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-  [www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety/](http://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety/)
-  [www.thereadingbear.ca](http://www.thereadingbear.ca)

# The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Valentine's Day Edition | February 14, 2021



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

Dear RBS friends,

The power of the Reading Bear rests in our love of children and transporting this love into the classroom via bears, books, stories, smiles, play, laughter, care and attentiveness. Being able to dress up as a bear, wear a bear hat, jump in and have fun is how knowledge is translated at the RBS.

We have much exciting news to share in this Valentine's edition. This month, we're excited to launch Dr. Bear visits via Zoom. Medical students will deliver the 30-minute A Visit to Dr. Bear program to children remotely, where they'll learn about healthy lifestyle through body facts, story time and play. Each visit begins with an interactive story that introduces children to common reasons for visiting the doctor. Throughout the story, medical students use teddy bears to demonstrate procedures that children might experience at a doctor's office, such as a checkup, washing hands, wearing a mask and getting a vaccination. Bear species from around the world are featured, including the spirit bear, to promote cultural diversity.

You'll also hear from RBS FLEX students and RBS chapters about what they've been working on. Members of the communications team, Brett Collinge and Gavin Doyle, worked to bring new additions to the RBS website, such as a section on health-related resources for parents, which

were developed as FLEX medical student projects, including tips for visiting the doctor, being in nature, and healthy nutrition.

We'd also like to highlight how our fundraising team, led by Ceilidh Matthews, reached new heights this holiday season and Valentine's Day to bring books and bears to our BC community. Lastly, I am pleased to announce that Eloise Moss, FLEX medical student and Chapter co-chair, was nominated by the RBS for the YWCA Women of Distinction Award. Congratulations Eloise.

In my interactions with the RBS family, I am consistently inspired by the passion and commitment that each of you brings to our vision of transforming health for children. A special thank you to Katrina Hsu, Director of Communications for her stellar dedication for the past seven years. Katrina is the cornerstone of RBS.



"RBS: Valentine's Over the Years" video

Wishing you a Happy Valentine's Day.

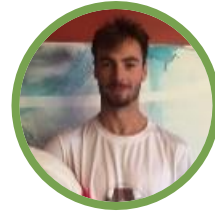
Joanne Roussy

# RBS Communications Team



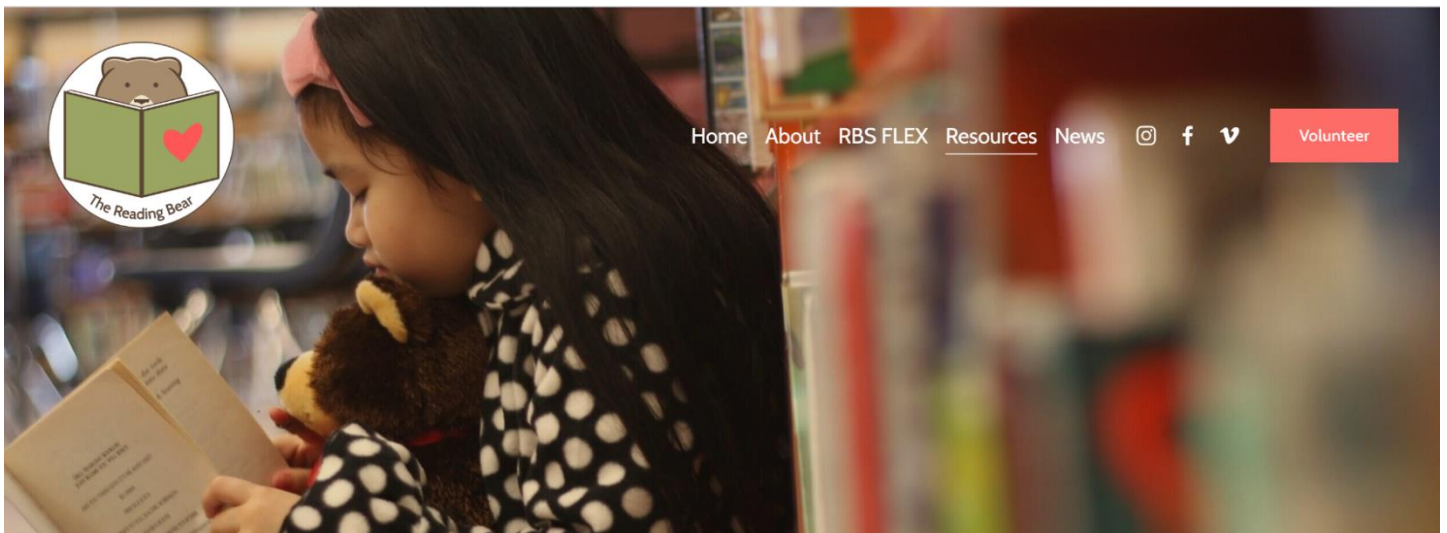
**Katrina Hsu**

Director of Communications & Newsletter Editor



We are delighted to announce the launch of the newly updated Reading Bear Society website, developed by Gavin Doyle, Website Manager, and Brett Collinge, Co-Chair of Communications. Visit the new website to learn more about what we do, browse the outstanding achievements of the RBS team, and explore the Early Childhood Resources developed by RBS medical FLEX students with the support of our expert advisory board. We are grateful for the hard work of Gavin and Brett and look forward to continuing to expand the online resources available through the Reading Bear Society.

<https://thereadingbear.ca/>



## Early Childhood Resources

Designed for young families and caregivers, these resources offers you the latest evidence-based information, activity ideas, practical strategies and best links to support young families and children.



# The Reading Bear's FLEX students



**Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD**  
RBS FLEX activity supervisor

The past five months have been, in part, dedicated to converting A Visit to Dr. Bear into an online module. This includes the creation of a teacher's module that explains activities they may carry out in the classroom, as well as a video on handwashing and wearing a mask. The children's book, A Visit to Dr. Bear, has also been put on video, and all of these materials can be found on the RBS website under [Resources for Parents](#).

I am also pleased to introduce a new FLEX committee member, Dana Anderson. She brings her experience as a nurse and a mother of three preschool children to FLEX.

We are delighted to announce that the medical students' RBS FLEX projects have been posted on the RBS website. Thank you to the RBS Communications team, Brett Collinge and Gavin Doyle, for pulling this all together. We also thank the FLEX team of experts and extend a special thanks to Drs. Janet Greenman and Lynn Miller for reviewing FLEX medical student projects.

## Introducing Dana Anderson to the Advisory Board

Dana is a Registered Nurse and mother of three preschool children. She has 4-year-old twins, a 1-year-old, and a 6-year-old Aussie doodle dog. She has always been an avid reader and since having children, she has seen the enormous benefit of reading to them. It has helped with language development, imagination and togetherness. Dana works in Oncology/Hematology at BC Children's Hospital, where she loves getting to know and support the families. Dana has loved being a part of the Reading Bear in an advisory role due to her experience as a mother and nurse.



## FLEX Project Spotlight: Bhavan Panghali

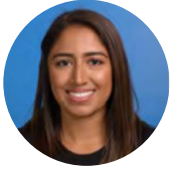


**Bhavan Panghali, MD 2021**  
RBS FLEX Student Mentor

As part of my FLEX project, a scholarly activity block for UBC Faculty of Medicine students, I worked with fellow peers to brainstorm practical and digestible information relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic to share with parents. I developed a set of handwashing hygiene resources aimed at teaching preschool age children how to wash hands. I addressed common misconceptions and questions about effective handwashing.



# FLEX Student Projects



Anisha Bains, MD 2023

FLEX Student

This year has brought unique challenges for students of all ages, as well as their parents, as we tread into the uncertain waters that are online schooling. With the limited access RBS has to classrooms for Dr. Bear Visits, I focused my FLEX work on creating a simplified version of A Visit to Dr. Bear for teachers to use with their students. This module is designed so that teachers themselves can present A Visit to Dr. Bear Visit in their classrooms with minimal materials or preparation. The goal of this project is to provide students with the experience of a Dr. Bear visit, while providing teachers with an easy to follow guide for presenting the module. I have also created a short feedback survey for teachers to complete after they use this module.

With young children spending more time online and removed from in-person interactions with their peers, the need for easy and effective calming techniques is becoming increasingly important. Bear Breathing is one tool that is utilized in programs run by the Reading Bear Society, such as the Dr. Bear school visits. I have been working on finalizing a pamphlet focusing on Bear



## Stations (5-10 minutes per station)

Run through each station using the instructions below. This guide is designed for stations to be presented in a sequential manner, with teachers demonstrating the station first, then allowing their students to practice with their own bear. The presentation of stations can be adapted, meaning you can select the stations that you wish to present. Suggested phrases are shown below in green text, however, feel free to improvise your script as your present.

### 1. Hand Washing + Mask Station

#### Materials:

- Teddy Bear
- Mask
- Hand Sanitizer or Soap



- Start by showing your students a video demonstration of proper handwashing, see [here](#).
- Explain to the students that to remove germs, we should wash our hands for 20 seconds, while singing the Happy birthday song.
  - Can you count to 20 with me?
- Next, demonstrate proper handwashing for your students, highlighting the important steps.
  - First, we turn on the sink and we'll get our hands wet. Next, we'll put some soap on our hands.
  - Can everyone help me sing Happy Birthday while I wash my hands?
  - Let's wash off the soap and dry our hands with a paper towel!
- Next, ask students why they might wear a **mask**. Put your mask on incorrectly and ask students if this is the proper way to wear one.
  - Why are masks important?
  - Can everyone show me how we properly wear a mask?
- Take some time to touch on sneezing. Ask students how they cover their mouths when they sneeze.
  - It's important we sneeze into our sleeves so that we don't spread our germs!
  - Can everyone show me how to sneeze safely?

### 2. Check Up Station

#### Materials:

- Teddy Bear
- Otoscope
- Tongue Depressor
- Reflex Hammer
- Thermometer

- Start by introducing why someone might go to the doctors for a check-up.
  - Sometimes we don't feel well, so we need to go to the doctors to find out why. Doctors don't always know what's wrong just by looking at you, so they need special tools.
- The **otoscope** is used to look inside the ears. Show students how to look inside our bears ears. Encourage them to practise on their teddy bear. Ask them what they see.
  - Can everyone say otoscope? Repeat after me:

Breathing, providing information about how to engage in this technique and the benefits associated with regular practice. I began this project with a survey of existing evidence-based literature, using the information obtained to guide its creation. The pamphlet is designed to be a resource for parents of children ages 3-5 years, providing them with suggestions as to how they can help their children engage in this practice to help calm their thoughts. Looking forward, I will be starting a literary search exploring the topic of emotional regulation in young children, as emotional regulation is at the heart of practices such as Bear Breathing.



## Eloise Moss, MD 2023

FLEX Student

Working from home this year has given me the opportunity to get creative with developing new educational materials for the Reading Bear Society. For my second year FLEX project, I created two videos to both entertain and educate children about the importance of health and hygiene during the pandemic. After identifying gaps in infection control information for children published by other organizations, I made a 3-minute interactive video demonstrating how to correctly wash our hands and wear a mask. This video was developed using evidence-based public health information from the BC Centre for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and the Canadian Pediatric Society. It was reviewed by physicians, educators, parents, and public health expert Joanne Archer (RN, BTEch, MA, Education and Practice Coordinator, BC Provincial Infection Control Network).

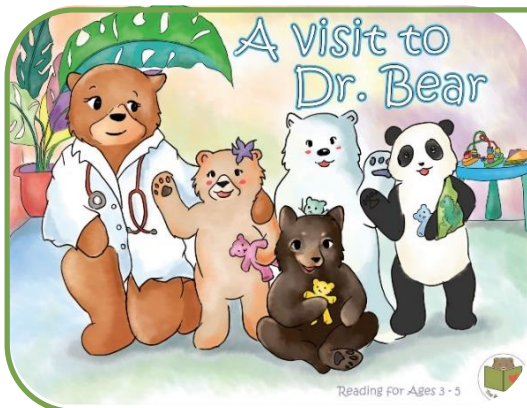


Upon release in December, the video has been well received by teachers, parents, and children alike. Over the past several months I have also been working on a video version of the children's book, *A Visit to Dr. Bear*, which was released in January. The story, which educates children about doctor visits, emotional regulation, and healthy habits, is now more accessible to children across the province. Both videos have been incorporated into the virtual *A Visit to Dr. Bear* program, which Anisha and I have put together as Vancouver Chapter Co-Chairs.



### Video: Wash Your Hands and Wear a Mask with the Reading Bear Society

<https://youtu.be/8liueug6Dls>



### Video: *A Visit to Dr. Bear* - Story Time with the Reading Bear Society

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtOmsS6ZH7c>

# RBS Vancouver Chapter



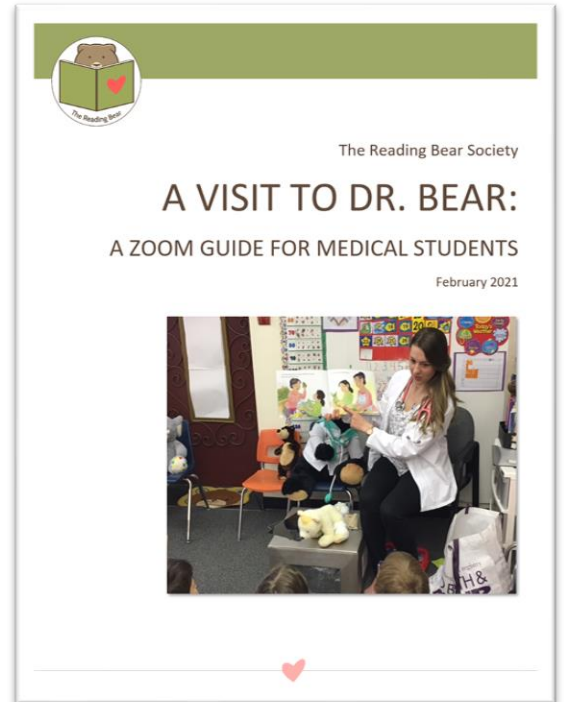
**Anisha Bains & Eloise Moss**

Co-Chairs of Vancouver Chapter



With the new year upon us, the Vancouver Chapter of the Reading Bear Society is excited to roll out an online version of the Dr. Bear school visits program! Previously, medical students have conducted these visits in-person, in classrooms all over Vancouver. However, in the era of social distancing, in-person visits are no longer possible.

Understanding the importance of community outreach, we have adapted the current school visits program so it can be done virtually! We created an instructional manual for volunteers to conduct the visits over Zoom as well as a module that teachers can use to run the visits independently. We have met twice with the Chapter Chairs from the other RBS sites to introduce them to the program and provide training on facilitating the Zoom sessions. The virtual A Visit to Dr. Bear program was piloted with Kindergarten classes in November 2020 and February 2021. The pilot visits were incredibly successful and allowed us to connect with children in our community in a safe, socially distant manner. The children practiced breathing techniques, listened to heart sounds, and even learned how to check reflexes, all virtually! Moving forward, we are hoping to roll out this virtual program at other RBS Chapters, and begin training volunteers. We anticipate the virtual Dr. Bear Visits program will be in full swing by Spring 2021. Finally, we have been involved in connecting the Reading Bear Society with Community Womxn's Initiative to donate books and teddy bears to children residing in shelters over the holiday season.



Kat and Mariam, Co-Chairs of the Dr. Bear Zoom visits, are excited to be back and leading Dr. Bear sessions via Zoom! These will be fun and interactive sessions that will introduce children to the tools used at the doctor's office. Dr. Bear will teach everyone how fun going to the doctor is. ❤️ ❤️



# Fundraising Update



**Ceilidh Matthews**  
Co-Chair of Fundraising



**Antonia Bonnis**  
Co-Chair of Fundraising

Having books in the home is proven to help with success in school. The RBS, for the seventh consecutive year, continues to strive to ensure that children in our community have books and bears at home all while meeting the COVID-19 safety protocols, as outlined by Public Health.

My journey with the Reading Bear started in Grade 9. My motivation to lead the fundraising team stemmed from my earlier work with the RBS when I had the opportunity to deliver books and teddy bears to young children in our local schools. I was also inspired by my brother Liam, who had the opportunity to taking the RBS buddy reading to schools in Hamilton. Over the past eight years with the RBS, I was able to see first-hand the joy and excitement as children heard stories and received book bags at the annual Mom2Mom picnic and at the Canuck Place, Hospice for Children.



In the fall of 2020, I took on a leadership role with the RBS as a Chair of Fundraising. One of my first tasks as a Chair was to lead and facilitate the delivery of books for Thanksgiving via our sister partner,

*Thank you to BC Liquor Stores for the donation of 250 bears. Pictured is Krisann Harriott from the Jericho Corner Liquor Store.*



*From left to right: Antonia Bonnis, Julie Roussy-Newton, Kaylee Longpre, and Adam Plummer, Manager of the Boulevard Coffee Roasting Company at UBC.*

Community Womxn's Initiative (CWI), and to plan a RBS holiday fundraising initiative. I worked alongside with RBS Fundraising co-chair Antonia Bonnis, RBS fundraising volunteers, Julie Roussy Newton, and Kaylee Longpre. A special thank you to Nicole Minielly for managing the social media side of the fundraising activities.

Holiday fundraising was launched at the Blvd Coffee Company in November. Throughout December, the fundraising team worked to collect, sort and prepare bags of books and teddy bears for delivery. Ultimately, the RBS was able to provide over 1,000 new and gently used books, 300 teddy bears, and 100 advent calendars to various sites across Vancouver and the RBS Kelowna Chapter. The fundraising team also sent books and bears to shelters. For Valentine's Day, the RBS will be spreading love by delivering 200 books and 120 reading bears to Thunderbird School.

With the help of Camilla Ting, these books and brand-new bears (donated by BC Liquor Stores) will find a

home with Thunderbird students. My first experience with the RBS seven years ago was a reading buddy visit to Thunderbird School, so I am thrilled to reconnect with the community this Valentine's Day.

The holiday initiative was a wonderful success because of the generosity of a multitude of RBS supporters. Special thanks to everyone who organized books and teddy bear drives: Maria Gonzalez at University Hill Preschool, Dr. Yuki Namekawa and the PAC at Norma Rose Point School, Antonia Bonnis at Prince of Wales high school, and Lauren Rideout at Kitsilano Secondary, were instrumental in gathering new books. As well, thank you to the Jericho BC Liquor Stores for their generous donation of brand-new teddy bears. Finally, thank you to Antonia Bonnis for working tirelessly to organize and deliver books, bears, and gifts for children and mothers to our partners at Mom2Mom and to local inner-city classrooms.

Without our wonderful volunteers and sponsors, these holiday initiatives would not have been possible. We are so grateful for your kindness and commitment to the RBS. Your contribution to helping children discover the joy of reading is deeply appreciated and makes a tangible difference in the community!



*Ceilidh Matthews and Camilla Ting, teacher at Thunderbird School.*



*Dr. Trevor Newton, RBS Secretary/Treasurer, and Caitlin Elgar, Mom2Mom Program Coordinator.*

On behalf of the team at Mom2Mom, I wish to express our sincerest gratitude for your ongoing support, generosity and kindness. The packages created for the moms and children for the Holidays were thoughtful and creative. Thank you for the wonderful gifts.

Stephanie DiGiacomo

Resource and Community Engagement Coordinator

Mom2Mom Charity





# RBS Kelowna Chapter

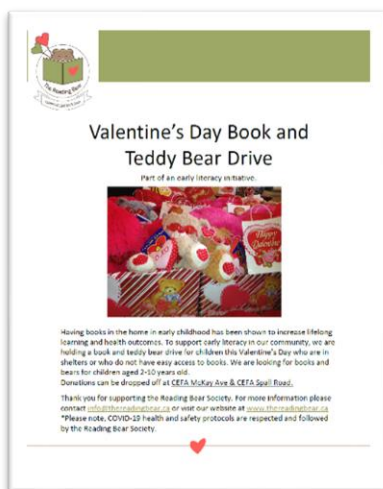


**Larissa Steidle, MD 2023**  
Co-Chair of Kelowna Chapter

It's been a wonderful year so far at the Kelowna Chapter of the RBS! This year we welcomed a new co-chair, Austin Pietramala, MD 2024. We have also welcomed Ms. Danielle Neer and Dr. Christine Voss as advisors for the chapter. Ms. Neer is a Learning Disabilities Intervention Program teacher for grade 3-5 students in SD23 and first started with the RBS in Vancouver in 2014. Dr. Voss is a Clinical Assistant Professor with the UBC Department of Pediatrics. Dr. Voss is also a member of the RBS FLEX committee and Ms. Neer the RBS advisory team. We are very excited to have them join the Reading Bear Kelowna Chapter family.

In December, we conducted a book and teddy bear drive. We collected many boxes of donations and were able to provide several boxes of book/bear bags to Kelowna Women's Shelter for Christmas. Thank you to our community members for your generosity, without whom, this initiative would not have been possible. A special thank you to Stephanie Lapointe, the principal of CEFA Early Learning who has partnered with us to continue collecting donations of bears and books.

In 2021, we are conducting another book and teddy bear drive, where all our collected donations will be given to Mamas for Mamas, a Kelowna-based poverty relief agency for mothers and caregivers. We are also working towards conducting virtual Dr. Bear visits. These will be an online version of our Visit to Dr. Bear program, allowing us to reach children in elementary schools and StrongStart programs in a safe way during the pandemic. We are looking forward to seeing what the new year brings for RBS Kelowna!



## Valentine's Day Book Drive in Kelowna

Dr. Voss, FLEX course director in Kelowna, hosted a book and teddy bear drive at CEFA with help from her son, Aidan (pictured left).

## Introducing Co-Chair of Kelowna Chapter and RBS Kelowna Advisors



### Austin Pietramala, MD 2024

Co-Chair of Kelowna Chapter

Austin studied chemical biology at Thompson Rivers University before moving to Kelowna to study medicine at the Southern Medical Program. Austin has volunteered with the Canucks Autism Network and has coached youth soccer of all ages. When he isn't studying, he loves playing sports (especially soccer), playing music, running, and hiking. Austin is excited to be working with the Reading Bear and looks forward to bringing his positive enthusiasm to teach children about the importance of literacy.



### Christine Voss, PhD

RBS Kelowna Advisor

Dr. Voss is a pediatric health researcher based at the UBC Faculty of Medicine Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Management in Kelowna, BC. She is also the Flex Director for the Southern Medical Program, a bicycle-enthusiast, a volunteer therapy dog handler, and new(ish) mom to one. Dr. Voss has a keen research interest in how children's health behaviours (such as physical activity) are related to their physical health and mental well-being.



### Danielle Neer, MEd, MA

RBS Kelowna Advisor

Danielle Neer holds an M.Ed. from the University of Western Ontario and an MA in Child Study and Education from the Eric Jackman Institute of Child Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). She is currently a teacher with the Vancouver School Board, a volunteer with organizations in the West End neighbourhood, and a mom to two young (and active) boys. She currently works in Student Support Services for the Learning Disabilities Intervention Program in Kelowna, BC.



## Healthcare Worker Resources

During these difficult times your mental health is a priority. Whether you're looking for up to date credible information to ease your mind, a free workshop to learn about resiliency, or quick daily coping tips, it's here. This site provides a diverse collection of quick and easy resources to support your mental health.

<https://www.careforcaregivers.ca/>

# News

## Eloise Moss nominated for YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award

Congratulations on Eloise's qualified nomination for the 2021 YWCA Young Women of Distinction Award. Eloise was nominated by Drs. Joanne Roussy and Kay Fung for her scholarly work with the FLEX RBS, Vancouver Chapter Chair and as a founding member of the Community Womxn's Initiative. The YWCA Young Women of Distinction Awards Gala will be held on June 7th. Your family at the RBS is cheering you on. She follows in the footsteps of two RBS members, Isabel Chen (2014) and Jennifer Wildi (2019), who both received this prestigious award.



## RBS Board Meeting

The RBS board meeting was held in November via Zoom. Dr. Isabel Chen, Vice-President in Los Angeles; and Emerald Yeh, Director in Hong Kong, were able to join in from afar alongside Katrina Hsu, Director of Communications; Dr. Trevor Newton, Secretary/Treasurer; and Dr. Joanne Roussy, President.

## Congratulations



Congratulations to Victoria Kan, RBS Director of Administration, on her new baby girl who was born in December. As new parents may you be filled with much joy and happiness with the arrival of your new baby. Wishing your new family all the very best.

Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Ji, MD/PhD, RBS artist in residence for her creation of the artwork in *A Visit to Dr. Bear*. Congratulations on your new baby girl and best wishes to you and your family!



## All in the family: the Matthews siblings

RBS siblings team Dr. Liam Matthews, who joined the RBS before entering medical school, and his sister Ceilidh Matthews, who joined in Grade 10, are our first RBS sibling team. Liam is currently doing his internal medicine residency in Newfoundland and Ceilidh is a research assistant at BC Children's Hospital. Thank you both for being our dynamic duo.



# Thank you!

A special thank you to BC Liquor Stores for donating over 200 beautiful bears.

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



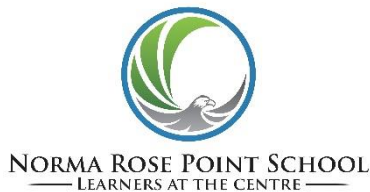
Special acknowledgement and thanks to our donors:

School Book & Bear Drives:

- Anonymous financial donor and Lauren Rideout, student from Kitsilano Secondary School
- Maria Gonzalez, teacher from the University Hill Preschool
- Dr. Yuki Namekawa, PAC from Norma Rose Point School
- Holly Broadland from the Vancouver School Board
- Antonia Bonnis, student from Prince of Wales Secondary School
- Kelowna CEFA Early Learning



*Maria Gonzalez, teacher at UHill Preschool, with Dr. Trevor Newton, RBS secretary*



Company sponsors:

- BC Liquor Stores for 250 brand new bears: Maria Selezneva (Dunbar), Krisann Harriott (Jericho), Douglas Perri (Granville)
- Tamsin Carling from Stong's Market for 100 advent calendars
- The Boulevard Coffee Roasting Company
- Café Crêpe, Z Gallery Arts



Private financial and book donors:

Lynne Stanger

Blair Lockhart

Joan Fortier

Ann and Ed Juls



The next edition of the Reading Bear Newsletter will be sent in Fall 2021. Please email [rbs.coms@gmail.com](mailto: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:

[www.facebook.com/thereadingbear](https://www.facebook.com/thereadingbear)

[www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety](https://www.instagram.com/thereadingbearsociety)

[www.thereadingbear.ca](http://www.thereadingbear.ca)