



Highlighting Hope: Rory

Rory had been homeless for four years before finding his way to LOFT. During that time he struggled with substance abuse, and had been back and forth between living with his mother and living on the streets. Two years ago, his mother contacted LOFT, who got him into long-term housing, and his progress since then has been fast and remarkable.

He was assigned to a case manager, Eppie, who immediately identified his potential. His courage and determination were apparent to her from the start, and they realized that what he needed most was a support person to help him access the resources he needed, and to walk alongside him. Eppie helped him through the process of getting into housing and setting up appointments with doctors and counsellors, but *"the rest Rory did on his own,"* she said.

All roads to recovery have their challenges, and Rory's was no exception. Though he was surrounded by support and encouragement, the transition was difficult from time to time. But experiencing setbacks can sometimes motivate us even more to reach our goals, which is exactly what happened to Rory. *"I overdosed and that was scary,"* he admitted. *"I also had a friend overdose in my room. He was dying in front of me and Wilkinson staff administered Naloxone. This was a big shift in my life and my outlook. There were friends I had to let go of. If they are*



" When I walked into Wilkinson High Support House, I did not really know what to expect. They gave me a key to my room-it was clean, the bed was warm. Nobody was mean, there was food every day and I could come and go as I pleased and there was a door to lock and no one would bother me. I loved living there. " - Rory

using they must be let go when you are doing your recovery."

Rory loves cycling, and to help his recovery, Wilkinson staff set up a small shed in the backyard where he could work. He's now a certified bicycle repair mechanic, and he owns and operates a small business. *"Being able to have this fledgling bicycle business was a huge part of being able to move away from the harmful substance abuse,"* he said. *"The business helps to keep me busy-the goal is to have something to do. The business is a boost to my self-esteem."*

Rory's tenacity and courage saw him through his journey to recovery, but he credits his success to his mom and to LOFT. *"My mom is my best friend,"* he told us. *"We did not speak for years, but now we talk every day...my quality of life has gone up so much because of these guys. LOFT provided the safety and the support that allowed me to accomplish many other things on my own."*

Thanks to supporters like you, LOFT's Wilkinson Housing and Support Services can run a range of housing and support services for individuals aged 16 to 64, who are experiencing mental health challenges, substance abuse, social isolation and loneliness, and who have few opportunities for employment. These roadblocks often create situations of homelessness, and prevent people from living successfully in our community.



Get to Know Us: Dorota

Everyone is at ease when Dorota is around. Her infectious laugh precedes her like a beam of sunshine and when you hear it, it's impossible not to smile along with her.

Dorota left her home in Poland years ago to come to Canada, and, upon her arrival, had to re-qualify as a social worker. She took the opportunity to pursue an undergraduate degree at Ryerson, and then a Master's in Social Work from the University of Toronto. After graduating, she joined LOFT.

Now a Health Information Specialist, Dorota gets to put into practice both her love of data and research, as well as her passion for helping others. She trains new staff members to adhere to LOFT standards, and oversees client assessments. Her work is important because it ensures that clients' needs are being met and that they are happy, healthy, and on track to achieve their goals.

Dorota describes her job as a perfect fit. *"It must be perfect, after ten years I'm still here!"* she said, a warm smile breaking across her face. Seeing the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff members she trains is one of her biggest motivations. Her favourite part of the job is visiting with clients and front line staff because she loves seeing the positive impact of their work on the faces of our clients. *"Particularly when they're older, they show a comfort in knowing they have a place to*

call home. They are content and happy. This makes me proud of the staff."

In her spare time, Dorota spends her weekends hiking and cycling in Algonquin Park or along the Bruce Trail, getting out into nature to rejuvenate the bright and bubbly energy that she's known for.

Volunteer Appreciation Lunch



LOFT Community Services hosted a volunteer appreciation celebration lunch at our head office on January 31st in honour of our team. Some of our volunteers are new and many have worked with us long-term, but all are enthusiastic and passionate about the work that we collectively do. Our volunteers help us with our mailing and our annual Holiday concert, and we had a wonderful time showing our gratitude for their efforts and dedication!

Special recognition goes to our volunteer team:



Ted K., Nancy D., Nancy W., Heidi K., Maridene J., David W., Len F., Antoinette M., Janice H., Aaron P., Brian M., Donna A., Elizabeth Q., Jean M., Elizabeth G., Yvonne & Steve R., Jaime A., Odetta M., Seema C., Jim W., Amy F., Michelle W., Wendy T., Monique C., Chinwe O., Dorota M., Eva M., Siobhan & Roxxane G.

If you're interested in becoming one of our volunteers, please contact us at 416-979-1994.



Adopt-A-Senior Results

This year, *700 gifts were distributed across LOFT seniors programs.* Thank you to our amazing volunteers and donors for making another holiday season warmer and brighter for our seniors.



WHAT'S NEW AT LOFT?



Heather McDonald, CEO

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR IDENTITY(S); MASKED AND UNMASKED: May 9, 2019



Back by popular demand, our collaborative mixed-media art show and silent auction celebrates the talents of the youth in our art therapy programs and explores the theme of individuality and identity. All proceeds from the auction will go directly to the youth artists.

TUDHOPE MANOR IN ORILLIA

We are excited to announce our new partnership with Tudhope Manor in Orillia! Tudhope is an assisted living residence that provides specialized support services for seniors with complex mental health needs in the York Simcoe area.

Tudhope Manor in Orillia is our newest site, where we will be supporting 36 seniors transitioning from hospitals to affordable housing, assisted by specialized support.

Many retirement homes are receiving referrals from seniors who are stuck in hospital, whose needs have become increasingly complex and are denied supportive

housing. LOFT recognizes this emerging need for care. With our expertise in providing 24-hour specialized PSWs, life enrichment and psychogeriatric case management/care coordination, retirement homes can accept seniors who are stuck in hospital so that they can make a successful and safe transition back into the community.

We are so happy and proud to be expanding this work. We know these efforts truly support people, providing them with hope and dignity. Through our work with Tudhope Manor, we will be able to move people who no longer need acute care out of much-needed hospital beds and into full, enriched lives in their communities.

IPOP

Starting on April 1st, LOFT will be the new health service provider for IPOP (Integrated Psychogeriatric Outreach Program) in York Region. IPOP provides comprehensive assessments, treatment planning and educational support that assists seniors with mental health and dementia-related issues in continuing to live independently. By increasing access to community-based support, IPOP reduces avoidable emergency department visits, which contribute to hospital overcrowding. IPOP has been available in York Region since 2008, and we plan to expand the service to patients living in the South Simcoe area as well.



Our 28th annual Home for the Holidays Christmas Concert was held at St. James Cathedral, and featured a host of renowned Canadian talent. Co-hosted by Kelly Walker and Taborah Johnson, the concert opened with a lineup of traditional Christmas music, played by The Hogtown Brass Quintet.

Honorary Patron Rex Harrington, who shared his moving personal connection to LOFT with the audience, encouraging us all to Take a Leap of Faith Together. Later on, the string Ensemble Vivant lulled the crowd with a nostalgic selection of Christmas songs. Opera singer Jennifer Taverner leant her powerful voice to the evening, prompting one of our hosts to proclaim that "St. James Cathedral was built for a voice like hers." Singer Gavin Hope also gave a strong performance, followed by a cappella ensemble THAT CHOIR and Louise Pitre to round out the night. The grand finale was the audience themselves, who were invited to participate in a carol sing, accompanied by Tim Elia.

In addition to our musical program, LOFT clients Leslie and Mike courageously shared their recovery journeys, moving and inspiring the audience. You can still read their stories at: www.loftcs.org.



Special thanks to the alumni and students from Ryerson School of Performance, who generously donated their time and talents to provide sound and lighting. We

couldn't have put on the show without them!

Last but not least, our immense gratitude and thanks goes out to our generous sponsors, donors and volunteers. We raised almost \$70,000, and the evening was only made possible by your efforts.

Save the date! Next year's concert will be held on Monday, December 2, 2019.

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