LOFT COMMUNITY SERVICES
Opening doors to hope

CONNECTIONS

YOUR WINTER 23/24 COMMUNITY UPDATE

Finding Home: Frederick's Resilient Journey from Hospital to Hope

Once able to live independently, Frederick lost his home after an extended hospital stay to address a physical health concern.

He had been in the hospital for 128 days when two members of LOFT's Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (M-DOT) visited him before his discharge.

Introduced in 2006, LOFT's M-DOT offers intensive transitional outreach services to individuals experiencing homelessness or residing in emergency shelters, while simultaneously faced with health, mental health, or substance use challenges.

At LOFT, Frederick was assigned a Personal Support Worker, Afolabi, to help him manage his day-to-day activities, access necessary medication, and assist with cooking and cleaning. "Afolabi is more than a caregiver; he's like a brother to me. It is very comforting to know I am cared for," says Frederick.

A year after leaving the hospital, Frederick continues to grapple with mobility challenges. However, with Afolabi's support, he remains hopeful about maintaining stable housing and managing his physical health concerns.

With LOFT and Afolabi's support, Frederick has gained essential resources to rebuild his life and prioritize his well-being. Frederick's increased resilience and confidence highlight the power of compassionate care and accessible support in his journey toward recovery.

A Transformative Collaboration: Extending Support In Toronto's Transit System

In March 2023, the City of Toronto, TTC, and LOFT Community Services initiated a one-year partnership to expand the M-DOT program to support individuals sheltering in Toronto's transit system.

Initially hoping to support 80-100 people, the program exceeded expectations. We engaged with **290** individuals over **eight** months, connecting **145** to comprehensive support services.

LOFT Celebrates Birchmount Green's Grand Opening

In December, LOFT celebrated the grand opening of Birchmount Green in Scarborough with Mayor Olivia Chow, MP Salma Zahid, Councillor Michael Thompson, and Tim Neeb, President of Birchmount Green, Inc.

This new property offers 220 mixed and affordable supportive rental homes, addressing crucial housing needs in Scarborough. Collaborating with five not-for-profit partners, LOFT proudly holds 12 units and has already begun transitioning individuals.

Stable housing provides a safe environment, supporting recovery and independence.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of the Balsam Foundation, we provided our clients with crucial items such as furniture and groceries to ensure a seamless transition into their new homes.

We're grateful to work with the City of Toronto and other community partners to support our neighbours in need.

Jmoon's Journey to Stability

Jmoon grew up in unstable housing conditions, frequently moving and spending much of his childhood in shelters. Without a secure environment, Jmoon faced challenges in pursuing academic and personal goals.

When Jmoon was offered a referral to Pankhurst House, he finally found the housing stability to focus on his studies and personal growth. "For me, living at Pankhurst House feels easy and calm. The staff here are not just friendly but also incredibly reliable. Whether it's help with homework or just needing someone to talk to, I know I can count on them."

LOFT's Pankhurst House is a youth housing program that works in collaboration with the City of Toronto. The extendable, year-long program is designed to prepare clients for independent living, focusing on financial management, career development, and emotional regulation. The property includes five units, an office, a backyard, a communal kitchen, and two bathrooms.

With the unwavering support Jmoon found at Pankhurst House, he can now focus on his personal goals and build a bright future for himself. He is grateful to have the support of the LOFT community behind him every step of the way.

An Update from **Heather McDonald, CEO**

As we settle into the new year, I'd like to reflect on the remarkable strides we made in 2023.

I'm thrilled to announce that the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) have extended their partnership with LOFT for another year. This expansion will allow our M-DOT program to continue offering outreach support within the TTC. In December, LOFT's Director of Mental Health and Homelessness Services, Sarah Collins, and Program Manager, Ryan White, joined CBC to discuss this collaboration and our M-DOT program.

LOFT's Board of Directors demonstrated exceptional generosity in December by committing to match all donations up to $40,000. We not only met this goal but exceeded it—a big thank you to everyone who supported us during the holiday season.

In 2023, our team witnessed significant growth, and we are proud to enter 2024 with over 1,000 staff members working across the GTA and Simcoe Region. As a part of our commitment to fostering a community of learning and connection, we started hosting open houses last year. These activities allow our staff, clients, and supporters to visit and learn about programs beyond their usual focus. We received an overwhelming response and have decided to introduce tours of other locations in the new year.

In Bradford West Gwillimbury, I am pleased to announce that LOFT will start constructing new housing in Spring 2024. The new property will be located at 31 Frederick Street and will provide affordable and supportive housing for 99 vulnerable seniors and older adults. This relocation will enable us to support 60 more residents than our current Barrie Street building, addressing the critical need for accessible support services and housing for seniors and older adults in the Bradford community.

As we step into 2024, we are excited about the opportunities ahead and what we will continue to accomplish together.

Upcoming Open Houses

February 21 | Pine Villa

March 12 | Bathurst House

April 30 | 416 Community Support for Women

The LOFT community is always welcome at our open houses! For more information and to RSVP, please contact us at fundraising@loftcs.org or 416-979-1994.

Celebrating Our Donors:
Building a Better Future Together

Future Fertility
In December, Future Fertility put together Winter Warmth Kits for those facing housing instability. The kits, which are distributed via LOFT's Street outreach programs, offer warmth and security during extreme cold for people experiencing homelessness. They contain age-specific winter clothing, blankets, hats, scarves, and more. Beyond meeting physical needs, this quality gear fosters trust and empathy, showcasing our community's support.

A heartfelt thank you to Future Fertility for spreading warmth in LOFT's community.

Learn more about LOFT's Community Care Kit Program and other group or employee engagement opportunities by contacting us at **fundraising@loftcs.org**.

Beresford Charitable Foundation We're deeply grateful to the Beresford Charitable Foundation for generously funding vital upgrades to one of our youth housing programs. Their support enhanced both the interior and exterior spaces, including the main bathroom, stairs, fire escape, and property fencing. These renovations ensure accessibility, especially given the property's age.

Investing in a clean and well-maintained space communicates respect and dignity to our clients, providing a secure environment for their recovery. Our aim is to show clients that they deserve a high-quality living environment, which positively impacts their self-esteem, well-being, and overall quality of life.

United Way Greater Toronto and Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy We are so grateful to United Way Greater Toronto and Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy for providing funds to procure a new accessible van. This new van arrived at LOFT's Crosslinks Supportive Housing Program in York Region, just in time for the New Year!

We understand how crucial an accessible van is for promoting community participation among residents and improving mental health and well-being. This new van promises residents secure and timely access to medical appointments and community services, which are vital in supporting their recovery journey. This van will also foster inclusion and autonomy within our York Region community.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

CALL: 416-979-1994 EXT. 2033#
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