

Thank You



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Message

From Our CEO



The day we sent this newsletter to the printer was the official first day of Fall and a warm and sunny 22 degrees in downtown Toronto. It was also the day we held the first meeting to prepare for this year's Christmas Concert. The meeting seemed to underline the end of summer, in spite of the warm weather.

Fall always feels like a time of change. If the summer months have provided any respite from the fast pace of life, that time is past. To tell the truth, at LOFT we did not slow down much this summer. We seem to have new programs and projects on the go in every area of our work.

We offer you updates on some of these developments, although with so many things happening and a limited amount of space in the newsletter, we had to pick and choose what to include. Fortunately, there will be other newsletters, and more things to share with you in future.

The main thing I want to say right now, is that every time we expand or innovate, or launch a new program, we are all aware our donors have played a pivotal role. Your generosity provides us with the resources and the ability to keep moving forward with new initiatives to fill more of the gaps we see in the system we work in.

The name LOFT stands for Leap of Faith Together – and “Together” includes you, our donors. Thank you for making it possible for us to do this important work. And thank you for believing in LOFT, and in the spirit and resilience of our clients.

We could not do this work without you.

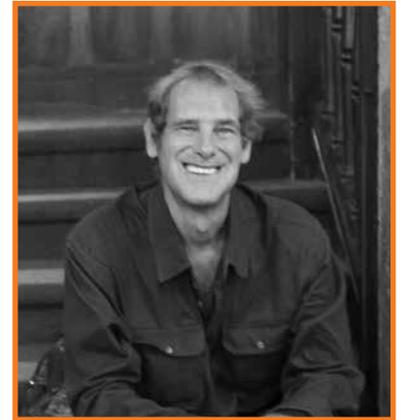
Sincerely



Terry McCullum

Dan says “Thank you”

Back in the Spring we sent out a mailing to many of our donors past and present, asking for financial support. Dan, a long-term resident of John Gibson House, helped us with the appeal by sharing his story, as an example of the impact of charitable giving on the lives of LOFT clients.



We want to join Dan in saying Thank you to everyone who responded to that mailing, and everyone who has made a donation to LOFT so far in 2015.

Your generosity has helped us provide critical services to Dan, and to the 4,600 men and women, youth, adults and seniors, who benefit from LOFT programs. With your help we have been able to increase the amount of high support housing we have for people with the most complex needs. We have also been able to support our homeless outreach team, and to provide personalized support services to people with serious mental and physical health challenges.

Dan remembers when he first became a LOFT client. “I had no idea this place would change my life”, he says. And change his life, it did, thanks to the support of all our wonderful and generous donors.

So once again, from Dan, and from all of us...Thank You.

Charity Really Does Begin at Home

When people have the opportunity to visit a LOFT program, one of the things they almost always mention is the enthusiasm and commitment they see in our staff.

What they don't see is that the commitment doesn't stop with talent and time. Many LOFT staff members also support the organization with their treasure – many staff members are regular donors to LOFT. In fact, over the past two years, the number of staff

donors has nearly doubled.

It feels like a particularly meaningful form of philanthropy when the people who know the organization best, and who contribute and work hard every day to fulfill LOFT's mission, are also inspired to make a financial contribution.

So, to all our staff, for all they do, Thank You!! And let's particularly celebrate those who have taken that one extra step to become donors.

Updates On Our Youth Programs

In the last issue of Connections we reported that our award-winning Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program was about to expand into Toronto's high-needs Jane and Finch neighbourhood.

LOFT has been working at Jane and Finch since 2007, offering assisted living/supportive housing and community support services to at-risk seniors. As a result, we have staff who know the area well and who willingly jumped in to help the TAY staff kick-start their relationships with community partners and other youth agencies. The Behavioural Support Services team, part of LOFT Services for Seniors, has even agreed to share their office space with the new TAY team.

A successful application was made to the Ministry of Health who are providing funding for one staff. This was a good start, but we really felt the program needed two staff, and Green Shield Canada came to the rescue with a charitable grant from their Community Fund that will cover the cost of the second case manager for the first eighteen months of the program. As a result, in September, TAY Jane and Finch was launched with our hoped-for team of two Case Managers.

TAY Jane and Finch will provide the same services as the downtown Toronto TAY programs, focusing on youth with combined mental health and addiction issues. The team will support clients to set goals and develop life skills, while helping them navigate the social services and health care systems, coordinating the range of care and services needed in response to a complexity of issues and supporting them in dealing with the justice system.

The case managers will be “mobile”, travelling the neighborhood meeting with clients in locations like coffee shops and community centres where the clients are most comfortable. The mobile model was adopted in the downtown program because it is identified as a best practice and we found it effective, but in Jane and Finch it has turned out to be a practical necessity. Because things are quite spread out and distances are not walkable, travelling around and paying for transit can be a huge obstacle for many young people.

There are other notable differences in this new program. There is a much higher level of gang involvement and gang violence at Jane and Finch, and nearly all the clients so far are Canadian new-comers who live with their families and (at least sporadically) attend school. Downtown the clients are not living with family and are rarely involved in school. This is at least in part because of the absence of homeless shelters in the Jane/Finch area. Youth who become homeless there tend to migrate downtown in search of shelter and services.

Instead of homelessness, the Jane and Finch clients have other challenges arising from their living situations. Some of the challenges include clients whose whole family has experienced trauma, and others where large multi-generational families are living together in one small apartment.

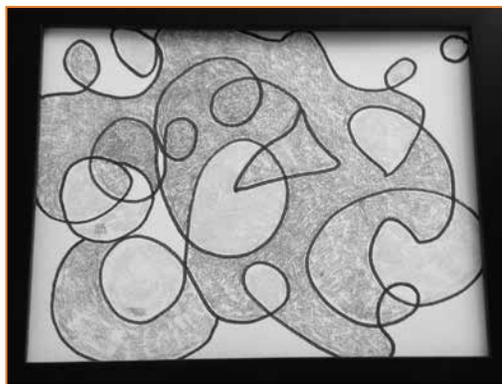
The first few clients have already been enrolled and the number is growing, with most referrals so far coming from hospital. Our program staff have been invited to do rounds once a week at the local hospital where they are able to meet the young people hospital staff think will benefit from our program. This allows our staff to begin to develop a rapport with a new client, and to participate in planning their hospital discharge. As a result, clients are coming into our new program already feeling comfortable with their case manager.

The Transitional Age Youth Program – Jane and Finch is getting off to a great start, and the staff look forward to working with youth in this new and challenging environment.



Twice a month, residents of John Gibson House get to participate in a volunteer led art group. Here are some of the fun results!

Eiffel Tower by Peter and some abstract art by Pam.



Launching the Campus Project

Post-secondary schools across Canada have taken great strides over recent years in responding to students' mental health issues. Not so, unfortunately, for substance use and addiction issues.

Mental health services are readily available on Canadian campuses and the need for these services is widely accepted as normal, removing much of the stigma. On the other hand, one student recently told a LOFT support worker that it is always possible to obtain drugs on campus, but when he looked for help for addiction, he couldn't find it.

With our long history of supporting young people aged 16 to 26, this sounded like a place where LOFT could play a role. So, beginning this September, the LOFT Campus Project will offer addiction support groups at three schools: Ryerson, George Brown, and OCAD Universities.

We ran a pilot project for 16 weeks over the summer, offering a single group, located off campus, and available to students of all three schools. About 20 students attended each weekly session. The LOFT Case Managers who ran the pilot were also available to their student clients for counselling and support between the group sessions. The response was very positive.

Schools have tried offering addiction services in the past, but the students who participated identified a different trust factor with LOFT. While acknowledging that their school was not likely to violate their confidentiality, they admitted that LOFT, as an "outside" organization, just felt a little safer. Students felt they could be a completely truthful, or show up to the group "even when I'm a mess", without worrying that their professor or instructor would find out, or that it would show up on their academic record.

In September the Campus Project began offering support groups at all three schools. Students are being referred from campus health centres and hospitals, and we expect word-of-mouth to be an important source of new clients as students tell their friends about their experiences.

Maybe this will be the first step in making addiction services as readily available to students as mental health services. In fact, there have already been success stories. One young woman, who attended every single session all summer, has now been engaged to work part-time for the program as a Peer Mentor. She will attend the groups, acting as a role model, and drawing on her own experience to talk one-on-one with participants about their experiences with alcohol and drugs.

Meeting TM

Lula is one of two Case Managers at the centre of the staff team at the new Transitional Age Youth Program – Jane and Finch. Recently, she shared the story of her first meeting with one of her first clients at the new program.

Lula met TM in early September at a Tim Horton's near his family home. TM is 16, and moved to the Finch and Kipling area with his family from St. Lucia in 2010. He came to the meeting with a friend, but he was reluctant to talk about his life and showed little interest in receiving any support.

Lula reminded him that the meeting was voluntary and that he was free to go if he felt the meeting would not be helpful. He told her he would stay to "see what this is all about". Then he began to open up.

TM lives in a small apartment with many siblings and extended family members where he shares a bedroom with four other people. He finds this living situation full of frustrations. He has no interest in school and attends periodically if he is bored and has nothing else to do. He has only completed about half of the credits he needs to graduate from high school. He smokes marijuana when it is available to him but doesn't believe he has a dependency because he does not

go looking for it.

He is also facing pending criminal charges in a sexual assault case that has been ongoing for two years.

After chatting with Lula for about an hour and a half, TM had changed his point of view. He will be meeting with Lula weekly to work towards identifying goals.

One of the operating principles of the LOFT Transitional Age Youth Program is that youth, when given trust, respect and responsibility, can transform their lives and each other. With Lula's support, TM has taken an important first step toward a positive future.

Meet the Board of Directors

James Anok is a senior consultant and project manager providing change and risk management, and knowledge management services to clients in the legal sector. He has many years of experience as a volunteer, with interests including programs that support LGBT youth and the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation.



Number of years on the board – 4

Current board role – Board Chair

Why did you choose to join the LOFT Board?

The mission, vision, and values of LOFT speak to my personal belief in active and participatory social responsibility. I believe that the populations LOFT supports (from transitional age youth all the way to senior citizens) deserve a higher standard of care and consideration than is currently

available to them. LOFT addresses this directly. I was also drawn to the reputation of the organization and the high level of professionalism that both the staff and the board of directors exhibit. Being part of an organization that is respected for its work and has such a positive social impact is an incredibly fulfilling experience.

What is one thing you think everyone should know about LOFT?

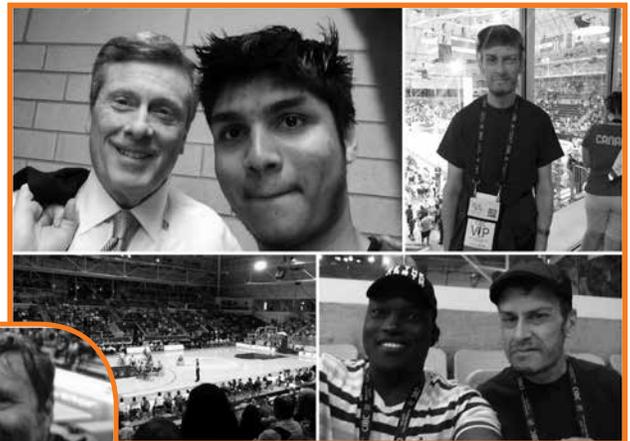
There are so many things that I'd like to talk about! If I have to choose one thing I would say the following: LOFT staff and board are willing to make hard choices if it means that the end result increases our ability and capacity to help more people. LOFT isn't afraid to depart from the beaten path, nor is it tied to existing models of service. It is one of the most pioneering organizations in its field.

PANAMANIA!

Some lucky LOFT residents attended a Pan Am and Parapan Am game this summer! Tickets were generously gifted to us by CIBC.

From men's handball to wheelchair basketball, they had a great time. The athletes were really outstanding!

THANK YOU CIBC for this PanAmazing experience!



In the photos are Michelle & Colin, Simon & Michael, and Jai with John Tory.



Small Change. Big Difference. Introducing Changelit.

We're happy to announce that LOFT Community Services is now a partner of Changelit; a new way to donate while making everyday purchases using your existing BMO MasterCard. Changelit lets you automatically round up your purchases and donate the difference to us!

With Changelit you can track your donations online, control your rounding preferences and even set a monthly maximum. At the start of each month, a donation notification will be delivered straight to your inbox from Changelit to let you know how much you donated in the previous cycle. You'll also receive an annual Official Donation Receipt for Income Tax Purposes from us for every penny you donate.

Sign up at www.ca.changeit.com



Hey little fighter
Stay strong my dear
Keep holding on little fighter
It ain't over yet.
I know it's hard little fighter
And you're dying inside
I know you're tired little fighter
But please just hang on.

And as I say these words
I suddenly can't tell
If I'm saying them to her
Or to the little fighter
In my soul.
Because my little fighter
Is starting to disappear
Just like me.

By LOFT client Chaya G.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The newsletter you are currently reading was brought to you in part by a volunteer! We rely on our team of volunteers to assemble every mailing we send out. Our volunteers save us from paying thousands of dollars a year for mail house services.

LOFT has 8-10 mailings a year. Each mailing takes place on weekday morning at our administrative office in downtown Toronto. You can volunteer for as many, or as few, as you like.

If you would like to help, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Ted Krawchuk at 416-979-1994 ext. 244 or Amy Tran at ext. 233.

Are you interested in being a speaker?

The LOFT Speakers Bureau needs your help!

We are always looking for new speakers to help educate others on the work that LOFT does. Many of our speaking engagements are at churches, so we are particularly looking for people who can be available on Sunday mornings. If this sounds like something you are interested in getting involved with, please let us know!

We provide a complete orientation, speaking scripts and support materials. You have the opportunity to learn more about LOFT, meet new people and help us spread the word about our work.

If you are interested in becoming a speaker or in having a LOFT representative speak with your group, please contact Volunteer Speakers Bureau Coordinator *Paul Kight* at 416-979-1994 ext. 250.

E-NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE!

Would you like to receive our newsletter in electronic format instead?

Go to www.loftcs.org and use the Newsletter Sign-up option on the front page.

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