

# RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF OUR DAY!



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## Message From Our CEO



The theme for this issue of Connections, "responding to the needs of our day", is central to the character and history of LOFT.

It was there at the beginning, when Ingles House opened its doors to young women released from prison. It is there right now as we open our newest program for seniors living at risk in the Jane and Finch area.

We are able to reach out and adapt as we do because of the tremendous passion of our staff, who share the belief in a moral imperative compelling us to respond. When we approach a challenge in this way, together as a team, we find that almost anything is possible.

But of course, it is only possible because of the great generosity and loyalty of our donors. We saw a really outstanding expression of this recently, when a gala held in honour of Jim Fleck contributed over \$300,000 to the benefit of our clients. And we see it in the generous donations of every size received from donors every day.

You have made it possible for us to take chances and reach out when no one else seemed to care, and as a result we have been a constant witness to the incredible strength and resilience of the human spirit, watching people who have been "written off" recover their dignity and take back their lives.

So, as we celebrate the opening of new programs and the continued service of existing ones, we thank you for believing in our work and our clients.

Sincerely,

Terry McCullum, CEO

## Touching the "Untouchables"

A dramatic example of LOFT's approach of responding to need can be seen in McEwan Housing and Support Services. McEwan serves clients with HIV disease or AIDS combined with mental health and addiction challenges and histories of homelessness.

McEwan was established almost twenty years ago when a diagnosis of AIDS meant certain death. It also meant instant discrimination and rejection. Fear of AIDS contamination made even medical professionals reluctant to touch AIDS patients, and funeral homes often refused to accept the remains of those who had died of the disease.

For people with mental health and addiction issues and histories of homelessness, the situation was even more grim. There were AIDS hospices in Toronto, but they were not prepared to take clients with difficult mental illness or addiction challenges. In those days there was not much that could be done about AIDS, but we believed that at the very least each person deserved respect, a safe and welcoming place to live, and a dignified death.

No one else was offering this then, and no one else offers it now.



Since then, drug "cocktails" have made HIV a manageable disease, and increased understanding has removed the "untouchable" stigma. Palliation is still a part of what McEwan does, but now life-skills, nutrition, cooking and household management are also important. McEwan was born when LOFT took a leap of faith to respond to an unmet need, and the program continues to change in response to the changing needs of its clients.

Bringing Hope and Recovery Home

## Responding to the Needs of Our Day

It is part of the LOFT mantra: "We respond to the changing needs of our day." It sounds worthwhile. But what does it mean?

Principally it refers to two things that are basic to LOFT's character. It means we change and it means we are proactive and willing to take risks.

For the most part, social service organizations and programs come into existence because government has recognized a problem and provided funding to address it. LOFT has a history of reaching out, and taking risks to address issues early, sometimes well before government funding is available.

A quick look at our history tells the story.

LOFT began its life in the early 1950's providing housing to young men and women, usually first offenders, leaving provincial and federal prisons. In 1960, a residence for immigrant and homeless men was added and in the 70's we acquired our first seniors' program.

In the 80's, we began to work in a focussed way with people experiencing mental illness and substance abuse. This was not really new work for LOFT. From the very beginning, many of our

clients had mental health and addiction challenges. However, by opening our first program focussing specifically on these issues, we were able to increase the depth and breadth of our understanding.

Soon we were able to apply this expertise to the

needs of people who had truly fallen through the cracks: people with HIV/AIDS and histories of homelessness and young people involved in prostitution, and we opened our first

co-operative houses for transitional aged youth moving toward independence. In the 80's we also reached out geographically, responding to the need for supportive housing services in York Region.

Since the 1990's, we have also been able to apply our expertise in response to the needs of older adults and seniors, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable, serving clients in public housing buildings, and opening a seniors' apartment building of our own.

At LOFT, our view has never been narrow, nor do we allow ourselves to become set in our ways. Instead, we always remember our mantra and continue responding to the changing needs of our day.



## From Link to Hub

*Responding to the changing needs of the day doesn't always mean creating a new program. Sometimes it means changing the way we present an existing one.*

*Take our Crosslinks Street Outreach Van, for example.*

*It travels more than 20,000 kilometres a year throughout York Region, making contact with the region's homeless, and providing the critical link between them and the services they need.*

*The growing understanding of the issues of the homeless, and the prominence of mental illness and addictions within that population, led our staff, our municipal partners and our colleagues in the social services in York Region, to think about how we could all do more.*

*So, about 18 months ago, LOFT took the lead in facilitating a dialogue among fifteen potential partners to investigate a more holistic approach to support for the homeless. The result was a new model of operation in which the Crosslinks Van has moved from "link" to "hub" in a comprehensive and co-ordinated network of supports and services.*

*The network brings together such services as community outreach, housing, medical and addiction services, financial, social and peer support, public health workers, and a team of mental health specialists. The goal is to provide each client with the fastest and easiest possible access to the support and services they need to help them take control of their lives, find housing, recover their health and begin their journey of recovery.*

*As a result, on October 15, 2008, the new York Region Homeless Outreach Network was officially launched, with our Street Outreach Van at the hub.*

## Jane/Finch Seniors Join the LOFT Family

Just a few short weeks ago, in September of this year, LOFT Program Director Debra Walko drove into the parking lot of a seniors' public housing building in the Jane/Finch area. She walked into an empty office and, with the help of only two staff, began to create LOFT's newest housing support program.

Called Crosslinks Seniors Supportive Housing Services, this new program, like Dunn Avenue and College View, will serve seniors resident in public housing, who are living with complex challenges including physical and mental health and addiction issues, social isolation and poverty, most with little or no support from friends or family.



The area is terribly under-served, and our partners in the project, Downsview Services to Seniors, Jane/Finch Community & Family Centre, Humber River Hospital and Toronto Community Housing Corporation have welcomed LOFT to the neighbourhood. The program will open on November 24th with 20 staff, and already over 50 potential clients have been referred by our partners and other community agencies.

We expect the client list to very quickly reach the current maximum of 150, which will make this newest program also LOFT's largest program for older adult and senior clients.

LEAP OF FAITH  
TOGETHER

## Donors Voices

*In the past we have included client testimonials. We felt you would enjoy reading what our donors have to say about us.*

"It's an incredibly noble cause. When I saw first hand what LOFT does, I was awestruck by the staff and volunteers."

"If people only knew how happy LOFT residents are. I met one resident who told me she was finally in a place where she felt safe enough not to lock the door of her apartment."

"LOFT is perhaps the only organization that helps those who fall through the cracks and who are dealing with multiple challenges."

"For me, LOFT appeals on a humanitarian level—the fact that they're reaching out to people others won't. We all have a responsibility here."

"The name doesn't tell people what they are. But there's a great story to tell and once they hear it and even see it by taking a tour, then they're more engaged."

Bringing Hope and Recovery Home

LOFT Community Services'  
18th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT  
*Home for the Holidays*

Monday, December 8, 2008 at 7:30 pm  
at St. James' Cathedral

Please indicate which level of ticket you require:

Benefactor Level \$500 quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes 2 tickets in preferred seating, a tax receipt for \$440  
and two invitations to the post-concert reception at the Albany Club)

Patron Level \$100 each quantity: \_\_\_\_\_  
(includes 1 ticket, a tax receipt for \$70)

General Level \$30 each quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

If ordering patron or benefactor tickets, please print your name as you would like to be listed in our program:

I cannot attend however, I want to make a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ PC: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Method: Cheque  VISA  MasterCard

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Holder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail order form to:**

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

or order tickets by phone: 416 979 1994, ext. 233  
or by fax: 416 979 3028

This Christmas Concert sells out every year, don't be disappointed!

*Sponsored by:*



Patricia O'Callaghan



Gary Relyea



Catherine Wilson

Please join us at LOFT Community Services' 18th Annual Christmas Concert for a memorable evening of Christmas cheer and goodwill. Artistic Director Kelly Walker will not only perform, but he will also Emcee the evening with a star-studded cast of prominent Canadian performers who have generously donated their time and talent to help raise money to support LOFT.

The evening will feature prominent performers such as Mezzo Soprano Patricia O'Callaghan, Bass Baritone Gary Relyea, and Classical Pianist Christine Wilson, just to name a few. Karen Kain is our honorary patron.

The Concert will be held on Monday, December 8, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. at St. James Cathedral, Church and King Streets, in Toronto. Our goal is to raise over \$100,000 to support the most vulnerable and marginalized homeless in our community. We can only reach this goal through your support and the generous contributions of corporate sponsors.

## One Door – Many Homes

LOFT Community Services is the lead agency in a very exciting initiative aimed at simplifying the process for people looking for supportive housing. Termed "Coordinated Access", this new service will provide a single point of access to more than 4,000 housing units offered by thirty participating organizations.

The Coordinated Access office will act as a sort of clearing house, taking applications for housing, maintaining a wait list as necessary, and ensuring that units are made available to new tenants as soon as they become vacant. This replaces the current system where each organization maintains its own wait list, where it was possible for someone to wait for a long time for housing in one program, even though units were available somewhere else.

The project started with the painstaking process of registering every unit of supportive housing available through all of the 30 participating organizations. It is hoped that the Coordinated Access Program will begin operation sometime early in the new year.

## FLECK Gala

On September 23, 2008, LOFT was the recipient of the proceeds of a gala fund raising dinner presented in honour of Dr. James Fleck. The contribution to LOFT exceeded **\$300,000!**

The dinner, attended by about 750 people, paid tribute to Jim and his contributions to Canadian society thus far, in government and public policy, as a business person, an academic and as a philanthropist.



Margaret and Jim Fleck

The money will be used in the expansion of our supportive housing programs for vulnerable seniors, to help keep them out of over-

crowded hospitals and nursing homes, and enable them to live safely and with dignity, in the community. The first step in this expansion is the opening of our new program in the Jane/Finch neighbourhood, coincidentally the neighbourhood where Jim's wife, Rev. Margaret Fleck, had her first ministry.

The work of LOFT would not be possible without the help and support of our friends, and we feel especially lucky that our friends include Jim and Margaret Fleck.

## 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

## Birthdays, Birthdays...

LOFT St. George House, a lovely old house on a tree lined street in the Annex, has been home for 26 men and women with serious mental health issues since 1988. On October 8th, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of this program known for its good food and warm, friendly atmosphere, in the most appropriate way possible – with a delicious Thanksgiving Dinner shared by residents, staff, family and friends.

On the 28th of October, one of LOFT's oldest programs, Etobicoke Girls' Residence, celebrated its 40th Anniversary. EGR, as it is known, has provided stability and support to literally hundreds of young women who have experienced family conflict, abuse, trauma and neglect. Because the use of the word "Girls" in the program name felt outdated, current and past residents were polled about their choice of a new name. In a highly practical move, they suggested calling it Etobicoke Group Residence, updating the name while keeping the initials EGR. The new name came into effect on October 28th.

## 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](http://www.loftcs.org) by phone or mailed to:

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205 Richmond St. West  
Suite 301

Toronto, ON M5V 1V3

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