



# VOLUNTEER READERS PROGRAMME

## 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

This year, VRP celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since 2009, the program has grown from serving one school to 29, spanning metropolitan Toronto from Morningside to Mimico and Black Creek to Parkdale. Our volunteer base has expanded from 20 to more than 200, and we are now reading annually with over 400 grades one and two children, versus 40 in our launch year. And in these 15 years, VRP has presented graduation certificates and gift books to more than 4,000 children.

In January, 2024, the Ontario Ministry of Education announced its “back-to-basics learning by introducing mandatory learning through clear and direct instruction in reading, writing and math for kindergarten students”. It asserted that the focus in reading would be upon phonics. Volunteer Readers has long been advocating a phonics and phonemic awareness approach thanks to the leadership of Marjie Calla, our Director, Education. She has emphasized this approach in our training workshops, and this year has also produced two videos which demonstrate to our Volunteers how to incorporate phonics into their reading sessions. These videos are available on the login section of our website, accessible to all VRP Volunteers.

In this past year, we offered our Volunteers the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities with us through the VRP Job Jar, detailing various tasks (from single occasion to regular commitment) over the year. An astonishing 16 per cent signed up and we are indebted to them for tremendously increasing our productivity and improving our program.

New schools launching VRP this year included John English, Lanor, Lord Dufferin, Malvern and Vradenburg. There was also a waitlist of schools at yearend and we will do our best to provide them with reading teams in the Fall. Accolades for VRP this year included the following:

- *I am really enjoying the Frankland program! My reading partner is fantastic and the kids have been wonderful. I'm glad I signed up!*

*Volunteer Amy ... Frankland*

- *I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for your continued support of our students this year. We are incredibly fortunate to have all the dedicated volunteer teachers at our school...It was a huge success... Thank you again for your valuable contributions to our school.*

*Teacher Sunita ... Flemington*

- *I wanted to express my appreciation to you ... and to all of your volunteers. This is a meaningful program that makes a huge difference in children's lives. Thank you so much for supporting the children.*

*Principal ... Lynnwood Heights*

- *Thank you for such a fantastic program. The volunteers are great and the students love it.*

*Principal ... General Crerar*

VRP's February Fundraiser Love for Literacy Month achieved the target of \$25,000, thanks to our many generous supporters and the invaluable services of UpOnline eMarketing. Over the year, we were also supported by the following Foundations: The Coffey Family Foundation, GHW Memorial Fund, The Joan and Clifford Hatch Foundation, Lamb Foundation and The Weppler Family Foundation.

As always, I wish to close this report with an expression of gratitude to all the Volunteers who so generously dedicate their time and skills to the children reading with VRP.

*Lenora Butler*

Lenora F. Butler, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
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