



2021 Annual Report

Volunteer Grandparents



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A Message from the Chair

As chair of the board of Volunteer Grandparents, I can assure you that in spite of a global pandemic we are now more than ever committed to our mission, “to *bridge and enrich the generations* by fostering intergenerational understanding, communication and cooperation between the generations”.

Once again, our program manager, Veronica Grossi, has delivered another outstanding year of programming! I would like to expressly acknowledge the third year of the Letters to Seniors program, which has made a significant difference in the lives of those it has touched. To that effect, we have received numerous letters of gratitude from seniors for this important work that addresses social isolation and loneliness.

In regards to our program activity, we have experienced a noticeable increase in community support and participant interest. I am pleased to announce that since the public health orders have ended, we are beginning the slow process of returning to matching seniors to families as carefully and safely as possible.

I can also report that our funding streams remain stable and our organization is healthy. I'd like to say a big ‘thank you’ to our core funders the City of Burnaby and BC Gaming, and to our individual and corporate contributors for their continued vital support.

To our volunteers, I want to assure you that you have made a huge difference in our community through your investment of time, effort and involvement.

As I look back on our successes over the year, I also want to recognize the immeasurable contributions from our staff, volunteers and our Board of Directors.

The program participants who connect with our society every day inspire and humble us. I honour them for their enduring commitment to establishing intergenerational bonds that make our communities stronger!

Woosang Lee, Chair
Volunteer Grandparents

2021 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

There is no doubt that the global pandemic continued to challenge us in 2021. While working mostly remotely, we focused on providing programming to the most vulnerable of populations, isolated seniors. Intergenerational connections continued to be created, just in a different way than before. Our Letters To Seniors Program enabled us to create pen pal relationships that flourished and created a sense of belonging in our community.

Although our School Grandparent Program did not run in 2021, many of our school grandparent volunteers began actively participating in our Letters To Seniors Program.

We would like to thank all the volunteers in our Family Match Program who continued to mentor their grandchild through kind phone calls, socially distanced outings and virtual meetings. We appreciate how you have remained resilient and creative in the face of adversity. Through all of this change, you have remained committed to the cause of providing mentorship.

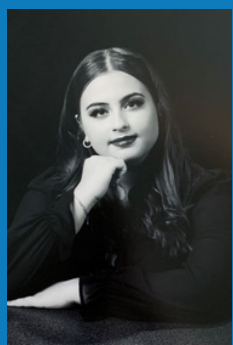
CANADA SUMMER JOBS FUNDING

In 2021, Volunteer Grandparents received funding to hire two summer positions through the Canada Summer Jobs Initiative. Sarah Qiu was hired as our Letters To Seniors Program Developer and Alessia De Blasio was our Administrative Assistant.



Sarah Qiu

Working at Volunteer Grandparents has truly been a rewarding and meaningful experience for me. It has been so heartwarming to see the impact that the Letters to Seniors Program has in the community. I was really impressed by how much Volunteer Grandparents does, not just for the Burnaby community, but for seniors across Canada. I have enjoyed learning more about the importance of intergenerational connections, and I am really grateful to have been a part of this organization. Volunteer Grandparents is a small organization that makes a huge impact. **Sarah**



Alessia De Blasio

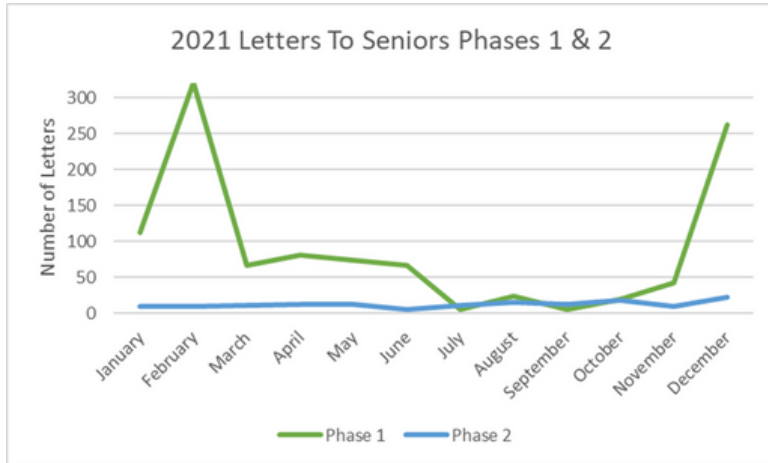
Throughout my time with Volunteer Grandparents, I had the pleasure of working on various projects that allowed me to gain valuable skills in communication, collaboration, and community engagement. The main accomplishments I am most proud of are: my contribution to the creation of the "Our Stories" page on the Volunteer Grandparents website, enhancing my social media skills through promoting a Grandparents Day Contest to our community, and submitting a request to the City of Burnaby to Proclaim September as Grandparents Day. Throughout my time working with Volunteer Grandparents, I was able to make genuine connections with my community and develop skills that will allow me to become successful in the future. **Alessia**



Bridging Generations

LETTERS TO SENIORS

In 2021, a total of 1231 letters were sent to isolated seniors. 1082 of these were handmade cards, drawings, and letters sent by participants in our Phase 1 of the program, while 149 were longer letters exchanged between seniors and youth taking part in Phase 2 of our program.



OUR STORIES



Why did you want to form a pen pal connection?

I sought a pen pal connection for the sheer delight of meeting someone new and expanding my horizons. The young lady I was matched with is a perfect fit because we both have a passion for writing and social justice issues. Our relationship is just beginning, but already I recognize a fascinating quality about her. I hope to encourage her as a young writer.

Miss Heather, Senior Pen Pal

I joined the Letters To Seniors Program around March, 2021. I was matched with a woman who shares many of the same interests as me, specifically in regards to social justice issues and advocacy, as well as writing. Initially, I set out to gain my volunteer hours for my high school diploma and thought that would be the end of it. I never knew that a relationship would blossom out of this. A relationship founded on various struggles and passions; of two people who, despite being generations apart, would have so much in common and would be a friend like none other. Through my joining of this program, I have learned how important and comforting it is to connect with others, more than ever before. I have also realized that it is important to form connections with people, regardless of age, and that newer generations have much in common with older ones.

Parneet, Youth Pen Pal

Board of Directors

Woosang Lee, Chair
Sarah Fantin, Vice-Chair
Jeff Scheffel, Director
Kami Grovue, Director
Sally Kann, Director
Pat Thomas, Director

Staff

Dave Baspaly, Executive Director
Veronica Grossi, Program Manager

We would like to thank all our volunteers, families, members, and community partners. Your support and generosity enabled our success in 2021!

Additionally we would like to extend a special thank you to our funders, specifically the City of Burnaby, New Horizons for Seniors Program, The Hamber Foundation, BC Community Gaming, Walmart, and the Federal Government of Canada Summer Jobs Initiative. With your support, you have ensured that our programs continued to serve our community.



Burnaby is located on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəm and Skwxwú7mesh speaking peoples. Volunteer Grandparents is grateful for the opportunity to work and live on this territory.



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CHARITY NUMBER: 108186347 RR0001