



It's never too late to start over: Anna Catherine

If there's one thing Anna Catherine has learned in the past few years, it's that starting over and pursuing education has no time limit. The now 55 year old was referred to LOFT four years ago by a mental health provider in order to get specialized one-on-one support to manage her depression, which was diagnosed 12 years ago. It has had a profoundly positive impact on her life.

Anna was assigned a LOFT case manager and a family doctor, and she began to make use of the resources available through 416 Community Support for Women, which offers client-centred daily drop-in meals and programming, mental health and addiction case management, and a health and wellness program. She immediately felt supported by the staff and quickly became a regular.

While she continues to make great strides, Anna has also faced challenges head on. She was hospitalized this past spring for depression and, although she was given the option to be discharged earlier, she opted to stay for a full five weeks in order to make sure she was in control of her mental health. These days, she takes just one antidepressant, down from four during her hospitalization, and is enjoying life and living with gratitude.

Part of that enjoyment of life comes from going back to school. Two years ago, her case manager, Uttara, suggested Anna take her son to an open house for George Brown College's Transitions to Post-Secondary Education program. On a whim, Anna completed her own personal summary application, and both she and her son were accepted. (Though she worried about how her son would feel about taking classes with his mom, he encouraged her to go for it.)

Now in her second year, she's planning to complete the course next spring and then apply for the Community Service Worker program at George Brown—the same program Uttara once completed. Anna's ultimate goal is to help women and children who've experienced assault, and she's also eager to give back to LOFT.

The 416 Community Support for Women program offers client-centred daily drop-in meals and programming, mental health and addiction case management, and a health and wellness program.

* Image per Anna Catherine's request for privacy



Case Manager, Crosslinks Reintegration Program, Stouffville

Life experience has had a big impact on Michelle Brochu's career. Thirty years ago, her first child was born with Down Syndrome, and he tragically passed away within a year following surgery. Michelle was then blessed with two more children, one of whom has complex physical needs. She has noticed that complex needs aren't always well understood, and has channelled her unique perspective and compassion into helping her clients.

As a case manager in the Crosslinks Reintegration Program in Stouffville, which provides transitional housing and 24/7 support services, Michelle works with clients ages 16 and up who are living with complex mental health and addiction issues. The program helps clients learn new life skills, develop confidence and build relationships to become engaged in their community. In the five years she's worked with LOFT, Michelle has fostered her clients' imagination, so they can see a future of possibilities.

For many clients, it can be intimidating to settle into the home, so Michelle works hard to help ease the way. "I believe the Leap Of Faith goes both ways, and I'm humbled to be part of the support system that helps clients reestablish their roots and resilience,"

she says, noting that she's especially drawn to the environment of unwavering support and hope at LOFT. She also firmly believes in the importance of being heard, so she's a strong advocate for her clients.

Michelle has never been content to rest on her laurels – she's a lifelong learner who's currently in her third year of Ryerson's Bachelor of Social Work program. When she's not working, studying or volunteering with her church and at a local mental health hospital, Michelle unwinds by painting and hanging out with her rescue dog Ruby.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JUNE 25





ONTARIO HEALTH TEAMS UPDATE

We're happy to share that LOFT is part of five proposed Ontario Health Teams, designed to deliver coordinated, seamless patient care. A full application is being prepared for each of these teams, and we're working closely with our partners—including hospitals, doctors' offices, and health and social care services—toward a formal designation.

Throughout this change, LOFT remains committed to enhancing our clients' voice through advocating for equal access to care, influencing positive change, and, wherever possible, ensuring clients are at the table in this new model of integrated health care.

A SUMMER OF CELEBRATIONS!

We kicked off summer with our Annual General Meeting on June 25, featuring a talk with future strategist Zayna Khayat. In August, Jim Fleck, continuing the legacy of his late wife Margaret, opened his home to LOFT seniors for a picnic lunch, complete with a rockin' Elvis impersonator. And at Pelham Park Gardens, we brought the community together for a fun BBQ.

Jim Fleck (2nd right) and Heather (far right) with clients

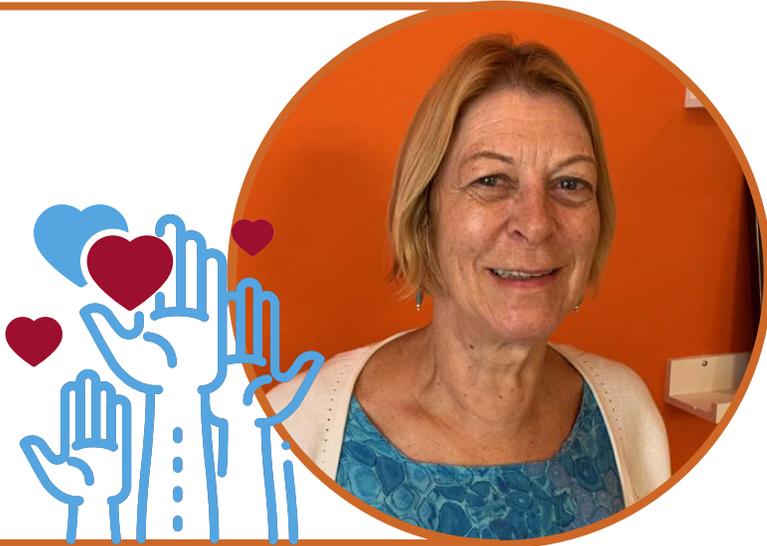


Clients and staff from Pelham Gardens



Staff and clients dancing





VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT:

Janice Habasinski

Janice first learned about LOFT 20 years ago while volunteering with her church, St. John Norway. Intrigued, she attended LOFT's Annual Christmas Concert in 1998 – and she hasn't missed a single one since. In fact, she often buys extra tickets to give as gifts. Three years ago, she decided to give her time, becoming a LOFT volunteer.

The social aspect of working with her fellow volunteers is important to Janice, and she truly appreciates the warmth and friendliness of LOFT staff. "They don't just hand you work and then leave for hours and come back when you've completed your task—they either sit down with you and help out themselves, or check up on you to see if any assistance is required," she says.

"I have learnt about so many entertainment venues and travel places while volunteering at LOFT—it's a great experience," she says. While she's particularly fond of LOFT's services for seniors, she values its approach to helping those in need. "It's a very humanitarian organization, which functions without any kind of biases, be it age, language or ability."

VOLUNTEER WITH LOFT!

We couldn't do the work we do without help from people like you! There are lots of ways you can volunteer with LOFT. Here are just a few of the volunteer opportunities we have right now:

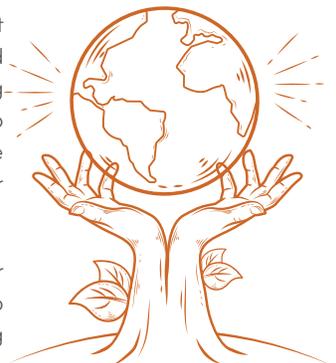
- **Event support at our Annual Christmas Concert fundraiser on Dec. 2, 2019**
- **Administrative support at our downtown office**
- **Photographer**
- **Copywriter**
- **Graphic Designer**

Interested and available?
Email volunteer@loftcs.org today!

MAKE A GREATER IMPACT

Your support helps us do important work. Donating to LOFT is easy and secure: visit us online at loftcs.org and click the "Donate" button to get started. A tax receipt will be emailed to you instantly after your donation is completed.

While you're there, sign up for our email newsletter so we can keep you up to date on what we're doing to support our communities.



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