

HAMILTON FOUNDATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FOUNDATION FOCUS

CELEBRATING IMPACT, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY

DECEMBER 2025



foundation@hwdsb.on.ca



905-527-5092 ext. 2103



@HamFdnSS



@HamFdnSS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Susan Bennetto: A Hamilton Legacy	3
Susan's Impact Remains	4
Kal Tire Ribbon Cutting	5
2025-2026 Enhancement Grants	5
Special Thank You	6



Susan Bennetto



**Director Sheryl
Robinson Petrazzini
and Trustee Graeme
Noble at
Kal Tire Ribbon
Cutting**

A GLANCE INSIDE

Welcome to this month's edition of the Hamilton Foundation for Student Success (HFSS) newsletter, packed with stories that celebrate impact, connection and community.

We're excited to shine a spotlight on the trail-blazing legacy of Susan Bennetto, share the joy of our Kal Tire partnership, showcase our recently rejuvenated play area, highlight enhancement grants and officially drop the Save the Date for Prom Project 2026.

SUSAN BENNETTO: A HAMILTON LEGACY

When Murray Weaver recalls his great aunt: Susan Bennetto, his words paint a portrait of a woman far ahead of her time, a trailblazer, educator, and community builder who dedicated her life to the students of Hamilton. Born in Cornwall, England, Susan came to Canada at just four years old with her brother Thomas, Murray's great-grandfather. After their father passed away 11 years later, the family built a new life in Hamilton, one rooted in perseverance and care for others.

Susan went on to become the first woman in Hamilton promoted to principal, a remarkable achievement during an era when leadership roles were almost exclusively reserved for men. Her success broke through the glass ceiling and inspired generations of women in education.

Beyond the classroom, Susan was known for her extraordinary compassion. When new families arrived in Hamilton, she often used her own money to help them settle, ensuring students had what they needed to thrive. Her kindness became a cornerstone of the community around Bennetto School, which was later named in her honour.

Susan surrounded by former students from Bennetto from her teaching anniversary circa 1917



SUSAN'S IMPACT REMAINS



Pictured from left to right: Robert Bennetto and Murray Weaver

Today, that spirit continues through her family, Murray and Robert, proud descendants of the Bennetto family. Murray recently met with HFSS to revitalize the Susan E. Bennetto Award. With a renewed **\$10,000** investment, the family's goal is to celebrate not only academic excellence but also citizenship, recognizing students who, like Susan, contribute meaningfully to their community.

"The only thing we asked," Murray shared, "was that this award not go to the smartest person in the class, but to someone who gives back: someone who makes a difference." This year's recipient, described as a "beautiful young lady who truly gives back," exemplifies the very values Susan championed.

The family's gift is more than a financial contribution, it's a continuation of a legacy that began in the heart of Hamilton's North End and lives on through every act of generosity, leadership, and care inspired by Susan Bennetto's remarkable life.

KAL TIRE RIBBON CUTTING

ALLAN A. GREENLEAF HAS A OUTDOOR PLAY AREA

Now with a glance into initiatives that follow the same footsteps as Susan Bennetto! We were ecstatic to celebrate the revitalization of the Kindergarten outdoor learning space at Allan A. Greenleaf Elementary School. A vibrant new area designed to inspire exploration, imagination and connection among our youngest learners. This project was made possible through a generous **\$15,000** gift from Kal Tire whose support helped bring this vision to life. This contribution reflects a deep belief in the power of outdoor, hands-on learning to spark curiosity, creativity and joy in early education.

HAMILTON
Foundation
*for Student
Success*



HFSS, HWDSB Representatives and Kal Tire staff cutting the ribbon to the play area



Students present a handmade “thank you” banner

2025-2026 ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

HFSS is excited to announce the launch of the 2025–2026 Enhancement Grant Program, offering **\$30,000** in total funding to support creative and inclusive projects that foster student success and strengthen school communities. The program aims to fund initiatives that build a sense of community within schools or student groups, promote inclusion and equitable participation, create engaging, hands-on learning experiences, and enhance student mental health and well-being. The past year we have seen projects like Indigenous Wellness and Belonging at Bellmoore Elementary School, The Sensory Adventure Project at Frank Panabaker North Elementary School, Creativity and Culture Dance Workshop at Prince of Wales Elementary School and Physical Education For All at Lawfield Elementary School!

SPECIAL THANK YOU

HFSS is privileged to be governed by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors. These visionary leaders from across the community, have a vital role in the governance of our organization and we thank them for their ongoing support and leadership.

Nair Lacruz, Chair | Associate Dean, School of Climate Action - Mohawk College

Jen Hughes, Vice-Chair | Head, Learning and Development - Gowlings WLG

Matthew Gerard, Treasurer | Associate Director, Business Services - HWDSB

Peggy Savage, Secretary | Freelance Writer/Marketing Director - Retired

Amanda Fehrman | Trustee Representative - HWDSB

Brent Foreman | Lawyer - Retired

Caroline Wilson | Senior Director, Quantitative Research - Sago

James Empringham | Teacher – Dalewood Elementary School

Lohifa Pogoson Acker | Entrepreneur and Hair Artist

Lorraine Valmadrid | Research and Analytics - HWDSB

Melissa Colbert | Women's Advocate - YWCA Niagara

Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini | Director, Education - HWDSB

**HAMILTON
Foundation
for Student
Success**

SAVE THE DATE - MARCH 28TH, 2026



- HFSS will host Prom Project 2026, a one-day pop-up event for students to find free outfits for prom, graduation, banquets, and other celebrations. Students can choose from new, gently loved, upcycled, and vintage formal wear. Appointments are required and they are on a first come, first serve basis.
- Volunteers 18+ needed! Roles include personal shoppers, change room attendants, inventory coordinators, and seamstresses/tailors.

For more information: promprojecthamilton.ca

Follow us on Instagram [@promprojecthamilton](https://www.instagram.com/promprojecthamilton)