

# JULY 2021

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*"Throughout high school, I had to sacrifice a large portion of my time to pick up a part-time job so my family could stay afloat. I would choose work over school because it was a matter of not only comfort but survival. It was difficult being 15 and putting off assignments and handing them in late just so I could make extra money. I often prayed for the ability to rest instead of worrying about how my brother would be fed, how we'd be able to do schoolwork if we didn't have wifi, how my family would get anywhere without a Presto Pass. It always seemed like we were short something.*

*The morning that I found out about being in the program, I almost didn't come to school as I had a shift that ended at 11pm the night before and had to stay up to finish some assignments. Hearing the news of being a part of the HOST program provided me with the greatest relief I've ever felt in my teenage years. I was never someone who asked for help, so being given the help I needed, no questions asked, was one of the greatest feelings. The appreciation I have for those at the HOST program is beyond describable. Thank you for being a source of stability for so many students like me." (2020-21 Recipient)*

Every time I start writing this report, my first thought is always "WOW!". It really describes how I feel about this past year, our 11<sup>th</sup> year.

When I wrote last July's report, we were just getting into the pandemic. When September rolled around, I was not allowed to enter schools to meet the new recipients of the Help Our Students Program award. The only way to meet them was virtually through GoogleMeet. What was a disappointment soon became a blessing. I now could meet every student, often with a parent alongside, without having to travel back and forth across the city. I am so grateful to the Principals and Guidance Counsellors who organized the meetings and made sure students opened their bank account.

It became so easy and effective that I now intend to continue using virtual meetings for most of my contacts with students. I will still try to have some in-person meetings in schools that are closer to me in Orleans.

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I am happy to report that we raised \$256,786 this year, compared to \$148,671 last year, an increase of 73%. I especially want to thank the donors who set up a monthly donation. Your commitment to help the students is humbling. A financial

statement is available by clicking on this

link: [www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/2021FinancialStatement.pdf](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/2021FinancialStatement.pdf)

Since 100% of the donations we receive from you go directly to support hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances, the Board had a pleasant task in May in deciding how many awards to give out for the 2021-22 school year. The Board must balance two competing factors; while we don't want to unnecessarily hoard funds, we also don't want to risk over-extending ourselves and running out of money during the year.

The Board made three important decisions:

1. Grade 10 or 11 students who are renewed in June by their school for the next school year will continue to receive the award in July and August. Poverty doesn't end in June and, due to the pandemic, many of our recipients may find it difficult to get summer jobs;
2. We will provide **three** awards per school next year. In addition, some awards are added because they have been funded by donors who wish to support students in a specific school. Therefore, as of now, we will provide 209 awards next year. We provided 134 awards this year;
3. In view of the fact that inflation has eaten up part of the value of the original \$100 award, the Board agreed to increase the award to \$110 per month, for a total of \$1,100 for the year.

These decisions mean that we need close to \$230,000 to meet our commitment for next year.

So, we need your help more than ever to allow us to pay out these awards and to stay financially strong for future years.

In such a successful year, there are so many individuals, groups, organizations and businesses who have contributed to our success. I hesitate to acknowledge them here because I'll miss too many of them. Nevertheless, I cannot express my appreciation enough for everyone who supported us throughout the year. From \$15 to \$30,000, each donation humbles me and confirms the tremendous generosity of our Ottawa community.

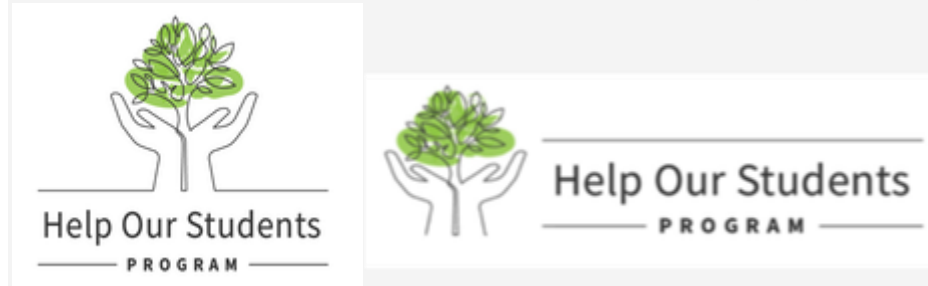
I would like to thank the Board of Directors. They provide guidance and support throughout the year. I could not imagine being on this trip without them.

As you may know, each recipient is required to write a letter describing, in general terms, the impact of the HOST award on their school year. The letters are both heart-breaking and heart-warming. I invite you to read this year's letters by visiting our web site. Unfortunately, due to the large volume of letters that we

need to review in order to remove any identifying items, they will not be available until August.

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I am delighted to announce that the Board has approved a new logo for the Help Our Students Program. The original one was a stock photo that represented our mission: helping hands to support students in need. The new logo was designed by Leslie Horan of Creative Media Design. The logo is flexible so that we can position the text either under the logo or to the right of the logo, depending on the intended use. Here are the two versions; I hope you like it.



Please support us again this year. It is very easy to make a one-time or monthly donation by visiting our web site at [www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/how-to-donate/](http://www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/how-to-donate/). Please consider setting up a donation in an amount that you can afford each month.

I wish you a great summer and I hope this next year brings us good health and joy.  
Richard Lussier

President

*"With my award money, I bought gifts for a special celebration for my family and I spent a good amount on eating lunch rather than not eating. And buying coffee, which helped a lot with my school work. My family does not have a car, and it felt really good that I could pick up things for my mother when she needed them using the money. I went on a grocery haul for my family and realized the importance of budgeting and learned more about cooking. I used a small amount of money for things I didn't have the money for before, like makeup, new clothes and cosmetic services. This made me so confident in my everyday life and a lot more willing to participate in social settings. It felt good when I could take my siblings out and feed them and spend more time with them. As well as go out with friends here and*

*there and afford my own food independently. It felt good not worrying about needing a big job and focusing on school and on my mental health. I set aside some of the money for my bigger goals, and learn how not to lose my money on un-essential things. When I heard I was selected for the HOST program award, I felt like I mattered for something, as at that time my family was in crisis and I was having extreme mental issues. Having the money, I bought books to read although I didn't really read before.” (2020-21 Recipient)*

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