

A Dignified Life for Everyone: *It Begins With A Home*



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A Dignified Life for Everyone

What can we say, in just a few words, that clearly explains what LOFT is about, when it takes a paragraph just to list our basic services?

LOFT is a constantly evolving organization, leading the way in providing a range of services to people who are not served elsewhere and who, as a result, fall through the cracks. Over more than 60 years, LOFT has developed into a large, diverse, multi-service organization. But the more LOFT evolves, the harder it becomes to find a concise way to describe it.

Over the past several months, we have had the pleasure of working with people from Stephen Thomas Ltd., a Toronto-based company offering strategic fundraising, communication and branding expertise to charities worldwide.

They helped us look, not at what LOFT *does*, but what LOFT *means*. When LOFT offers unwavering support, hope and a home, what does it mean for our clients? And for the wider community?

It means *a dignified life for everyone!*

LOFT's Social Enterprise Program

*Guest writer: Marty Clancy
Social Enterprise Coordinator*

The Property Services Department Social Enterprise Program began on March 1, 2014. It offers paid employment to LOFT clients who are also residents at LOFT-owned or operated properties and receive program support. Clients are employed for tasks such as painting, carpentry, cleaning and grounds maintenance.

The program has employed over 20 clients since its inception and currently has 12 employees performing various duties. Each participant is determined to be a beginner, intermediate or advanced in the duties they will perform. The expectation is that with the support of the coordinator, these participants become more confident and proficient in their skill.

One participant previously had their own landscaping company and is responsible for transforming our beds, lawns and pots for the spring and summer and giving a property that added well-cared for look. Another participant has some real carpentry skills and has made benches and picnic tables. A number of the participants have no previous experience. The only prerequisite is an interest and eagerness to learn!

The group has really made strides in terms of the quality and commitment in their work. We continue to receive very positive feedback from neighbours and LOFT program workers. We are coming up to our two year anniversary and we can definitely say that the integrative work settings have been a success. Clients feel a sense of community and are improving their own skills at the same time.

BEHIND THE SCENES: CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Did You Know?

- The production aspect of the concert is put on by students from the Ryerson School of Performance. They get graded on this project for school! Everything from stage management, to lighting and sound is handled at least in part by students.
- The Christmas trees are decorated with common household items such as aluminum foil, blue recycling bags, balloons and plastic wrap!
- We only have access to the Cathedral beginning the evening before the concert. That means we only have about 24 hours to set everything up!
- Everything gets taken down immediately following the show. The student crew stay until after midnight to get the job done.

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Dignity Starts With A Home

A client once told us, "You can't look after your body and soul if you don't have a roof over your head." Adequate housing is one of our most basic needs, recognized by Canada as a fundamental human right.

Housing is also fundamental to recovery. No matter what your goals: improved mental and physical health, better life skills, getting a job; it is hard to make progress without a decent place to live.

LOFT began over 60 years ago as a pair of half-way houses, and housing remains at the core of what we do. But it is no simple matter.

GTA housing is expensive. There are 82,000 households on Toronto's wait list for affordable housing. York Region reports wait times of 10 years. More than 10,000 people are on the wait list for mental health supportive housing.

Housing is never off the agenda at LOFT.

LOFT owns 31 properties, from small shared houses to small apartment buildings. This portfolio includes some of our flagship locations: Beverley Lodge and Ingles House (the two original properties), McEwan House, St. Anne's Place, John Gibson House and Bradford House, as well as a number of smaller houses with 4 or 5 residents each.

Twenty were purchased in the late 1980s and early 1990s through a provincial government funding program. Most of the remainder have been true "leap of faith" ventures, purchased with donor funding and mortgage financing.

Our clients often face discrimination and rejection when trying to rent in the open market and, of

course, market rents are beyond the reach of most. LOFT solves both problems by taking head-leases on blocks of apartments and single units in more than 150 locations, and sub-letting to our clients.

For the property owner, LOFT is a reliable lessor. In turn, we can provide housing to our clients at affordable rents. The difference between what we pay and what we receive from our clients is made up through government subsidy programs

wherever possible, and when subsidies are not available, with the help of our donors.

We also have partnerships. St. George House is owned by Habitat Housing but managed and staffed by LOFT for our clients. The Fred Victor Centre provides housing

in the former Pan Am Village. Through our long association with Toronto Community Housing we provide services in several of their buildings.

A lot of housing means a lot of work, and LOFT has a great Property Services Department. With a core team of 5, plus 7 additional members in various programs, they look after the maintenance, repair and upkeep of LOFT-owned properties and advise on matters relating to tenancies and lease agreements.

In these ways, LOFT is able to provide 1,290 housing units; quite a number but not enough for all of our 4,900 clients. So we also work with private landlords and support our clients in housing provided by other agencies.

In short, LOFT does whatever it takes to ensure that everyone has a safe place to call home; a basic requirement of our goal of A Dignified Life for Everyone.



Home for the Holidays Christmas Concert

LOFT's 26th Annual Christmas Concert attracted hundreds to the St. James Cathedral. With a new Artistic Director at the helm, the stage was set for an exciting evening.

On Monday, December 5th, performers at LOFT's 26th Annual Home for the Holidays Christmas Concert dazzled under bright lights and next to beautiful trees!

Raising over \$75,000, the concert was a success in more ways than one. Our new Artistic Director Micah Barnes introduced great talent for his debut LOFT show. The audience was delighted that Kelly Walker returned as the MC and set the perfect tone for the concert.

The night started off with a bang from the powerful lungs of the Hogtown Brass Quintet, moved on to the sparkling Melissa-Marie Shriner, to perfect harmonies from The Ault Sisters. Next came a touching duet from father-daughter Roger and Effie

Honeywell, a dramatic performance from Ins Choi, the soulful sound of Jeremiah Sparks on the piano, the wonderful Charlotte Moore, a fantastic performance from members of Countermeasure and a show-stopping end from Thom Allison. Jeannie Wyse accompanied most performers from the piano and Tim Elia led carols from the organ.

We thank all of our sponsors, donors, volunteers and the Ryerson School of Performance students. This concert would not be possible without all this support!

Thanks for a great night and be sure to save the date for this year's concert, *Monday, December 4, 2017!*

For more photos, please visit our website at www.loftcs.org.

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St. James Guild of Change Ringers
St. James Cathedral
The Hotel Victoria

Left: Countermeasure performs an a cappella act.



Below: Effie and father Roger Honeywell in a duet.





HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS ♥

If we asked you, our readers, about what home means for you, we would probably hear different things – a place to call one’s own, a parent’s house for family reunions, an island of comfort in the daily storms of life...No matter what you feel about your home, it is something important and cherished, both physically and mentally. Yet many people take for granted having a place to call home.

For many homeless people a home can be just a dream; a heart-felt need for stability and belonging. If you ask LOFT clients how they feel about the supportive housing where they live now and what it means for them, most would say they finally feel at home and that it’s truly where their hearts are.

For 69-year old Faye who lives at LOFT supportive housing St. Anne’s Place, it is a place to enjoy many things - her own clean apartment, the neighborhood with a church just next door, caring staff and the company of great people. She feels it is a place where she belongs. She jokes that if somebody decides to make her leave, they would need to put her in a wooden box first as she would never voluntarily live her beloved home.



Faye

For Gerold, another resident at St. Anne’s Place, it is where he feels much better than in shelters. He says sleeping in his room in a clean bed and having regular tasty meals made a big difference for him. This is the place he has stayed the longest since he left his parents’ home, and where he wants to be.

Elvis, also at St. Anne’s, confesses it is much better than hospital where he stayed for a long time. It is a home and he feels well taken care of and never lonely when he needs company. Elvis says he is quite independent as his place is equipped to let him move around in his wheelchair. It is a home filled with love and care, where he feels happy.

When you support LOFT, you help people live dignified lives in their new homes with all the things it means for them – stability, independence, respect, the support they need, company, regular meals and enriching recreational activities.

Thank you for helping them re-enter their community in a meaningful way and finally find a home. A home where the heart is.

MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Al Rands held executive and consulting positions for a number of years with the Government of Ontario after working earlier in the financial sector and in geological mining exploration. His volunteer activity has included: Out-of-the-Cold, out-reach co-ordination in Anglican Parishes, and Board Member and Chair of a business association. He has also been along-time member of a Toronto yacht club.

Number of years on the board – 7

Why did you choose to join the LOFT Board?

I joined LOFT at the request of a previous LOFT Board Chair who knew of my past activity on a major governmental mental health project, and my interests and views on social outreach. He thought I would be a good fit.

What is the thing that has surprised you most about LOFT?

I was surprised at LOFT’s broad range of clients and its ability to meet their complex needs. I am also impressed with LOFT’s skilled and dedicated staff who are able to deliver alternative, humane help and home to clients who just do not fit an institutional setting like a hospital.



Adopt-A-Senior Delivers Over 700 Presents



The group of volunteers who make up the Adopt-A-Senior team are small but mighty. Together, they delivered over 700 presents to LOFT seniors this past holiday season!

The magic begins in August when every senior in a LOFT program is asked to supply a Christmas “wish list”. Armed with this information, volunteers go out and shop, wrap and label each gift. Come December, the gifts get distributed at parties where Santa himself shows up!

Donations are collected by these same volunteers and go towards purchasing gifts and paying for the food at these Christmas parties.

If you are interested in helping or contributing to the Adopt-A-Senior team please contact Amy at atran@loftcs.org or 416-979-1994 ext. 233.



Team Leader Lori Sutej (middle) and her “Dream Team” at Simon Apartments.



Bella, Linette and Sophia at the Simon Apartments party.

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!

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

Consider including LOFT in your Will.



For more information, or to receive a free estate planning brochure, call 416-979-1994 ext. 227, or email jcorbett@loftcs.org.