

# Planning Ahead



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# Message From Our CEO



In this issue of Connections we are focusing our attention on LOFT Seniors Services. This is one of the areas of our work where we have seen tremendous change over the past few years. We have been able to keep up – and even lead this change, thanks to our dynamic and dedicated staff, and thanks to our donors.

In 1999, LOFT launched its first program of services specifically designed for seniors with mental health and addiction issues. There were 30 clients.

Today, more than 1800 vulnerable older adults and seniors a year are receiving specialized mental health and addiction services, stretching from the corner of College and Yonge in downtown Toronto, all the way to Simcoe County.

It is only when we look back that we realize just how remarkable this growth has been.

The growth of services and the impact we are having are important, of course, but for us, there is an even more important element. To quote Leonard Cohen, we are “trying to change the system from within”.

We are so grateful to have donor support to help us make this possible. Thank you for believing in LOFT, and especially for believing in our clients of all ages.

You are helping us chart a path for the future.

Sincerely

## Nikone's Story

*Nikone is a resident at Mount Dennis Supported Housing Services, a recently established service hub. The Mount Dennis program offers support for adults and seniors with complex challenges including mental illness and physical health challenges.*

My name is Nikone and I'm from Laos, a country in South-East Asia.

In the late 80's we moved to Toronto and I enjoyed life here. I was an active member of the Buddhist temple and involved with the Lao community in Toronto. I have fond memories of my life with my kids and family.

As much as I was enjoying my life in Toronto my physical and mental health issues started to get worse. A few years later, I lost my job and was involved in multiple motor vehicle accidents. My wife and I got divorced and I blame a large part of it on my mental health issues including bipolar disorder. My mental health and physical issues were not only hard on me but her and my family as well.

My life was spiralling out of control, I was jobless and suffering from physical ailments. My ex-wife continued to live with our children and I moved to a small place by myself.

Mental health is not recognized or understood in the Lao community and I was alone and isolated without support. I lost touch with my wife and kids and extended family.



My family doctor did an assessment of my condition and referred me to Hong Fook Mental Health Association, a mental health clinic that specializes in addressing the needs of Asian Communities. I have been receiving psychiatric care from Hong Fook on a regular basis. Because of their support and care, I am doing well now - I don't have pain and I take my medications regularly.

I was so fortunate to have found LOFT. The staff at LOFT, like James, my support worker, have been a great help to me. I am no longer isolated and I take part in a lot of the social activities at LOFT including the monthly grocery trips and other events. LOFT is my community now. If it weren't for LOFT I wouldn't have a home or my life back, and I am so grateful for the services of LOFT.

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# Moving on Up – To South Simcoe County

*In 2012, LOFT crossed – well – not the Rubicon, but we did cross the Holland River, and we are not turning back.*

In 2012 LOFT opened Bradford House, a high-support house for at-risk seniors, in the community of Bradford-West Gwillimbury. LOFT has been serving York Region, since 1987 with programs based first in Aurora, and now further north in Newmarket. With Bradford House we crossed the Holland River, York Region's north-west boundary, and set foot in Simcoe County.

Our geographical reach is determined to some extent by our provincial funding partners. In Toronto we are funded by the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network; the TC-LHIN. In York Region, we are funded by the Central LHIN which covers an area that also includes North York and South Simcoe County.

In 2012 LOFT also launched our Behavioural Support Services – Mobile Support Teams; we call it “BSS”. Funded by the Central LHIN, BSS offers timely, mobile support services to seniors and their care-givers, living at home or in long-term care, who are experiencing challenging behaviours caused by mental illness, addiction, dementia or other neurological disorders.

We have three BSS teams: the South Team in North York, the Central team in York Region and the North Team in northern York Region and South Simcoe County.

Whereas Bradford House provides an effective alternative to hospital, BSS is aimed at keeping people out of hospital

in the first place. The two programs work well together. If a Bradford House resident has behavioural issues, BSS is called in to help. In return, BSS refers to Bradford House people who need more support than they can receive at home.

Now, as we write, LOFT's third South Simcoe endeavor is underway. LOFT Seniors Supportive Housing – South Simcoe Hub is providing services to seniors living in municipally-operated public housing in Bradford, Alliston and Beeton. This program is using a “hub and spoke” service model developed by other LOFT seniors programs.

The “hub” containing office and meeting space is located in Bradford. Our Psychogeriatric Case Managers and Personal Support Workers “spoke” out from the hub, travelling to meet, support and work with clients. This model means we don't need to incur the cost of maintaining office space in every building we serve, and we are able to fully utilize all our staff resources.

More importantly, seniors who need our services can get those services where they currently live. They don't have to move someplace else in order to be supported. This new service also meshes seamlessly with Bradford House for high-support, and BSS for behavioural support.

As LOFT Director of Seniors Services often says, “It's about doing more with less. But more importantly, it is about ensuring that our seniors receive the right services, at the right time, in the right place. And the right place for many, is in the community.”

## SAVE THE DATES

*Dates of importance to mark on your 2016 calendar:*

**March 21** – Fundraiser & silent auction at Sabai Sabai Kitchen and Bar



**March 23** – Flow & Glow, yoga fundraiser put on by Humber College

**June 28** – Annual General Meeting @ St. James Cathedral Centre (not the St. Lawrence Hall)

**December 5** – 26th Annual Home for the Holidays Christmas Concert @ St. James Cathedral

**December 6** – Giving Tuesday

**December 31** – Last chance to give for the 2016 year

For more information on any of these events, please go to [www.loftcs.org](http://www.loftcs.org) or call 416-979-1994 ext. 233

# Home for the Holidays Turns 25 Years Old

Home for the Holidays, LOFT's annual Christmas Concert, turned 25 years old this past December and we celebrated its success with so much wonderful talent!

On the first Monday of December, St. James Cathedral was sold out with over 500 people filling the pews. With the help of our generous sponsors, ticket buyers and donors we raised **\$95,000**. In its 25 year history, the concert has grossed over **\$1.6 million!** Thank you to everyone along the way who has helped make this possible.

Our talented performers this year were: Barbara Dunn-Prosser, Greg Barry, Billy Newton-Davis, Molly Johnson, Yulia Kovaleva, Andrew Seok, Breanne Dietrich, Tim Elia, and the Canadian Men's Chorus.

*Molly Johnson with Robi Botos and Mike Downes.*



*Michelle Henry, Vice-Chair of LOFT's board, presenting Kelly Walker with his "retirement" present.*



Loyal concert-goers will be familiar with our fantastic Artistic Director and MC Kelly Walker. This concert served as Kelly's last as Artistic Director. We will surely miss him as the AD, but we are sure to see Kelly involved in other ways!

Be sure to save the date for this year's concert – Monday, December 5, 2016.

For more photos from concert night, please go to our website [www.loftcs.org](http://www.loftcs.org).

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# Helping to Calm a “Perfect Storm”

*We all know about Ontario’s aging population. And we also know that our health care system is challenged and over-burdened.*

Where these two things come together, LOFT is forging a path, showing the value of community-based support. And nowhere more clearly than in our programs for seniors.

Currently, about 15% of Ontarians are 65 or older. By 2030, that number is expected to double. As we get older we tend to use more health care services. In fact, older Ontarians account for nearly half of provincial health care spending, now.

In the meantime, our hospitals are over-crowded. People are waiting for beds, waiting for surgeries and waiting

in emergency departments. We just cannot afford enough hospitals to do everything.

When you consider that the 10% of older Ontarians with the most complex issues are using nearly 30% of our health care resources, it looks like we are heading for a ‘perfect storm.’

One of the ways the Province is responding is by taking steps to ensure that the people receiving hospital services really need them. For those who do not need the hospital, there must be sufficient community-based services available.

We see the importance of this every day, especially in our work with vulnerable older adults and seniors.

It is becoming a common story for LOFT. There is a senior whose needs are too complex for home care (and maybe they don’t actually have a home), the nursing home can’t handle their mental

health issues, the hospital doesn’t have room. Who will “take them”? LOFT will!

Or maybe they have been in hospital for a while – even years - and they need to be discharged. But the same issues are there. Where will they go? LOFT says, “come on in”.

Now, imagine this scenario playing out 15 years from now, with double the number of seniors and health care services even more strained.

LOFT is lucky. We have the support of our wonderful donors, and that means we can be flexible and responsive and give our clients the services they need in the manner that is best for them.

LOFT can’t solve all the problems of the health care system, but we can show the way; both in terms of services for vulnerable seniors, and in the value of community vs hospital care.

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## MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michelle Henry is a Partner at the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, advising and representing both private and public sector employers on various labour, employment, and human rights matters. Her involvements include the Ontario Bar Association Council; the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers; and volunteering with pro bono law programs and various programs to support persons from disadvantaged communities.

**Number of years on the board** – 4

**Current board role** – Vice-Chair

### Why did you choose to join the LOFT Board?

I had been volunteering with a number of organizations dedicated to serving the homeless and disadvantaged and I was ready to take the leap into being more than “hands on the ground”. LOFT was a perfect match. While LOFT is prepared to take risks in responding



to community needs, every single program and initiative is undertaken purposefully, professionally, and with a significant level of commitment from staff. I am truly grateful that I am able to be part of such a great organization.

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

The vast range of programs and services LOFT provides. I wished we were better at bragging about it! As part of our Board meetings we hear about specific programs that are either ongoing or which

LOFT has recently embarked on. I always leave our meetings amazed at how much the organization is able to accomplish and the significant impact we are having in our community. I know that we are only able to accomplish so much because of the dedication of our fabulous staff and volunteers.

## 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.



*Ester, Donghee and Peter with their paintings at John Gibson House.*

### Donating Online Is Easy

Did you know you could donate online?

Just head over to the LOFT website at [www.loftcs.org](http://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](http://www.loftcs.org) and use the Newsletter Sign-up option on the front page.

### 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.