

The Wind Beneath Our Wings



Mark DuBois and Members of the
Mark DuBois Studio Singers

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Message From Our CEO



In this issue of Connections, rather than reporting on our programs as we usually do, we have something else we'd like to share with you.

We are taking a look behind the scenes at the hidden volunteers who help us reach beyond our grasp. In so many ways, volunteers are the "wind beneath our wings", enabling our staff to reach further and do more.

And so we take great pleasure in sharing with you just a few examples of the many ways that volunteers support LOFT's work and contribute directly to the recovery and quality of life of our clients.

Our largest and most visible volunteer effort is our Annual Christmas Concert, and we are happy to report that the recent concert, our 20th, was once again a financial and artistic success. To those of you who were able to join us, thank you for your support. If you couldn't make it, put December 5, 2011 in your calendar now and perhaps we'll see you next year.

But of course, not every volunteer contribution is as visible as the concert. As you will see, most are low key, motivated by a personal desire to make a contribution, and inspired by the very people who benefit most – the clients.

So, in this season of hope, as the days lengthen and winter begins to fade, I hope you will enjoy this issue of Connections and that you will see, as we do, the spark of hope in all these stories, and the very meaningful and practical ways LOFT volunteers support the hopes of our clients.

Best Wishes,

Terry McCullum, M.S.W., M.A.
CEO

One of a Kind

Ted Krawchuk is one of a kind, in every way! The LOFT administrative office has just one ongoing volunteer job, and Ted has it. In fact, he has had it for sixteen years!



In 1995 he had just retired from his career as a high school science teacher when he picked up a Connections newsletter at his church and noticed LOFT was looking for a volunteer. Ted made a phone call and got the job.

He admits he didn't really know anything about LOFT when he started. But the more he got to know, the more impressed he became, and the more he wanted to give whatever he could of his abilities.

He arrives every Wednesday morning like clockwork, and he cheerfully does whatever needs doing. He is every charity's dream volunteer.

He files documents, works on the database, stuffs envelopes, fills in for the receptionist, puts things through the shredder, sorts cheques for the finance department. His biggest project is the Christmas Concert, where he organizes all the seating and assigns the tickets, as well as helping set up at the Cathedral and recruiting and managing the volunteer ushers. If you've ever been to the concert,

there's a good chance it was Ted who greeted you at the door.

He is also the organizer and main cheer leader for the team of volunteers who help out with big mailings, including this newsletter.

When asked why he does it, Ted says he likes the people and the sense of friendship in the office. He particularly enjoys the involvement with other volunteers and mentions especially the mailing team as an interesting group of people who all like to make a contribution.

When asked what keeps him coming back, every Wednesday for sixteen years, he says, mainly, he just enjoys it and he's happy to contribute to something he believes in.

The Mailing Team Needs Help

Ted needs a few new people to join his mailing team. If you'd like to help LOFT and meet some interesting people, call the office at 416-979-1994, ext 222

More Satisfying Than New Shoes

Roza Kolonjari and Shiva Khalilnia have been best friends for more than twenty years. Both come from families where sharing, giving and helping were just part of everyday life and both grew up knowing what it was like to do something positive for others.

When they met, their shared desire to help people in need created an instant synergy which became a powerful bond. They are not only best friends, they also work together. And together they have created Adopt-a-Senior.

The women are always looking for causes where their efforts will have the greatest benefits, and are involved in many things, always together. But when they discovered the LOFT seniors programs, the connection was immediate and the Adopt-a-Senior project was the result.

They feel that with Adopt-a-Senior they are carrying forward the legacy of their own grandparents with whom both had strong bonds.

First they recruited their mothers and sisters to help prepare a Thanksgiving dinner for LOFT seniors. Then the program expanded to Easter as well. Now, a great deal of the energy, and most of their fundraising, is focussed around the Holiday Season.

The women begin in February, planning, organizing, discussing the logistics, recruiting and inspiring others. Volunteer team leaders each take responsibility for a group of LOFT seniors,

recruiting and inspiring others to help. Then the teams ask each senior for their Christmas Wish List, raise the money they need and buy each client a gift.

Each gift is individually wrapped and addressed to the specific client with a hand written note, and delivered at a party hosted and catered by the volunteers. Dozens of volunteers are involved and more than a hundred donors.



It is a huge amount of work, and they admit there are moments when they ask themselves "Why?" Roza shares the secret of their motivation. "At the end of the day, it's really selfish. We get so much satisfaction out of doing it." "It's even better than buying new shoes", Shiva laughs.

Roza and Shiva quickly point out that they are just the starting point. The real credit goes to all the truly amazing people who come on board so willingly. It is hard work, especially when there are 40 or 50 gifts that

all need to be wrapped and labelled. Shiva's message to the volunteers: "I know it's tough right now, but the day you come to the party and give these gifts, you won't believe how good you will feel!"

LOFT joins Roza and Shiva in thanking the Adopt-a-Senior Team Leaders: Martha and Koula Bourikos, Effice Kapodistrias, Joesy Fuda, Norm Wright, Jen Sykes, Josefina Nadurata, Derek Sewell, Cindy McArthur and Rinaldo Paonessa and all their helper-elves.

Meet The Cookie Grandma



For five years, Emanuela Tattelis has been baking Christmas cookies for LOFT seniors. This year she was joined by her granddaughters, 7 year old Zoe Vieira and her 4-year-old sister Eva. Together they baked 4,000 cookies; enough for every one of LOFT's 637 seniors to receive a bag.



A "Personal" Connection

Several of the LOFT programs are fortunate to have great relationships with groups or organizations that provide much needed support. But for the members of St. Timothy's Anglican Church, the relationship feels personal.

St. Timothy's has been friend and supporter to LOFT's St. George House for more than twenty years. In addition to making an annual financial contribution, volunteers from St. Tim's cook and serve a monthly meal at St. George, make regular deliveries of home-baked cookies and send birthday cards to the residents.

At Christmas time staff provides them with all the residents' wish lists and St. Tim's parishioners sign up to shop for one resident each. Outreach Chair Linda Gilpin says it's never a problem getting enough volunteers for the Christmas list. There are only twenty-six residents and they get "snapped up in a minute".

St. George resident Brian March describes the St. Tim's volunteers. "They are very nice people, well established and great company". Brian noted that the members of St. Timothy's consistently make folks

feel at home, especially on their monthly visits when they bring their families, and join the residents in enjoying the meal they have provided.

Why do they do it? Because over the years the relationship with St. George House has become "personal". The volunteers may not know the residents personally, but they know the program and feel a strong connection.

The relationship is not all one-way, either. When St. George House has a particular need, they know they can turn to St. Tim's for help. Sometimes the call goes out for household items like linens and towels, or coffee mugs. St. Timothy's always responds if they can. They help with larger needs as well. Three years ago they paid for a new dishwasher, and last year, when the dining room air conditioning unit finally quit, they replace that as well.

Linda Gilpin explains. "We see everything that St. Tim's does with St. George House as a manifestation of the churches vision of *Open Arms, Open Hearts, Open Minds.*"

Mitzvah Day

Each year Adath Israel Congregation pick a Sunday in May as their "Mitzvah Day". The members of Adath Israel come together and devote the day to deeds of loving kindness. Because the day is usually close to Mother's Day, one of their activities is to prepare gift bags and deliver them to some of the city's women's shelters and to the women in some of LOFT's seniors programs. A Mitzvah, indeed!

If you are a part of a group that would be interested in supporting LOFT clients by painting some rooms, providing a meal or "adopting" a program, contact the Development office at 416-979-1994, ext. 222



A Visit to St. Timothy's Church

In January, Brian March, a resident of St. George House, and I went to St. Timothy's Church on a Sunday afternoon to be guest speakers at their Stone Soup Lunch. The folks at St. Timothy's have long been great supporters and we wanted to share our stories and extend our thanks.

Brian had no previous public speaking experience but he asked to speak first, and did so with great confidence. He detailed his previous boarding house experience where, for three years, his generosity was taken advantage of by the operator having him do endless chores, and where he felt the noise and disruption reflected a chaotic atmosphere.

Brian spoke eloquently of the contrast at St. George, which he has contentedly called home for eight years. He spoke of having his own room and privacy, access to telephones, having experienced and professional staff in key roles - all supporting residents in meaningful tasks.

He highlighted the fact that he was the first to join the St. George House Volunteer Program, which gives him both "a sense of purpose" and provides financial consideration. He spoke of experiencing order and respect, and "everyday, something to look forward to".



Kay Roeslein and Brian March

When Brian finished his speech, I reiterated the sense of respect that our residents have always experienced from the members of St. Timothy's Church, and a true sense of community where the monthly visits by St. Tim's really build on the home atmosphere at St. George, with the cooking of food and the presence of entire families to prepare and enjoy the meal.

We both reflected on the generosity of St. Timothy's over the years, the experience of being so welcome and well taken care of. Brian and I could not help but agree that St. George is most fortunate to have such an ally and friend as St. Timothy's.

Kay Roeslein, Program Director, St. George House

SUPPORT LOFT

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
205 Richmond St. West, Suite 301
Toronto, ON M5V 1V3

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

Work Teams Build Bonds of Hope



With more than 70 program sites in Toronto and York Region, upkeep of all these properties is a big job and a major expense.

But LOFT is lucky to have willing helpers.

In recent months, teams of volunteered have come from the corporate world, from church groups, service clubs and schools.

A team from the Leveraged Finance group from CIBC painted halls and stairways. A team from Deloitte, spearheaded by LOFT Board member and Deloitte Partner Andrew Kwong, painted kitchens. A group of accountants from Grant Thornton put down their calculators and picked up rakes one rainy day to clean the grounds at a LOFT apartment building. Another huge grounds cleaning project was undertaken by students of Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School who filled more than 40 garbage bags with leaves and clippings.

"If we have to hire professional painters for example, it can cost hundreds of dollars. So a group of willing volunteers is a real bonus. And we certainly have lots of painting for them to do." says Property Services Manager Dan Van Willegen. "It is fun for the team." is the explanation offered by Andrew Kwong. "It gives them a chance to get out of the office and do something different together, that also makes a contribution to the community."

Most importantly, LOFT clients have clean, bright surroundings to help them feel better about themselves, and more hopeful about their lives.

LOFT

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 21, 2011 at 7:00 pm
St. Lawrence Hall, 3rd Floor
157 King Street East (at Jarvis) - Downtown Toronto

Christmas Concert Turns 20



Billy Newton Davis



Jean Edwards and Joan Hall



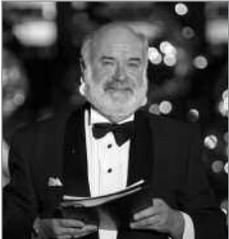
Mark DuBois



Karen Kain, Honorary Patron



Winona Zelenka



Kelly Walker, Emcee



Trillium Brass



The Albany Club, Reception

When we talk about our Annual Concert, we usually focus on the financial contribution and indeed, those contributions, which this year totalled some \$90,000, are essential to maintaining the level of support we provide to our clients, and to allowing LOFT to reach out to those who fall through the cracks in the social safety net. But there is more going on than meets the eye.

Look behind the scenes and there is a whole army of volunteers providing their talent, their services and their hard work. Virtually every element of the production is provided for free, and virtually every person involved is volunteering.

Chief among the volunteers are Kelly Walker and Ted Krawchuk. Kelly, as Artistic Director works for months recruiting the artists, meeting and rehearsing with them and then participates in the concert himself, not only as Emcee, but often as a performer as well. Ted's contribution is described elsewhere, so suffice it to say that he is key.

And then there are the artists. How can we thank them! Mark DuBois and the amazing members of his Studio Singers, the incomparable Billy Newton-Davis, the beautiful Rachel Presaud, the wonderful cellist Winona Zelenka and the utterly lovely and charming Jean Edwards and Joan Hall, accompanied by the talented Yuval Fichman.

The Cathedral's Director of Music Andrew Adair filled the space with the sounds of the organ and

with the help of LOFT friends, The Trillium Brass, accompanied the carol singing. The St. James Guild of Change Ringers welcomed the audience as they have done for years.

And then there are the students of the Ryerson Theatre School who begin in September, to plan and design the production. They work late the night before the concert, start again early on concert day, run the show and then, when the sponsors have gone to their reception with the artists and the rest of the audience have gone home to their beds, they take everything down again so the Cathedral is ready for its early morning service the next day. This year there were 53 students involved.

Special thanks to clients Regina and Patrick for sharing their story and to actress Dana Jagla for her skilful telling of it, and to client Dax, who volunteered to tell her own story, an act of courage much appreciated by the audience. And of course we thank Karen Kain our Honorary Patron

A very special thank you to the Cathedral Church of St. James for hosting us again this year, to The Very Rev. Douglas Stoute, Dean and Rector, Kerry Dickson, Property Manager Emile Rhineland, and Sextons Gilbert Salam and Attila Kiralyfalvy for making us welcome and taking such good care of everyone.

And last but not least, we thank Goldman Sachs and all our wonderful sponsors, and every single audience member whose contributions made our 20th Annual Concert such a great success.

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