

# HELP OUR STUDENTS PROGRAM – A beacon of hope for high school students

*"Each of our students has a story of hardship, strength and hope attached to them. Today, you changed the life of this student forever." Alex Belloni, Principal, St. Pius X High School.*



A high school diploma is an important step to a successful future. Yet, many Ottawa students are unable to finish high school because they can't afford to. Far too many families, through no fault of their own, barely make ends meet. This situation leaves young adults no choice but to leave school and help out financially. While it may help in the short term, not having a high school diploma means dim prospects for a better future. They need help this year, even more than in the past, due to consequences of the pandemic such as lost income.

The Help Our Students Program (HOST) is trying to change students' futures. It provides financial

assistance - \$100 per month for the ten months of the school year – to hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances. The students are selected by the school; they know best who needs help.

*"I'm convinced that your financial assistance has kept many students from dropping out of school and is literally saving lives and providing students with a chance of a brighter future. As one student said, "you are the angel that I needed at this time in my life." Thomas D'Amico, Director of Education, Ottawa Catholic School Board.*

This year, the Help Our Students Program is supporting 133 students in 61 Ottawa high schools; one male and one female in each school. Recipients open a bank account and electronically receive their monthly \$100 directly into their account. The program promotes financial literacy; they must learn to manage their money well. \$100 has a substantial impact on these students' lives.

*"The HOST program is absolutely amazing. It made me realize that if I work hard enough, I will be recognized. It helped me out a lot during this school year. I was able to buy groceries. I was able to buy clothing, I felt good about myself. And most importantly, it reminded me that I was worth it. It reminded 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."*

The Help Our Students Program was founded in 2010 by Richard Lussier, a retired managing director of the National Arts Centre, who also served in the Canadian Forces. "It was my way to get back to the true spirit of the holidays and to try to make a difference in my community," he explains. "Since then, donors have told me that every donation makes them feel better about their contribution to local people in need."

One of the most important features of the Help Our Students Program is that **100% of all donations go directly to the students**. There are no salaries and the volunteer Board of Directors pays all administrative expenses.

Each student is required to write a brief letter in May, describing in general terms how the award has impacted them. Donors receive a President's Report that includes a financial statement and a link to (anonymous) recipients' letters that are posted on the web site.

*"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 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."*

Donating is simple: visit our web site, [www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com), go to the Donations page to download a Donation Form and mail your cheque, or click on the "DonateNow" button. This will take you to the CanadaHelps web site, a Canadian charitable organization that helps charities process credit card and securities donations. Whether you send a cheque or use CanadaHelps, you will receive a tax receipt for your donation (CRA registration N°. 8144 74730 RR0001).

This is a very difficult time for young men and women and it's a difficult time for charities to raise funds. Please consider helping us support these hard-working students in need. A one-time or monthly donation can change someone's future. Every dollar donated helps a young student stay in school.

*"Thank you so much for all that you do to support our students. Your program is so inspirational and life-changing for so many young people. The day they find out that they are receiving such a generous gift of support is one of the highlights of my school year." Carrie Bowie, Principal, St. Patrick High School.*

***This article is a paid advertisement. All administrative and media costs are funded by the volunteer Board of Directors of the Help Our Students Program, ensuring that 100% of all public donations go directly to students. The Directors are: Dr. Chris Carruthers MD, The Honourable James Chadwick, Q.C., Suzanne Donnelly, David Hill, C.M., Q.C., Carman Joynt, Genevieve Kosavic, Linda Lussier, Richard Lussier (President), Susan Prior, Donald J. Stephenson, and Michel van Aanhout.***