43 Foundation would like to thank the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, minister of housing and diversity and inclusion, as well as the Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board for their partnership in this initiative.

"Our youth are our future, and right here in York-South Weston and across Toronto, the future couldn't look any brighter," said the Honourable Ahmed Hussen. "Today's news from PS43 foundation is another crucial step to ensure youth have the skills and tools they need to succeed, and continue to be the leaders of today and tomorrow. Can't wait to see what they accomplish next!"

About The PS43 Foundation Canada

The PS43 Foundation Canada is a not-for-profit organization that finds unique ways to make a difference in the lives of children through education. Through financial literacy, sports, and life skills our goal is to teach children and give them an advantage in society. The PS43 Foundation Canada is guided by one basic principle: dream big.

About Penny Appeal Canada

Penny Appeal Canada is a relief and development organization with a really big vision for the world. Penny Appeal wishes to create the best societies it can and break the cycles of need and poverty for good with their long-term sustainable solution approach. That is why Penny Appeal works to turn small changes into a big difference.

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