

A Fresh Start for Julius



The Canadian Criminal Code provides a defense of Not Criminally Responsible, or NCR, for an act committed while a person is experiencing a “mental disorder that makes them unable to appreciate the nature or quality of the act”. People deemed NCR are treated in locations like the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) secure Forensic Unit.

Once they attain stability, they often get stuck at CAMH because service and supportive housing providers are reluctant to accept a client with a criminal record.

In 2007, Julius was convicted of criminal harrasment and uttering threats and was deemed NCR. Since 2015, LOFT has been partnering with CAMH to help folks like Julius reintegrate into the community.

“I have been living at LOFT since July of 2015. I was living at CAMH from 2007 to 2015 and I was glad to get into a new atmosphere here.

At CAMH they come into your room every hour to check on you. To go out, you got a pass and had to be back by 9:00 pm. Here, I go for walks; I go to the coffee shop and here and there. You pretty much have the whole day until 10:00 pm. I am

independent here.

I grew up in Scarborough in a family of five kids and two adults. Our circumstances weren't too bad. I have one older sister and one younger sister, and one older brother and one younger brother. I don't see them, but I see my parents once in a while at holidays.

I dropped out of Grade 10 when I was 17. I worked as a cook for about 10 years - at Versa Foods, McDonald's, Druxies and Beaver Foods. I liked that pretty well. I also delivered newspapers and did flyer distributions in Toronto.

I moved out of my family home when I was 19. I lived in three different rooming houses and apartments until I moved to CAMH. I have never been married.

Since I have been here I have been completely clean. And no problems with police. I am proud about that.”

NCR individuals come under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Review Board. The ORB sets conditions for each person based on the need to protect the public, the mental condition and other needs of the individual, and their ability to reintegrate into society.

Julius was under an ORB order requiring him to live at LOFT under supervision. At his ORB review hearing earlier this year, it was expected his conditions would be reduced. However, he had done so well that he received an absolute discharge and the conditions were removed completely. This is a very rare outcome, and appears to have lifted a weight, leaving him more positive and hopeful.

He has chosen to continue living at LOFT so he can benefit from the support here and at CAMH.

“The people who live here are pretty good. We spend time together; watch the news and sports, stuff like that. I am a sports fan: football, basketball, hockey, baseball, the Olympics. I am not a Leafs fan. I like Pittsburg and Cleveland.

One thing I like here is the activities. We have Jeopardy, Name That Tune, Family Feud, Karaoke, a Wii game. All these games are put to good use. We have groups, talks, programs. Today we are having Family Day where we eat together. Then we have a program called Tool Box; We have discussions and learn skills. That's a good program.

We can get points for participating in the groups. At the end of the month we accumulate our points and there's a draw. I won participation points six months running.

I would say I have a path forward. I would like to get a place of my own, and maybe get a job. But that's for the future. I am not ready for that right now. Right now I am working on getting a driver's license and a passport, and I am working on a criminal pardon.

To donors I say to keep funding these programs. **It helps make a troubled life into a great life.”**



Supporter Spotlight: Everyday Heroes

The inspiring personal story of how one couple was motivated to make a big difference with a monthly gift.

David and Marlene heard about LOFT in 2012, when their youngest son started as a social worker with one of our affordable assisted living housing services for seniors in the Jane/Finch area. "Our son spoke of LOFT helping people and how great the need was for the clients," David recalls.

"Our son would sometimes call us up and tell us about a client who needed furniture and had no money to buy it and we would find something and deliver it. One day, he told us about a client whose apartment had burned due to an electrical fire. What little he had was gone. LOFT found him a new apartment but it was unfurnished. So we got to work and found and delivered enough furniture so that the client would feel at home. Our son said he was very grateful."

"We attended the Christmas Concert later that year and made donations here and there to support the work," says David. **"We became Everyday**

Hero monthly donors because we saw the need. It was so desperate. And LOFT does such incredible work with these people who've had a rough go at life."

David shared this story to illustrate the philosophy behind why he and Marlene donate monthly:

A young girl was walking along a beach one morning where thousands of starfish had been washed up by the tide. As the little girl walked along, she occasionally bent down to pick up a starfish and throw it into the sea. An old man came by and said "Don't you think you're wasting your time? There must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference." The girl bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she turned, smiled and said, "But I made a big difference for that one!"

David says, "To me it's better to help a little bit somewhere than just to think that problems are so big that you can't help at all."

As little as \$13.89 is enough to help provide meals, safe housing and care for someone with complex mental health challenges. Learn more, visit

www.loftcs.org/everydayhero



Meet the Board of Directors: SANDRA MIERDEL

Years on the Board: 2

Sandra is the Director of Clinical Innovation at Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN), a global leader in the use of telemedicine and virtual care technology to improve access to medical services at a distance and in rural communities. Before joining OTN, she was a Senior Planner with the Central Local Health Integration Network (Central LHIN), one of LOFT's principal government funders.



works with clients that have very complex needs. I was impressed with the dedication, passion and leadership at LOFT in supporting these complex clients. I wanted to learn more about the challenges and care needs of the people LOFT supports and help out any way I could - this led to the chance to be part of the LOFT Board.

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

LOFT supports some of the most complex and vulnerable people in our society – LOFT does not shy away from this challenging work and has developed a high level of expertise and skill in caring for these clients and helping them lead productive lives.

1) Why did you choose to join the LOFT Board?

I have worked with members of the LOFT team in the past on some new projects in Central LHIN. I had the opportunity to learn about LOFT programs and services and how LOFT

A Safe Place to Live and Hope for the Future

How "K" Escaped an Abusive Living Situation and Found Safe Housing, Recovery and Hope through LOFT's 416 Community Support for Women Program

The 416 is a refuge for women experiencing homelessness and complex mental/physical health challenges. This respected service became a LOFT program in April, 2017 and we are excited to celebrate our "1st anniversary". The 416 provides a safe, healing and respectful environment, so that women can achieve full health and have the opportunity to hope, dream and work toward a better future. K is a 416 client. Here is her inspiring story of hope:

All I knew was abuse. My father was a war veteran, drank heavily and abused my mom. I went from one abusive relationship to another. Though I struggled with substance use, I worked two jobs to put my kids through school and kept them from abuse so they would have the best life possible.

After being diagnosed with Arthritis and prescribed opioids, I ended up in a downward spiral of addiction, resulting in my kids telling me that if I did not get help, I wouldn't be allowed to see my grandkids. I had hit rock bottom. I weighed only 90 pounds.

Every day since, my motivation has been my family. Many days I thought I couldn't get out of bed but my kids kept me going. And my dog was there for me too. I got clean, joined AA and NA. But affordable housing was out of reach.

I found an apartment, but had to get my ex to sign the lease. Then he moved into the same building and the cycle of abuse started again. I had been clean for 10 years but this hostile living situation re-traumatized me to a point of crisis where I thought 'I've got to get out of this. I feel unsafe. I need help.' I did an assessment

at Women's College, which is where I heard of LOFT.

If I had not found LOFT I think I would be dead or have lost it.

I had been on the housing wait list for 11 years. Right away, my LOFT caseworker advocated for an update to my housing application, which took 8 months. Shortly after, my name came up! Now I live in my very own place. I feel safe and clear-minded. My caseworker even helped me to hang drapes.

LOFT has changed my life. At the 416 I have accessed a family doctor, Acu-detox and case management, which have all been essential in my recovery. I've rejoined AA. I've learned to say no to toxic people. I'm 54 and I feel I never had the chance to choose. But I can choose today.

I have reconnected with my family and love spending time with my grandkids. I now have a degree in Counselling and Addictions and am working with an agency that helps recovering addicts find meaningful jobs. I have hope for the future. One day I dream of using my experiences to help others who have experienced abuse. I still have health issues but know that LOFT will see me through.



Client Artwork on the wall of the 416

The Leap of Faith Circle: Generous Giving - Making a Difference

When people with mental health or addiction issues, find themselves vulnerable ... When they find themselves homeless ... LOFT is ready to offer unwavering support.

Sometimes being ready means breaking boundaries to provide new services, for vulnerable people. Sometimes being ready means taking a "leap of faith". Leap of Faith Circle (LOFC) donors make it possible for LOFT to offer new services that bridge gaps and create circles of hope and recovery for every client.

Each year, donors who make gifts of \$1,000 or more are recognized as an important part of our work through the LOFC. Our Circle donors are brought together annually through exclusive events, enhanced communications, and more.

It's how we say thank you for taking a Leap of Faith with us and helping us reach beyond established programs and conventional methods of service delivery. Learn more about the LOFC by contacting Christopher Walker at 416-979-1994 ext.#2032, cwalker@loftcs.org.



Loyal LOFC donors Catherine Graham (far left) and The Honourable Bill Graham (centre right) hosted a LOFC event in their home. They are seen here with LOFC donor Lois Broad (far right) and Everyday Hero monthly donor Jan Shuckard (centre left)

New Supportive Housing for Seniors

LOFT is Becoming a "Go To" Agency, Providing Care for Seniors Coming out of Hospital

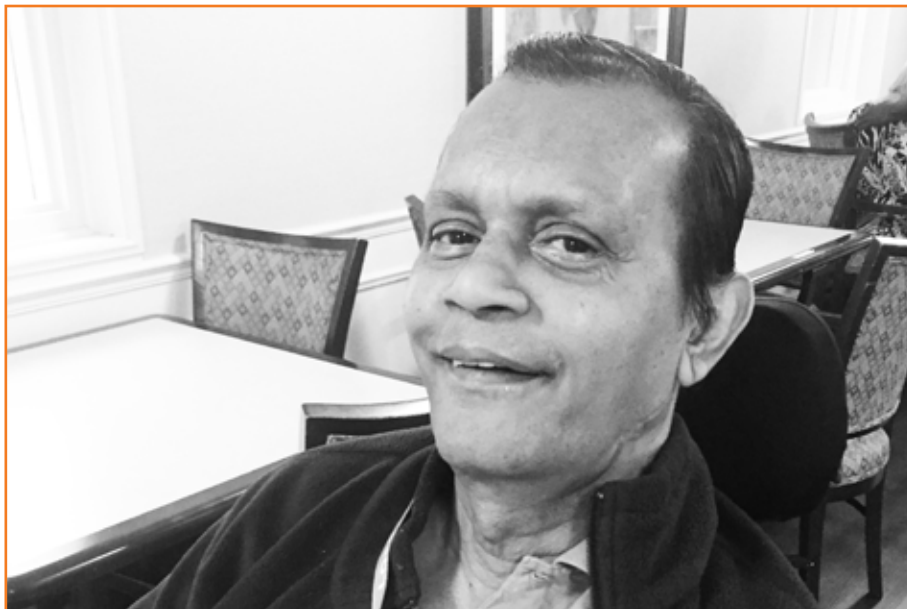
New service agreements are leading to exciting expansion of senior's services at LOFT. For more than 30 years, we have played a leading role in supporting seniors facing complex challenges like mental or physical health, addictions, dementia, absence of family, social isolation, and poverty.

LOFT is providing more enhanced services for vulnerable seniors enabling them to get out of hospital beds when they don't need to be there. LOFT is quickly becoming a "go to" service, helping seniors find appropriate housing in Toronto, York Region, South Simcoe and Barrie. LOFT has received requests for provision of new services beyond our traditional service area.

For some at-risk seniors, the hospital becomes their default care facility*. When they are sick, they go to the hospital. After their acute illness is managed, they remain in hospital simply because they have nowhere to turn for supportive housing because of their health needs.

On any given day in Ontario, 15% of the province's 27,520 acute and post-acute care beds are occupied by patients who don't need to be in hospital. That means over 3,700 hospital beds are in use by people who could be supported in the community. Many of our 2,320 senior clients would be frequent users of the hospitals if community-based housing and support services were not available.

We know that these seniors are better served in types of housing that will help them stabilize their health needs. In hospital, they may not receive the best treatment for mental health, addiction or



dementia. While they are not receiving the supports they really need, the economic costs are also compounding. A day in hospital can easily cost \$1,000 a day. LOFT housing costs \$50 to \$110 a day and provides the supports and services our clients really need.

Pine Villa, a project with Sunnybrook Hospital and Sprint Seniors Care, is showing exciting results and making hospital beds available for acute care patients. LOFT, Sprint and Sunnybrook are partnering to help seniors successfully adjust to living on their own. This program offers short-term housing, case management, nursing care, and personal support. The goal is to help clients transition to their homes or a long-term care facility in the near future. Since the program opened in February of this year, 28 clients have moved in and we are pleased to say that four have already successfully moved on: Two have returned home and two have moved to long-term care.

(*When someone is living in hospital and doesn't need to be there it's called "Alternate Level of Care" or ALC)

Ashley (pictured above) is a Pine Villa resident who went through a divorce 3 years ago. His brother lives in Vaughan and his sister lives in West End Toronto. He has a son with whom he is not in contact. His mental health history includes anxiety, which was diagnosed a long time ago in Sri Lanka. His other health complications include diabetes and high blood pressure. Ashley is also paralyzed from the waist down. When he was visiting Sri Lanka recently, he got into an argument that got physical and he broke his neck. With the help of a friend, he came home to Canada and went directly to Sunnybrook for six months.

With his physical health stabilized, Ashley has moved to Pine Villa where he is receiving support from his personal support worker (PSW), Carolyn. He enjoys watching Sri Lankan movies and listening to Sri Lankan music. Cricket is his favourite sport, and he has promised Carolyn he will teach her the game. Ashley has friends that visit him and talk to him over the phone. He loves his stay at Pine Villa, and is happy with the care he receives from LOFT.

EdgeWest – A Health Clinic with a Difference

A Partnership of Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Health Centre, Planned Parenthood Toronto and LOFT, EdgeWest Opened in 2014 to Address a Critical Shortage of Services for Youth in Toronto's West End

EdgeWest doesn't look much like a health clinic. It is located in the back corner of an old house, with a couple of sofas, some plants and a bright orange wall covered with posters. But that's the point. This is a clinic with a difference.

Edgewest describes itself as: Non-judgemental, youth-focused and LGBTQ positive. It is a one-stop location with a range of services. Nurse Practitioners from Planned Parenthood cover the health care aspects including STI testing, contraception, sexual health and flu shots, and can refer to a primary care physician or psychiatrist if needed. LOFT Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program staff provide mental health support, peer mentorship and counselling. Legal aid and employment services are also available on site.

As Michelle explains, it is important that youth find the place welcoming and see that a lot of help is available. You don't need to make an appointment, although you can. You don't need a referral, you can just walk in. You don't even need health insurance, which removes a huge barrier for newcomers.

Michelle and Mike are aware that they may be a young person's first point of contact with mental health services. They want to make the experience as positive as possible, to ensure the client will want to come back for the services they need.

EdgeWest is open for four hours each Monday and Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon. The LOFT team sees 4 to 8 people each time. With limited hours, and because it

is intended as a "gateway" to service, the TAY team employ what's called a "brief, solution-focused model".

Rather than delving into the issues that bring a person to the clinic, they focus on immediate needs, working one-on-one with each client. When they see more serious issues of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation or serious substance use, they use a harm reduction approach, putting in place a safety plan appropriate to each client – who to call, where to go in case of a crisis - and helping them access additional services like psychiatric support or longer-term case management.

This is an approach particularly well-suited to youth who are most likely to respond positively when they can see an immediate improvement.

Michelle and Mike try to limit their interaction with each client to six

weekly sessions, to ensure they can always welcome new clients.

Turns out EdgeWest is a gateway, not only for clients, but also for young support workers. Michelle is a recent graduate of Humber College for whom EdgeWest is providing a great opportunity to develop her skills at one-on-one counselling. As a former TAY client who has had training as a Peer Educator, Mike credits his EdgeWest experience with his decision to return to University to study either Social Work or Psychotherapy.

To be able to participate in the EdgeWest clinic, LOFT depends on charitable funds. Thanks to our donors, youth in the West End have immediate access to the support they need.



LOFT TAY Program Team Members, Michelle and Mike, pictured above, provide mental health support and counselling on site at EdgeWest

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteer Team: This newsletter was brought to you in part by our valued LOFT volunteer team. We rely on this team to put together every mailing we send. Our volunteers save us thousands of dollars a year for mail house services. The result is more funds to help the clients that LOFT serves. We have 8-10 mailings a year. Each takes place on a weekday morning at our office in downtown Toronto. You can volunteer for as many, or as few, as you like. If you can help, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Ted Krawchuk at tkrawchuk@loftcs.org, 416-979-1994 ext. #2044.

Speakers Bureau: Want to spread the word about LOFT? Many of our speaking opportunities are at churches, so we are looking for people who can be available on Sunday mornings. We provide a complete orientation, speaking scripts and support materials. You will learn more about LOFT, meet new people and help reduce the stigma of mental health. If you are interested in becoming a speaker OR in having a LOFT representative speak with your group, please contact our Volunteer Speakers Bureau Coordinator Paul Kight at 416-979-1994 ext. #2050.

Donating Online Is Safe and Easy

Go to the LOFT website 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 via email?

Go to www.loftcs.org and click on the Newsletter Sign-up button on the front page.

Connections is published quarterly by LOFT Community Services.

• 15 Toronto Street • Toronto, ON • M5C 2E3 •
• T: 416-979-1994 • F: 416-979-3028 •

Charitable registration #13058-6605-RR0001

***Trying to reach us? Our phone system has recently changed.
Please listen carefully to the voice prompts. Thank you.***

You're invited to LOFT's Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 26, 2018
St. James Cathedral Centre,
Snell Hall
65 Church Street
(behind St. James Cathedral)

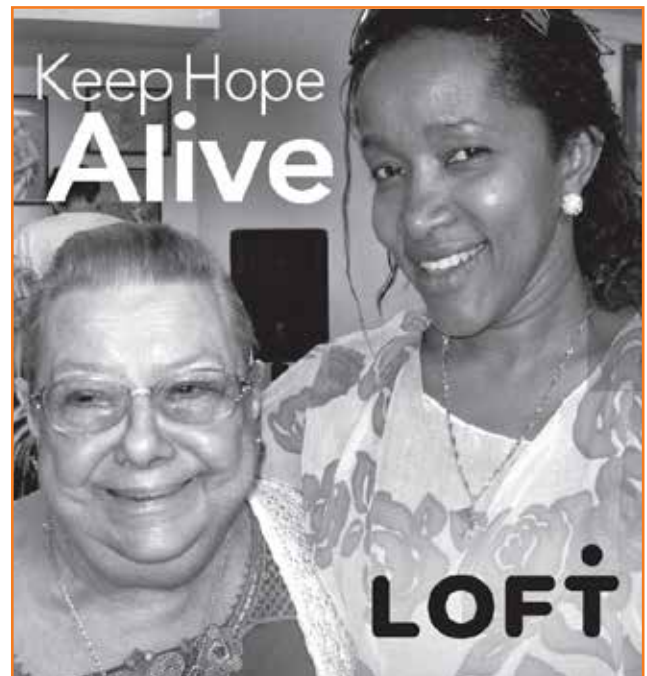
"Care Passionately:"
Living the LOFT Strategic Plan

•
Doors open at 7:00pm
Celebration begins at 7:30pm

•
Business Meeting at 6:30pm
(attendance optional)

•
Please RSVP by June 21, 2018 to Chinwe Onwubolu at conwubolu@loftcs.org, or call 416-979-1994 ext.0.

Consider including LOFT in your Will.



For more information, or to receive a free estate planning brochure, call 416-979-1994 ext. #2027, or email jcorbett@loftcs.org.