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The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Valentine's Day Edition | February 14, 2020



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

Dear RBS friends,

In the spirit of love, our Valentine's Day newsletter celebrates the power of relationships across the city of Vancouver as well as our Kelowna chapter. This is always a special holiday for the Reading Bear, as we believe it best reflects the message of love we hope to spread by sharing books and bears with children, and it was Valentine's in 2013 when this photo was taken of founding medical students who brought the RBS to their former schools.



From left: Cynthia Gunaratnam, Isabel Chen, Andrew Pursell, and Katrina

As we enter our seventh year, I am delighted to share exciting news that we have started visits at Ronald McDonald House. These visits will be led by Kat Xie and Mariam Manna, both first-year medical students. At the Canuck Place Children's Hospice, we have put in a reading corner that celebrates Valentine's books.



Our FLEX program continues to grow with new members and medical students. In this newsletter, you will hear about recent fourth-year FLEX projects, Doctor Bear school visits and our two new FLEX committee advisors, Lynne Stanger, RBS co-founder who has returned to assist, and Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier. We also welcome Larissa Steidle, a new co-chair in Kelowna who will be joining Svetlana Hadikin, and Antonia Bonnis who has joined the fundraising team.

Underpinning all of these achievements is the support given by our administrative team, communications team, and FLEX committee—thank you for your valued contributions to sharing the love of reading with children. And thank you to each and every one of you for your gifts of time, effort, talent and charitable donations. We're really happy to share with you our numbers to date this newsletter.

Number of Children Visited 2013-2020	
Peer Buddy Reading Program	2516
StrongStart/Kindergarten/Gr. 1 Visits	4204
Doctor Bear Visits	952
CP, M2M, RMH	373
TOTAL	8045

Bear hugs for Valentine's Day! ❤️

-  www.facebook.com/thereadingbear
-  <https://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety/>
-  www.thereadingbear.ca

From Our Student Leadership team



Rozlyn Boutin, MD/PhD 2022
Director of Volunteers

This fall has been very busy for the Reading Bear and we are extremely excited to be expanding our fabulous student leadership team to include Kat and Mariam, who will be helping to organize and run visits to the Ronald McDonald House! I am always so amazed by the generosity and kindness of our student volunteers. The enthusiasm these two have for working with children is truly infectious and they have already brought so much joy to children at the RMH! The RMH visits will run alongside the excellent work Max Liu, Chair of Canuck Place Visits, has been doing at the Canuck Place Hospice for Children along with Sheila Hartstein and Jagdeep Gill who coordinate the Doctor Bear Visits.

The Reading Bear also had the pleasure of continuing with our Visits to Dr. Bear this fall, visiting local schools and preschools to educate young children about what it is like to visit a doctor's office and how to stay healthy! Finally, we continued our annual tradition of visiting the children at the Mom2Mom Christmas party, bringing the gift of reading to those in attendance. Our volunteers had a great time and we are very glad to be involved with such a great organization! The positive impact our student volunteers have on the lives of the children they read to cannot be overstated and I am excited to see how the Reading Bear will grow and continue to touch the lives of children in the lower mainland as we head into the spring!

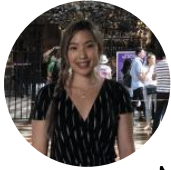


We're on Instagram!
[@thereadingbearsociety](https://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety)



RBS ambassadors with U-Hill preschool teachers

Introducing our new Doctor Bear Visit chairs



Sheila Hartstein, MD 2023
Co-Chair of Doctor Bear Visits

Sheila was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology and Immunology at the University of British Columbia. She is currently a first-year student at UBC's Vancouver Fraser Medical Program with an interest in pediatrics. She loves working with children and watching them thrive in a healthy and happy community. Being a part of the Reading Bear Society allows her the opportunity to fulfill her passion in advocating for the well-being of children.



Jagdeep Gill, MD 2023
Co-Chair of Doctor Bear Visits

Jagdeep was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta and came to Vancouver for medical school. Back home, his mother ran a day home and where he would help the older children with school work if they needed it. He also volunteered with an organization where he helped children from immigrant families with literacy. From these experiences, he learned that he really enjoys working with children and how much of an impact education and literacy have on their confidence, ability, and desire to learn. I joined the Reading Bear to contribute to their mission of improving child literacy and to gain more experience working with children with hope of going into Pediatrics.



Thank you to U-Hill preschool for hosting the Doctor Bear visit!



The Reading Bear and M2M

The RBS has been visiting the children of M2M for 7 years!



Kat Xie, MD 2023

Co-Chair of RMH Visits

On December 21, RBS visited the annual Mom2Mom Christmas party to spread some holiday cheer! Dressed up in bear suits, Jessica, Brett, Antonia and I read holiday-themed bear books and sang songs with kids and moms. The kids loved finding and naming all the animals each book, especially in "The Animal's Santa"! Each child also got to bring home a bag of books and a teddy bear at the end. This event was a wonderful way to share the magic of storytelling during an already magical season. We cannot wait for next year's Christmas party!



Stephanie Connolly
Executive Director, Mom2Mom

"The group of students that came were so lovely and very generous with their attention and time. One of the little boys in the photos stayed listening to them longer than all the other children. His mom told me he's struggling with reading, and she was overjoyed to see him so engaged! She told me she was supposed to be leaving to go to her cousin's house, but that she didn't mind being late because she didn't want to disrupt him while he was engrossed in the story with the Reading Bear students! As always, the bags of books and stuffies were a HUGE hit. Thank you for investing in the literacy and inspiration of Mom2Mom's families!"



Introducing our Fundraising Coordinator: Antonia Bonnis

Antonia currently attends Prince of Wales high school and enjoys volleyball, basketball, and competes in chess tournaments. She has been a volunteer with Reading Bear since Grade 5, reading to young children and assisting with fundraising. She recently volunteered abroad in Morocco, teaching sports and English. She speaks French, English and Greek.



Thank you to Antonia for preparing the children's book bags for the M2M Christmas party visit and to our other volunteers Jessica, Brett, and Kat for bringing joy to the children of M2M!

Christmas Leadership Team Luncheon 2019

On December 12th, the RBS members of the board, student leadership team, and FLEX committee members had the opportunity to gather and celebrate the holiday season.



RBS at Ronald McDonald House



Kat Xie, MD 2023

Co-Chair of RMH Visits

As the new co-chairs of Ronald McDonald House visits, Mariam and I are delighted to grow this initiative in the next year! The Ronald McDonald House BC & Yukon (RMHBC) provides support and accommodation for families who travel from afar so their child can receive treatment at BC Children's Hospital. Reading books can thus offer some comfort to children who are otherwise going through a very difficult time. As if having their own life-sized teddy bears wasn't enough fun, RMHBC is also home to a "magic room", where interactive holograms and wall projection allow kids to express their imagination freely. This magic room is where Mariam and I completed our trial visit in November, where kids were delighted to hear holiday stories in the company of stuffed animals. By the end of the session, one of the kids even shared their own good night story! It's always incredible to see how a gesture as simple as reading can make such a huge difference to a child's day. Moving ahead, we have established a relationship with RMHBC and we have started monthly visits. We look forward to inviting our wonderful RBS volunteers to this program - thank you for sharing your space, RMHBC!

Mariam Manna and Kat Xie are Chairs of the new Ronald McDonald House visits. They bring a great deal of warmth and enthusiasm to their new roles.



Kat Xie, MD 2023

Co-Chair of RMH Visits

Kat Xie is a first year UBC medical student who recently completed her Health Sciences degree at McMaster University. Her passion for promoting literacy and working with kids began in high school, where she

volunteered at afterschool programs and helped run a summer reading camp. She has also done a lot of work with the special needs community as a peer tutor and aquatics instructor. For the past two summers, Kat was a recreational programmer at the Ronald McDonald House BC & Yukon. She is excited to return to this wonderful place and share what the Reading Bear Society has to offer.



Mariam Manna, MD 2023

Co-Chair of RMH Visits

Mariam Manna is a first year UBC medical student. She has an avid passion for reading and is looking forward to sharing this love of reading with others. She has worked in a library for five years and has been exposed to

numerous childhood literacy programs, such as Reading Buddies. In particular, Mariam enjoys role-playing and acting as a means of encouraging reading from younger children. She is keen to be part of this program that works towards early literacy and facilitating enthusiasm towards reading.

The Reading Bear's FLEX students



Isabel Chen, MD MPH 2015 &
Kay Fung, MD 2016
FLEX Committee Co-Chairs



Dearest RBS friends and family,
Happiest of Valentine's Days!

What an incredible new year filled with everything that we love - dedicated volunteers sharing their time, hearts, and passion for literacy with so many communities across the province. We are so, so grateful to everyone who has shared their invaluable resources with us and our communities. What we are incredibly amazed by is also our inspiring cohort of FLEX students. The student enthusiasm is so contagious, and they really remind us of how bright the future is!

Thank you to each and every one of you for bringing your purity of heart, joy, and love to our community and for making this effort such an enjoyable endeavour for us all.

With much love and gratitude,

Kay & Isabel



Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD
FLEX Activity Supervisor

This past November, four fourth-year medical students had the opportunity to join forces for a one-month FLEX rotation. Returning RBS FLEX medical student, Amy Plessis (founder of RBS Kelowna Chapter), continued her previous FLEX project, the Doctor Bear school visit module as well as creating an information sheet for parents with tips relating to a doctor's office visit. Victoria Baronas, MD/PhD 2020 and RBS director, joined in to create material regarding nutrition tips for young families. Two newcomers to the RBS were Jeremy Mak, who explored the literature on mindful breathing, and Vikas Sharma, who created best guidelines for sleep in young children. All

Our numbers: FLEX Students	
2013-2014	3
2014-2015	5
2015-2016	2
2016-2017	6
2017-2018	8
2018-2019	6
2019-2020	16
TOTAL	46

four FLEX students had the opportunity to join in a kindergarten and preschool visit, where young children were showed different topics that arise at a doctor's office visit. In the next page, you will hear from each student and more information regarding their projects. This fall, two second-year medical students, Arman and Arjun, continued from their first-year FLEX project to research the impact of screen time on early childhood. The RBS FLEX committee is pleased to welcome two new FLEX advisors, Lynne Stanger and Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier. A special thank you to Stephanie Gold, Dr. Lynn Miller, Danielle Neer, Julie Gelson, Dr. Janet Greenman, Lynne Stanger, Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier, Dr. Christine Wang (UBC MD 2016), Dr. Isabel Chen (UBC MD 2015), and Dr. Kay Fung (UBC MD 2016) for reviewing students earlier drafts and sharing their expertise with the FLEX students.

Welcoming new FLEX committee advisors: Lynne Stanger and Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier



Dr. Marie-Paule Redelmeier-Schutze

Dr. Redelmeier was born and raised in France. She moved to Vancouver 20 years ago and worked as Research Scientist at UBC in the department of Pathology and at BC Cancer Agency in Advanced Therapeutics. She is currently an instructor in the UBC Medical School program. Mother of two children, she has volunteered at Minerva in the "Learning to Lead" program for young female students and is currently mentoring moms at Mom2Mom. She is a strong believer of the positive influence of mentorship community programs and is delighted to join RBS as advisor for the FLEX team. Dr. Redelmeier received her PhD in Immunology from Pasteur Institute in Paris and was a postdoctoral fellow at Scripps Research Institute in molecular/cellular biology in La Jolla.



Lynne Stanger

Lynne is pleased to continue her connection with the Reading Bear Society on the FLEX committee. Lynne has a BA in Communications, a master's degree in International Education, and has worked in the field of education in a variety of roles and countries for the past 20 years. Lynne is currently the Director of Admissions at West Point Grey Academy and previously served as the Director of Service-Learning and Global Learning at York House School. Through her work with KidSafe, Queen Alexandra School, and the Reading Bear Society, Lynne has experienced first-hand the value and impact of mentorship programs, school partnerships, and literacy initiatives.



FLEX Activity Day



Dr. Trevor Newton (UBC MD '87)

RBS FLEX committee mentor

On January 27th at the UBC Life Sciences Center, medical students Arman Singh and Arjun Arora had the opportunity to host a booth while presenting their FLEX projects and discussing with first year students their role at the Reading Bear Society. There was a lot of interest from first year students as Arman and Arjun did a wonderful of representing the RBS.

"By promoting early literacy, it provides an avenue to also encourage the social wellbeing and the overall physical and emotional health of a child. And by ensuring the health of our children, it assures the health of our communities for the future."

Kay Fung, UBC MD'16, FLEX Committee Co-Chair

See interview page 8



FLEX Student Projects



Victoria Baronas, MD/PhD 2020

I'm Victoria, one of the fourth year medical students working on a FLEX project with the Reading Bear. I'm part of a FLEX group where each of us is designing an information pamphlet for parents on a variety of different topics. My topic is nutrition and healthy eating. Eating habits are learned from an early age, and my pamphlet is jam-packed with helpful tips on how to overcome barriers parents and caregivers often face, including budgetary and time constraints. Particularly helpful to my project were qualitative studies where parents had the opportunity to share their struggles and how they have adapted or overcome them. As part of the project we also had the opportunity to lead a Doctor Bear visit in St. George's Junior school in the Kindergarten classrooms, and we had a blast teaching kids about going to the doctor. It has been a very rewarding FLEX project with the Reading Bear!

Healthy Eating and Nutrition Tips For Children Aged 2-5

Did you know?

Nutrition and healthy eating are important for children's growth and development. Did you know that kids who eat breakfast regularly perform better in school? Parents and caregivers play an important role in this. Children will choose healthier options if their caregivers do, too.

What does the Canada Food Guide say?

Have plenty of vegetables and fruits

Choose whole grain foods

Eat protein foods

• Divide the plate into portions:
1/2 = Vegetables and fruits
1/4 = Whole grains
1/4 = Protein

• Drink more water. Juices (even 100% fruit juice) and sodas contain high amounts of sugar

Add flavour to water with fruits

Slice fruits and place in 1 L of water. Let sit for at least 4 hours. Store in the fridge for 3-4 days.

- 2 apples + 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 lemon + 1 cucumber
- 1 lime + 1 cup (250 mL) raspberries
- Try your own mix



Jeremy Mak, MD 2020

My name is Jeremy Mak, and I'm a FLEX student in my 4th year of medicine. Mindfulness has been a growing field in psychology, but it's relevance to children is still a relatively new and unexplored topic. Specifically, breathing techniques

have been shown to not only reduce stress, but help the brain and the body to regulate emotions. My project explores the use of breathing techniques in helping young children to regulate their emotions. The goal is to provide parents with an information sheet to help them understand the relevance of a simple technique like deep breathing, and to provide them with resources that they can use with their children at home.

Using Breathing to Calm and Regulate Emotions (Age 3-6)

Background

It is natural for young children to frequently experience emotions such as frustration, joy, and fear. Emotion Regulation is how children recognize and "dial down" their emotional responses. A child that regulates their emotions well will be able to cope by expressing them in socially acceptable ways. Children are not born knowing how to control their feelings or calm down. Caretakers play a vital role helping children develop this by modeling in themselves healthy ways to express and regulate emotions.



Vikas Sharma, MD 2020

A big hello to the Reading Bear Society community! My name is Vikas Sharma. I am a 4th year UBC medical student working with RBS for the first time. Sleep issues, including trouble falling asleep and night-wakings, are common among children. Along with the RBS FLEX team of experts, I was able to design an evidence-based information sheet on sleep tips for children aged 2-5 years old, to be incorporated into an electronic resource for parents of preschoolers. I used databases Medline Ovid, PubMed, PsycINFO and CINAHL to do a literature search on best sleep practices for 2-5 year olds. I also looked at recommendations from Canadian sleep organizations and connected with experts in the field. With the support of the RBS team, I am very happy with the information sheet we have created. I am hopeful it will help countless children obtain better sleep and in turn, achieve their academic and physical potential.

Sleep Tips For Children Aged 2-5

Background

- Sleep is crucial for the healthy growth and development of children.
- Sleep helps with a child's attention, learning and memory.
- Recommended hours of sleep by the Canadian Paediatric Society:


Age	Sleep (including naps)
1-2 years old	11-14 hours
3-5 years old	10-13 hours




Amy Plessis, MD 2020

I'm Amy, a fourth-year medical student from Kelowna. I have been involved with the Reading Bear Society for the past 4 years. I love the supportive atmosphere within the Reading Bear Society! This year as part of my FLEX project I created a pamphlet with information on how to help children feel more comfortable at health care appointments. This project allows me to combine my passion for working with children with my passion for medicine. I had never done a literature review before

but the team at the Reading Bear Society was ready to help in any way possible!



Doctor Office Visit
Children Aged 3-5



Background

Many children feel nervous about a visit to the doctor's office. Being prepared for your appointment can lead to a more positive experience which sets the stage for future healthcare visits.

Common fears for children are that they will be separated from their caregiver, will be in an unfamiliar place, will receive a shot/needle or that they will be given bad news. Each child is different so explore with your child what he/she is imagining might happen at the doctor's office.



Looking back at Valentine's Day 2014: A note from a former RBS Ambassador



Katrina Dutkiewicz,
4th Year Internal Medicine Resident

I was so happy to become involved with the Reading Bear during my time in medical school. Reading has always been so important to me, and I relished this opportunity to reconnect with my high school in bringing stories to children who may not have grown up with them. It was such a treat to be able to attend a school visit, to see the interactions between classes, and to see the important place the Reading Bear had at Queen Alexandra Elementary. I was so glad to be able to give a presentation to the York House Junior school class about the program and its importance. I'm so glad that I met Joanne and was able to connect with such an amazing program!

St. George's School Reading Buddies

Thank you to Catherine Holmen, Head of Service Learning at St. George's School, for sharing these photos.



“Recognizing the power of intergenerational mentorship between high school and primary-aged students, the Reading Bear Society facilitates partnerships within and between schools, where groups of secondary students work with young readers in a 1-to-1 buddy program aimed at educating both hearts and minds. During each visit, buddies read, colour, play together, and complete sections of *The Bear Book*, an activity book based on the kindergarten science curriculum that looks at eight different species of bear, including habitats, diet, and other traits.”



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

♥ *“When I ask current and former Grade 8s what the best part of Reading Bear is, the unequivocal answer I get is about the friendships they made with their buddies over the course of the year.”*

RBS Kelowna Chapter

My time with the Reading Bear Society



Amy Plessis, MD 2020

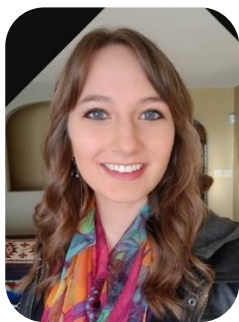
Kelowna Founding Chair, FLEX Student

I first became involved with the Reading Bear Society in my first year of medical school, 2016/2017. I was excited to be working with an organization that was directly involved with working with children and their families in their community. I loved working with the Reading Bear Society, it was inspiring to see the children's faces light up when we were in a classroom dressed up as giant teddy bears! In addition to getting the chance to dress up as a bear and work with children, I also continued to be involved with the Reading Bear Society due to the supportive environment. Dr. Roussy and the team go above and beyond in supporting me not only in projects with RBS but also through the stressors of school. Despite being at a distributed site in Kelowna, I still always felt a part of the team. They work incredibly hard to create a welcoming environment and pay special attention to helping prevent burnout. Regardless of my interest, Dr. Roussy always encouraged me to pursue it and helped me along the way. I know that I am always welcome at Dr. Roussy's home for a warm cup of tea!



The group at the Southern Medical Program is very excited to start visiting classrooms and making a difference in the lives of local children!

Introducing Kelowna's new Chapter Chairs: Svetlana and Larissa



Svetlana Hadiken, MD 2022

Svetlana was born and raised in a small town in BC. She is currently living in Kelowna BC, where she is in the Southern Medical Program - when she graduates, she intends on becoming a rural family physician. Throughout her life,

Svetlana has made volunteering a large priority for herself. She used to volunteer with Rotary Interact and also worked with children in the local primary school in her hometown. She is excited to be working with the Reading Bear Society now, so that she can continue to work with children, and to encourage other students to get involved as well. Svetlana also enjoys reading, skiing, hiking, and exploring beaches in her free time.



Larissa Steidle, MD 2023

Larissa was born and raised in Chilliwack, BC, and studied biochemistry at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. She is currently studying medicine at the Southern Medical Program. She loves working with children

and promoting healthy habits. In her spare time, Larissa loves hiking, snowboarding, and camping in the beautiful BC mountains. She is excited to be working with the RBS and recruiting others to get involved!

Volunteer Profile: Kay Fung

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 Kay Fung, MD '16, FLEX Committee Co-Chair

Tell us about yourself.

I am currently a family physician working as a locum in the Greater Vancouver area and rural Canada. I have an interest in global health and working with marginalized and underserved populations.

How did you become involved in the Reading Bear Society?

I have been involved with the Reading Bear Society since 2013 as a member of the first student project team. Alongside two other second year medical students at the time, we developed pilot modules to present in the kindergarten classrooms as part of a self-directed project in our Doctor, Patient, and Society (DPAS) course, now known as Flexible and Enhanced Learning (FLEX).

What is your current role with the RBS?

Currently, I am the FLEX committee co-chair as well as a member of the Board of Directors. Prior to this, I was a member of the FLEX committee as a mentor and the newsletter co-editor.


What is your best memory of RBS?

My best memory of RBS was seeing the production of "My Bear Book" and the school manual come to life. As a part of the first RBS student project team in 2013, a lot of the work done in the initial days were related to reviewing literature, piloting programs, and setting the foundation for years to come. I am so proud to have played even a small part in laying the groundwork for a structured peer reading and literacy program connecting youths from various schools and across the city of Vancouver. In the last year, with the work done within the FLEX program, it has now expanded across the province into Kelowna with plans for even further growth. I am so excited to see what lies ahead for the RBS in the future!

Why do you support the RBS?

I support the RBS because I am a passionate advocate for children's health. Growing up, my days and nights were often spent with my nose buried in a book. These early days provided me the magic of imagination, and I hope to be share this joy of reading with other children. By promoting early literacy, it provides an avenue to also encourage the social wellbeing and the overall physical and emotional health of a child. And by ensuring the health of our children, it assures the health of our communities for the future.



 *"I am so proud to have played even a small part in laying the groundwork for a structured peer reading and literacy program connecting youths from various schools and across the city of Vancouver."*

Thank you!

Thank you to our longstanding major donors **Café Crêpe** and **Z Gallery**. Both of these organizations truly make the difference for us, and we are extremely grateful.



Thank you to **Phyllis Simon**, owner of **Kidsbooks** for her ongoing support of the RBS and Valentine's Day book donations for the new reading corner at the Canuck Place, Hospice for Children.



Thank you to the book club of **Barb Newton** and **Joan Fortier** for their sixth consecutive Christmas book drive!

Thank you to **Lydia Vandenberg**, Assistant Director Advancement & Alumnae Relations, for organizing a book drive at this year's **Crofton House School Alumnae Seasonal Social**. Many of these books were recently delivered to the children at the Canuck Place!



CROFTON HOUSE SCHOOL
EST. 1898

We would especially like to thank **Joan Fortier** who organized book drives with these book clubs and their members for their generous donations:

- Jackie Bevis & friends
- Debbie McElroy & friends
- Cheryl Hoover & friends
- Judi Narduzzi & friends
- Nikki Lovie & friends
- Janice Brown & friends
- Joan Fortier & friends

Individual contributions were made by:

- Cynthia Abel
- Diane Ayling
- Cathy Busby
- Cindy Teskey
- Mary Loukas, staff, parents and students at Kerrisdale Annex






The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in Fall 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 Reading Bear activities!

 www.facebook.com/thereadingbear

 <https://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety/>

 www.thereadingbear.ca