

President's Report - July 2017

I am very proud to submit this Report to you about the activities of the Help Our Student Program for the 2016-17 financial year which ended on June 30.

In May 2016, the Board of Directors authorized \$1,000 awards to 107 students in 52 Ottawa high schools. As a result of the amazing support of the Ottawa community, the Board recently approved for 2017-18 \$1,000 awards to one boy and one girl in every Ottawa high school. With the closing of Rideau High School, the Board further agreed to fund an additional two awards at Gloucester High School; these two awards are reserved for former Rideau High School students. There will also be additional awards that are fully funded by school Parent Councils, school fundraising or alumni who wish to support a specific school.

To read the 2016-17 Financial Statement, please click [here](#). A few highlights:

- While total revenues declined by 4.5%, if one-time major donations (e.g. a registered charity closing down and transferring their funds to us or a one-time fundraising event) are excluded, revenues grew by 9.6%.

- Administrative and marketing expenses increased by \$200; however, these expenses were fully paid by the Board of Directors. Otherwise, **100% of all donations are used solely to support students in need.**

This year, we inaugurated a Recipient Survey to obtain more precise, measurable data on the impact of the awards on the students' lives. A few interesting highlights:

- 80% said that the award had a "very important" impact on staying in school.
- 38% used the award to "support their daily needs" and 44% said that the award was used "50-50 between saving the funds or spending on their needs."
- 87% said the award reduced their family stress "very much" or "some".
- 90% said the award allowed them to focus more on school "very much" or "some".
- 84% said the award helped them "very much" or "some" in teaching them about banking, budgeting and managing their money.

The Recipient Survey also identified students who were willing to accompany me when I meet with companies, associations or individuals, to give a first-hand account of the impact of the Help Our Student Program on their lives.

The growth in the number of schools and the number of students we support has created a greater administrative burden on the organization. In order to be able to continue to operate without incurring additional administrative costs and to manage the increase in workload, we are introducing a number of changes in 2017-18:

1. Thanks to the generous support of Mario Deller, Head of the Technology Department at St. Matthew High School, together with some of his students, a video was produced that captures the presentation that I normally make when I meet new recipients. In many schools next year, I will email a copy of the video, together with the documents that I usually give the students. The Principal or the Guidance staff will meet with the recipient to view the video and receive the documents. This new process will significantly reduce the amount of travel that is required to meet students in schools from all over the Ottawa region.

2. Up to now, recipients were required to send me a letter twice each year - in December and in June - describing how the Help Our Student Program award made a difference in their lives. In light of the success of the first Recipient Survey, students will now be required to complete the following two assignments in order to receive their full \$1,000 award:

- a. The students must write me a letter/email in May describing how the Help Our Student Program award has helped them; and

- b. The students must complete the Recipient Survey in June.

The students' letters from this June are available on our web site, www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com. I would like to highlight some memorable excerpts that best describe the impact of your donations on these deserving students.

"I did not take it for granted because I know for a fact there are so many people in school and in the world actually who would want this and they can't because there aren't people like you in their lives."

"Financially, things have been very difficult for my mother, as a single parent. She has to support my brother and me, paying bills, buying clothing, groceries and certainly covering many more things that I am not even aware of. However, with this money I have been able to pay for my own things and release some stress off of my mom."

"I am so thankful that I was given this chance and opportunity to grow and flourish into the bright, cheerful and optimistic girl I am today. I am only able to be so bright because I do not have the weight and darkness of financial instability holding me down like before I came across the HOST Program."

"My life has been flipped upside down in such a positive way, and it feels absolutely amazing. Last year at this time, I would have never thought I was going to make it this far, yet here I am today, a few weeks away from graduating."

"My family has never been the richest family, which I don't mind and I couldn't ask for more loving parents, but it felt really good being able to contribute in the home when needed. Weirdly enough, having this award has almost helped me in maturing as well. I'm aware of cost, saving, banking and helping, all these things have made me become a more independent person."

"Between struggling to keep my grades up in school and my stressful life outside of school, I had lost pretty much all motivation to do well, to try. When I was called down to the office, being introduced to the HOST program was the last thing I expected. When I was told about the program and informed that I had been chosen, I just cried and cried for a while. To think about all the other students that deserved this money, but to know that I had been chosen made me truly grateful. It made me feel like there were other people that cared about me and believed in me which made all the difference. They believed that I had the potential to succeed and the HOST program recognized that I just needed a little push in the right direction. This in turn, helped me believe in myself. This pushed me to study even harder and I am very happy to have been chosen. Thank you for making the HOST Program possible, I will be forever thankful for this opportunity."

"The money offered through this program has helped me to continue with my hard work at school. This was particularly helpful as my classes were difficult in the first semester, I was helping my mother around the house and I had to take fewer hours at my part-time job. The HOST program took the stress off expenses, and kept my focus on my school work, allowing me to enjoy my last year of high school and maintain my grades."

In April, I was honoured to be nominated to receive a VOscar by Volunteer Ottawa, in the category 'Senior Volunteer Award'. Volunteer Ottawa builds community by strengthening the non-profit sector through a focus on building expertise, fostering collaboration and promoting volunteerism. For over sixty years, it has been a leader in helping people make a meaningful difference in our city. I was delighted by their recognition of the Help Our Students Program.

Our challenges continue to be awareness and a stable donation base. Supporting at least two students in 52 high schools was a great leap forward. Being able to help one boy and one girl in every Ottawa high school next year is a dream come true. However, to maintain this level of financial support or even to add more students, we need our current donors to continue to donate and we need to find new donors. You are our best ambassadors. Please share this President's Report with your family, friends and colleagues. If you can make an introduction, I would love to make a presentation to a group or a prospective donor. In some cases, I may be able to secure one of our graduates to speak to you about their life situation and the impact of a Help Our Student Program award on them and their family.

Thank you for caring about these hard-working young men and women who live in difficult financial circumstances. Your help gives them the means and the hope to graduate high school and help them achieve their dreams.

Richard Lussier
President
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