

Addiction, Recovery and Reconnection

How Cate found the strength to change her life from desperation to a future of possibilities.



Last year Ingles Housing and Support Services served 73 young women age 16-26 in recovery from complex addiction, mental health or eating disorder challenges. Cate was one of these.

Cate describes her childhood as “normal.” She had a loving, caring family, played sports and was active in school. She and her friends also experimented with drugs, but for Cate, things got out of hand.

“First drugs were my friend – then they were my enemy – then they were my God.” Cate dropped out of school. She stayed at friends’ more often than home. Her life spiraled out of control.

She moved to Toronto to live with her father. Unfortunately, the move brought her right to the “centre of all the trouble.” At

a new school in Grade 11, she gravitated to the people who had drugs. She dropped out again.

Her parents tried to help. They would arrange treatment. They got her out of “juvie” and out of trouble with the police. But after four trips to rehab, they said “enough” and cut her off. No more bailing her out of jail or picking her up at the police station.

Cate acknowledges that those first four trips to rehab were for her parents, not for herself. “I wanted to stay in their good books, but I knew I wasn’t ready. After rehab I came back to Toronto and went right to the corner of King and Bathurst and bought more drugs.

“Personally, I think rehab works when you are right down there at the bottom, and I got to the

bottom after they cut me off. Desperation gives willingness and makes it possible to change.”

After six more trips to rehab, Cate found Ingles House and she was finally ready. “I liked Ingles because the women are all under 26. When people your own age are going through the same thing, everyone is so supportive. Ingles is not just a house, we have support, life skills classes, do chores and cook. I had to learn how to take care of myself.”

Now living in one of Ingles’s Peer Support Houses, Cate has renewed her ties with her mom, dad and brother. She has had dinner with her family, her grandmother, aunt and cousins. Building trust again is slow but she knows that her family cares and wants the best for her.

Cate is finishing high school on the Dean’s List. She’s working hard, juggling school and running a business cleaning houses. Ever the salesperson, Cate is always looking for more clients.

Her plans include college, perhaps to study fundraising or event planning. However, she believes in “career serendipity” and is keeping her options open. She wants to meet as many people as possible to learn from them and explore all opportunities.

Visit www.loftcs.org and **DONATE NOW** to Change a Life

LOFT

Thanks to people like you, Cate and others like her have a safe place to live and the compassionate care that changes lives. When someone has complex challenges, they need support that takes **time, resources and flexibility**. LOFT has **all three - thanks to our donors**. This year’s **Fall Fundraising Appeal** will arrive in your mail box or your inbox in **early November**. Please donate generously – for people like Cate.

The Story of AJ – Journey To a Greener Path

AJ has asked us not to use his full name or his photograph out of respect for his family. He has just moved into LOFT housing for young men experiencing mental health issues who have been homeless.

What is my life like right now? Good question! I've been working at Starbucks six weeks. It's the best work environment in my life. I'm being trained on cash and I just started making drinks.

Yesterday, I moved into one of the Beverley Lodge houses. There are four other guys, but I haven't had a chance to meet anybody yet. I'm happy to be sharing a house with these amazing people.

As to school, well, that's being worked on. I started in Computer Engineering in 2014, but I've been taking a break for two years. I am thinking of switching to social work though. I think I can be a great asset, because I have first-hand experience.

This time last year, I ended up at a youth homeless shelter. That's where my journey begins.

I moved to Canada about twelve years ago with my parents and siblings. I guess it's a typical immigrant story. My parents sacrificed a lot to bring us here, and so they are all about education, education, education.

I have ADHD, so I've always struggled with school and my relationship with my dad was always rocky. Plus, I'm the stubborn kid who wants to figure it out for myself. I don't blame him for kicking me out. I ignored him because I was angry at him and that made him more angry.

LOFT has done amazing things in terms of my journey. I went to other places where I felt like everyone was angry. People here always have a smile and are happy to help you. We need more people like LOFT.

Shaniah, my LOFT worker, is always about no judgement. At first I was a bit hesitant. But now I'm an open book with her. I never hide anything. If I get stressed I don't talk to anyone. Shaniah will call me up and follow up. Another person wouldn't bother. She's dedicated and she has a great work ethic.

I had given up hope. I was unmotivated. Without LOFT and Shaniah, I would have ended up as part of the opioid crisis. I would be a statistic. And I'm not just saying that.

My goal right now is to finish my education and save money. I would love to move to a smaller community. I watched the Senators/Leafs pre-season game; they played in a small town called Lucan, Ontario. It looked like a great place to live.

I honestly appreciate all the donors who put their resources into LOFT because without them, I'm not kidding when I say I would be a statistic. Mentally and physically I was in a very bad space. Knowing there are people who are willing to help the less fortunately, I am really grateful. The next part of my journey will lead me down a greener path.

I will do my best to represent LOFT for the rest of my life. I am grateful for this organization and the people who are supporting it.

Thank you everyone.

Meet the Board of Directors: RAJU BAINS

Years on the Board: 1

Raju has over a decade of experience in front line crisis management and health care leadership and holds two Masters Degrees in Social Work and Health Administration. She has learned that the most important trait in leading healthcare is tapping into people's sense of purpose and duty, and that institutions cannot solve system problems in silos. This led her to become Faculty and Leadership Coach at University of Toronto's Health Administration Leadership Program and the Strategy and Community Lead at Michael Garron Hospital, with a focus on partnerships and networks.



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

Throughout my career I have always had a nagging feeling that there was a part of society that wasn't walking through the places where I worked. No matter how many people I served or in what capacity, this feeling never left me. It was important for

me to contribute to an organization that was boldly addressing this gap in the system with courage and compassion and I found this at LOFT. Joining the LOFT Board is giving me the opportunity to be of service and also learn from fellow Board Members who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table.

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

The people who work at LOFT make the impossible possible! When I worked with LOFT as a community partner, I admired how proactive and nimble the organization was at addressing system gaps and how creatively and successfully they would navigate populations that many organizations struggled to serve. I didn't know then what I see now as a Board Member. The people who work here, from leadership right through to frontline and support staff, love what they do and see opportunities. They truly embody what it means to treat their clients with dignity and this is both humbling and inspiring!

The Journey of Recovery

Why we call it a "Journey" and How LOFT Helps.



Many people facing addiction, or mental and physical health challenges, know that achieving recovery is not the end of the road. It isn't even a goal to be achieved. Rather, for many recovery is a personal journey. A lifelong journey on a road that is bumpy and filled with many roadblocks which must be overcome. Every person's recovery journey follows a different course and experiences different roadblocks. And, for most people, it is a journey they cannot make on their own.

Many LOFT clients speak about the beginning of their recovery journey as one of the most important steps they have taken in their lives. They gratefully describe how LOFT helped them. Some even say LOFT saved their life. Others acknowledge that it is LOFT's unwavering support that changed their life completely. No matter the form of recovery, our clients say that they would not have been able to make the journey on their own. They admit they could not have done it without the support of LOFT staff, or peers. Others credit their fellow clients who stand by them and watch their backs. An Ingles House resident once told us, "It's like having a whole bunch of sisters and you can't go wrong with a big group of girls on your side."

People turn to LOFT on their life long journey because they know they can find "unwavering support" to break away from the challenges affecting them. People living with serious substance misuse turn to LOFT to learn how to live clean, and take care of themselves. Youth turn to the Transitional Age Youth Program for help learning to

cope with mental health or addiction challenges or help to overcome the effects of abuse or renew family ties. Some people are seeking ways to break away from the sex trade. Clients in the Mental Health and Justice Initiative turn to LOFT to learn how manage their mental health challenges and reintegrate successfully into society. The common thing for all clients is that they learn to respect and love themselves.

The key to LOFT's "unwavering support" is a set of powerful guiding principles:

- Everyone is welcome.
- Access to services is voluntary
- We accept people without judgment.
- We embrace individuality.
- We believe in resilience, and most importantly
- Everyone deserves to live a dignified life.

While our values remain consistent, LOFT tailors service for each client to meet their own goals on their recovery journey.

No cookie cutter approach will serve all the individuals who are part of the LOFT community. LOFT knows that we cannot lead our clients, nor can we push them. We walk beside them and help them set and achieve their own goals. Everyone has the ability to grow, change, and get back on their feet; they just need a helping hand and LOFT is here to provide that hand.

Discover Your Talents – a Story of Recovery

In 2007, a LOFT client shared his story of recovery, entitled "How I Turned Lemons into Lemonade". At that time he expressed his gratitude for LOFT services that enabled him to resume an active life when he feared he would spend his life in hospital. Now, we are pleased to share his "sequel" and what he has learned on his journey. He has asked to remain anonymous.

I had a normal family life growing up in Ontario and the future was looking bright. I was 20 years old, studying pre-med, when a tragic event changed the course of my life forever. I was involved in serious car crash. As a result, I could not sleep for 3 days. I was hospitalized and put on anti-psychotic medication for a sleep disorder. While in hospital, I fell out of bed and hit my head. The next thing I know I'm being diagnosed with a mood disorder and having to undergo shock treatment. I went from being a top student in my class to being unable to find regular work. Then I came to LOFT.

LOFT offered a safe, supportive place to live where I could regain my independence. I made great strides at recovery class and benefitted from the mentoring and social engagement programs. At one challenging point I was hospitalized, but my LOFT case worker came to visit me and even brought me winter shoes and a jacket.



My mental illness has stabilized. I have a good job and I'm able to live on my own: I haven't been hospitalized in 16 years! And I'm proud to say that I've been in a committed relationship for the last 16 years as well. I've also won the CMHA

Courage to Come Back Award and LOFT's Spirit of Recovery Award.

What I've learned is that everyone who has a mental health challenge has something that they are good at whether it be chess, fixing bikes or photography. And LOFT will help you discover your talents and find innovative ways to use them in the community. I like to write so right now I'm working towards publishing my second book. I've completed certification as a peer support worker and hope to find part time work helping others recover their mental health.

LOFT got me back on my feet. They have been there to encourage me every step of the way.

Thank you to everyone who supports LOFT so generously. **Your donations make a huge difference to people like me.**

Volunteer Spotlight : Meet Seema

This newsletter is brought to you with the help of volunteers....like Seema.

Seema has been volunteering for 18 years in various organizations. She had never even thought of volunteering until, in 2000, someone suggested she give it a try. It was a challenging time in her life and she says, "When we're going through things in our own lives, we sometimes aren't able to see beyond it. But when we are able to step outside of ourselves, it gives us perspective – and purpose. I have become a life-long volunteer now. It has become part of who I am.



a good time, too. Also, the staff is always welcoming and the interactions are friendly and easy. And there are always little treats like donuts and cookies when we come in, and we are also treated to lunch. Not every place does that and it makes us feel appreciated as volunteers.

"And finally, it feels like the organization really wants me and needs me and values me. 'You need help? Okay! I think I can help you.'"

"I choose to volunteer at LOFT because I like organizations that help people in need and don't exclude people. I keep coming back for a couple of reasons. On the Mailing Team, there's a social aspect that I like. We get the job done, but we talk and have

"I feel good about spending my time at LOFT. I want to be around good people who are doing good work.

"I would recommend LOFT volunteering. The social aspect is open and easy and it is all very welcoming."

Meet George

"I was at CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) for about four months. It feels good to come here [to LOFT]. You see yourself as more sick when you are at CAMH, because it's a mental hospital. You can feel better about yourself because you are living here at LOFT."

George is neatly dressed and wearing a gentle, engaging smile.

He explains that he grew up in Ghana, West Africa. "After my dad passed away, my two older brothers came here. I came later, in 1990." In 1992 he moved to New York where he lived with his first wife and daughter for four years. He returned to Toronto to work for several years, but lost his job.

"After that I was living at the Maxwell Meighen shelter where I met a lady from my country. I moved in with her and we had one son. But at that time I wasn't feeling well. I was very sick and was taken to CAMH."

George's landlord had scheduled work to be done in his apartment. When the maintenance workers arrived, he responded defensively. The result was his four-month stay at CAMH in their secure Forensic Unit.

From there he was referred to LOFT's Mental Health and Justice Initiative (MHJI) where he received support to stabilize his mental health issues in an environment where he has independence and personal dignity.

George's journey of recovery includes MHJI's Wednesday night Tool Box Talks where participants develop emotional tools, coping tools, social skills and problem solving. His worker has

also connected him with Project Works, an organization that provides support to people with an intellectual disability so they can find and keep an entry-level job.

Through Project Works, he now has a job placement, and a new-found sense of pride. He presents and dresses better, and takes much better care of himself. George is proud of himself and the staff is proud of him too.

His family is also important to him. "I have two sisters. They are both in Ghana. My two brothers are here and they visit me, so I have family around me. But I have not seen my kids in a long time and that's hard."

George's goals: "I would like to have a job again. I'd like to be more independent and have a place of my own."

In the meantime, he says, "I give thanks to the donors for helping me with this program."



What Matters to You Most - Your Legacy - Will Power

Do you think about the future and the community in which you want your children, or grandchildren to grow up?

Throughout your life you have made charitable gifts that make your community a better place. Now you can create a **LEGACY** and ensure your community holds those same values, after you have passed away.

A **LEGACY** gift is a gift within your Will that plans for a community in ways that matter to you. We call this **WILL POWER**. The power to "care passionately" about the disadvantaged of our community in ways far greater than you could, in your life time.



A charitable gift in your Will is called a Bequest. When you make a Bequest, your estate is entitled to a significant tax credit.

There are many ways to use **Will Power** and create a legacy. LOFT Community Services is here to help. We can send you information and meet with you, your family and advisors to discuss your goals.

Intrigued? Please call Christopher Walker, Development Manager at 416-979-1994 x #2032 or cwalker@loftcs.org.

Become a LOFT Volunteer!

The **Volunteer Mailing Team** puts out 8 – 10 mailings a year, saving LOFT thousands of dollars in mail house services. And that leaves more funds available for people who need LOFT services. Each mailing takes place on a weekday morning at the LOFT Administrative Office in downtown Toronto. If you'd like to help, please call 416-979-1994, ext. #2044 (Ted) or #2033 (Sania).

Speakers Bureau Volunteers help spread the word. LOFT receives 15 to 20 invitations a year to speak at churches and service clubs throughout the GTA. We provide a complete orientation, speaking scripts and support materials. If you would like to learn about LOFT, meet new people and help reduce the stigma of mental illness, consider joining the Speakers Bureau. Call 416-979-1994, ext. #2050 for Paul Kight.

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.



DEC 10, 2018 - MARK THE DATE

Monday, Dec. 10* Artistic Director Micah Barnes and MC Kelly Walker will join forces to bring you the 28th Annual LOFT Christmas Concert at St. James Cathedral, (corner of King and Church Streets, Downtown Toronto) Tickets information coming soon. Watch your inbox.



Kelly Walker



Micah Barnes

*Please note change of date



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We are now also on Instagram!



Did you know??? For as little as \$13.69 a month (only .45 cents per day!) you can provide a safe place to live & offer a brighter future for people like Cate? By giving every month, you'll not only provide warm meals, supportive housing & personal care, you'll be there for a person at LOFT every single day. Keep an eye out in your email inbox for info about our new **Everyday Hero monthly giving program** coming soon. **Don't receive emails from LOFT** but want to stay in the loop on new programs and stories of change? **Sign up today at loftcs.org (click on "Newsletter Sign-up" button).**