

LOFT

CONNECTIONS

YOUR FALL 2021 COMMUNITY UPDATE

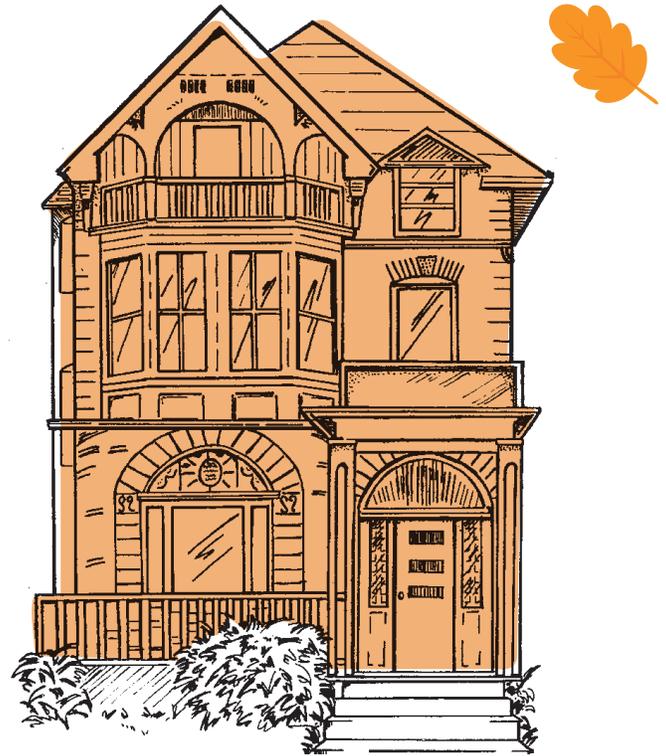
FROM AT-RISK TEENS TO INDEPENDENT ADULTS

Basedul was only 17 when his parents helped him flee an unhealthy situation in Bangladesh. He came alone to Canada in the hopes of finding a better future. They made plans to support him as best they could, but then the world went into lockdown and Basedul's support systems fell apart. Alone, afraid and isolated he ended up in the shelter system.

Fortunately, LOFT was there to help him with the mental health pressures of leaving his parents behind. "I moved to Beverley Lodge," he says. "They have an amazing staff that has become like a family to me. I have a chill and bold father figure, Lloyd, and a caring mother figure, Monique. They're always checking in on me and looking out for me."

Beverley Lodge is just one of several LOFT programs that serve at-risk youth who don't have a home, or who can't live at home due to complex mental health issues or addictions. LOFT provides a supportive, structured environment where young people can learn self-respect and the skills they need to be independent members of society.

"We ensure that our clients' educations are up-to-date, and that they don't fall behind," explains Monique, a child and youth worker. "People have misconceptions that our youth will never achieve anything, but our clients are very intelligent."



More than a house, Beverley Lodge is home for 9 youth like Basedul

Encouraging and enabling education is a key LOFT role, but the pandemic has caused setbacks. Virtual learning is only possible with a secure home and encouragement -- not to mention technology. With the right support, young people like Basedul are moving forward.

"My goal in life is to be a Chartered Professional Accountant," he says. "COVID-19 has been hard, but constant support from everyone at LOFT has helped a lot." 🍁

Back to school looks a lot different when you're a teen with so much to overcome.

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Director Paul Demaniw is retiring from a job that's been a labour of love for more than 40 years

"I'm going to miss my colleagues and clients at LOFT's Beverley Lodge," Paul says. "They're like family. We have wonderful staff who are dedicated to something that they feel is important."



Paul (right), at the Beverley Lodge Christmas Party in 1984, a long standing tradition funded by the CHUM Christmas Wish program

Started in 1954 by Bishop Alton Ray Beverley, Beverley Lodge provides high-support housing for at-risk youth clients so they can make progress towards education and/or employment.

"Much of the work we do is aimed at stabilizing and securing support for our clients," explains Paul. "Then we help them move forward into independent and successful lives."

Paul's decades of service have helped Beverley Lodge's approach evolve, ensuring a high level of

care and a sense of community amid the ever-changing social needs of his clients. "The number one priority and guiding principle is that we really do offer unwavering support," Paul says. "LOFT will be there, no matter what."

Paul believes that the right staff and a positive environment are critical. "This is serious work, but we find it rewarding to authentically engage with our clients," he explains. "Encouraging warmth, humour and stability is important because the longer the young men stay with us, the better they do. By making sure they feel valued and supported, we can help them find their way."

Paul sees retirement as an opportunity to continue his own personal evolution. "First I'll take a year to decompress, then see where things go from there." ©

Paul has helped change so many young lives! Words are not enough to express our gratitude.

“Paul has been a calm and stabilizing factor for the Beverley Lodge program. His approach with the youth has been respectful and caring at a critical time in their lives. I hope Paul feels proud knowing his dedication to the well-being of his staff and the young people he has served will be an important part of the LOFT legacy.”

– Karen O'Connor, Senior Director



DEC. 2021

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR VIRTUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT

We will be hosting our second Virtual Holiday Concert in December. We are planning a memorable evening of community and celebration, so stay tuned for further updates!

Watch our website www.loftcs.org, or contact fundraising@loftcs.org if you would like to support our efforts.

Autumn update from Heather McDonald, CEO



RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF OUR YOUTH

LOFT is proud to offer unconditional support. Together, we have built an environment of acceptance and community -- but things aren't always easy. The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table has projected that the Delta variant will peak in September. With the pandemic's devastating effects on mental health continuing to take their toll, our awareness turns to the needs of our clients and staff.

At LOFT, our clients have been dealing with multiple challenges, including increased isolation, anxiety, and depression. Tragically, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth. Nearly 90% of LOFT's younger clients have reported feeling suicidal at some point in their lives. The situation worsened during the pandemic, when the number of people in Toronto reaching out for mental health assistance broke records.

Thanks to donor funding from the Schulich Foundation, LOFT has expanded access to both virtual and in-person supports including group Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). DBT is a type of therapy that is focused on teaching youth how to cope in the current moment of distress and develop effective strategies to regulate their emotions.



Youth from LOFT programs learn life-skills like cooking.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACH

Many of our youth are also experiencing stress about returning to high school and post secondary institutions. Our clients need support to stay focused on school, and our dedicated staff is there to help with an increased level of care to make sure they don't fall behind.

We strongly believe that our strategic, community-driven approach to care will allow us to face whatever awaits. If you'd like to know more about how you can help, please see page 4. 

Thank you for your continued support and contributions to this life-saving work.



**World
Suicide
Prevention
Day**

September 10th, 2021

LOFT staff and volunteers are trained in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). Reducing stigma and raising awareness about prevention can lower suicide rates.

Growing goodness, harvesting hope

Ruby ripe heirloom tomatoes, crisp zucchini, leafy kale, wholesome peas and fresh garlic! The vulnerable seniors who find supportive housing at LOFT's Bradford House benefit from homegrown vegetables and herbs provided by students at Bradford District High School.

This partnership between LOFT and the school benefits seniors and students alike. Senior residents enjoy access to healthy produce, while students learn about agriculture, healthy eating habits and the value of giving back to their community.

LOFT's Bradford House provides housing, mental health supports, medication support and other assistance for seniors, but food security is always a challenge. The volunteer garden program at Bradford District High School is the kind of community-based solution that is central to LOFT's core philosophy: Community members helping community members.

LOFT is extremely grateful to Sherry Morrow, an educational assistant who leads the program. Thanks to her vision and dedication, students toil in the school's greenhouse to grow large quantities of produce. It's not small potatoes. Some items are frozen by the kitchen at Bradford House so they can be enjoyed throughout the year. ☺



Sherry and her volunteers donate more than 7 large bushels of vegetables weekly



Clients and staff at LOFT's Mental Health and Justice Initiative also built their own garden boxes using recycling bins

Help fund a garden box so more LOFT programs can grow their own food!

Creative ways you can help LOFT grow

There are many meaningful ways to make a gift or lend your skills to directly support LOFT's clients. Consider how you, your friends and colleagues can take action to empower your community. Here are some ideas:

- **Start a LOFT fundraiser**
- **Make a corporate gift or host an employee giving campaign**
- **Volunteer to build personal care or meal kits for our clients**
- **Become a Holiday Host for our virtual concert**
- **Donate household items, like twin bedding**

You can help!

Contact Lindsay, a LOFT fundraising team member

📞 Call: 416-979-1994 ext.# 2022

✉ Email: lcormack@loftcs.org



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