

# CONNECTIONS

EXPANDING TO MEET GROWING COMMUNITY NEEDS

## Holiday Update From Heather McDonald, CEO



With the end of another year nearly upon us, it's heartening to look back on LOFT's decades-long advocacy for those struggling with the most complex problems, and see so many successes.

For nearly 70 years, we've taken a uniquely holistic approach to support. We meet our clients' basic needs, then work to secure long-term housing while confronting the challenges of mental illness and addiction. It's a model that has helped create connections and community for thousands.

We're pleased to announce that real, tangible solutions are now even more accessible as we welcome two supportive housing locations for young people into the LOFT family. Formerly run by Arrabon House, these homes will continue to do important work with some of our most under-served populations. Additionally, in April of 2022, Toronto North Support Services will amalgamate with LOFT to provide a more seamless integration of mental health services.

These expansions come at a critical time as the pandemic continues to drive increased demand for housing, addiction and mental health services:

- The number of children and adolescents experiencing depression and anxiety symptoms has doubled during the pandemic.
- 529 people have died from opioid overdoses, an 81% increase from 2019, reflecting growing mental health challenges.
- The mounting mental health crisis will likely long outlast the pandemic.

The need for LOFT's services has never been more urgent. The momentum of recovery depends on ensuring that adequate supports and services are available. With your help, we will continue to be there for our clients, no matter the challenges they face.

*LOFT's 1,733 housing units provide hope, dignity and stability to those living with mental illness, addiction or experiencing homelessness.*

LOFT'S BOARD LEADS THE WAY WITH A 2X MATCH



LOFT's Board of Directors has provided us with invaluable support and guidance throughout the pandemic. Its members are stepping up again with an inspirational offer to match donations up to \$120,000. Won't you join us in this shared effort to raise urgently needed funds for those struggling with poverty, mental illness and addiction?

[WWW.LOFTCS.ORG/MATCH](http://WWW.LOFTCS.ORG/MATCH)

Excitement is building for another stellar virtual broadcast. Tune in on your choice of three dates to see esteemed Canadian jazz singer and host Heather Bambrick, and a glittering array of other exceptional artists as we celebrate the year that was and look forward to better days ahead.

Meet Award-Winning Actress and Home for the Holidays Featured Artist **Louise Pitre**

**What does the theme Home for the Holidays mean to you?**

This year, Home for the Holidays doesn't mean being at home with your loved ones. It means actually having a home to go to.

**Can you share why LOFT is an important cause for you to support?**

LOFT is known for offering unconditional support to anyone in need, regardless of their challenges or identity. In these difficult times, this is the kind of humanity the world needs most. So many people are facing insurmountable odds, and this organization touches my heart.

**What is a moment from your career that you will always remember?**

When I was doing Mamma Mia! on Broadway, I received a letter from a mother who was bringing her terminally ill teenaged daughter to the show. Her daughter loved musical theatre, and dreamed of being on a Broadway stage. I organized a surprise for them. On the day of the show, we brought the young girl backstage to a dressing room with her name on it. We quickly rehearsed her into the finale and, at the end of the show, we brought her on stage to join the cast for the last number. I will never forget that day or the look on her face. What did it cost? Nothing. Just a thought and some time. It gave someone something so precious. We gave her a dream.



**Has the pandemic changed how you think about performing and connecting to audiences?**

I admit that after such a long break I wonder if I ever want to work that hard again. I cannot imagine doing a show to a small audience wearing masks. I would rather wait even longer until we can actually be close to one another and I can see facial expressions and hear unmasked laughter. I imagine audiences will be so appreciative after this long drought and that does make the thought of performing live again pretty inviting. That said, I have had a really good practice run at retirement this last couple of years. And, you know? I don't mind it.

*You can help make the season bright for so many by joining us. Get your tickets today!*



Tickets are \$40 per household  
(with a \$15 tax receipt)

See Louise and a whole host of other incredible artists. [Visit \*\*loftcs.org/concert\*\*](https://loftcs.org/concert) or call 416-979-1994 ext. #2033 to learn more and get your tickets.

**A gift to LOFT is a gift to empower your community**

Call: 416-979-1994 ext.# 2033

Email: [fundraising@loftcs.org](mailto:fundraising@loftcs.org)

**LOFT**

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