



## The Reading Bear Society Newsletter

Summer 2014

*In this month's newsletter:*

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### Editor's Note

Please send articles before the last Thursday of the month.

Katrina Hsu  
katrinah@sfu.ca



Kindergarten buddies loved their hand-made cards from their big buddies!

(See full story on page 7.)

### Report

*From Joanne Roussy, RBS Chair, August 2014*

*"Community is the answer to the question."*

*Paul Born (2014) in Deepening Community. Finding joy together in chaotic times.*

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the Promoting Mental Health in BC Schools Summer Institute. Dr. Mark Greenberg gave a keynote presentation of "Connectedness and Belonging: Creating School-

Community Partnerships to Ensure Well-Being for All Students". His presentation touched upon the importance of community for successful schools. Community is one of the four pillars on which the RBS rests. The others are educating the heart-mind, early literacy, and mentorship. What makes the RBS unique is the interrelationship of these key elements that creates a sustainable foundational matrix.

#### EARLY LITERACY

Early literacy leads to lifelong learning and improved health.

#### HEART-MIND EDUCATION

Educating the heart is equally important to educating the mind.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL MENTORSHIP

Promotes meaningful relationships for mentor and mentee.

#### COMMUNITY

Connect and contribute to one another in a meaningful way. Sense of belonging.



The RBS is a citywide collaborative effort that allows children to get to know each other from different neighborhoods across the city. How the RBS creates this opportunity is what makes us unique. The quality of the early childhood years, and early literacy creates the foundation for which a healthy and happy society rests. Community and the relationship between our city schools are the building blocks to sustaining and building early literacy.

At the heart of a healthy society is the strength of its community. Community can help shape our identity as a collective and interdependent people. It creates the opportunity for us to care for others and, in turn, to be cared for. Caring and giving bring meaning to our life and are the key interactions to building a sense of belonging and meaningful relationships.

In a recent visit with ambassadors at the Life Sciences Center, Dr. John Helliwell, expert on happiness and community, discussed the benefits of giving. The art of community connectedness is inherently learnable and caring for one another is the premise of a healthy society according to Helliwell.

When children care for one another, they take important steps on the road to achieving their personal potential – all the while improving the world through their actions. It creates a symbiotic relationship that benefits both parties. When you lend your hand to others, the universe lends its hand to you. You invite abundance into your life. When we belong and enjoy meaningful relationships with one another, this makes us more resilient, and it makes us healthier and happier.

While in Paris this past July, I had the opportunity to meet with advisory board member Dr. Andrew Deonarine. Crossing the English Channel, Andrew came over from Cambridge to discuss the development of software for the Reading Bear.



Warmest regards,  
Joanne Roussy, RN, PhD  
Chair & co-founder, RBS



## *From Lani Morden, MEd, Co-founder and Director of Education*

We look forward to the new school year! With the current strike we have moved the start-up date to mid-autumn. This summer we have been busy working on program development and are pleased with our progress. At the end of the school year, we have heard amazing testimonials from teachers and parents that have warmed our hearts. This is a testimonial of your support and belief in the value of community and caring for all of the children in Vancouver.

What we are seeing and hearing from the Kindergarten teachers is that the children who are most vulnerable are adoring their buddies the most...and their bears! For the younger children, having an older buddy seems to provide attention, friendship and the joy of connection. From pre-adolescents and adolescents, the older buddies seem to have a renewed sense of being helpful which makes them feel good about themselves. They

receive unconditional love from the little ones who think the world of them.

Best regards,  
Lani Morden, MEd  
Director of Education &  
co-founder, RBS



Click the picture on the left to hear Liz Hayes-Brown, vice-principal at Collingwood Annex Elementary School discuss the impact of the Reading Bear in kindergarten classrooms!



## NEWS

### Isabel Chen, recipient of the 2014 YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award



Isabel Chen with Lynne Stanger, RBS advisory board member.

On behalf of the RBS, we would like to congratulate you on winning the YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award for co-founding the Reading Bear Society and Keep Safe Initiative. The event was held

on June 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Over 1,100 women were in attendance. Isabel's acceptance speech touched the heart of all who attended. We are very proud of your outstanding dedication to vulnerable populations.

### The Reading Bear took part in the City's online dialogue

Following a meeting with the city officials last April, the Reading Bear recently participated in the Healthy City Strategy dialogue, an online soapbox to share innovative ideas. For more information please see [The Healthy City Strategy Team](#)



### UBC MD students and their teddy bears build healthy communities

On Tuesday April 29th, about half a dozen medical student volunteers made their way to Queen Alexandra Elementary School in Vancouver to read to an enthusiastic group of Kindergarteners. See UBC Faculty of Medicine's coverage of the event [here](#).



### Congratulations Lynne Stranger

Reading Bear Society advisory board member Ms. Lynne Stanger will be moving to St. John's School as the Director of Communications and Marketing. Congratulations and best wishes for your new position.

### RBS Facebook Page



"Like" The Reading Bear on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/thereadingbear>



## RBS AMBASSADOR PUBLICATIONS

### **“The Reading Bear”**

*The Saint (Spring 2014), St. George’s School Alumni Newsletter*

Medical student ambassador Dr. Andrew Purssell recently published an article on the RBS in The Saint, newsletter of his former school, St. George’s School.

*“The response to this initiative has been profound. . . . children across the city are better equipped to have successful academic careers. Teachers have remarked at the progress their kindergarteners have been making with reading. The response each child shows when their buddy arrives for a session speaks volumes about the impact of their relationships developed throughout the program.”*

Click [here](#) to read the full article (page 9).

### **“YHS Alumna volunteers with Reading Bear”**

*The York eRose (Summer 2014), York House School*

Medical student ambassador Katrina Dutkiewicz is featured along with the Reading Bear in the York House School alumnae newsletter.

*“This is the part of the program that I value the most - children helping children to learn to read and to bring more support and love into their lives. . . . I really believe that childhood is where we can most make a difference in a life, whether it be through health care, teaching, recreational programs, or the many other ways there are to reach children in our community.”*

Click [here](#) to read the full article (fourth article from the top).



(Left to right) Katrina Dutkiewicz, Julie Gelson (Kindergarten teacher at Queen Alexandra), Darren Jones (Grade 5 teacher at York House) along with reading buddies from York House and Queen Alexandra.



## INTRODUCING

### Dr. Andrew Deonarine – Advisory Board Member

Introducing Dr. Andrew Deonarine, advisory board member, Fellow at the Royal Institution of the United Kingdom, and CEO of Ontoit Software. He is a resident in the Public Health and Preventative Medicine residency program at the University of British Columbia (UBC). He previously completed a BSc (Hons) and MSc at Western University, an MD at the University of Toronto, and an MHSc at UBC, during which he had a chance to

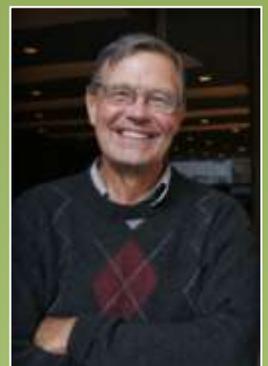
research biomedical ontologies at Stanford University. He completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge in bioinformatics ontologies with Dr. Mark Musen (department of Biomedical Informatics at Stanford University). Andrew won the Economist Innovation Award in 2010 for developing the EduCell literacy system, which broadcasts ("phonecasts") literacy apps to inexpensive cellular phones.



### Dr. John Helliwell – Advisory Board Member

Dr. John F. Helliwell of the Vancouver School of Economics at UBC is a Senior Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and Co-Director of CIFAR's program on "Social Interactions, Identity and Well-Being". His most recent books include *Well-Being for Public*

*Policy* (2009), *International Differences in Well-Being* (2010), *The World Happiness Report* (2012), and *The World Happiness Report 2013* (2013). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and an Officer of the Order of Canada. More information and publications are available [here](#).



#### What makes us happy makes us healthy?

According to Dr. John Helliwell, the art of community connectedness is inherently learnable and caring for one another is the premise of a healthy society. He summarizes six facts that make communities and cities happier and healthier.

<http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/2012/02/01/six-things-science-tells-us-about-happiness>



## END OF YEAR ACTIVITIES

### StrongStart children receive books, arts & crafts

For the second consecutive year, children at the StrongStart centre at Seymour Elementary School received a Kidsbooks bag of books and arts and crafts. The funds to purchase the items came from the sale of Christmas cards that were made by children at Seymour school. The girls who made the Christmas cards presented each StrongStart child/parent with a Kidsbooks bag of books and crafts then read with their little buddies. The parents applauded the girls who beamed with pride.



Also, on June 10th the same Kidsbooks bags were distributed to Queen Alexandra StrongStart children. Thank you to ambassador Katrina Dutkiewicz, Crofton House School (CHS) alumni mothers, Victoria Ling (Isabel Chen's mother), Shenul Dhalla, and Zohra Bonnis for coming in to read with the little ones.



### Kindergarten buddies loved the handmade cards from their big buddies

On June 13th, 150 hand crafted cards made by the Grade 8 St. George's School (SGS) boys were hand delivered to their little buddies. It was heartwarming to see cards filled with drawings of their buddies, hearts, favorite animals, as well as greetings and best wishes. As each child received his/her card, faces were lit up with delight as they attempted to read the message by sounding it out.



Click the above photo to view a thank-you video from a Strong-Start mother!



## LETTERS FROM TEACHERS

### From Grade 5 York House School (YHS) Mr. Darren Jones

My Grade 5 class has seen considerable benefits from participation in the Reading Bear program this year. In building relationships with their kindergarten buddies, my students have really grown in terms of character development. Reading and interacting with their buddies taught them patience and empathy, and allowed them to develop their leadership skills.

The students loved presenting their Kindergarten students with a new book each time we visited. It was clear that many of the little buddies didn't have a lot of experience with books at home, so they were delighted to receive new books that they could call their own. My students loved reading the new books to their buddies. While they probably didn't realize it, the Grade 5s actually improved their reading skills (fluency, confidence, etc.) by having a captive audience for their read-alouds. It was incredibly heartwarming to watch my students act as nurturing mentors with their Reading Bear buddies. The smiles and laughter of the Kindergarten kids made it clear that they were happy connecting with my students this year too. The program was a great experience for my class. The social and emotional benefits will be long lasting, I'm sure.



### From Strathcona Elementary school Ms. Evelyn Tam

My Kindergarten class loved their grade 8 Big Buddies from St. George's School! They would clap and cheer when they found out they were coming for a visit. On our initial meeting each buddy pairing filled in a 'getting to know you' sheet which we made into a class book. This was hands down the most popular book in the classroom. My students noticed through studying the photos that there were a set of twins that came to our classroom! Mostly, I enjoyed the smiles and the happiness that filled the room when my kids had their own attentive big buddy to read them books, play games, and make messy art projects with them. The Big Buddies were good role models who encouraged their little buddies, kept them on task and helped make their time together a lot of fun.



From kindergarten teacher Colleen Sturrock:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/l/jSIdRha98xbzUOkmHNOfwq/invite?>



From a father:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/udexnx2yq7f1hm/Kindergarten%20father.mp4?dl=0>



## From Queen Alexandra Elementary School teacher Ms. Julie Gelson

My Kindergarten class loved every second of every visit with their Grade 5 York House Buddies. I always marked our visits with a "Special Day" symbol on the calendar, so when a new month started, the students would check for this symbol first. Then the questions would start: "Does this mean our big buddies are visiting?" "Will they read with us?" "What craft are we going to do together?" As the big day approached, they started to count how many more sleeps until they would see their buddies again. Our visits were full of big smiles, constant chatter and attentive little ones listening with adoration as their big buddies read them new stories. There was a little bit of magic in each of those visits that carried over until the next one when it all began again. One of my favourite moments in the whole year came when I began to read the Alphabet Jive to the class one morning and realized how loud and confident their chanting was. Afterwards, I told them they didn't need me to read it to them anymore now that they knew it so well themselves. One little boy put up his hand and said, "That's because I read it to my bear every night before I go to sleep." It was one of those teacher moments when your heart swells with pride and love. Seeing the connection this little guy had made between home and school made my heart sing. Suddenly, there were echoes of, "Me too, me too! I read to my bear at night." or "My mom reads to my bear and me." Thank you to the Reading Bear and to our York House buddies for all the wonderful visits. We treasured each and every one.



The kindergarten children made water-colour pictures for their big buddies. The big buddies gave their little buddies a picture of them and their little buddies (as seen in picture).



From kindergarten teacher Melanie More at Queen Alexandra:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ch5sidysgm1b2jr/Melanie%20Moore%2C%20K-teacher.mp4?dl=0>



# THE READING BEAR

On the last visit, big buddies wore their earth globe necklaces they made with their little buddies. Little buddies delivered these to their big buddies as a gift for Earth Day.





## Many thanks to...

- ◆ Major donors, **Mr. & Mrs. Jacques and Margaret Barbeau**, former YHS alumni and her husband, author, retired lawyer and former chairman and president of Barbeau & Company Capital Management Inc..
- ◆ The **National Council of Jewish Women** for their charitable foundation donation.
- ◆ A special thank you to **Ms. Phyllis Simon**, owner of **Kidsbooks** and to her staff for their on-going support. For the past year they have provided the colorful Kidsbooks bags for all nine RB kindergarten and StrongStart participants as well as expert advice for book selection for the RBS.
- ◆ Donor **Liz Watson**, President of Watson Inc. for the use of their office space this year. Having a central location has been beneficial in reuniting the various schools.
- ◆ **Mr. Alazar Berhane** for donating stuffed bears to the StrongStart children.
- ◆ CHS student **Katrynna Uy** for book donation and for reading with StrongStart children at Seymour school.
- ◆ **Antonia Nowtash**, Zumba instructor at OneDance Creative Arts Studio in North Vancouver, and the mothers and children who raised funds to purchase books and crafts for the StrongStart children.
- ◆ **Andrea McEwen** of University Hill Elementary and **Kerry Harding** of Crofton House School for their generous donation of books for the Reading Bear.

**Kidsbooks**



**WATSON™**





## LITERACY LINKS

### Inspiring Initiatives

#### *Join the Heart-Mind Challenge*

Research about the social and emotional development of children states that the five qualities that make up Heart-Mind wellbeing can be deliberately fostered in families, schools and communities. Equipped with background information on each quality and a doable list of activities, you choose your action to promote this quality in yourself and with the children in your life.



<http://dalailamacenter.org/heart-mind-challenge>

#### *Lead for Literacy*

The Lead for Literacy initiative is a series of one-page memos written for leaders dedicated to children's literacy development. Click [here](#) for the link at Harvard's Language Diversity and Literacy Development Research Group.

### Interesting Books & Articles

#### *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times by Paul Born (2014)*

This past spring, I had the opportunity to meet author and community activist Paul Born at his book launch. This book describes the four pillars of deep community: sharing our stories, taking the time to enjoy one another, taking care of one another, and working together for a better world. Important elements of his book are at the heart of the RBS definition of community.



#### *New Study Shows Reading Partners Tutoring Program Boosts Reading Proficiency of Elementary School Students*

MDRC, June 2014

<http://readingpartners.org/our-results/mdrc-study/>

#### *Breathing Bears*

The Huffington Post, August 11, 2013

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/08/mindful-kids-miami\\_n\\_4226800.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/08/mindful-kids-miami_n_4226800.html)



## More Great Resources

### *MDI Maps and Reports*

[New 2013-2014 maps and reports](#) based on data gathered from the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) are now available for the school districts in British Columbia that have opted to participate. The MDI is a self-report questionnaire that asks children (in Grade 4 and Grade 7) to report on critical components of development that are strongly linked to their academic achievement, health and well-being throughout the school years and their success in later life.



### *HELP Online Library*

HELP has an extensive library collection of items related to child development and health. View peer reviewed journal articles, HELP-specific research briefs and fact sheets, and a wide variety of reports that represent HELP's cell to society approach to early child development research.



<http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/publications/>

### *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*

The RBS has ordered key pamphlets for parents from:  
<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/home.html>

### *The B.C. Aboriginal Childcare Society (BCACCS)*

Committed to ensuring every Aboriginal child in B.C. has access to spiritually enriching, culturally relevant, high quality early childhood development services.

<http://www.acc-society.bc.ca/>



BC Aboriginal  
ChildCare Society



## Re-visioning Inner City and CommunityLINK Resources in Vancouver Schools. Summary Report (January 2014)

Ranking of Inner City schools based on Social Services Index (SSI, from BC Ministry of Education).

Adjusted 5 year (% + #)

Rank	5 yr average 2008-2012			Adjusted	
	Enrol	SSI %	SSI#	% + #	
1	Sir William Macdonald Community	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
2	Lord Strathcona Community Elementary	528	27.3%	144	171.5
3	Grandview Elementary	166	43.7%	72	116.1
4	Admiral Seymour Elementary	137	45.4%	62	107.4
5	Britannia Community Elementary	177	38.4%	68	106.2
6	Thunderbird Elementary	297	25.2%	75	100.2
7	Queen Alexandra Elementary	190	27.4%	52	79.6
8	Tillicum Community Annex	105	30.3%	32	62.1
9	Hastings Community Elementary	620	7.6%	47	55.0
10	Florence Nightingale Elementary	247	13.9%	34	48.3
11	Lord Selkirk Elementary	608	6.7%	41	47.3
12	Captain James Cook Elementary	338	10.7%	36	46.9
13	Sir Sandford Fleming Elementary	463	8.2%	38	46.0
14	John Henderson Elementary	511	7.4%	38	45.2
15	Lord Roberts Elementary	435	8.4%	37	45.0

<http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Summary%20Report%20January%202014%20FINAL.pdf>



This past June and last November, the Reading Bear Society donated 26 bags of books and bears to the children of Mom2Mom mothers.



## SPECIAL EVENTS & CONFERENCES

### **NORTH SHORE EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE**

*SEPTEMBER 27, 2014, Capilano  
University Birch Building*

The 13th annual NSECE Conference "To Learn, To Wonder" is an opportunity to be inspired and to re-affirm your commitment to providing quality care and education to the children and families in our communities. Register [here](#).

### **HELP FALL RESEARCH EXPO**

*OCTOBER 15, 2014, UBC  
Robson Square*

HELP's Fall Research Expo will take place on Wednesday October 15, 2014 at UBC Robson Square.

### **ROGER TONKIN PROFESSORSHIP IN ADOLESCENT HEALTH**

*OCTOBER 16-17, 2014*

Visiting professor Dr. Thom Garfat from the School of Child and Youth Care at Ryerson University will be joined by Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi in leading skill building workshops on effective brief therapeutic interventions with adolescents. Email to confirm attendance: [youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca](mailto:youthhealthprogram@cw.bc.ca)

### **S.E.E.D. CONFERENCE**

*OCTOBER 20-21, 2014, Marriot  
Vancouver Pinnacle Hotel*

The Social Emotional Enhancement and Development Conference will serve as an entry point for professionals, families and caregivers to explore the area of social emotional health and development for children and youth with special needs. Dr. Dzung Vo will be presenting, "The Mindful Teen: Mindfulness for Stress and Pain Management" on October 21st (Day 2 of the conference). Hosted by the BC Centre for Ability.

<http://bccfa-seed.org/?page=10>

### **DALAI LAMA VANCOUVER 2014**

*OCTOBER 21, 2014*

The Dalai Lama is returning to Vancouver to inspire British Columbians to get involved in nurturing compassionate, flourishing, socially responsible children and youth who rise to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

[dalailamacenter.org](http://dalailamacenter.org)



## Writing a letter to my big buddy

