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The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Thanksgiving Edition | October 14, 2019



Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD
RBS President and Co-founder

After seven years at the helm of the organically grown RBS, I have had the opportunity to reflect on what I have observed and experienced. Whether in the classroom, amongst teachers, one-on-one with a FLEX students, or with the members of the board, each experience has offered a new and unique perspective.



In a classroom, I get to see children light up when they see young medical students dressed up as bears to share knowledge, warmth, and loving kindness. I see the formation of a connection and emerging friendship when an adolescent boy reads to a young child. The parents of reading buddies say just how much it means to their son or daughter to be a big buddy, how connecting with a younger child nurtures their heart.

It’s a circle. As a mentor, I am inspired by former medical students who are now practising physicians. I am continually

moved by their ethics and sense of responsibility to others.

Giving ourselves to a cause can go a long way in making a ripple of positive change, which comes back upon us as the fruit of our gifts. It comes back in the smiles on the faces of others, the joy in a young child reading to their teddy bear, the admiration of a child for their older reading buddy, or the bewildered awe of a child listening to the heartbeat of a medical student dressed as a bear.

We are responsible for each other as a community. Santa Ono, UBC President, said, “I actually think individuals and communities can achieve much more if they take the time to look after themselves individually, and if individuals in the community look after each other.” Whether amongst colleagues, students, or friends, healing happens in community. We know this academically, but our experience in the Reading Bear demonstrates the common knowledge we’ve known for generations.

Seeing the relationships that are created within the RBS are the gifts that keep us giving back. On behalf of the board of directors, we wish you and your loved ones a happy Thanksgiving.

From our Student Leadership team:



Rozlyn Boutin, MD/PhD 2022
Chair of Students

With the new school year upon us, the Reading Bear Society continues to grow and evolve with the help of some truly amazing volunteers! I am very excited to be taking on the role of Director of Students at a time when our student leadership is so strong. We are incredibly lucky to have such motivated and caring volunteers who are truly dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families through their work with the Reading Bear Society. I am so grateful to work alongside these inspiring people, as well as our our President, donors, and sponsors who share our vision and make our work possible!

The RBS has already been busy this year attending the Mom2Mom annual summer picnic and Max Liu, Chair of Canuck Place Visits, has continued to organize monthly visits to the Canuck Place. The importance and impact



of his amazing work there on the families, children, and staff at the Canuck Place cannot be overstated—thank you Max! The Visit to Dr. Bear has been incredibly well received. Since January, dedicated first and fourth year FLEX students have run more than ten visits to StrongStart, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 classrooms at Seymour, Queen Alexandra, Thunderbird, Mackenzie, and St. George's schools, reaching over 250 students! These visits aim to promote early literacy while helping kindergarten and Grade 1 students to feel comfortable visiting a doctor's office and promoting healthy habits. It is always such a rewarding experience to see the impact our student volunteers have on the lives of the children they read to and I look forward to the many visits to come this fall!

"I wanted to let you know how much the parents, caregivers and I enjoyed the visit from the Reading Bear crew. It was a busy day at the StrongStart and they handled the situation very well. Many of the families commented on how valuable they found the experience."

**- Stella Lees, StrongStart
Program Facilitator, Mackenzie
Elementary School**



A special thank you to Ms. Andrea Wilks, Literacy teacher at Admiral Seymour Elementary school who invited FLEX students in for A Visit to Dr. Bear. Pictured from left: Arman Singh, Peter Wang, Andrea Wilks, Joseph Goody, Arjun Arora, Matt Heron (first row)

The Reading Bear at Mom2Mom's annual summer picnic



Brett Collinge

Co-Chair of Communications

On August 8th, Victor Mocanu, Preety Nijjar, and I had the opportunity to dress up as bears and share some of our favourite stories with the nearly 20 children present at the Mom2Mom annual picnic. In addition to our reading session, each child went home with a new bag of books and a stuffed animal to read to. Nearly 100 books were distributed throughout the picnic. This is the 7th year in a row that the RBS has attended the M2M picnic and we are already looking forward to next year's picnic!



Dear Reading Bear Society,

Thank you so much for coming to our Annual Summer Picnic and entertaining the kids with some wonderful stories!

For many of our participant moms, events like these are the only opportunity they get to wind down, enjoy some good food and socialize without having to worry about whether their kids are having fun or not. This would not be possible without your constant support at our SuperMamas events. The kids enjoyed listening to different stories and were delighted to be able to take new books home!

Thank you so much once again for taking some time out of your busy schedules and creating some special memories with the kids!

– Stephanie Connolly, Executive Director of Mom2Mom



The Reading Bear's FLEX medical students



Kay Fung, MD 2017

Co-Chair of FLEX

Welcome back to a new year! I am excited to be co-chair alongside Dr. Isabel Chen again for the 2019-2020 school year.

This past year, we had a total of twelve UBC medical students who did a FLEX project with the Reading Bear Society! We had our first group of five total fourth year students who spent a full month in March with RBS doing school visits and working with the Dr. Bear kindergarten module. The module is an interactive activity that introduces young children to common procedures performed at the doctor's office. A

special thank you to Paul Abraham (MD 2019) and Cheryl Gascoyne (MD 2019) for doing a FLEX project with the Reading Bear Society! Peter Wang created a pamphlet of parenting tips on how to read to young children. Matthew Heron and Joseph Goody, also fourth years, created a flyer for parents with a few additional parenting tips. Our chapter chairs in Kelowna, Darren Guenther and Bhavan Panghali, also continued to further develop and refine our Visit to Dr. Bear module. An education pamphlet regarding healthy lifestyles for parents of preschool aged children was developed by



Gabby Levesque in Kelowna and Jennifer Wildi in Vancouver. Nancy Li had the opportunity to interview Grade 8 students at St. George's School regarding their experience of being a "Big Buddy" in the RBS peer reading program. Finally, we had two first year students, Arman Singh and Arjun Arora, who performed a literature search on the topic of screen time for young children.

Each one of the students had the opportunity to learn more about the RBS's mission to encourage early literacy, social well-being, and emotional health across generations and communities. We hope that through their projects, they have developed skills in working with

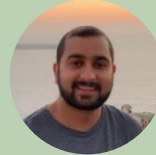
community partners and advocating for young children, empowering them to be strong advocates for their patients as future physicians. We could not do this work without the expertise of the FLEX team who revise each FLEX project. Special thank you to Colleen Sturrock, Danielle Neer, Julie Gelson, Dr. Adele Diamond, Dr. Lynn Miller, Stephanie Gold, Dr. Linda Siegel, Dr. Janet Greenman, and Catherine Holmen. We hope through each of their projects they have developed skills We look forward to working with both new and returning students in the upcoming school year!



Arman

MD Candidate 2022

Arman grew up in Surrey and completed his undergraduate degree in Biomedical Physiology at Simon Fraser University. Before entering medical school, he worked at a homeless shelter and as a program director for inner city children with the City of Surrey. Throughout his childhood, Arman always had a passion for reading and school visits with the Reading Bear have allowed him the opportunity to pass this passion on to future generations. In addition, Arman's experiences working with disadvantaged people have influenced him to be a health advocate for those in need of help. This past summer, Arman and his partner Arjun performed a literature review on the negative effects of screen time on elementary-aged children, with the hopes of developing a pamphlet for future distribution. In his spare time, Arman enjoys playing hockey, golfing, and lifting weights.



Arjun

MD Candidate 2022

I am a second-year medical student in the UBC Vancouver Fraser Medical Program. Born and raised in B.C., I love spending time outdoors, especially with my dog Maximus (a 125lb. Newfie/Italian Mastiff/Border Collie mix!). When I am not outdoors or spending time in LSC lecture halls, I enjoy playing ice hockey. My first year FLEX project work involved researching the effects of screen time on children, and possible interventions to reduce the harm. I am excited to continue working this year with the Reading Bear Society to promote literacy and wellbeing in children.

FLEX Student Projects

Tips for reading to your child

Peter Wang (MD 2019) created an informational pamphlet for parents with tips on how to read to your child.

Thank you to RBS advisory board members for kindly reviewing Peter's work: Colleen Sturrock, Danielle Near, Julie Gelson Dr. Linda Siegel



Reading to your child



Why? You can make a big difference!

Shared book reading

Parent-child shared book reading is the most effective way to help your child develop early literacy skills!

The effects are life long

Studies show pre-K children with strong early literacy skills perform significantly better later on in school.

Beyond literacy

Shared book reading also increases parent-child bonding, emotional control, and the child's ability to express him/herself.

When?

Start as soon as possible

Even at 8 months old, infants' language skills improve with shared book reading.

How much should we read?

As much as your child would like. Set aside a few times a day specifically for book reading that lasts around 15 minutes each.

Home environment

Create an environment for reading; less TV and screen time gives more time for books. Make reading a regular part of your routine.

HOW?

Make reading a conversation!

The most effective way to read a book is to use back and forth dialogue with the following

Completion: Allow your child to complete the sentence.
Eg. "The cat ran up the _____"

Recall: Ask if they remember parts of a story.
Eg. "What did the dog eat?"

Open: Ask open ended questions about the story.
Eg. "What did you like about the story?"

Wh-: Who, what, when, where, why questions.
Eg. "Why was the wolf blowing at the house?"

Distancing: Connect the story to your child's experience.
Eg. "Have you ever been scared like the character?"

Bring focus to print!

- Extra attention on recognizing numbers and letters helps both writing and reading.

- Follow letters with your fingers as you read, and have your child do the same

- Ask question about the print.
Eg. "Can you find the letter E?"

- Bring attention to print.
Eg. "Where is the book's title?"
"Where do we start reading?"

- Use environmental print as opportunities to teach your child.
Eg. "There is a S. T. O. P on the stop sign."

Find books appropriate to your child's level. Also try reading advanced books sometimes for an extra challenge! Use your local library often.

Choosing the right books

If your child is not interested in reading, find a book that fits their interests! Eg. animals or space.

Remember to use both!

Story books are great for developing empathy, critical thinking, expressive language and vocabulary.

Informative books can offer a different set of vocabulary and ideas, and help children develop new interests.

A Visit to Dr. Bear module

Paul Abraham (MD 2019) and Cheryl Gascoyne (MD 2019) developed the Visit to Dr. Bear module introducing children to common medical procedures and healthy living in a fun interactive environment.



A special thank you to Paul Abraham, who went above and above in his role as Chair of Students for the past two years!



A VISIT BY DOCTOR BEAR

About the Reading Bear Society

The Reading Bear Society (RBS) is a not-for-profit initiative that promotes early literacy and healthy living in children through intergenerational mentorship. To accomplish its mission, the RBS uses teddy bears to connect with children. Whether children are reading to their teddy bear at night, practising bear breathing or bringing their bear to the doctor for comfort, teddy bears can uniquely help them in their journey of learning and growth.

What is a Visit by Doctor Bear?

A Visit by Doctor Bear is a 1-hour session in which children learn about healthy lifestyle through body facts, story time and play.

Each visit begins with an interactive story, which introduces children to common reasons for visiting the doctor. Throughout the story, teddy bears are used to demonstrate some routine procedures in pediatric health care like ear exams, throat exams, X-rays or vaccinations. After the story, the children practise these procedures on their own teddy bears using toy instruments as they rotate through various stations. During this time each child can listen to their heartbeat with a real stethoscope.



What is the Purpose?

1. Promote healthy living by educating children about their body
2. Nurture learning through stories and play
3. Introduce common medical procedures in a child-friendly environment

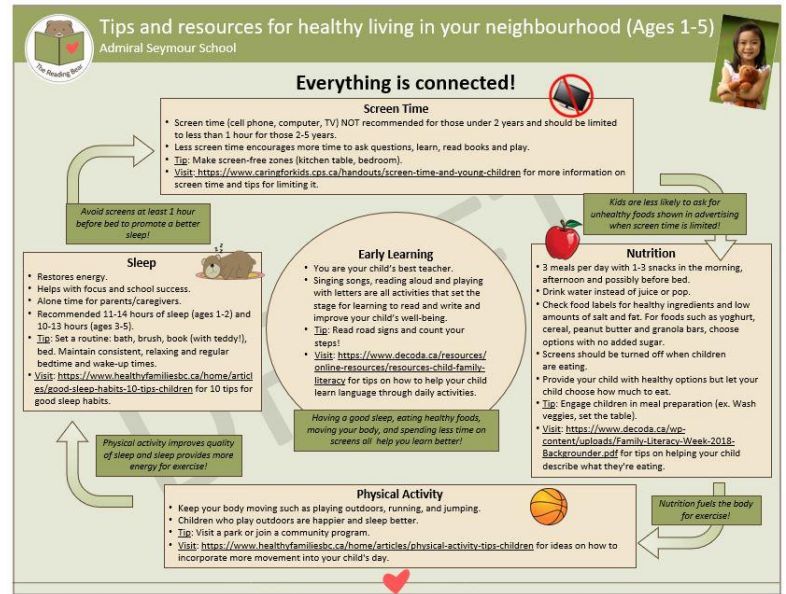
How Can My Group Participate?

These visits are best suited for groups of children from preschool to grade 1. If you would like your class to participate in this program, or you wish to volunteer with the Reading Bear Society, please visit www.thereadingbear.ca.



Healthy Living Resources

Gabby Levesque and Jennifer Wildi, second year UBC medical students in the Southern Medical Program and Vancouver Fraser Medical Program respectively, completed their Flexible Enhanced Learning Program (FLEX) in May. For their project, they produced a healthy living resource for inner-city parents of children ages 1-5. The resource, in both a printable and online form, includes guidelines and tips regarding nutrition, physical activity, sleep, screen time, and literacy. They also included resources, both online and within the neighborhood, that parents can access to help their children achieve these guidelines. To supplement this material, they developed a daily routine map that provides suggestions to parents for what a healthy day may look like for their child. As their project is now being shared with pediatricians for feedback and approval, Jenn and Gabby would like to extend a sincere thank you to the many community members who shared their time and expertise to help create the best resource possible.



RBS Kelowna update



Darren Guenther, MD 2021
Co-Chair of Kelowna Chapter

I feel honored to work with amazing volunteers at the Reading Bear Society to help develop and refine the Visit to Doctor Bear program over the course of my UBC FLEX experience. In the past academic year, we updated most of the materials for the program to better inform early childhood educators of the program and better prepare volunteers for participating in these visits. Specifically, the one-page summary of the Visit to Doctor Bear program briefly outlines these visits. This document is intended to help spread the word to early childhood educators who may be interested in hosting a visit. It is my hope that kindergarten students across BC will enjoy the benefits of participating in a Visit to Doctor Bear and learn more about healthy living. The Kelowna Chapter has seen 793 kids over 40 visits!



Introducing Svetlana Hadkin,
Kelowna Chapter Co-Chair

I am very excited to become more involved with the Reading Bear Society and A Visit to Dr. Bear. Throughout my first year of medical school, I was welcomed into this organization by several incredible volunteers, and I am looking forward to welcoming the incoming students. I had the honour of volunteering with a number of fantastic teachers and their classes back in my hometown of Castlegar BC, and I was very happy to learn that I could continue engaging with young minds through this fantastic organization. I had the opportunity to participate in a number of Visits to Dr. Bear over the past year, both in Vancouver and Kelowna. The experiences that I had with the other volunteers, and with the children in the local schools allowed me to take a step back from the hectic day-to-day of medical school and give back to the community. It was inspiring to see the joy and wonder in the faces of the children that we visited. I look forward to visiting more schools this year and recruiting new volunteers.

Canuck Place Visits



Max Liu, MD 2022
Coordinator of Canuck Place Visits

It is an incredible privilege being able to bring the Reading Bear to Canuck Place Children's Hospice. Every month, two of us go in the evening to read stories with the children and families in house. Our goal is to bring the children comfort, learn some animal facts, and have fun!



Amy Plessis and Dr. Hal Siden at Canuck Place in 2017 along with therapy dog Poppy

It is always very special walking in with our giant teddy bears and bear costumes on for the children and seeing the excitement in their faces. Before we start reading, we hand each child a teddy bear to listen and get comfortable with if they want one. Sometimes we read one-on-one and give the children a lot of individual attention, and other times we will read in a big group and have a great time with everyone. We are always adapting to what the children are interested in and what can help the staff the most. As for our books, we have a

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I can hardly believe it's been three years since the Reading Bear program has started.... The Reading Bear is such a special program because it truly doesn't matter if you're verbal or non-verbal, if you have the ability to walk or if you use a wheelchair for mobility, The Reading Bear program doesn't see disabilities – they see kids who would like to be entertained, kids who perhaps need a friend, an infant who may not even understand what's being read to them, but they can feel the intention and the care.

What I love most about the Reading Bear volunteers is that they have no expectations. Many times, people volunteer because it makes them feel good. In my experience, The Reading Bear volunteers just want others to feel good. They don't care if there are 10 kids to read to or just one child. They are there to fulfill whatever need is required to be filled on that particular day.

Canuck Place Children's Hospice truly appreciates the Reading Bear program, it is unique, it is fun, and it reminds all of us that sometimes nothing is as precious as quiet time, spent together, reading a book.

- Laura Fielding, Recreation Therapy Manager

big assortment of bear books, bedtime stories and sound books we like to choose from. Sound books like *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* are always very popular and can bring out endless laughs and singing. When bedtime rolls around, we give each child a little goodie bag with a book and a teddy bear for them to enjoy again.

It is so heart-warming to see the children having fun and the experience is something we will always cherish. The families, staff, and volunteers are always so welcoming and really make us feel a part of the amazing community that Canuck Place is. We hope to continue bringing the Reading Bear to Canuck Place for the foreseeable future!

Volunteer Profile: Max Liu

In each newsletter, we profile one of the many valued supporters and volunteers of the Reading Bear Society. In this edition, we are proud to feature Max Liu, MD 2022, Chair of Canuck Place Visits.

Tell us about yourself.

I was born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan. I eventually moved to Saskatoon where I completed an undergraduate degree in physiology and pharmacology. I am currently a student at UBC's Vancouver Fraser Medical Program with an interest in pediatrics and child development. In my spare time, I enjoy going on runs, spending time with friends, and trying new restaurants.

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear Society?

I have always been involved in various child education organizations in Saskatchewan and knew I wanted to continue giving back to the children and families in Vancouver after moving here in August. When I heard about the RBS team and all of the incredible things they do around the community, I knew right away that I wanted to be a part of it. I was most interested in the Canuck Place Children's Hospice visits because of how unique and personal the experiences would be with the children and families. My first visit was so positive that I joined the Canuck Place volunteer team shortly after. I now have the pleasure of representing the RBS as the Canuck Place Visit Coordinator

What is your current role with the RBS?

After starting as a volunteer with the RBS, I am very excited to continue as the Canuck Place Visit Coordinator. In this role, I coordinate when we make visits, make sure everyone has a safe and fun time, and make sure every child gets an RBS care package suitable for their interests.



“Being able to bring a smile to a child and their family’s faces are what it is all about.”

On our visits, we read with all of the children and their families as a group or go to individual rooms and read one-on-one if it is more suitable. It is certainly a fun time when we dress up in our bear costumes and the kids can choose from our huge selection of teddy bears to read

with! As I am a peer volunteer at Canuck Place and the chair of visits with RBS, I am able to get to know the kids well, maintain strong communication with the staff and try to understand how we can improve our visits.

What is your best memory of RBS?

My best memory of the RBS was on my first visit to Canuck Place. I was taken aback by how grand the building was, being literally a mansion. Before we saw any of the children, the staff and volunteers

greeted us so warmly and made sure we had everything we needed. I was quite nervous going in but felt comfortable right away because of the amazing Canuck Place team. We spent most of that visit reading one on one with a child in their room. The smiles we were able to bring out were very impactful on me. Interactions like these are what continue to motivate me to pursue this career.

Why do you support the RBS?

The RBS team is passionate about an extremely important cause, and I want to contribute whatever I can to support it. Being able to bring a smile to a child and their family's faces are what it is all about. The entire team puts in so much time and effort, that together, we really are making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of many.

RBS Communications



Katrina Hsu

Director of Communications

I am pleased to introduce this year's Communication team for the Reading Bear Society. The Communications team is responsible for the important job of connecting the Reading Bear with the communities we work with; whether that's through our website, social media posts, newsletter, or our printed materials. This year, Brett Collinge will be joining the leadership team as Co-Chair of Communications. Brett was instrumental last year in creating the video featuring our volunteers' experiences. Tiana Lee is rejoining our team as Graphic Designer, and will continue to add to her portfolio of work including the guidelines she developed for our Reading Bear brand which are key to guide our medical students in their FLEX projects. Lastly, Steven Xu is continuing as manager of our website. Thank you all for contributing your time and creativity to the Reading Bear! The relationships built with our community partners could not be accomplished without your work.



www.thereadingbear.ca

Logo Use

When using The Reading Bear logo, it must not be altered in any way that will distort the logo itself. When scaling, it must be scaled proportionately. The safe space of the logo, which is shown below, must be considered as well. When using the logo, make sure that no other elements are intruding into the safe space. The logo must have the breathing room to stand out against the rest of the elements in your deliverable.

LOGO IN COLOUR



LOGO WITH SAFE SPACE



NOTE
The dashed lines represent the safe space. No elements should enter into this space when using the logo.



Katrina Hsu,
Director of
Communications

Katrina graduated from Simon Fraser University with a BSc in Biomedical Physiology and completed her master's in Global Health at McMaster University. Though her graduate studies have focused on studying health issues at a global level, she is interested in how local community-driven efforts can contribute to improving the health of individuals and families both in Vancouver and around the world.



Brett Collinge,
Co-Chair of
Communications
Brett graduated

with a BSc (Hons) in Biochemistry before beginning a Masters in Pathology at the University of British Columbia. His strong support for engaging youth and promoting early literacy initially attracted him to the RBS. He looks forward to continuing his work with the RBS as the new co-chair of communications.



Tiana Lee,
Graphic
Designer
Tiana is currently

completing a Bachelor of Design at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), specializing in graphic design for marketing. She joined the Reading Bear Society to gain experience and make a difference in the world. In addition, her passion for layout and app design, and love for reading is what convinced her to join the team.



**Steven Xu, Web
Manager**
Steven graduated
with a BSc (Hons)

in Mathematics before embarking on his studies in medicine at UBC. His passion for sharing knowledge and belief in the value of early education led him to the RBS, an organization empowering children through literacy. Steven looks forward to bringing his experience in web development to the RBS team as website manager.

News

RBS featured in *The Saint*



It has been six years since Santhe LeBlanc (Head of Grade 8 boys at SGS) and Colleen Sturrock (Kindergarten teacher at Strathcona) brought together 19 boys to pilot the buddy reading arm of the RBS. Santhe recognized the need to help the boys transition to the high school setting and Colleen recognized the benefits of peer reading. They both also contributed in the creation of the My Bear Book and the reflective writing aspect for the teens. Along with a dedicated group of medical FLEX students, Rachel Liu, Paul Abraham, Victoria Baronas, and Kay Fung, to develop and further integrate this program at Saints and YHS. A special thank you to Stephanie Gold who was instrumental in the reviewing of the reflective writing component of the buddy visits. This arm of the RBS at SGS alone has brought close to 2000 youth as reading buddies (not including YHS 400 buddies and other activities).

Spark Conference



Conference held on May 10th at UBC.

As a part of their fourth year medical FLEX project, **Cheryl Gascoyne** and **Paul Abraham** presented a poster at the Spark

Jennifer Wildi recipient of YWCA Award



The Reading Bear Society is delighted to announce **Jenn Wildi**, as recipient of the [YWCA Young Women's Achievement Award](#).

MUS Clubs Night



Katrina Hsu, Director of Communications, and **Max Liu**, Canuck Place Coordinator, recruited over 80 medical students at MUS Clubs Night in August!

Congratulations



Congratulations for our first group of FLEX students who spent four years with the RBS. **Paul Abraham** is now in Ottawa for Family Medicine and **Cheryl Gascoyne** at St. Paul's Hospital for Family Medicine.



Jennifer Ji, artist behind *My Bear Book*, got married June this year. **Rozlyn Boutin**, RBS Chair of Students, was a bridesmaid!

Best wishes to **Victoria Kan**, Director of Administration, who was married this July to **Sashi Parekh**.



Best wishes to **Colleen Sturrock**, who has moved on from her Strathcona kindergarten classroom to teach in Langley. Colleen was instrumental in developing, piloting, and implement the RBS buddy reading program at Strathcona Elementary School. She was an inspiration to all medical students who had the opportunity to visit her classroom. The educational opportunities and the manner in which she engages with young minds, no doubt captured all who entered her classroom. Colleen continues to be a part of the RBS advisory committee and continues to provide feedback for all materials created by the RBS team and FLEX medical students.



Thank you!

Our successes are achieved only because of the hard work and dedication of our generous supporters. On behalf of everyone at the RBS, we thank you for your commitment to our youth and organization.



Thank you to **Ms. Emerald Yeh**, Reading Bear Society Director, for another donation of bears and tote bags. Also, Thank you to **Ms. Maggy Lee Grant & Dr. Andrea Cantin** for packing bags of books and teddy bears.

Thank you to the parents at **Westside Montessori School** for donating over 250 books!



Thank you to **Phyllis Simon** from Kidsbooks for the donation of books beloved at our visit, including *Big Bear Hug*.



Thank you to **Jaime Sarophim** at Slater Vecchio for their donations of books and bears.

Thank you to **St. George's School** fair book booth for their kind donation of books.



— SINE TIMORE AUT FAVORE —
ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

Thank you to **Cathy Lamoureux** for her donation of books.

The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in February 2020. Please email rbs.coms@gmail.com if you have any stories or photos you would like to share with us!

In the meantime, please follow us on our social media accounts to stay up to date with all the Reading Bear activities!



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