

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT - JULY 2022

*"I don't even know how to describe this feeling of gratefulness. It is something that I will never forget and that I will be forever grateful for. I have never in my whole life had the feeling of financial security that I have, that in case my mom gets kicked out, I can help pay for a hotel room, or that I can be there to support my family and friends. Growing up, I was always the kid with no money to go on the field trips, or the grad trips, or being able to afford food or other things, and I know how upsetting it is, to grow up poor, to grow up having to worry about whether or not there will be food on the table. It is stressful."*

*(2021-22 Recipient)*

Folks, I'm running out of superlatives to describe my joy and pride in how the Help Our Students (HOST) Program continues to meet its mission of helping hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances graduate high school. When Don Stephenson and I started the Program in 2010, we were happy to help three students in two local high schools. In December, we will likely have given out \$1,000,000 to almost 1,000 students from every Ottawa high school.

The future continues to look bright.

Despite very little public advertising and promotion, word-of-mouth has promoted HOST throughout the Ottawa community. Even with the COVID pandemic affecting everyone's lives, our total donations increased 7.5%.

With the better base of donations, we made some changes going forward:

- As long as funds are available, students in Grade 9, 10 and 11 who are renewed by their school for the next school year prior to the end of June will continue to receive their monthly award in July and August. Poverty doesn't take a holiday in the summer.
- We have increased the award from \$110 to \$150 per month (\$1,500 for the school year). From the beginning, it was clear that \$100 didn't go very far when you didn't know when your next meal would be, when you would be able to buy decent clothes to wear to school, or when you could go out with your friends and buy a drink too.

Our new [Vision Statement](#), approved by the Board of Directors this past year, aspires to increase the monthly award to \$250 in five years.

That's a big dream.

We are working hard to make it happen by being more focused on fundraising – finding new donors to join the solid base of current donors.

We continue to give our students 100% of the donations we receive from you. The Board continues to pay all of the administrative and marketing expenses. As we grow, there will inevitably come a time when we will need to invite volunteers to handle some of the tasks. For now, all is good. We just need you to support our mission.

Please consider making a monthly donation. A \$10 monthly donation is still better than a \$100 one-time donation. It's really easy to sign up by going through our donation page at <https://www.helpourstudentsprogram.com/how-to-donate/>.

*"These payments allowed for me to gain extra sleep during those times where I have overworked myself too hard and needed time-off, balancing practically a full-time job and school. Simply going out with friends and being able to match the purchases they're making is such a great and inclusive feeling. Finally, pitching in for the weekly cost of groceries has helped my dad and my family very much and has lifted many pounds of weight off my dad's shoulders. I thank you for this help you've given my family and I; it really has added some ease to our lives."* (2021-22 Recipient)

This year's letters will be posted on the web site later this summer. It's a big job to invite, remind, chase, assemble and post the letters - almost 40% of our annual workload. So much so that 2021-22 is the last year that it will be compulsory. Next year, the students will be invited to submit a letter describing how the award helped them stay in school. It will be voluntary – no more reminding and chasing. We have over 800 letters "in the bank" so there will be no shortage of awesome letters to use in our submissions and reports. Over the years, we have learned how the students spend their award money and the tremendous impact the award has on their lives.

We have complete faith in the school Guidance Counsellors to identify qualified students (hard-working and living in difficult financial circumstances).

You can review the annotated 2021-22 financial statement by clicking [here](#).

I wish you and your family a relaxing, safe summer.

Richard Lussier  
President and Chairman of the Board

*"My family has been hit hard with Covid. I have been contributing to my household buying groceries, clothes etc. This award has changed my life dramatically giving me a sense of hope that I could get through the month. For some people \$110 might not sound like a lot but to me and my family it was everything. I used basically all of the money I was given to support not only myself but my two little sisters we would get new shoes that we couldn't afford before, small lunch dates and we became a lot closer these past few months we started making our little "adventures" a monthly thing. I feel as though this money has improved my daily life, I want to get up and be productive throughout the day. It has really made me see the beautiful things in life what I've been missing for a long time. I thank everyone from the bottom of my heart who contributed to this program. You have forever changed my year!"* (2021-22 Recipient)