

LOFT

# CONNECTIONS

YOUR FALL 2022 COMMUNITY UPDATE

## Bienca's story: Finding life-saving support

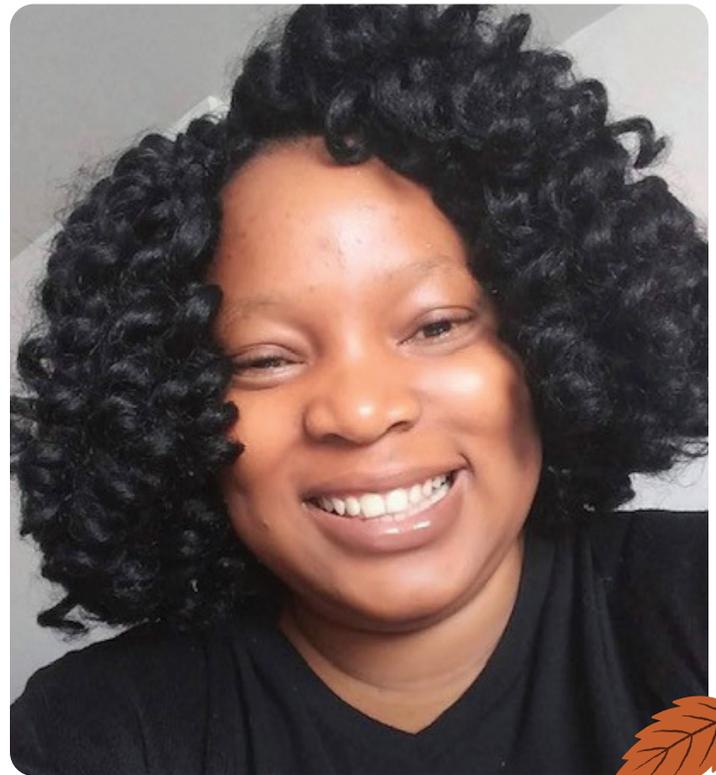
"I like baking in my free time – muffins, cakes, and pastries. I like to try new recipes. Sometimes they turn out great but other times, not so good."

Bienca is an ambitious person, who is goal-oriented in all corners of her life. She completed a 16-week baking course at George Brown College, and is currently working as a full-time Personal Support Worker.

It's been a tough journey for Bienca. In 2016, Bienca was referred by her psychiatrist to LOFT's Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program, as she was struggling with her day-to-day life. The TAY program became the supportive next step in Bienca's recovery journey. "My first Case Manager, Lula, helped me with everything, such as going to medical appointments and setting up my alarm to take my medicine. We worked together to define my goals and time management, so I didn't spend all day in bed depressed."

Bienca has struggled with complex mental health challenges for a long time and was self-medicating. "I was very sick before. When I was in college, I had my first very serious overdose. I would end up back in the hospital every 2-3 months, and have to spend 1-2 weeks there, every time."

At 25, when Bienca was no longer defined as a youth but needed continued care, she joined LOFT's Wilkinson program for adults. "At the Wilkinson program, I was able to rebuild connections I'd lost and make new ones. All my case managers have been very supportive, connecting me to needed services in the community."



With the support she's found at LOFT, Bienca has been able to rebuild her confidence and set goals for her future. "The help I received was truly life-saving. I am now able to control my mental health with medication and therapy. **For the past 3 years at Wilkinson, I have not been readmitted to the hospital. Not once.**"

I really hope that others who need the help are able to get it from LOFT."

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*"The help I received was truly life-saving. I really hope that others who need the help, are able to get it from LOFT."* – Bienca

Bienca is now able to manage independently, and is in the process of graduating from LOFT. She also celebrated another milestone as she recently got married. Looking to the future, Bienca says she wants to continue with her education: "I want to spend one

more year working full-time, and then I want to go back to school. I like helping people, so I want to complete a community social worker program. I know I can share my own lived experience of mental health and I hope that others are inspired by it." 🍷

## Perin goes where she's needed

**T**he impact of the pandemic and rising inflation has created ongoing barriers for our young clients, especially those who need housing. Perin, a Community Support Worker from our Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program, says it's a worry: "Rent prices have gone up so much and Ontario Works (OW) benefits are just not enough. With the pandemic, some of our clients have lost jobs and are having difficulty finding new ones because of that gap in their employment."

Perin's days are spent visiting and supporting clients across LOFT's various supportive housing locations for youth – from facilitating life skills meetings, attending appointments, helping with rent, conducting health and wellness checks, to working with clients on their goals. "Housing is a different level of support because we're in clients' homes. We need to be a little more flexible and even more relational. We meet and support clients where they're at."

At LOFT, we recognize that isolation during the pandemic seriously impacted youth mental health. When lockdowns occurred, the only people our clients saw regularly were housing workers like Perin. Encouraging youth to socialize and join activities was vital in managing their mental illness. "We would go

*"(Clients) want to transition, but feel that independent housing is out of reach. That's why it's so important to provide transitional housing."*

– Perin, Community Support Worker, TAY program

for walks, try to find activities online or support them with virtual interviews. We just tried to be there with them. We even did a Halloween haunted house walk-through, which was one of my favourite memories."

Through her work, Perin sees just how vital transitional housing and housing support is. "Clients want a place of their own. They want to transition, but feel that independent housing is out of reach. That's why it's so important to provide transitional housing. They're able to think, and realize "Okay I'm here for a year – I can focus on my mental health goals and have a safe space in which to do that before moving on."

Outside of work, Perin likes spending her time outdoors paddle boarding, "I love the feeling of being on water. It's just so calming." 🍷



## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Annual Home for the Holidays Concert

We had plans to return to an in-person concert. Unfortunately, with the ongoing pandemic, we have made the difficult decision to not hold our annual holiday concert this year to ensure continued safety for all.

If you have any questions, please contact [fundraising@loftcs.org](mailto:fundraising@loftcs.org) or 416-979-1994 ext. 2033#.



# An Update from Heather McDonald, CEO



According to Statistics Canada, more than **two in five Canadians** have reported being affected by rising food prices and the high cost of living. While times have been tough, many are fortunate enough to adjust spending habits or tap into savings. For our clients, there is no safety net. Our leadership team is working with funding partners to provide greater financial support to those who need it most, but there is more to do. It requires all of us to work together.

Many of our clients are experiencing increased isolation, depression, and substance use. Caring for the whole person is more important than ever.

In this edition, Bienca shares her progress towards a life of independence and dignity. LOFT's goal is to provide our clients with the support they need to achieve their optimal health and well-being.

We are growing. Together with our partners, donors and staff, we have expanded services for youth, adults and seniors.

During these challenging times, we thank you for consistently walking alongside us to respond to unmet needs and support our clients. 🍁

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A senior client from one of our housing locations.

## Expanding our support for seniors with complex needs

Canada's population is aging. The demand for better support services for seniors with complex needs is rising. LOFT is expanding our programs to support seniors with mental health, addiction and psychosocial challenges. Our senior clients are able to transition out of hospital and live safely in the community with access to subsidized housing and a range of on-site services. Through collaboration with regional hospitals and partners, we are establishing a new site in Penetanguishene, as well as expanding our operations in Toronto, Orillia and Barrie. 🍁

**Our housing programs offers:** Affordable supportive housing, 24/7 care through our specialized Personal Support Workers, 24/7 nursing support, behavioural supports, meals, life enrichment services, primary care, psychiatry and pharmacy services. Clients may stay for short term or live permanently with us.

# Working together to serve those at risk

Since January 2022, countless organizations, churches, schools and individuals have generously donated in-kind gifts and services towards our Crosslinks Street Outreach program. Our thanks go out to:

- Moraine Hills Public School (Kindergarten class)
- Ginger's Cupcakes
- Richmond Hill United Church
- York Region Food Network
- The Cookie Collective
- Magna International

There are so many more to thank. We are grateful to everyone who has supported, and continues to support, our Crosslinks Street Outreach program. We strive to provide a comprehensive and coordinated network of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty in York Region. People receive food, clothing, and one-on-one mental health support services from our Street Outreach Van team. ©



Delicious cookies donated by The Cookie Collective



An array of clothes donated by Magna International

*"Thank you to all those who have donated gifts to our Crosslinks street Outreach program. With the impact of the pandemic and rising costs, every gift provides immediate support to those who need it most."*

— Mary Ann Proulx, Crosslinks Street Outreach Van Coordinator

## Support the Most Vulnerable

There are many ways you can support LOFT and have a tangible impact, including:

- Financial gifts
- Donating personal care items such as shampoo or bed sheets
- Group fundraisers
- Volunteering
- Estate giving

Every day, community members and donors help provide food, housing and mental health supports to the thousands of deserving youth, adults and seniors we serve. Learn more at [www.loftcs.org/how-you-can-help/](http://www.loftcs.org/how-you-can-help/)



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

Call: 416-979-1994 ext. # 2033 or visit: [loftcs.org](http://loftcs.org)

**LOFT**

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