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Hope is a Necessity

From an interview with Monica, a resident

Monica describes her life in Toronto, where she lived on and off the streets for 20 years, as hopeless. She makes the point that when you are homeless you do not have the stability you need to break free of addiction.

In the fall of 2009, Monica moved into a treatment centre in Ottawa. Three months later, after completing the treatment program, she moved into an apartment, not knowing it was a drug house. After seven months, her living arrangement had become unbearable. Less than one month later, fearing a relapse, she moved into a Daybreak house. In her words, "housing is the backbone". Stable housing has allowed her to grow and has enabled her to continue with her treatment program. She describes the Tenant Support Worker at Daybreak as a "counsellor" to whom she could talk about anything. "He was like a rock," she says. Daybreak is the first place where she's lived for longer than a year in over 20 years, and the ability to prove that she had stable housing qualified her for a government grant to receive treatment for hepatitis C. She is now responsible for buying groceries for the Daybreak household she is a part of, and says that the responsibilities she's entrusted with boost her self-esteem and validate her as a productive member of society. It's the first time she's been trusted, and it feels good.

She speaks fondly of the support she receives from her housemates, and the simple delivery of birthday cakes by a Daybreak volunteer. Since receiving the support she needed, Monica has also reconnected with her family. Most importantly, she has hope. 

The Community That is Daybreak

by Irene Hilkes, Volunteer

Support comes in many forms and from different sources, and everyone needs it. Many of us are privileged to have had it take root within our families, maintained by friends, and topped up by society.

Along with the need for affordable housing, there is often the need for some type of support. I've learned that over 95% of those applying for housing with Daybreak don't have family members working with them, and many can't provide an emergency contact.

Daybreak's philosophy is to provide "minimum support." Staff includes a Tenant Support Worker, a Property Manager and an Office Coordinator, who help residents develop confidence and the skills needed for independent living. One of the questions asked at intake is "How can the staff at Daybreak tell that you are not ok?" The support is concrete, and it is subtle.

The support begins with a thorough review of the lease with each new resident, to make sure they understand it. Regular house meetings begin with everyone sharing what's happened for them since the last meeting, and I'm told that "nothing" is not an acceptable answer. House maintenance, such as chores and groceries, is also discussed at these meetings. Daybreak staff is involved with conflict resolution—necessary for independent living with housemates—and they manage a 24-hour on-call emergency system. The staff initiates one-on-one life skills support in areas such as budgeting and housecleaning, and they offer outside referrals for assistance with issues such as job search. (Referrals to outside

(continued on reverse)

agencies are offered in times of crisis, and feedback is provided if a resident works with a social worker, to ensure that the social worker is apprised of important issues. Staff advocate for more appropriate housing when someone needs more than what Daybreak offers, and they uphold house rules to protect others in the house from relapse (for example, into addiction). Support considers the household, and it is individual, just as the needs are individual.

When I asked staff what they felt was the most important support they provided, the answer was “the security of knowing that someone who cares is there for them.” We all need it.



Our Support Needs Your Support

by Margaret Singleton, Secretary of the Board of Directors

“Supportive housing” is a very broad term. Margaret Singleton has worked in non-profit and supportive housing in Ottawa for 35 years. Here she explains what is distinctive about Daybreak’s minimum-support model.

Supportive housing comes in a variety of forms. The family of supportive housing to which Daybreak belongs includes various types of physical housing, from group homes to self-contained apartments, and different support levels, from 24/7 staffing to visiting volunteers. Residents may be long-term with full tenancy rights or transitional. Funding sources vary.

Daybreak provides a group living environment with private rooms and common living areas. Its minimum-support model is an example of what the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network refers to as “*HousingPlus*”. **“HousingPlus provides services and (affordable) housing for people who face social isolation and other complex challenges—individuals and families who may have very low incomes and serious, persistent issues that may include mental illness, HIV/AIDS or substance use. It reduces reliance on costly emergency, health and social services and, more importantly, helps people to be strong and successful members of the community.”** (see www.housingplus.ca)

Community-building is at the heart of this type of supportive housing. Its base is in the community, with management and support services governed by volunteer boards. Services are provided in direct association with the building and its residents. Its purpose is to build a safe home from which residents can begin to participate in, and contribute to, the wider community.

Funding has depended largely on the government policies, priorities and programs that were in place at the time the housing program started, and on the types of organizations using these programs. Over time, responsibility for funding has moved between departments and levels of government. At this time, the City is the primary funding source and program administrator for much supportive housing, and is Daybreak’s main funder. Conversely, the Ontario Ministry of Health is the main funding source for agencies that specialize in housing persons diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Daybreak and other supportive-housing providers cannot do what they do with government funding alone. For Daybreak, funds through government subsidy for the “bricks and mortar,” and rents (kept at levels affordable for our residents), are barely adequate to maintain and manage our housing. Therefore, the critically important work of our support staff desperately depends on donation income to meet its full costs. **Your donations make our supportive housing model work.**



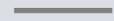
Donate through Canada Helps by following the link on our web site
www.daybreakhousing.com



Thank you to
Parliament
Cleaning
for keeping our
carpets clean.



Impact Day was a
great success!
Our thanks to
Deloitte for
painting and
gardening.



Stay tuned for our
winter issue where
we showcase the
generosity of our
neighbours and
supporters.



*Our mission is to provide
minimum-support homes
emphasizing community living for
single people with limited
income. Daybreak Housing
believes that residents can better
achieve their goals and potential
when provided with support for
their well-being in a safe, caring
environment, designed to foster
personal growth.*