

Our Attitude of Gratitude



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Doug's Thank You

Below is a thank you letter from a resident to Marco Villa, Program Director of LOFT's Wilkinson Housing and Support Program. Like all LOFT programs, Wilkinson offers a variety of activities that engage clients in the development of a community of mutual support.

Dear Marco,

As Director of the Wilkinson housing program, I would like to thank you and LOFT for twenty plus years of excellent housing and support services. J.W. Green has been a safe, peaceful place to live, relatively clean and structurally sound. There have been no major mishaps, the backyard has been wonderful, with its lovely surroundings. I think most of all I'm thankful for the "people programs" that have been provided here. For that matter, just bringing a large group of people together, housing us and allowing us to interact has had a beneficial effect for me. Pathways, food groups, peer support workers, B.B.Qs, Bible studies, dances, private functions, all have been therapeutic. The staff over the years have also been exceptionally friendly, courteous, and efficient. I don't know how many more years I have at J.W. Green, but I wanted to let you know how grateful I am for these past years. Thank you Marco and LOFT for being so helpful over the past 20-25 years.

Sincerely,
Doug Slater

P.S. Please don't raise the rent. Now you know I know this is a great place to live.

Dunn Avenue Celebrates 15 Year Anniversary!

Dunn Avenue Supportive Housing celebrated its 15th anniversary this past summer. There was live entertainment, delicious food prepared by the team, and the always popular Dunn Avenue Fashion Show dazzled! Service users proudly modeled their carefully chosen outfits with a unique walk or dance down the catwalk. Terry McCullum, LOFT CEO, addressed the crowd and representatives of Arif Virani MPP presented LOFT with a certificate of acknowledgement for services provided to the community over fifteen years. Toronto Community Housing and other partners were present and a good time was had by all!



Valentina and Flo enjoying the festivities.



Iqbal on the catwalk!

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Our Attitude of Gratitude

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, our thoughts seem to turn naturally to things for which we are grateful. Here at LOFT the "Attitude of Gratitude" is everywhere.

When the topic of gratitude comes up among LOFT staff, especially front-line staff, they often talk about their clients and how inspiring they are. Clients, on the other hand, often talk about their workers and LOFT as an organization and how grateful they feel for the support and services they have received.

Another source of gratitude, and one we can all agree upon, is the generosity of LOFT donors. Our clients participate in LOFT programs because there is a service they need. Our staff join LOFT because they have chosen helping as their life's work. But our donors get involved simply because they want to.

Donors have a desire to see things improve – to help make the world a better place – and one way to do that is by supporting organizations that have that same goal. There are dozens – or actually, thousands – of organizations a donor could choose from, so when they choose LOFT it makes us feel a special debt of gratitude.

Charitable donations represent about 5% of LOFT's annual budget. It may sound like a drop in the bucket, but in fact that 5% makes all the difference.

LOFT provides important services reaching out to people with more and more complex challenges. These are people who need support in many aspects of their lives at the same time: mental health, addiction, physical health, housing, financial, legal for example. You might think, "Let's see, what should we deal with first?" But it does not work that way.

Mental and physical health challenges cannot be managed without also solving the housing issue, and that probably means also dealing with financial and legal issues. In other words, complex needs cannot be addressed one by one. They need to be taken as a whole in order for the whole person to be able to benefit and to recover health and stability.

We rely on our donors to help us provide the time and resources needed by complex clients.



Some of our most innovative programming is also heavily reliant on our donors. Our Transitional Age Youth Program, for example, is funded to a significant extent by our donors. The Positive Service Coordination Program (see www.loftcs.org/programs/supports-for-adults/McEwan) was entirely supported by donors for several years until it began to receive provincial government funding.

Now many of those same donors are helping the McEwan Program develop services for HIV+ individuals who are experiencing a phenomenon known as "accelerated ageing". In fact, all across LOFT there are new and innovative services being developed to meet specific, complicated needs.

These are programs and projects where the impact is enormous because the need is so great and the right kind of help is so hard to find.

Sometimes donors say to us, "but my gift was not very large". It is true that LOFT is privileged to have the support of individuals who are both willing and able to make large gifts, and we are truly grateful. But we are equally grateful for every gift, no matter the size.

Every dollar received from every donor is helping to change someone's life. What more could one ask for. We are profoundly grateful.

Program Evaluation: Through a Prism of Gratitude

When we evaluate our work at LOFT, we do it through the prism of gratitude. The methods we use to evaluate our programs give us important opportunities to listen to the men and women we serve, and to learn from their experiences. We are grateful to our service users for sharing with us so that we can improve the services we offer.

Program evaluation also helps us to show our donors the impact of their generosity and to express our gratitude for their priceless support. We want our work to be worthy of gratitude for everybody involved, that's why we do evaluation and show the results.

Our evaluation methods come in different shapes and sizes.

There are a number of formal tools - standardized surveys completed by our support workers and their clients, working together, at regular intervals through the year, to better understand the needs of people with mental health and addiction issues.

One of the surveys, the Ontario Common Assessment of Need (OCAN), helps assess the needs of people in 24 areas including a number of "quality-of-life" measurements like self-care, nutrition, food, psychological

distress, social life and money management to mention a few. Such a thorough survey, conducted one-on-one, can be especially helpful for clients who may be reluctant to talk about their needs or not able to articulate them. Once our staff helped an elderly woman in one of our programs to reunite with her sister living in another city - all after this need was discovered during the OCAN.

Another tool - Community Health Assessment Instrument or interRAI CHA, helps measure the various risks that people face. Once this survey helped us discover that a common risk for many LOFT clients is not drinking enough water. This information helped LOFT focus on educating our clients about drinking enough water, and its importance for recovery and well-being.

There are also less formal evaluation methods, such as case managers

seeking informal feedback during their meetings with clients. We also conduct an annual client satisfaction survey. These methods are important to help us understand how well we serve people and what we need to do better.

But that's not all we do to make our work and our evaluation solid and worthy of gratitude. We have been able to receive accreditation to show the high standards of our work. We are accredited by CARF, an international nonprofit organization specializing in health and human services. Their accreditation means we at LOFT are committed to continuously improving services, encouraging feedback and serving the community.

We are truly grateful to everybody involved in our program evaluation process, which in turn helps LOFT do a better job in serving people. Thank you for helping us learn and make our services better.

CROSSLINKS VAN DONATIONS VIA FACEBOOK!

Over the Summer, we posted a plea on our Facebook page as the LOFT Crosslinks Street Outreach Van was running low on a variety of supplies. Some generous individuals came forward and within 24 hours the van's needs were met! One person even said, "meet me at Walmart and we'll fill a shopping cart!"

We are so touched by the responses and would like to thank everyone who donated and Liked and Shared our message! Our Facebook page is updated on a regular basis with news and events. Please check us out and Like us if you haven't already!
www.facebook.com/LOFTCS

Of course you can always donate to the Van or other LOFT programs on our website at www.loftcs.org.



THANK YOU JUNIOR LEAGUE OF TORONTO FOR SUPPORTING LOFT!



Melissa Ostrosser, VP of Community and Outreach and Chelsea Brown, former VP of Outreach from JLT with Director of Operations Jim Nason and Director of Adult and Youth Services Heather McDonald from LOFT.

The Junior League of Toronto (JLT) has awarded a \$1,500 seed grant to LOFT. JLT's Seed Grant Program helps non-profit organizations start innovative projects benefiting the Greater Toronto community. Their grant is for LOFT's Youth Art Therapy project at Ingles Housing and Support Services to provide a positive, creative outlet for young women recovering from serious addiction.

Thank you to the Junior League of Toronto for your support!

The Junior League of Toronto unites about 400 women volunteers in Toronto and promotes voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers.



Green Shield Canada Supports LOFT Youth Program

Left: LOFT is grateful and excited to receive a grant from employee benefits company Green Shield Canada. They are helping to bring LOFT's specialized support services to at-risk transitional aged youth in the Jane and Finch area of Toronto. Our Green Shields funded support worker, Keisha, helps youth with a wide range of complex challenges including mental health, addictions, jobs, employment and legal issues.

Annual General Meeting Success

Below: Thank you to the youth from the Transitional Age Youth Program who presented at the AGM in June. They did a great job! If you would like a copy of our Annual Report, please request one on our website at www.loftcs.org/annual-report-sign-up/ or call 416-979-1994 ext. 233.



Theresa's Story: It's Good to Be Here

86-year old Theresa is known as "Momma Theresa" at LOFT St. Anne's Place. Her caring, supportive, quiet personality attracts people like a magnet. She is great at listening and finding the right words of support and encouragement for everyone. People look forward to having meals with her and talking to her in the lobby.

My life before LOFT was tough. I had a stroke, which affected my mobility and though I required help and medical care, it was not easy to get. I lost my house, had no place to call home and no family to support me. I stayed in shelters, which was difficult and unpredictable. You cannot take good care of yourself when you live in a shelter. My health was declining and I did not know what to do. Then I was referred to LOFT.



go too often – I prefer walking around the neighborhood. I love talking to people and especially listening. There are people with different backgrounds and everybody has an interesting life story to tell. It is fascinating how people open up when you listen, and how you can make them feel better by concentrating on their strengths.

My health has definitely improved. I regularly see a physician and psychiatrist. I get help with taking my medications – they put the pills into my hand. It is so nice not to worry that

I've been here for four years and I love it. We can stay or go as we like.

I love my apartment where I can see the garden from my window. Every morning a personal support worker helps me with activities like showering and cleaning. The staff here are very supportive and respectful.

I might forget about medications.

There are many activities to enjoy. I can't see well, but I still love movie nights and watching TV. We have summer barbeques in the garden. There are cultural evenings and entertainment. People love to go on trips, but I do not

We are well cared for. I feel more independent here compared to shelters. What is important for me is that nothing special is happening in my life – it means stability and a good predictable schedule. I like being independent and that's how I feel and what I have here. My life is stable and it's really good to be here.

Donating Online Is Easy

Did you know you could donate online?

Just head over to the LOFT website at www.loftcs.org and click on the orange "Donate" button. Once your donation is complete, your tax receipt will be generated and emailed to you instantly.

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.

Mailing 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 a 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.