



Taking Back Their Lives

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Message From Our CEO



Spring has sprung! And with it come thoughts of new beginnings and fresh hope. Of course, at LOFT we see new beginnings happening all the time, as new clients join our programs and begin their journeys of recovery, like Alex whose story we share here.

Each client's journey is unique. We can't take the journey for them and we can't tell them how to do it. It only works when it is truly their own, when they make their own decisions and take responsibility for themselves and their life. Our job is to give them the opportunity to do so, and to support them in their decisions.

What if they make the wrong choice? It happens. But by and large, when people are truly able to make their choices freely, knowing that their support system won't desert them if they take a wrong step, their decisions are good ones. Taking control of one's choices and being responsible for one's own actions are fundamental to our human happiness.

So this Spring issue is all about taking control. We have included a selection of stories illustrating the ways in which our clients take control, and as they do so, affirm their places as responsible and contributing members of their communities.

As always, we also make room to recognize our supporters. Every dollar raised, every item and service contributed, truly makes a difference to some of our region's most marginalized individuals.

Thank you to each and every one of you! You make the Spring sunshine brighter for our clients simply by believing in them and their journeys.

Sincerely,

Terry McCullum,
CEO

LEAP OF FAITH
TOGETHER

Turning Around

In 2003, Alex left his fiancé and his beloved seven-year-old daughter in Barbados to look for opportunity in Toronto. He was struggling with the new-comer's usual barriers - under-employment,

poverty and lack of status - when one day he found himself hearing voices; voices that nobody else could hear.



The voices' got worst, and he quit his job and shut himself off. He was in Canada on a visitor's visa with no access to the health care

system, and without support or advice. Desperate, depressed, and alone, he started to abuse alcohol and then crack cocaine. Then he was hit by a car and sustained a very serious ankle injury that left him needing to use a wheelchair to go any distance.

One cold night he took a taxi he couldn't pay for, the police were called, and he ended up in an immigration detention centre. That's when things started to turn around for him.

The immigration officers, concerned with his mental health and seeing that he was also very sick physically, sent him to

St. Michael's Hospital where he was diagnosed with AIDS.

The Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, an agency serving Afro-American and Caribbean new-Canadians made a referral to LOFT's Pilot Project. Within two months of becoming a client of the pilot project Alex's situation had changed dramatically.

His immigration problems are being looked after, and he has access to a doctor, an HIV specialist and a psychiatrist as well as a community nurse who calls on him regularly. He has a home with 24-hr support from staff who are there when he needs them, and can remind him about appointments and medication times. He also has a physiotherapist who is treating his injured ankle and he hopes soon to trade his wheelchair for a walker.

The Pilot Project provides services to homeless people with mental health and addiction issues and HIV/AIDS who experience a mental or physical health crisis.

Belonging and Giving Back

For the past several months we've been hearing about something called the Wilkinson Core Group, so in February, we sat down with some of its members to find out more.

The group has organized three activities for the Wilkinson community: two Holiday Season "Year End Celebrations" and a bus trip to the Martyr's Shrine in Midland, and are well on in planning their fourth. Historically, these events would have been organized and run by the staff, but now the staff attend as guests.

The Wilkinson Core Group, made up of about ten people, supported by Case Worker Eppie Eden, meets twice a month. They solicit suggestions from the wider Wilkinson community and discuss the options. Once they have decided on an event, they strike a series of committees based on the various activities, involved like finding a venue, designing and printing fliers, sending out invitations, and the physical set up of the space.

They also take great care in the clean up afterwards to be sure the venue will want to have them back again. Finally, they meet again after each event and do a full evaluation: what worked, what have they learned and what could be better next time.

The work they do is not just fun for the clients. It is important to the Program. Because Wilkinson lacks a central hub location, the Year End Celebration is the only time of the year that the whole Wilkinson community comes together.

The bus trip to Midland was education and a real treat for people who can't otherwise afford to get out of the city.

Wilkinson Housing and Support Services provides housing, support and case management for men and women aged 16 to 64, with mental health challenges.

Their next bus trip will be to Niagara Falls at the end of May, and they have managed to organize it at no cost at all to the clients. They expect no problem filling the bus at that price!

In many ways, the best part of this story lies in the Core Group members themselves. They talk about the fulfillment that comes from helping their community. They also appreciate the opportunity to be active and involved, and to connect with other clients.

They also talk about learning and growing: the satisfaction of problem-solving with limited resources, the feeling of self-confidence that comes from being given a task, the sense of belonging, and for some, the opportunity to develop the social side of their personality.

They say they are learning all the time about things like effective communication, planning, decision-making, how good it feels to be given responsibility, how to negotiate to get the best price and how to build on an idea and make it grow.

They are thinking of trying something different by organizing some educational workshops. They are taking control, and enjoying the results.



Seated: Mike Corkery, Marc Addison and Kevin Waller
Standing Back:
Everett Barclay, Eppie Eden and Ephrem Tessima

Taking Control in Emergency

Eileen Campbell is the Security Tenant the J.W. Green Apartments, home to 42 LOFT clients. The security tenant's job is to act as the contact person in case of a property-related emergency and contact 911 and LOFT Property Management as required.

One December evening at about 10:30, the fire alarm rang. The fire panel fire indicated a fire on the fourth floor. Eileen asked another tenant to call 911 while she went to get the keys and rushed up to the fourth floor.

There was heavy smoke coming from an open door so she grabbed the fire extinguisher and discharged it on and around the flame. Then she dragged the apartment's lone occupant to safety.

The fire department were able to put the fire out, and Eileen was treated in hospital for smoke inhalation and a small burn, and was released the following morning.

We commend Eileen and thank her for her prompt action that saved the life of one of our tenants.

We also thank Eileen's neighbours who rushed to help: Bronwyn Mackenzie who acted as Security Tenant while Eileen went to hospital; Alida Dillorop and Val Anderson who, with Bronwyn, helped evacuate the building; Donna Murdock who made the 911 call, then opened her unit so other tenants could stay warm on a cold winter night; and to John Person who, along with Donna, helped with the clean up.

We're All Smiles

Taking control of your life often means taking control of your health, but when that is your dental health, it can be easier said than done. Dental services can be costly and for many LOFT clients, it is a major, on-going concern.

Over the course of the fall and winter, ten clients from LOFT Seniors' programs have been given the gift of a healthy smile through the generosity of Dr. Dana Colson and Associates Wellness Based Dentistry, a holistic and environmentally responsible dental practice near Yonge and Davisville.



Dr. Leyla Emami, Dr. Dana Colson, Dr. Bernie Gryfe with Brian Clarke

The gift is not restricted to the basics like fillings and cleaning. As Dr. Dana said "We want to look after people's highest needs. We are sensitive to their mental and physical health challenges and want to support the quality of their life journeys. We want them to feel like our office is a safe place where they are treated with respect."

The body has a better chance of absorbing the nutrients in food if the mouth is healthy and teeth are strong. Healthy teeth are important so people can eat comfortably and feel good about food. A healthy smile is also a great boost for self-esteem.

As a result, they have provided a wide range of services with the clients' quality of life and wellness in mind, including cleaning, whitening, fillings, extractions and they are even looking for an affordable way to provide dentures.

They also intend to sustain and maintain the quality of life and wellness of these ten clients on an ongoing basis.

"We want Brian and all the LOFT clients to be able to smile with dignity", says Dr. Dana.

Making It

Don Fraser is a partner at Connor Clark & Lunn Private Capital, a company that provides financial management services to LOFT. Don also makes a personal donation to LOFT and, together with Connor Clark & Lunn, sponsors the annual Christmas Concert with a contribution to Street Outreach Services, or SOS as it is known.

Last November, when Don went to get a bank draft to pay for his sponsorship, he had a surprising experience. As the young woman at the bank was filling in the details for the bank draft, she asked Don if he worked for SOS. He explained that he is a donor, and that the bank draft was to support the Concert. She told he she wouldn't be here had it not been for SOS.

"It really made you think, seeing this young woman working in the bank and apparently doing well. And she was once a client of SOS. I had to wonder what would have become of her if it hadn't been for LOFT and SOS. It made me feel like my donation was going to the right place!"

BEST CONCERT EVER!

Looking back, it seems that each concert develops a personality of its own. There was the year the equipment wouldn't work, the year the featured artists had to cancel at the last minute, and who could forget the year the power went out! 2009 was the year of "the ever-changing program".

There was an extra edge to the normal state of controlled chaos back stage. Some of the performers who had so generously agreed to be part of the Concert also had other engagements, but they were making a special effort on behalf of LOFT. Some would have to leave early, and others had not even arrived at the cathedral when the concert started.

The comings and goings meant a series of last minute changes in the running order. One performer has to leave early, and another one's accompanist hasn't arrived yet - switch their places in the program! Now there are two soloists in a row - make another change to keep the program balanced!

Artistic Director Kelly Walker and the Ryerson students on the technical and stage management crew were in constant communication. Audience members may have realized that the evening wasn't exactly following the order printed in the program, but had no idea of what was really going on behind the scenes. The students were thoroughly professional and Kelly managed the evening beautifully with his trademark warmth and good humour.

And the comments we heard afterward? Everyone agreed it was the **best LOFT Concert ever!**

We extend heartfelt thanks to a wonderful line-up of performers: brother and sister team, Lea and Aidan Keeley, young mezzo-soprano Wallis Giunta, Jazz Diva Julie Michels with guitarist Kevin Barrett, Canadian helden tenor John Mac Master, and long-time LOFT friend, Michael Burgess. We were especially pleased to be able to welcome about 20 members of the Regent Park School of Music Choir under the direction of Wayne Strongman. Teacher/composer/performer and Sandra Mogensen accompanied some of the performers.

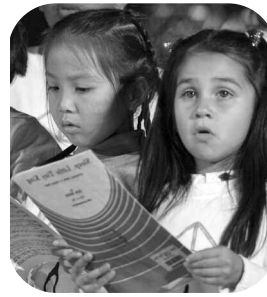
And of course, a LOFT Christmas Concert wouldn't be complete without our friends from the St. James Guild of Change Ringers, the Tillium Brass, and Andrew Ager with the wonderful choir and organ of St. James Cathedral.

We also thank LOFT clients Timothy and Charis and her daughter Yolisa, for allowing their stories to be told, and actors Neil Naft and Ruth Miller for their skilful telling. Special thanks to LOFT client Chris for telling his own story, and to his parents who were there to support him.

Please have a look at the list of our sponsors and in-kind donors. Their financial and in-kind support help make this fundraising concert a success. And finally, thank you to our audience and supporters without whom the work of LOFT would not be possible.

Mark your calendar for this years concert

Monday, December 6th, 2010



Regent Park Choir



John Mac Master



Wallis Giunta



Michael Burgess



Julie Michels

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Charity Challenge



On Sunday, September 26th, LOFT will be running to raise money at the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon.

You will soon see LOFT's name appearing in the Charity Challenge section of the Marathon website, so put on your running shoes and walk or run with us in the 5K, half-marathon or marathon.

Don't want to walk or run, then sponsor a runner or join the LOFT Cheering Section on race day.

For more information, go to www.loftcs.org and select What's New and click on the Run For LOFT link or call Development Coordinator Irene Breznica at 416-979-1994, ext 222.

TICKETS TICKETS TICKETS



Do you have tickets to a show, concert or sporting event that you can't use?

Donate them to LOFT.

We'll give you a tax receipt for your thoughtfulness, and a LOFT client will have a wonderful opportunity to do something they could only dream of.

Whether it's the opera, heavy metal or a Raptor's game, with more than 1,700 people receiving housing and support services, you are sure to make someone's dream come true.

The Gift That Keeps On Giving

Have you thought about including LOFT in your Will? A Bequest to LOFT's investment fund will generate a steady stream of income for years to come.

For more information contact the Development Office:

416-979-1994, ext. 227
or email: jcorbett@loftcs.org

LOFT Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 22, 2010 at 7:00 pm

St. Lawrence Hall, 3rd Floor
157 King Street East (at Jarvis) - Downtown Toronto

For information on attending, please contact: Irene Breznica
by phone: 416-979-1994, ext. 222
or by email: ibreznica@loftcs.org



LOFT Needs Your HELP

Please consider making a donation in order to help those in need.

Donations can be made online at www.loftcs.org by phone or mail:

LOFT Community Services
301-205 Richmond St. West
Toronto, ON M5V 1V3

Phone: 416-979-1994
Fax: 416-979-3028