

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT – JANUARY 2021

*Wherever there is a human in need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference. (Kevin Heath)*

Eleven years!

I would never have thought that our modest charity, the Help Our Students (HOST) Program, would be going strong at 11 years old. Our mission is to provide financial assistance to hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances to help them graduate high school. Thanks to the generosity of the Ottawa community and the hard work by our Board of Directors, here we are, having helped 618 students since 2010.

We are delighted to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors: the Honourable James Chadwick and Dr. Christopher Carruthers. They have a long history of serving their community and we look forward to their counsel as we move forward. The full slate of the Board of Directors is listed at the end of this report.

In my last report in July 2020, I shared the happy news that a similar program to ours was being created in the Toronto area. I am thrilled to report that the Community Support for Students Program (CSSP) has received its CRA registration as a charitable organization and has already started to grant COMPASS awards to Toronto-area students. My wife, Linda, and I were invited to join the CSSP Board and the CSSP founders, Tracy and Fred Cass, are Honorary members of our Board. You can visit their web site at [www.compassaward.com](http://www.compassaward.com).

This school year, we are providing financial support to 136 students across every Ottawa high school. This is comprised of 124 awards approved in May 2020, two additional awards at the urgent request of schools, and 10 awards funded by school fundraising and donors who made donations to support additional students in specific schools.

In the past, I would travel to meet most students in their schools. As a result of the pandemic, I am no longer able to do that. Instead, I have met each student virtually using Google Meet. It is a wonderful tool; it allows me to meet many students in a single day without having to travel all over the Eastern Ontario (we

have participating schools in Brockville and Kemptville). I intend to continue to use this method when the pandemic is over, except for nearby schools.

We participated in Giving Tuesday for the first time this year. Despite the limited size of our mailing list, we managed to raise almost \$14,000. In addition, the Board of Directors and others donated \$18,000 for matching purposes.

Next, Ottawa Citizen photographer, Ashley Fraser, wrote a feature story on the HOST Program, Board member Carman Joynt and me on December 7<sup>th</sup> online and December 9<sup>th</sup> in print. You can read the online version by clicking [here](#).

A few days later, our regular holiday article was published on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. You can read it by clicking [here](#).

The two articles generated a wonderful response, including a \$30,000 donation from an Ottawa philanthropist. All told, we have set an all-time record for a single month, \$100,742, this after setting a new record in November. For the year to date, we have received \$174,586 in donations (excluding donations by Board members to pay our administrative costs). A financial statement is available by clicking [here](#).

Despite the pandemic, the Board has continued to meet virtually. We meet in May to look at our finances and then make the decision on the number of awards for the next school year. The process starts with a current financial statement. I give two estimates: one, the projected year-end balances, (the previous year-end balance plus donations during the year, less awards paid out), and, two, my forecast for revenues in the upcoming fiscal year. Those estimates tell us how much we will have available for the next year.

I am very conservative in my estimates. Otherwise, an overly ambitious projection could cause us to fall short of funds to meet our commitment. The Board also looks ahead to the following year to ensure that there will not be a big drop-off.

Once the Board approves the number of awards, there is flexibility to add awards if we receive an urgent request from one or more schools. Also, additional awards will be granted that are fully funded by school fundraising and donations made specifically to support additional students in specific schools.

I then inform each school of the number of awards approved for the upcoming school year, ask them to start their selection process, and ask them to confirm whether or not they wish to renew their Grade 10 or 11 students who received an

award in the current year. Early renewals ensure that they will start receiving their award on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

I live a very blessed life: I have a wonderful family, I live in a beautiful home, I have all of the food and other essentials that I need to live a full life. I hold a very strong belief that I will someday be asked to account for these blessings, to show what I accomplished for those in need in my community. Managing the HOST Program every day of the year is my answer. I am very fortunate to be able to do this work.

Many of you are equally blessed and I know that you also care about our community and help out where you can. Most of you support your community by donating to worthwhile causes. Your donations are what we use to provide that support, to help students in need. Our Program uses 100% of your donations (after paying CanadaHelps processing fees for donations made through them) to help hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances.

I am asking you to help where you can. Make a one-time donation or, better yet, set up a monthly donation in whatever amount you can spare each month. Donating is easy. Simply follow this [link](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com) or visit our web site, [www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com).

I wish you a healthy and rewarding New Year.

Richard Lussier  
President

**HOST Program Board of Directors:**

Richard Lussier (President and Co-Founder), Donald J. Stephenson (Vice-President and Co-Founder), Linda Lussier (Secretary), Dr. Christopher Carruthers, MD, The Honourable James Chadwick, Q.C., Suzanne Donnelly, David Hill, Q.C., Carman Joynt, Genevieve Kosavic, Susan Prior and Michael van Aanhout.

*The **President's Report** is published twice each year, in January and July.*