



Strong Start to reading™

"Making a difference in the life of a child"

Strong Start Annual Newsletter • December 2018

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Follow us on social media



We don't do it alone...we need you!

This has been another exciting year of impact at Strong Start and we look forward to sharing our news and accomplishments with you in the pages of our 2018 newsletter. As you read the stories and stats, review our growing list of donors and program partners, and learn about the contribution of thousands of volunteers, you will see the role you have played this year. If you are just being introduced to Strong Start, we hope you will be inspired to join us in our mission to help young children learn to read. We don't do it alone; we need you.

Strong Start provides its unique programs and services through community-wide partnerships. With nearly 300 partner sites running Strong Start programs, 2,872 volunteers sharing their gift of time and 380 charitable donors, we have helped more than 4,800 children this year! When we consider that the skill of reading is the great enabler for learning, and foundational in a child's development of confidence, self-esteem, language, social-emotional development, sense of belonging and more, we understand just how profound and long-lasting our work together is.

There are strong links between literacy and high school graduation rates, civic engagement, employment, health and wellbeing. This early investment pays dividends for children and all of us for years to come. Measurable impact is a cornerstone of Strong Start and we invite you to visit our website to see our full assessment results and stories of impact. You will know you are making a difference!

This has been a year of welcoming at Strong Start. We've been thrilled to add new sites in our established regions and in a brand new region. New corporate volunteer teams and individuals are helping with our game and kit assembly. Many caring hands have counted, bundled, zipped, folded, stuffed and packed in the past months to keep pace with the growing demands for our programs. Whether you are a Volunteer Coach in *Letters Sounds and Words*, a volunteer classroom aid in *Get Ready for School* or a materials assistant in our assembly area, we value your time. And finally to our loyal, generous donors and to our newest supporters, we could not do this without you. Every dollar matters, and is multiplied seven to 12 times when we consider the social return on investment when we reach out to help children under the age of seven.

To all of you, we extend our heartfelt thanks,



Machelle Denison
Machelle Denison,
Executive Director



Steve Cameron
Steve Cameron,
Chair of the Board

“

@Strong_Start Thank you for all your great work. It was wonderful seeing the excitement and confidence you gave to my little guy!

”

Nicole D @NicoleD1013
via Twitter



Impact that Lasts.....

Bigger Dreams & A Brighter Future

Sean's story continues

In 2012, Sean was a bright little boy and tall for his age. He struggled with reading and his mom shared his story. His interest in school started waning in Senior Kindergarten and Carolyn could sense her son's reluctance to talk about his day or to practise reading. In fact, he was convinced he couldn't read and this was impacting his behaviour and attitude.

The fall of Grade 1, Sean was selected for the *Letters, Sounds & Words* program. Before his first coaching session, Sean knew 26 of 52 letter sounds and three of 28 words by sight. His reading level was zero. At the end of the 10 weeks, Sean knew all 52 letter sounds and 27 of the 28 words by sight. His reading level jumped to 6.

"Sean is so proud of his

“ *I had a total moment watching Sean reading, remembering that boy way back and how scary it must have been.* **”**

Carolyn, Sean's mother

accomplishments and feels like anything is possible. Strong Start made such a significant and positive difference in my son's life.”

We reached out to Carolyn to see how Sean was doing and she was more than happy to send us the update below. For the original story, visit <https://strongstart.ca/stories/biggerdreamsbrighterfuture/>

“Sean is now in high school! The thing he was most nervous about ... his combination lock (lol) not reading or math or science! It's so great to see how he has not only succeeded with his reading, but really learn to love it!



On our way back from Montreal this summer he read a thriller novel (his favourite kind of story) and asked for the next in the series when we got home!

Without even knowing you would be contacting me, I had a total moment watching him reading, remembering that boy way back and how scary it must have been, but this kid is brave and proud and looking forward to be a science teacher one day!”



Letters, Sounds and Words
A Strong Start to reading program™

“Mommy and I took the bus today....”

Napsi's story shared by her mother Sarolta

When we moved to Canada over three years ago, it was only supposed to be for two years. Napsi was only nine months old and at that time, I'd only spoken to her in Hungarian. However, after coming to Canada, I began talking to her in English, unaware of the consequences switching languages would have. Napsugar (Hungarian for sunshine), had always been a happy and curious child, but as she turned 15 months old, she was not attempting to talk. After consulting with Early Years and KidsAbility, I discovered that Napsi had speech delays.

Our original plans to stay two years had changed. Napsi would now attend school here, and I wanted to make sure she could learn in English. A friend told me about Strong Start's *Get Ready for School* program, and insisted I sign up Napsi. I was a bit reluctant in the beginning as I

“ *Napsi's confidence in her language, social skills and independence soared.* **”**

Sarolta, Napsi's mother

believed a three-year-old child should be playing, and was not ready to learn how to read.

I wanted to get Napsi help to learn and speak in English! The first few days were tough for both of us since my daughter and I had never been apart, but by week's end Napsi was looking forward to the class. As I witnessed how much Napsi enjoyed the letters and sounds taught in the program and the books she bought home, I realized I was wrong about my earlier hesitation. I was astonished and grateful to see the difference this program made in Napsi's life. Her confidence in her language, social skills and independence soared.

One of the biggest surprises for me occurred when Napsi said to her instructor Caroline, “Mommy and I took the bus



today ... because daddy took the car.” In that moment, Caroline and I knew that Napsi had received a gift of English, a new language. This moment left Caroline and me beaming with pride and I felt personal relief from my worry.

I am grateful for all these resources and helpful people on my journey from being a worried mother, to being involved with my child's language development. To read the full story, visit <https://strongstart.ca/stories/mommy-and-i-took-the-bus-today/>



Get Ready for School*
A Strong Start to reading program™

* Based on the research of Dr. Lukana Baacı

Why Starting Early Is Important?

Did you know that language and early literacy development begins in the first three years of a baby's life? Research shows such development is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories.

A common misconception is that babies are too young to be receptive to language and reading. But babies are not just cute and cuddly; their brains are working at top speed, forming more than a million new neural connections each second. The networks formed within the brain are transformed into an increasingly complex web of visual, motor, language and social emotional

“
A common misconception is that babies are too young to be receptive to language and reading.
”

connections that are essential for literacy learning.

Indeed, 90 percent of brain development occurs in the first five years of a child's life. It's critical that we reach children when the greatest impact is possible, helping to ensure reading and writing success later on.

Baby Connections is a free community-wide program offered to families with infants age six to 12 months to help



them develop their baby's literacy skills. Each family receives a kit that contains quality books, a sensory toy, music and parenting tips. While attending the program, parents learn about their baby's brain development and are coached to use the kit resources to enhance their child's development and attachment. <https://babyconnections.ca>





Strong Start to reading™
"Making a difference in the life of a child"

By the Numbers

2017-2018 PROGRAM YEAR

2,872 volunteers gave
46,440 volunteer hours
2,733 trained volunteer coaches



4,832
Children Reached



4 Regions Across Southwestern Ontario

Ontario by FreeVectorMaps.com



296 Program Partners Welcoming **32** New Program Partners

Strong Start Timeline

Letters, Sounds and Words™
Waterloo Region est.

2001

2006

Letters, Sounds and Words™
Wellington County est.

2008

Letters, Sounds and Words™
Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk est.

2010

Get Ready for School™
est.

2011

Baby Connections®
est.

2018

Letters, Sounds and Words™
Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford est.

Thank You

To date Strong Start has reached over **38,941** children through **487,592** volunteer hours, **28,064** volunteers and **YOUR** generous donations.

The numbers above reflect the totals for the 2017-2018 program year for *Letters, Sounds and Words™*, *Get Ready for School™* and *Baby Connections®*.

DID? YOU KNOW

- 38%** % of children who had a full year developmental gain in receptive vocabulary in *Get Ready for School™* program
- 14%** made a year and a half gain in receptive vocabulary in *Get Ready for School™*
- 90** # of children on waitlist *Get Ready for School™* program in 2018
- 5** # of First Nations schools
- 14** # of independent schools representing cultural diversity, faith-based diversity and specialized programs for students with unique needs

Thank you.....

We couldn't do this without you.

Your financial support enables us to offer our quality programs.



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION



Josslin Insurance
a Real Insurance broker



Wilson Family Foundation



Rotary Club of Brantford
Rotary Club of Brantford-Sunrise
Rotary Club of Cambridge North
Rotary Club of Kitchener-Conestoga
Rotary Club of Kitchener-Grand River
Rotary Club of Kitchener-Westmount
Rotary Club of Kitchener

Anonymous Fund
Collins-Wright Family Fund
The Marion Edgar Fund
Langdon Hall Fund
Berg Family
Jane & Ken Wright Family Fund

Victoria J. Suljak Memorial Fund
Waterloo Region Record Literacy Fund
Alex & Trish Brown Family Fund
Alex Schmidt Memorial Fund
David & Eleanor Yach Family Fund
Woolwich Community Fund
Motz Family Endowment
Landmann Family Fund
Lonsdale & Roberta Schofield Fund
TD Bank Financial Group Employees
Endowment Fund

Optimist Club of Baden
Optimist Club of Hespeler
Optimist Club of Lakeshore Village
Optimist Club of Westvale-Waterloo

Thank you to all our financial and in-kind supporters.

Your investment in helping young children read is making a lasting difference and will pay dividends now and in the future.

Corporate

Digital Chaos Inc
Energy + Inc.
HM Advisors Inc
Kitchener Rangers Jr. A Hockey Club
Miller Thomson LLP
Moksha Yoga Cambridge
Moksha Yoga Waterloo
RLB Management Partnership
Rogers Communication Canada Inc.
Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada
The Olde Heidelberg Restaurant & Tavern
Your Neighbourhood Credit Union

Clubs, Schools, Groups

100 Women Who Care Wilmot
Chamber of Commerce Brantford
ETFO- WR
ETFO-Occasional Teachers
K-W Montessori School Inc.
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
OSSTF District 24
Retired Teachers of Ontario District 11
Tait Street Public School
The May Court Club of Kitchener-Waterloo
The Park Baptist Church
Christian Couples Club
Victus Academy
Wilfrid Laurier University

Foundations

Caledonia Community Foundation
Centre Wellington Community Foundation
Elgin-St.Thomas Community Foundation
Good Foundation
Guelph Community Foundation
Paypal Charitable Giving Fund
Samuel W. Stedman Foundation
The D.H. Gordon Foundation
Toronto Foundation
Union Gas (Vancouver Foundation)
United Way of Greater Toronto
Waterford District Community Foundation

Government

City of Cambridge
City of Kitchener

Third Party Events

Elmira Maple Syrup Festival
ISC Ball Tournament
Peter Hallman Memorial Fast Pitch Tournament
St. Andrews United Church Quarter Charity Auction

In-Kind Support

Arrowsmith Corporation
Chris Howlett
Simpson Print
SVP Waterloo Region
Westmount Moving & Warehousing

Individuals

Anonymous (17)
Janet L. Baker
Cheryl Bauman
Rose Bettiol
Janet Bherer
Catherine & Bruce Brightling
Wendy & David Brum
Mary E. Cameron
Ron & Rita Cherkewski
Shirley Clairmont
Lois Corney
Jillian Cory
Bill & Mary Cressman
Rachel Dean
Melissa Demers
Tony & Mabelle Denison
Leo & Joan Doodchenko
Marie Fanjoy
Susan Fontes
Jennifer Hanson-Barry
Lewis & Inge Ford
Ivy Friedman
Randy & Karin Gondosch
Hulene Montgomery & Michael Graham
Linda Gumble
Jenni Guy
Jim & Sue Hallman
Rebecca Hamm
Amy Sergie-Hammond
Mike & Kim Heathcote
Jody Hunt
Carol Jankowski
Eleanor Kerr
Irene Klassen
Hannah Lawrence
Jennifer Long
Julie MacKenzie
Deborah MacLatchy
Bob & Gayle MacMillan

Donna McArthur
Colette Moffat
Bryan & Jackie Murdoch
Susanne Murdoch
Stan & Donna Nahrgang
Frances Neil
Meghan Obergan
Barry Paquette
Pascale Pearson
Matt Pliel
Christina Proctor
Brian & Stephanie Rempel
David & Maureen Rich
Ross & Susan Robertson
Beverley & Stan Salinwonchyk
Maria Sardini
Bob & Mieke Schroeder
Kimberly Shannon
Amanda Shantz
Ken Silvester
Nancy Silcox
Caitlin & Craig Smith
Susan Tupling
Natalie Waddell
Jillian Waters
Nancy Whetham
Scott Williams
Carolyn Winkel
Hilde Wong

Other Gifts

Thank you for all memorial gifts received in memory of Eric Gawman, Donald Pullen and Helen Salinwonchyk.

Thank you to the friends and family who made a gift to celebrate Jean & Jeff Stacey's 35th wedding anniversary.

This list reflects gifts given between July 1, 2017 and November 15, 2018.



News & Events.....

The World Gets a Look at Strong Start

Strong Start showcased its programs at this year's International Rotary Convention, held in Toronto in June. We greeted many visitors at our booth, including global citizens, international delegates and Rotarians from across Canada and the world. Our engaging display sparked quality conversations based on a shared interest in literacy and its role in improving outcomes for children and their communities.



The convention also served as a great opportunity to reconnect with our seven rotary clubs which already support Strong Start. We also made important connections with Rotarians from communities where Strong Start aims to expand in the future.

Happy Anniversary, Catholic Community Foundation of Waterloo Region!



The Catholic Community Foundation of Waterloo Region (CCFOWR) is celebrating 40 years of assisting our community by providing financial support within Waterloo Region for worthwhile programs and projects. Since 1980, the foundation has awarded grants in excess of \$3 million to schools, parishes and charitable organizations, focusing on key areas of child and youth programs, education and learning, to name a few.

Strong Start has been a recipient of CCFOWR's generosity since 2014, receiving nearly \$15,000 in support of our *Letters, Sounds and Words* program,

and most recently our *Get Ready for School* program. *"The Foundation fully supports programming initiatives like Strong Start as their work aligns perfectly with our philosophy. The children that participate in Strong Start develop the key foundational skills that are crucial for literacy development. It is an honour to support this organization,"* said Deborah Zettel-Schmitt, Chair of the CCFOWR.

Strong Start extends its heartiest congratulations and gratitude for the fantastic work the Catholic Community Foundation of Waterloo Region does to benefit and enhance the community.

Take Me Out to The Ball Game!

For eight days in August, The Peter Hallman Ball Yard was abuzz with the International Softball Congress (ISC) Tournament, where 50 teams from across Canada, the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean competed for the top spot. It was Kitchener's fifth time hosting this event.



Strong Start was the charitable beneficiary of the tournament, and we thank the planning committee for raising awareness for our charity and the cause of early literacy among your fans and supporters.

Strong Start worked the admissions gate and set up a community corner where children had fun playing games from our programs. They relaxed on blankets, enjoying books from the local library.

Meet the Team

Board of Directors:

Steve Cameron Chair of the Board

Keith Martin Board Member

Linda Fabi Board Member

Mark Hallman Board Member

Jennifer King Board Member

Kimberley Hogan Board Member

Team Members:

Machelle Denison

Executive Director

Colette Moffat

Director of Program & *Letters, Sounds and Words*™ Program Co-ordinator for Wellington County & Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford

Caitlin Smith

Director of Operations

Susie Gamble

Warehouse Co-ordinator

Iwona Dmitrienko

Get Ready for School™ Program

Co-ordinator

Kirsten Carr

Get Ready for School™ Program

Co-ordinator

Ruth Mills

Letters, Sounds and Words™ Program Co-ordinator for Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk counties

Introducing:

Raveena Lokur

Development and Communications Officer



Jean Stacey

Letters, Sounds and Words™ Program

Co-ordinator for

Waterloo Region



Please visit our [website](#) to read more about our team.

Thank you to all our program staff and volunteers who deliver *Letters, Sounds and Words*™, *Get Ready for School*™ and *Baby Connections*®. We are so grateful for your enthusiasm and time to help children learn to read. We couldn't do this without you.



Strong Start to reading™

"Making a difference in the life of a child"

Stronger Together.....

Our program partners



Letters, Sounds and Words
A Strong Start to reading program™

- Braemar House School
- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Brantford Christian School
- Carizon Encompass Program
- Grand Eerie District School Board
- I.L Thomas Odadrihonyanita Elementary School
- International School of Cambridge
- Jamieson Elementary
- KidsAbility School
- Laurentian Hills Christian School
- Lloyd S. King School
- MAC Maple Grove School
- Oliver M. Smith Kawenni:io Elementary School
- Thames Valley District School Board
- W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board
- Conestoga College
- Fanshawe College
- Mohawk College
- Nippissing University
- Six Nations Polytechnic
- University of Guelph
- Western University
- Wilfrid Laurier University



Get Ready for School*
A Strong Start to reading program™

* Based on the research of Dr. Juliana Baciu

- Bridgeport Community Centre, Kitchener*
- Centreville Chicopee Community Centre, Kitchener
- Chandler Mowat Community Centre, Kitchener
- Country Hills Community Centre, Kitchener*
- Downtown Community Centre, Kitchener*
- Forest Hill United Church, Kitchener
- Grow Community Centre, Cambridge
- Kids & I Resource Centre, Elmira
- Kinbridge Community Association, Cambridge
- Kingsdale Community Centre, Kitchener*
- Langs, Cambridge*
- Linwood Community Centre, Linwood
- McCormick Branch Library, Waterloo*
- Our Place Family Resource & Early Years Centre, Kitchener*
- Preston Heights Community Group, Cambridge
- St. Peter's Catholic Elementary School, Cambridge
- Stanley Park Community Centre, Kitchener*
- The Family Centre, Kitchener
- Victoria Hills Community Centre, Kitchener*
- Williamsburg Community Centre, Kitchener
- Woolwich Memorial Centre, Elmira



- Cambridge Early Years Centre
- Carizon/Mosaic Counseling
- Family & Children's Services
- House of Friendship
- Idea Exchange (multiple locations)
- KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
- Kitchener Public Library (multiple locations)
- LINC English at First
- Our Place Family Resource & Early Years Centre (multiple locations)
- Project READ Literacy Network (multiple locations)
- Region of Waterloo Healthy Baby Healthy Children
- Region of Waterloo Infant Child Development Program
- Region of Waterloo Public Library (multiple locations)
- Waterloo Public Library (multiple locations)
- YMCA Early Years Centre (multiple locations)
- YMCA's of Cambridge & Kitchener-Waterloo

**sites also offering a Baby Connections® program*

Strong Start Goes West



We are thrilled to announce that

we have expanded our Letters Sounds and Words program to the Thames Valley District School Board. In spring 2018 we piloted in 19 schools across Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford counties with eight of the schools in London.

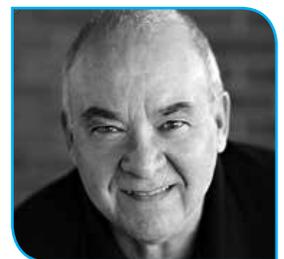
"The Thames Valley District School Board is thrilled to be partnering with Strong Start in order to provide our young students with additional literacy support from trained volunteers. Research clearly indicates that early intervention has positive, long-term outcomes for student success. This is a unique opportunity to engage parents and other community members to work directly in our schools to support student learning." - Laura Elliott, Director of Education, Thames Valley District School Board.

With a short 4 week ramp up, we were able to train 24 new Site Co-ordinators and 106 Volunteers. In their inaugural round of the program, 197 children benefited from the program with 91% of them achieving considerable,

excellent or outstanding gains. We are looking for volunteers and donors to help support the growth of the program in this region. The Thames Valley District School Board has 132 Elementary schools.

Technology Titan Helps Strong Start Scale Up

By day, Chris Howlett is the Chief Technology Officer at InTheChat. He has been a Technology Mentor at the Waterloo Accelerator Centre, CTO of Communtech and the CTO in Residence at Capacity Canada. It is in this last role where Strong Start first met Chris in 2010. Since then, he has provided expert advice and guidance and most recently he rolled up his sleeves to become Strong Start's Developer. Offering hundreds of volunteer hours, Chris created our SiTE SOURCE 2.0 program delivery platform which supports both *Letters Sounds and Words* and *Get Ready for School*.



This proprietary technology provides our partners with easy access to resources and allows Strong Start 24/7 access to program data and analysis. Brilliant! Thank you, Chris, for sharing your time and incredible talent with Strong Start. Visit strongstart.ca for the full story.

Just One More Child

Susan Quarry's story as a Volunteer Coach

Every child is unique and special. They are sponges soaking up all the lessons we teach them. Building a strong foundation for learning starts from birth. The gift of reading is such a powerful one.

I was volunteering with the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation when I first heard about Strong Start's *Letters, Sounds and Words* program. I knew immediately I wanted to be a part of this. For nine years, I've had the privilege of working in three schools and my experiences have been a true joy.

The children enjoy the one-on-one attention, playing the literacy games and don't realize how much they are learning. With consistent time spent, it is rewarding to see how quickly their skills improve.

When a child takes the lead in a game like 'Simon Says' or 'Alphabet Bingo', they practice their literacy skills and gain confidence and self-esteem. This helps encourage a child to say 'I can' when it comes to learning.



One boy had only been speaking English for a year when he started the program. He was reluctant to participate, but slowly realized it was fun. By week three, he would smile when he saw me at his classroom door and after 10-weeks, he was much more confident. Every time he saw me in the school, he waved hello.

You might not think that in such a short time you could have such a positive impact on a learner's life, but I can say for a fact that you do. I keep thinking if one more child has the opportunity to be involved in this wonderful program, one more child has a chance to succeed. To read the full story, visit <https://strongstart.ca/stories/just-one-more-child/>



Make a gift today to help children learn to read

The vision of Strong Start continues to be one of communities rallying around their children with time and resources to help children learn to read. Please note that your gift can be designated to a specific program or community.

Please make a gift today to help set a child on a path for success:

Online: www.strongstart.ca

Cheque by mail:

Strong Start Charitable Organization
20 Crestview Place
Kitchener, ON, N2B 0A2

Email: info@strongstart.ca

Call: 519-743-9578



Strong Start to reading™
"Making a difference in the life of a child"

Charitable Registration
#825948060RR0001

Material Volunteers:

Thank you to all the groups who volunteered with us this past year, to assemble program games and materials to help more children reach their potential.



BMO Harris Bank
We're here to help.



FARROW



miOVISION



shopifyplus



uniongas
An Enbridge Company

Get in touch with us to find out how your corporate group can volunteer with us!