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## **Helping high school students who would otherwise 'fall through the cracks'**

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The donor: Richard Lussier  
The gift: Creating the Help Our Students Program  
The reason: To help underprivileged high-school students

When Richard Lussier was a teenager attending the Royal Military College in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., he was having such a hard time that he planned to drop out.

"I called my father and I said 'I'm out of here, I'm not going back,'" Mr. Lussier, 74, recalled from his home in Ottawa. His father gave him \$100 and encouraged him to return. Mr. Lussier graduated and went on to a successful career in the military and as a managing director at the National Arts Centre. "I think that \$100 basically saved my life," he said. "In 1962, that was a lot of money and my family didn't have \$100. Somehow, he gave it to me."

Mr. Lussier never forgot that gesture and, after he retired in 1995, he launched a charity called Help Our Students Program. The charity provides \$100 a month, from September to June, to high-school students in need. The organization has grown from helping three students 10 years ago to providing funding to 126 students this fall at 60 Ottawa-area high schools. The schools select the recipients and the only requirement is that each student must write a letter to Mr. Lussier explaining how the money helped. The charity operates thanks entirely to private

donations, and Mr. Lussier said every dollar contributed goes toward students.

"A lot of these kids, nobody has ever cared about them at all. They just fall through the cracks," he said adding that he spends all of his free time on HOST. "I have a very, very strong faith. I'm convinced that when I go, I'm going to be asked [by God] 'Well, what did you do with all the stuff I gave you?' So this is going to be my answer."