

HOST PROGRAM HELPS STUDENTS IN NEED IN EVERY OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL

Program gives financial aid to help students graduate

Dreams come true.

When a friend and I started the Help Our Students Program in 2010, giving financial assistance to hard-working students living in difficult financial circumstances so they can graduate high school, we were able to help three students from two local high schools. Our dream was that, one day, we could help one student in every Ottawa high school. This year, we are giving \$1,000 awards - \$100 per month from September through June – to over 115 students - at least one boy and one girl - in 57 local high schools.

This achievement is due to the incredible support we have received from individuals, organizations and businesses. What has attracted them? Three reasons, I think.

One, it's a great cause. Graduating high school is not the final step but it opens the door to so many opportunities that aren't there without a high school diploma. We know that we are helping many Ottawa students reach that goal.

Before being chosen for the HOST, I was just about ready to give up in school. I was not in a good place, and felt as if nobody cared about what I did. Now, I feel like someone does care about me and my future. It makes me want to do the best I can in school to be successful and be able to give back, just like this program is doing for me. Some of the money being given to me by this program went into hot lunches and bus tickets.

Two, donors receive an annual report that contains a complete financial statement and excerpts from the recipients' letters describing how the award has impacted their lives. Awards are going to young men and women who are often in dire straits. Donors can read the moving and uplifting letters that show they are making a real difference in someone's life. For many of us, \$100 is not a lot of money but, for these students, it makes a big difference, gives them hope for a future and allows them to feel "normal".

With the help of the Host Program, I was able to attend prom and enjoy a fun night with my friends. Normally these things are not an option for me. In the end, I was able to feel normal

Things haven't been going too great at home and I've been trying my best to get to school every day. I've used the money to buy food for lunches, clothes as needed, medicine; I've also helped with rent a couple times, and other little things here and there.

The recipients are selected by the high schools. They know best who is working hard to get through high school and who needs help getting by. Every school in Ottawa, regardless of location, has students who live in difficult financial circumstances.

I have used some of the money that I receive from the HOST Program for food at home which helped me a lot in my academics because I did not have to worry about what my siblings will have to take for lunch at school or eat at home. It also helped me to continue saving for my education after I graduate since I did not have to use the little that I get from my recent job to give it to my parents. Since I started receiving this money I have been able to carry a lunch pack for myself because I know that my young brothers and sisters at least have enough to eat.

Visit our web site, www.HelpOurStudentsProgram.com, and read the many letters we have received since 2010. You can make a donation either by cheque or online by making a one-time or monthly donation using your credit card or PayPal. Since the HOST Program is a registered Canadian charity (CRA 814474730 RR0001), you will receive an official receipt for tax purposes for every donation.

We now have a new dream: to keep helping at least one male and one female in every Ottawa high school. It's a big dream.

At this time of year, helping students in need is a wonderful way to celebrate the true spirit of giving.

Please visit our web site and donate today.

You'll be helping someone make their dreams come true.