

# Operation Come Home's 2016 Christmas Newsletter



Operation  
**Come Home**



Opération  
**rentrer au foyer**



# From our Executive Director:

Dear friends and supporters of Operation Come Home (OCH),

I am pleased to report that OCH had another very successful 45<sup>th</sup> year of providing essential programs to at risk and homeless youth in Ottawa and across Canada.

In 2016, OCH partnered with Mealshare, a national program that provides OCH with funding to prepare nutritional meals to our youth. Operation Come Home provided young people with three job program options and as a result of these, more than 100+ young people found jobs. The Achievement Centre celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and since 2007, the school has graduated 59 young people. OCH provided two scholarships to students enrolled at Algonquin College and Carleton University. OCH provided financial literacy to youth working in the social enterprises and Housing Works. Operation Come Home continues to seek new customers to purchase our products and utilize our services in our five social enterprises. FarmWorks yielded the best crop ever this year, sold 26 full shares to community members and was sponsored by Knifewear and Tartan Homes. Repurpose General Store hosted the annual shopping party and featured many social enterprise products handmade locally. BottleWorks has partnered with Brew Donkey to pick up growlers (large empty bottles) from various micro-breweries in Ottawa. This new partnership will create more jobs and revenue for BottleWorks. Operation Come Home continues to operate all of the essential programs such as the Achievement Centre in partnership with the Ottawa Catholic School Board and Lester B. Pearson High School. Our drop-in and resource centre continues to be the sole centre open in the mornings for young people as young as 16 to come and seek supports and basic needs weekdays in our downtown location at 150 Gloucester St. OCH expanded our reunite program in 2016 by increasing the number of affiliates across Canada. It is vital to have National affiliates that work with OCH because our authorized partners can assist young people in person to travel them home to their families. Thank you to our 9 National affiliates across Canada for ensuring young people travel home safely. Our



evening outreach program continues to operate with many community volunteers that dedicate time every week to greet homeless youth “on the streets” in an attempt to encourage them to come to Operation Come Home for services. We have had success this year with engaging young people in our outreach program, many have gained access to our services. One young man from outreach found a job and a home as a result of our efforts. OCH continues with our two housing programs, Housing Works and our Housing First program. OCH assisted more than 30+ youth to find safe, affordable accommodation in 2016.

Operation Come Home is very grateful to all of our volunteers, staff, students, board members, affiliates, partners, funders, neighbours, donors and stakeholders in our community, we could not do what we do without all of your support, thank you. OCH continues to seek out new funding opportunities to continue to provide quality, best practice, unique and innovative programs to many of the most marginalized youth in Ottawa. We will continue to provide front-line services to at risk and homeless youth in the years to come. Please support us in reaching out to those who need it the most, the next generation of young people that are full of ideas, hope and motivation to succeed. Joy and peace to all of you and thank you for supporting our vital cause.

Elspeth McKay  
Executive Director

# Shlomo's Story:



Hello welcome my name is Shlomo. I spoke at the Breakfast in 2014 and I'm here to share what I've been up to in the last two years since then. When we left off, I had just graduated high school in the Achievement Center in OCH and was starting my courses for business marketing at Algonquin College.

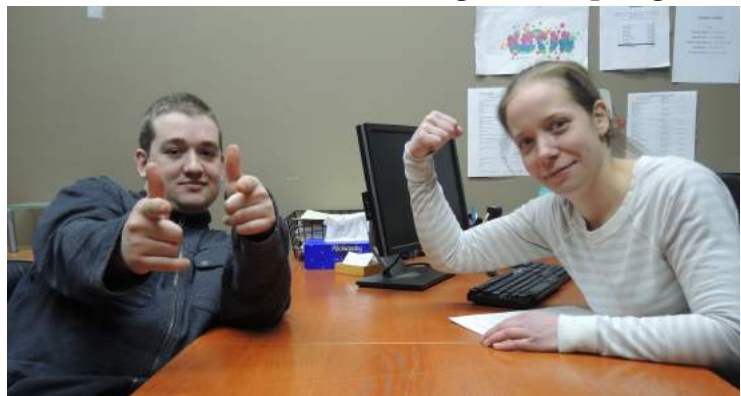
That school year began well but as the months went on struggling with my mental illness, the stresses of school, life and family became overwhelming and I stopped making classes. Eventually, I left Algonquin. I started slipping into a depression and things began to get worse. I wasn't taking care of myself. I wasn't eating, sleeping, doing laundry etc. I lost my supportive housing and went back to the shelter. I started isolating myself and withdrawing from my supports, both embarrassed and ashamed that I had failed. I thought I would never be able to live what we call a "normal life". I relapsed and began using drugs and alcohol to cope with it all.

In this dark time I was in counseling with Katie who does addictions counseling with Project STEP. I remember I would come into her office sometimes under the influence, hating life and wanting to give up. We would talk about the issues I was dealing with, how I felt about them and how they made me feel, what my options were and the consequences of each option.

These sessions really helped me gain perspective and regain focus. In the beginning of 2015, I mustered everything I had and decided I was going to try once again to live independently. I began apartment hunting and sure enough one month later I signed a lease and was handed the keys to my first apartment.

Things were difficult being on my own. I no longer had the support I had in the shelter and I didn't yet have a day program. I had to quickly learn life skills to live independently. I started doing better, but as I was, memories of my past and the trauma I had been through began to come back to me. They were very intense emotions: fear, anger, betrayal, helplessness. Some nights I wouldn't be able to sleep - at random times I would begin to shake uncontrollably and I began using drugs once again to cope with these memories.

In the summer, I started working at FarmWorks. There, I felt amazing. In the spring we planted seeds, set up irrigation and weeded the beds. We quite literally watched the fruits of our labour grow as we picked the vegetables and packaged them for delivery. I remember on my way home from work on the bus looking down at my muddy jeans and boots and how proud it made me feel to be working. To have a team of my peers who rely on me each day. To pay taxes and contribute to society. After receiving so much, a small portion of my paycheck was going towards the greater good and it made me feel like a million bucks. My confidence grew and it helped me grow as a person.







**+** With Katie's help, I joined a wait list at the Dave Smith youth Treatment Center and eventually got a bed. There I spent 3 months doing intense therapy and I changed my life. I did a lot of self-reflection on why I use, how I can overcome it and what I want my life to look like. I learned to love myself and to value myself as a person. When I got back I was a new man. I was meeting my responsibilities, making healthy and positive life choices and I was feeling great.

After building my confidence, I began building a foundation for my new life. I started looking for work and sure enough, one month later I found a job at Tim Hortons where I still work today. I began making friends, taking up new hobbies and appreciating what I have.

Recently, OCH connected me with a trauma counselor. These meetings have helped me to come to terms with my past hardships, and how overcoming them has made it possible to move on to the next chapter of my life.

Operation Come Home has provided me with the tools to fight my challenges.

Whether with school, addiction, job opportunities through social enterprises, or even just someone to talk to, OCH staff will give me the tools to pick myself up when I am down and push me towards further success. I don't know what tomorrow will bring. Tomorrow I may get knocked down again. But I know that I'm not going to be down for long and that I'm going to get back up and keep on fighting for the best life for me. And I know that I have the OCH family behind me and supporting me every step of the way.

A few weeks ago, the Tim Hortons that I work at made it to the "Team Tim's Cup Challenge" finals. Katie and Lynda showed up with signs saying "Go Shlomo Go!" and this really went to show how I am not just a client I am a member of the OCH family. And that is the way they operate. They care about each and every one of us who walk through the doors and truly want to see us succeed. I am so thankful for the help and support I have received from OCH and am glad to have been able to share some of my journey with you today.

*This past November, Shlomo celebrated a year of sobriety! To put it bluntly, Shlomo continues to be awesome!*

# 2015 in Statistics

**Engaged**  
**841**

youth through the street  
outreach program

**Inspired**  
**16**

youth to start their own  
businesses through  
Innovation Works

**Assisted**  
**45**

youth in completing financial  
literacy training

**Saw**  
**471**

unique clients through the  
Drop-in and Resource Centre

**Provided**  
**47**

clients with addiction  
support

**Enrolled**  
**87**

youth in school

**Helped**  
**83**

youth secure employment

**Reunited**  
**53**

youth with their families







# How can you help?

Operation Come Home couldn't do what we do without your support. Here are a few of the ways that you can help!

## VOLUNTEER



### What volunteering with OCH looks like:

Operation Come Home relies heavily on its volunteer support and we are constantly looking for new individuals to join our ever-growing team! There are several ways in which you can volunteer. The first is within one of our pre-existing programs such as a breakfast chef for the building or as a tutor for the schoolroom. Individuals can also gather a team of co-workers, friends or family to come and volunteer for an afternoon. Also, if someone has a specific skill that they think may benefit the organization, we would love to hear more about it and how you think it could support our youth. If any of these ideas interest you, or if you have another idea that you would like to propose, please contact [info@operationcomehome.ca](mailto:info@operationcomehome.ca).

## EVENTS



### How to get involved with events:

One of the best ways to support Operation Come Home is through events. We host several diverse and fun events throughout the year. This year, we'll be hosting a Reality Campaign that will begin January 26<sup>th</sup> for an entire month. We will also be partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa for a silent art auction in March. To stay up to date with our events, be sure to follow us on social media or subscribe to our e-mail updates by sending your contact information to [info@operationcomehome.ca](mailto:info@operationcomehome.ca). Individuals are also more than welcome to host their own events on behalf of Operation Come Home to raise money and donations. If you have an event idea, please contact the e-mail above and we'll support you in any way that we can.

## DONATE



### Why donate to Operation Come Home:

We are constantly overwhelmed by the amazing support of our donors and we could not run such a large variety of programs for homeless youth if it weren't for each donation that has come to us – big or small!

Here are some things we want you to know about donating to Operation Come Home:

- If you'd like, you can choose to allocate your donation to a specific program.
- Our financial statements are available on our website in the spirit of transparency.
- Your donation WILL change someone's life for the better.

To donate, visit our website at [www.operationcomehome.ca](http://www.operationcomehome.ca) or call 613-230-4663 x264



# Staff Stories

Operation Come Home has the privilege of working with some of the most passionate and driven staff in the social services field. This year, we'd like to share with you some of our staff's experiences with OCH and our youth. You can also follow our staff and their "behind the scenes" stories on Instagram. Just look up @ochottawa



## What is your favourite memory with OCH?

"Helping a client move into their new apartment – it was really wonderful to see how happy, proud and relieved they were to finally have their own place. I feel very privileged to have been a part of this moment in the client's life." – Sarah

"... when the Reunite team successfully traveled a youth back to their parents in BC from Newfoundland. It took 1 ferry ticket and 4 bus ticket donations as well as 4 national affiliates to safely travel the youth 7,200km over 4.5 days." – David

"... sleeping out for the 24 Hours of Homelessness. There were a few youth who chose to sleep out with us. For us, this was a one-time thing but for many of them, it is their reality. Instead of them being bitter about us sleeping outside for one night, they were extremely excited to have us understand their living conditions and for us to hear their experiences. It was a really eye-opening night!" – Jenna

"Six years worth of memories is hard to narrow down to one moment, but in general, it is the culture at OCH. The staff work hard for the clients but in a field that has its difficult moments, we also have to remember to laugh. It is almost a requirement of working here that you love pranking. The most memorable prank was when Shelby and I covered Katie's office floor with cups of water filled to the brim. It took us 3 hours after our shift, but seeing her face the next morning was priceless!" – Ashley



## What do you love most about your job?

"The client interaction; the diversity of tasks to accomplish; making a positive impact in the community." – Kaeli

"The relationships that are built. I spent many years in a social support role, but since moving to administration, the youth interaction has decreased significantly. You don't realize how important the relationships that you build are to the clients until they come knocking at your office door asking why you don't visit them. The clients truly appreciate all that you do for them and it is heartwarming." – Ashley

"Working hard, breaking a sweat and hanging out with youth." – Breann

"As stressful as it may be sometimes, I love when I get to drop everything to talk to a youth. Whether they're in crisis or looking to catch up, no one in their entire life has ever 'dropped everything' for them in the past and you can see in their reactions how meaningful that time is to them." – Lynda

"My job is to help youth secure and obtain employment, but in the process I get to hear about their passions and interest. I get to hear their story – what's brought them to where they are and what it is they want to do going forward. If we're successful in working together, our program becomes a part of that story, which to me, is amazing." – Lee

"Helping youth realize their self-worth, learn healthy self-respect and helping them reach their full potential." – Katie



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*Executive Director*

Operation Come Home

Operation Come Home would like to acknowledge  
the following donor categories:

- Service Clubs
- Churches
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- Foundations
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- Federal, Provincial & Municipal Governments

*Thank you!*

Thank you also to all of our volunteers. Your time is truly valuable and appreciated by all of the staff and clients of Operation Come Home. Without your support, we wouldn't have been able to reach nearly 500 unique clients last year! Keep up the great work and we look forward to seeing you all in the New Year!

If you'd like to **donate** to Operation Come Home, you can fill out the donation slip sent with this letter and send it back. Alternatively, you can visit [www.operationcomehome.ca](http://www.operationcomehome.ca) and click the yellow "donate" button or you can call us at 613-230-4663 to make a donation over the phone.

Office Address:

150 Gloucester Street  
Ottawa, ON K2P 0A6

Mailing Address:

PO Box 53157  
Ottawa, ON K1N 1C5

Toll free: 1-800-668-4663

Office: 613-230-4663