

## President's Report – January 2024

*(Please note: all video files in this Report are large files and may take more time than usual to download.)*

From time to time, I meet the students; it's a very uplifting experience. I met with two Garneau recipients in the Fall. The young man stood up and gave me a big hug. The young woman told me that last year had been very difficult for the family and they often went without food. She was overwhelmed with emotion when I told her about the award.

We are changing lives.

I wish you a Happy New Year, filled with joy and good health.

We are in our 14<sup>th</sup> year. Schools have selected 212 hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances, roughly three students in every Ottawa high school. Sadly, it is often difficult for some students to obtain the documents they need to open a bank account. Along with our "angels" at the Royal Bank, we help them as best as we can.

In October, our donations were down about 40% from the same time last year. Charities across the country are reporting decreased revenues. For the HOST Program, it is an even greater problem since we are getting frequent calls from schools to get an additional award for their school to help a student in dire need. It's hard to say no; however, spending more money now means having less money for next year.

On November 16th, I sent an appeal to our entire contact database, close to 750 people. Thanks to you, we raised almost \$50,000 in two weeks. December donations surpassed last December's. We are now at the same level as we were last year. However, we need another \$100,000 to cover the cost of this year's awards.

I am so grateful to our current 50 monthly donors. They provide us with a stable base. Please consider becoming a monthly donor too.

Our Fundraising Committee, chaired by Carman Joynt, has been very busy trying to find new donors. Far too often, the response they get is. "What is the HOST Program? Never heard of you." So, we have produced a beautiful promotional video. It stars two HOST graduates, along with Tom D'Amico, the Director of the Catholic School Board, Board member Peter Nicholson and me. The video was produced by Patricia Santos of Atomic Lavender and the interviewer is Ottawa writer Jeff Todd. The cost of the video was borne by Peter Nicholson. You can watch the video and share it with family, friends, and colleagues. The link is:  
[www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/HOSTVIDEO2023.mp4](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/HOSTVIDEO2023.mp4)

This year, we advertised in three print media: the Giving Guide, a publication by the Ottawa Business Journal and the Foundation WCPD that promotes Ottawa charitable organizations, the Ottawa Citizen and the Orleans Star. The cost of placing the ad was borne by Board member, Carman Joynt and his wife Gail. Thanks to the brilliant work of our volunteer print designer, Alex Moyes, we developed a new approach: celebrating the graduation of one of our HOST recipients. The ad tells the student's story as well as ours, inviting readers to help us in our mission. You can view the ad by clicking [here](#) or look at it at the end of this Report.

Since it is becoming harder for me to travel across the city to meet our new recipients, I recorded an English and a French video to describe the HOST Program to new recipients and to explain what steps are needed to receive their award. Unfortunately, the videos became a bit obsolete so we produced two new videos last Fall: the English version is done by my daughter (and Board member), Gen Kosavic, who is Head of the English Department at St. Matthew HS, and the French version is done by our VP and co-founder, Don Stephenson. You can watch the video by clicking on the language – [English](#) or [French](#).

Our succession planning continues. We are currently recruiting individuals who will serve as backups for me and for my wife, Linda. We are preparing a Succession Binder, containing all of the working knowledge that will be required by our successors. We're not planning on leaving soon but this planning is sound governance.

We will be holding our Annual General Meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Anyone who donated at least \$100 since our last AGM will receive an invitation to pre-register. If you haven't received one, please contact me at [hostprogram@rogers.com](mailto:hostprogram@rogers.com).

The Board of Directors will meet in May to review this year's results and will decide on the number of awards for the 2024-25 school year. If we are to continue supporting at least three students per school, it is important that we have a good financial year.

I ask you again to support us if you haven't already done so. As always, 100% of your donation will go directly to help students in need.

Our web page [www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/Donate](http://www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com/Donate) has a Donor Form if you wish to donate by cheque and there is a DONATE NOW button if you wish to donate by credit card. I urge you to consider being a monthly donor, giving us what you can afford each month. It's a simple setup. If you were planning on donating \$500, you can set up a \$50 monthly donation. It will give us a bit more money and it's a painless way to support us without being reminded from time to time.

That's the news for now.

I want to finish this Report by recounting my visit in December with a new recipient. He was a football player at the school and he was very nervous about being called down to the Guidance office. I assured him that it was going to be a pleasant meeting, that I usually got a hug at the end. He gave me this look that said, "There is no way you will ever get a hug from me." Once we told him that he would be receiving a HOST Award, he was close to tears. He stood up and almost broke my ribs giving me the biggest hug I've ever had. A few minutes after he left the office, he came back in, gave me another hug and left again.

We are changing lives.

Richard Lussier  
President  
613-983-3633

# WE HELPED BROOKLYN GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL

The Help Our Students Program (HOST Program) was founded in 2010 by two local friends to help Ottawa students living in difficult financial circumstances stay in high school until they graduate.



Help Our Students  
PROGRAM

These students, selected by their school, are working hard to stay in school but it isn't easy for them. In far too many cases, they don't know when their next meal will be, they wear hand-me-downs all through high school and, if they go out with their friends, they certainly can't buy anything.

Many need to either quit school to get a job to support their family or take on too many part-time hours that cuts the amount of time they have for schoolwork. The HOST Program now gives the students \$150 per month (September to June), sent directly to their own RBC bank account. The HOST Program gives them hope that they may be the first in the family to graduate high school, hope to go to college or university, and hope to realize their dreams.

*"When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, my family was hit hard. So hard, that I wasn't sure I could even graduate high school. My family needed me to drop out so I could help put food on the table. Then, one day, I was called into the guidance counsellor's office and told some remarkable news – I had been selected to receive an award, so I could keep going to school. I would be given \$110 per month for the school year. Having that money in my pocket changed my life dramatically. Suddenly, I could contribute to the family by buying groceries. I also bought shoes for my two little sisters, which we could not afford before. But most importantly, Help Our Students gave me hope.*

*Not only did I graduate high school, but I am currently in my second year of college at Algonquin College, specializing in Child and Youth Social Work. Given my own personal life experiences, I have a deep love for social workers. One day, I hope to pay it forward and become part of that vital team. My goal is to help children in difficult situations by giving underprivileged families a chance to learn and grow together. I would like to provide families with the tools to accomplish stability for themselves and improve their daily lives.*

*Thank you, Help Our Students, for changing my life and giving me hope for the future."*

*Change a life. Help another student graduate high school.*

To donate, please visit our website at  
**[helpourstudentsprogram.com](http://helpourstudentsprogram.com)**

The HOST Program, a registered charity (CRA # 0000000RR001), is a rarity:  
**100% of all donations go to a student in need.**

