

JULY 2020

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"The HOST program is absolutely amazing. It made me realize that if I work hard enough, I will be recognized. As a student who thinks pretty low of himself, I must say it made me feel important. It made me feel recognized. It helped me out a lot during this school year. I was able to do a bit of groceries, I was able to buy my friends birthday gifts for the first time ever. I was able to go to the store and get myself a treat whenever I wanted to. I was able to buy clothing, I felt good about myself. And most importantly, it reminded me that I was worth it. It reminds me not to give up. I am so thankful for the HOST program because if I wasn't shown that someone realized how hard I was working, I probably would've given up. But I didn't and I'm proud of myself. Whoever created or takes part in the HOST program deserves to know that their effort in helping students has a huge impact on my life."

Our 10th Anniversary year providing support to hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances is coming to a close. It started with so much enthusiasm and hope; we hadn't even heard the term COVID-19 last July. Now, things are dramatically different and seemingly a new "normal" is being created. Schools shut down at the March Break and didn't re-open. Businesses shut down, so part-time work for students became more difficult to find. Fortunately, we were able to continue to provide financial assistance to our recipients right through the end of June.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our supporters, we were able to celebrate our 10th anniversary by giving each student a \$100 bonus payment in December. It may not seem like much, but for these students, it allows them to be better prepared for winter and helps them celebrate the holidays with greater joy.

"The HOST program really helped me. I play competitive basketball and my family could no longer afford it but thanks to this amazing program I got to play basketball this year and I got to get a scholarship because I got recognized by a college. I would have never had this opportunity without this program."

It never ceases to amaze me that our modest program has helped over 500 students in need and provided more than \$540,000 in awards, with at least another \$132,000 being given out starting in September.

We plan to continue to provide a \$1,000 award to two students in every Ottawa school during the 2020-21 school year. We have added the Centre professionnel et technique Minto to our list of participating schools, bringing us to 61 schools.

With the addition of awards funded by donations directed to specific schools, we will help at least 132 students next school year, one more than this year's total of 131.

We received 133 donations during the past year, totalling \$146,323. Twenty-five people are making a monthly donation, ranging from \$15.00 to \$200.00 each month.

I cannot express eloquently enough how grateful the Board of Directors and I are for this great support. Our Board continues to pay all administrative expenses, so that we can continue our determination to giving 100% of your donations directly to help students in need.

"Growing up I had it rough, starting as an immigrant trying to learn a new language. I lived in rough neighbourhoods, ended up in foster care etc. School was never something important to me and I lacked motivation for school. When I got put into foster care , I finally started paying more attention to school thanks to my new support system including my foster parents, worker, the school teachers who pushed me hard to succeed. I never really had bad grades to begin with, but I started putting in 100% effort and I started receiving honour roll every semester receiving 80% averages! And to know that all my hard work has been noticed by my guidance counselor and the HOST program, I felt so proud I went home yelling to my parents."

I am also extremely happy and proud to tell you some great news: a couple from Toronto saw the article about the HOST Program in the Globe and Mail last year and indicated their desire to start a similar program in the Toronto area. We provided some documentation and spent time with them answering questions about every aspect of our operation. They are now awaiting approval from the Canada Revenue Agency and the Community Support for Students Program will hopefully begin helping students this September, giving them a monthly COMPASS Award. My wife and I are very proud to join their Board of Directors. We wish them great success.

I am also happy to share that at least 12 students, graduating this year as HOST recipients, will be receiving \$500 to help them with their tuition and books at Algonquin College. The funds come from the Carman and Gail Joynt Bursary; Carman is a member of our Board. I also expect to announce next year that another Board member is creating a bursary at Carleton and then at Ottawa University; HOST recipients will be eligible to benefit from these new bursaries. Here are some links to important information:

- Our preliminary financial statement for the 2019-20 financial year: www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/2019-20FINSTMT P.pdf;
- The letters that this year's recipients have sent us, describing the impact of the HOST award on their lives: www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/letters/;
- Additional information about the Help Our Students Program, including the Board of Directors, the participating schools, and how you can support us at www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com.

Although I have been reading these letters for the past ten years, I am still cognizant that, even if one letter often sounds a lot like another one, each letter represents a unique life - a young person, and likely his/her family, affected by your generosity. Each one represents an individual striving to get an education while coping with challenging circumstances.

"The money I have received has helped both me and my family on multiple occasions. I was able to buy myself winter boots, so I did not have to wear running shoes all winter because my family did not have enough room in their pay cheques. The money also helped me buy things when I was out with friends, so I did not feel embarrassed that my family could not give me any money. With the money I was also able to give my parents some when they needed help to make ends meet and pay bills. Most importantly it helped me buy lunch at school on many occasions so I did not starve. Lastly I would like to thank the President of HOST for creating the program, but also the people and families who give money to the program because without them I would not have been able to do some of the things I have done. This program has helped me realize that there are people out there that realize some families are struggling financially and are willing to help them out."

Many people have been affected financially by the pandemic. Every day, more organizations are reaching out for your support. I try to limit my requests to you to this President's Report and one additional reminder during the year.

We face a big challenge in continuing to help over 130 students next year. We can't do it without your financial support. Please consider making a donation; better yet, please consider making a monthly donation. Any amount, no matter how small, is important to our mission.

Please visit our web site, www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/how-to-donate/ to see how easy it is to help us.

"Receiving the award has forever marked me. I have learned to always serve other people no matter how far I go in life, and to never forget where I came from. I've learnt that kindness and generosity are limitless. Most importantly, I have learnt

that where seeds have been sown into my life, I ought to sow more in other people's lives."

Please stay safe.

Richard Lussier
President