

HELP OUR STUDENTS PROGRAM JULY 2019 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"Your monthly \$100 has helped me in many ways. Before I got your money, I was very unmotivated to go to school because I was always sad and hungry and just upset with the way my life was going for the past two years. Your money helped me put clean clothes on my body, helped me put the food on the table. And helped me get from place to place. Your money made it easier for me to come to school and actually get work done; before all the help I was stressed and insecure about never having anything. I was able to help my mom, friends and some family over time and I really wish there was a way I could repay you for all your help. I don't know where I would be without you."

The recipient's letter quoted above reflects the real impact that the Help Our Students Program award is having on our students. Our mission is to help hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances to help them graduate high school. We all know that there are no guarantees of success with a high school diploma but the odds of a better life improve greatly. Based on a survey conducted in May and June, 77% of the recipients graduating this year plan to attend college or university. We are not set up to follow our students after they leave high school but I'm very confident that we have given them the much-needed support they needed to reach that point.

We are now starting our 10th year and it looks even more promising and exciting. The Board of Directors has approved giving out at least 126 \$1,000 awards next school year: one male and one female in every Ottawa high school (60) plus a few extras where donors or school fundraising have given enough money to fund additional students in specific schools. As a result of the incredible support of the community, by next June we will have helped over 380 young men and woman in their high school journey, giving out \$525,000 since we started. Many of the students were renewed by the school for one or more years.

Our process is very simple: we ask the schools to find hard-working students who could really use a helping hand to get through school. After we meet the students, they open up a bank account and, each month from September through June, they receive a \$100 transfer directly into their account.

Every student is unique in what they need; therefore, there are no restrictions imposed by us on how they spend their award. It's clear, however, from their letter each May, that the award has made a big impact.

"To anyone who is thinking about donating to this program please do. Your donations are not going to be wasted. They really help ordinary people grow out of not the best situations into better ones. This has not only helped me get out of my situation but also mentally I am humbled. I grew up in a situation that made me think most people are not very virtuous and that in the end there is no sense in helping others because you will only get taken advantage of. However I was so wrong and thanks to large part of this donation I do not feel so alone in the world knowing that even strangers will help you out if you are worth it."

Each recipient is required to complete a short online survey. Some interesting facts from this year's survey:

- 88% of the Grade 12 students earned sufficient credits to graduate this year.
- 77% of the graduates plan on attending university or college next year.

- The award had a significant impact (69% answered 4 or 5 out of max 5) on them staying in school.
- The award reduced family stress (76% answered 4 or 5).
- The award allowed them to focus more on school (76% answered 4 or 5).
- Most of them used the award to buy food (81% answered 4 or 5).

One of the great things about being a small organization, our decision-making is quick and efficient. We received this letter from one of our recipients:

"This has been a very eventful year for me and I've had to overcome a whole lot of roadblocks and obstacles that a regular 16 year old wouldn't usually go through, but with the help of the Host Program some of the burden was lifted off my back and even my sister's. When my mom passed away this January, we were devastated and had no clue what we're going to do but with the help of the school community, our church community and the Host Program, we were able to bounce back from a dreadful situation. I have been saving up the Host money ever since the beginning of the year and when my mom passed away, it was nice to know that I had that money to fall back on. With that money, I was able to help my sister give first and last month's rent at our new place and help her out with buying new furniture."

I already knew that this was a single-parent household. When we read this young man's letter, we were moved to give him an additional \$500 to help him and his sister cope with a terrible situation. It took us about an hour to get the Board's agreement by email and to transfer the money into his bank account. When I spoke to him to let him know, he was incredibly grateful and kept telling me that it would help them so much. Our primary mission is to help students living in difficult financial circumstances to graduate high school but, over the years, we've had a few occasions where Guidance Counsellors or Principals have asked us to do something extra for a student in dire need. Not only does the Board quickly agree but many Board members often throw in some extra money of their own to supplement what we are doing as an organization. I encourage you to read our recipients' letters – this year's batch as well as all previous years. Go to <http://www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/2019RecipientLetters.pdf>.

Another wonderful addition to our organization is a bursary created at Algonquin College by a member of our Board and his wife, Carman and Gail Joynt. The bursary is set up to provide financial assistance to students who are part of the HOST Program. The interest generated by the endowment allows us to provide \$500 - \$700 to each student (32 students in four years), enough to pay the mandatory \$500 deposit that new students are required to make by mid-July to secure their registration. The rest goes towards tuition and books. When I inform the students that their deposit has already been paid, you can hear the sigh of relief over the phone. Many of them will work over the summer to pay their fees but they haven't yet been able to earn the \$500 so it's a big relief to them and their family. An amazing gift from a generous and caring family.

The Financial Statement for the 2018-19 fiscal year is available by clicking [here](#).

We have been very determined since the beginning to maintain our policy of transferring 100% of your donations directly to the students who need help. Even though we are a small organization, there are necessary expenses that are required to operate well, including paying to publish the Christmas article in the Ottawa Citizen; every single expense is covered by the Board. There are no salaries; everyone is a volunteer. It's simply a labour of love and giving back to the community we live in.

We depend on your donations to continue to help these young men and women who need our support. Please consider donating by visiting our web site, www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/how-to-donate . Every donation helps. A monthly donation, however small, continues to add each month to our ability to help our students.

I am also available to speak to your group or association. Simply drop me an email so we can arrange for a suitable day and time.

Richard Lussier
President