

**UNITY PROJECT** registered charity # 85962 8851 RR0001

**FOR RELIEF OF HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON**



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2007/8**

PREPARED FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MARCH  
26, 2009, THIS REPORT PROVIDES FINANCIAL  
REPORTING FOR FISCAL YEAR  
APR 1 07 TO MARCH 31 2008 AND  
PROGRAM REPORTING TO PRESENT

**717 DUNDAS STREET, LONDON, ON N5W 2Z5**

**[www.unityproject.ca](http://www.unityproject.ca)**

**SHELTER SERVICES 433-8700**

**ADMINISTRATION 433-8809**

**FAX: 433-7742**

## IN MEMORY OF ROLAND PARRIS



May Day 2007 - from left to right: John O’Handley-CAW Ford National Wellness Coordinator, Rob MacPherson-CAW 1520, Tim Carrie – President CAW 27, Jean Budden – CAW Local 1001 Women’s Advocate, Aaron Quinlan-CAW Local 1001 Trustee, Silvia Langer-Chair Unity Project, Roland Parris-CAW 27 Retirees Chapter, Eithne Griffiths-UP Frontline Support Worker, John Gall-CAW 1001 Vice President

This Annual Report is dedicated to the memory of Roland Parris who died in February 2008. Roland was a committed supporter of the Unity Project from its inception as a tent city in Campbell Park, London 2001. He was a reliable mentor and an encouraging friend to the young activists and founding members, served on the Unity Project’s board of directors, and continued to promote the Unity Project’s unique vision in his widespread and admirable social activism in many corners of London community life.

*He is very, very missed.*

# REAL GOOD VALUES ...

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

**The Unity Project provides safe, secular and home-like shelter and transitional housing services guided by the values of community:**

**mutual respect** We are all equal. All persons can make worthwhile contributions to enhance the community. We accept and respect others for their unique differences regardless of race, personal background, political or religious beliefs, sex, age, sexual identity or personal limitations.

**Cooperation** All those living and working at the Unity Project are working towards a common end must work together in order to attain our goals.

**Compassion** Those in need can and should be helped without accusation or judgment.

**Interdependence** By contributing our personal strengths to our community we create a support network that can help us all in our daily lives.

These values are the springboard to our very existence and are alive in everything we do, from our policies to our day to day interactions and even in the way the furniture is arranged. Our deepest appreciation goes out to the men and women who have lived with the pain of homelessness and undertaken these values to make the Unity Project a real community. Together, we share our strengths and mitigate threats. Unity!

**Mission Statement** Providing emergency shelter and transitional housing, and supporting self-help where people are struggling to escape and avoid homelessness

### **5 areas of shelter and transitional housing programming include**

- emergency shelter, safe bed and phase I transitional accommodations
- phase II transitional accommodations with staff support
- a safe, secular, home-like setting, open and staffed 24 hours
- comfortable dorms for women, men and couples
- a community of support where residents cook and clean together and take responsibility for themselves, each other and the function of the shelter
- diverse, involved and caring staff support each resident's unique needs

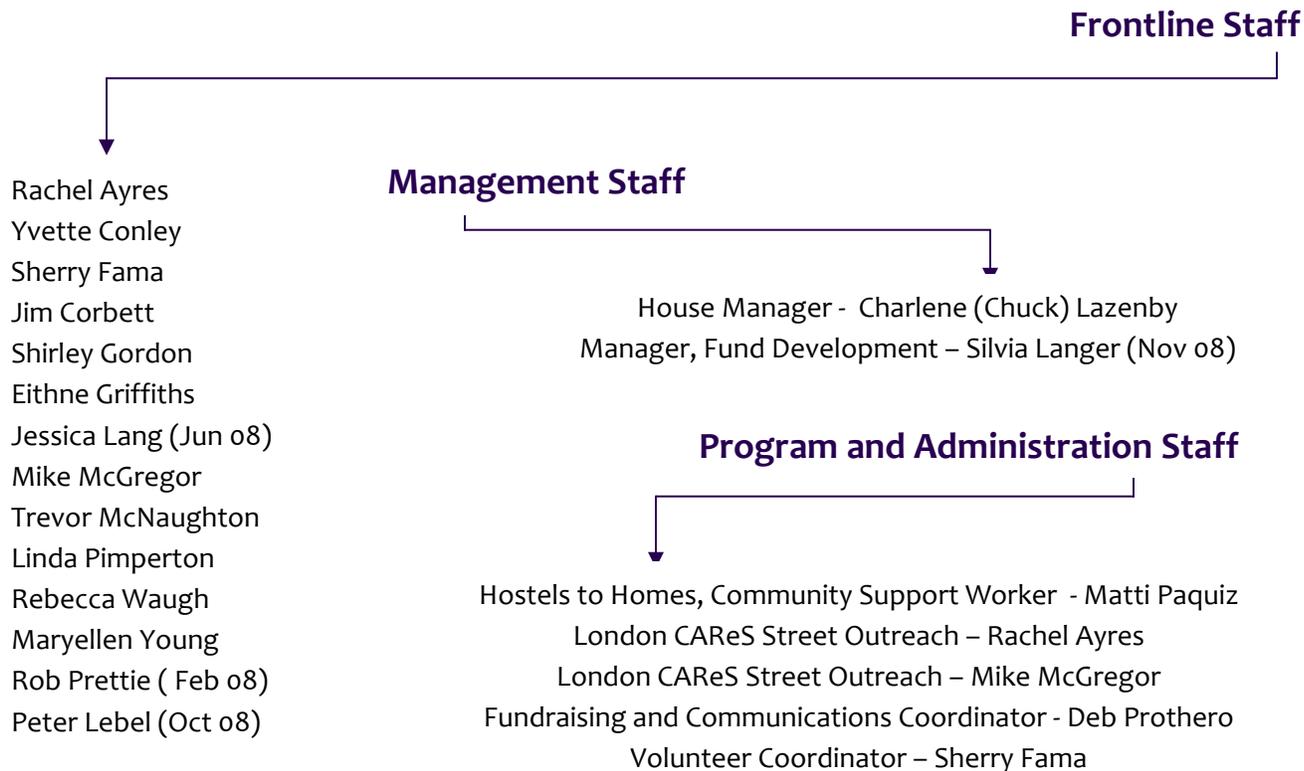
### **Programs and community participation includes:**

City of London's Hostels to Homes supported housing pilot program

City of London's London CARES street outreach pilot program

**History** In the summer of 2001 a group of youth activists, and many of London's homeless, formed a tent city in a downtown park to raise public awareness of a desperate situation. A sense of community developed among those residents, who organized first-aid services, a common kitchen, peer counseling and held meetings to identify and solve mutual problems. That experience of community led to the formation of the Unity Project to provide emergency shelter and transition housing with a peer-supported community model. With the support of hundreds of individuals, social service agencies, city councillors, labour organizations and a grant from the City of London, Unity Project was able to purchase and open its own facility in 2003, in the heart of Old East Village.

# WHO IS UP in 2007/8



## Board of Directors

Chair, Silvia Langer	Full-time Volunteer for Unity Project
Treasurer, Chuck Grawburg	Associate Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Past-Chair, Rick Odegaard	Broker of Record, London Commercial Realty Inc.
Secretary, Paula Lombardi	Associate, Siskinds LLP
Patti Dalton	English Teacher, Clarke Road Secondary School and President, London and District Labour Council
David Empey	President, UWO Staff Association
Amanda Grzyb Ph.D.	Assistant Prof., Faculty of Information and Media Studies UWO
Bernie Hammond	Director, Centre for Social Concern and Co-ordinator Justice and Peace Studies Program, King's College, UWO
Michael Klug	Barristter & Solicitor, Watson, Jacobs & McCreary
Pat Malloy	Co-Owner, Duo Building Limited
Gil Warren	President, London Coalition for Social Justice

## Golf Classic Committee

Rick Odegaard  
Dave Knoppert  
Jim Hales



# Who gave it UP for the relief of homelessness in London (2007/8)

Individuals, employees, companies, unions, governments, churches, clubs and associations and foundations invested in the Unity Project because they believed in our mission and shared our values. The generosity of donors keeps the lights and the heat on, keeps equipment in good repair and puts healthy, nutritious food on the table. Together we improve the quality of life of people living in our community.

The Unity Project does not publish the names of our individual donors. Many thanks to all who gave it UP  
Apr 1, 2007 – Mar 31, 2008

## Labour Organization Giving

CAW Local 1001  
CAW Social Justice Fund  
CUPE Local 107 – Benefit Fund  
CUPE Local 101  
CAW Local Area Skilled Trade Council  
CAW Local 27  
CAW Local 1520  
CAW Local 27 Retirees Chapter  
CUPW Local 566  
OPSEU Local 102  
OPSEU London and District Area Council

## Corporate Giving

Bell Localoop  
Ducharme Heating and Cooling  
Duo Building Ltd.  
Copp's BuildAll  
Provincial Glass and Mirror  
Holmes Heating and Cooling  
Porkey's BBQ & Leisure  
1343882 Ontario Inc.  
Architectural Woodworking  
Mustang Roofing  
H.H. Phinnemore & Sons Painting and Decorating  
Allred's Broadloom  
Balko Drywall  
Wilson & Associates Contracting  
Carlos Barbosa Concrete  
DD Electric Service  
Brouwer Plumbing  
Main Street Management  
McCormick Canada  
Longo Food Service Equipment  
Braveheart Signs

## Foundations and Government Giving

Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Arcangelo Rea Family Foundation  
PwC Foundation

## Association and Special Giving

London Lawyers Feed the Hungry  
Sisters of St. Joseph  
St. Leonard's Community Services  
London St. Thomas Association of REALTORS  
City of London Extreme Weather Support

## Employee Giving

United Way – Donor Designation Program  
BMO Employee Charitable Foundation  
London Kellogg ECCO

### **A special thanks ....**

LSTAR for supporting UP as one of its principal beneficiaries  
CAW Local 1001 for your members' incredibly generous gift and the new beds  
CAW Local 27 for deep and abiding support  
City of London for all support at all times  
Ontario Trillium Foundation for investing in the sustainability of our community  
Arcangelo Rea Family Foundation for your trust and goodwill  
Sisters of St. Joseph for being great in every way  
All the businesses and employees who give it up for the relief of homelessness in London

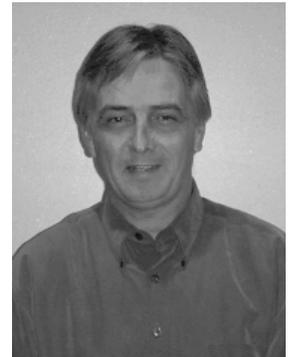
# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Chuck Grawburg



The Unity Project's success this past year would not have been possible without the vision, commitment, hard work and financial support from our committed staff, board members, members and friends, our funding partners and the community as a whole.

Unfortunately our business is booming. Our occupancy rate continues to exceed 100% and, by all accounts, the same holds true at other London shelters. We expect the current recession to bring a further increase in the number of homeless men, women and families requiring services provided by front line agencies like us.



The reasons why people become homeless or remain homeless are complex. The basic and underlying cause is poverty. While the causes may be complex, there are solutions. There are three necessary components in addressing homelessness: availability of affordable housing, sufficient income to live on and support services for individuals at risk including health and mental health problems and substance abuse. To address the root causes of homelessness, all levels of government must address poverty and affordable housing including strategies for adequate social assistance benefits, and job training and employment options are critical for long-term solutions. The strategies must also address rental housing market options, social housing options, effective prevention of discrimination in the housing and job markets, specialized services for people with mental illness, chemical dependencies and other problems, and adequate settlement for newcomers.

And we (you and I) can also contribute to the solutions by spreading the word to raise awareness in the community, sitting on the board or volunteering on a committee, talking to the politicians and telling them that poverty reduction must be a priority.

Over the course of the year the Unity Project was heartened to see the Ontario government make a strong commitment in the right direction with the establishment of a Cabinet Committee for Poverty Reduction. We joined other agencies and associations successfully urging it undertake a broader and more aggressive mandate, beyond its initial emphasis which limited the Cabinet to child poverty.

Today, the Ontario government is investing in two important poverty reduction initiatives by increasing the Ontario Child Benefit from a maximum of \$600 to a maximum of \$1,100 per child per year starting this July and making a proposed \$600 million investment over the next two years to retrofit and build new social and affordable housing, including extending the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program and creating new affordable housing for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

I hope you will join us, the London Homeless Coalition and the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction in urging for matching federal infrastructure dollars to provide an increased supply of housing as well as an economic stimulus, for new and more affordable childcare spaces, and for a housing benefit to help low income renters meet the rising cost of housing.

We can't allow poverty to be seen as "business as usual." Any steps taken by the government today relating to its Poverty Reduction Strategy are just a beginning. There's still a long way to go and, at our local level, we need everyone to be involved in the community to build support for poverty reduction.

Chuck Grawburg assumed the role of Chair in November 2008 and writes this report on the eve the March 26, 2009 Annual General Meeting

# FINANCIAL REPORT

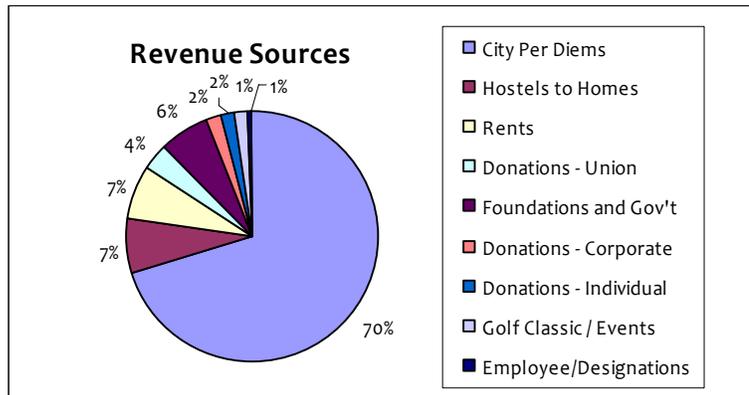
During the fiscal year ended March 31 2008, the Unity Project built upon the initiatives from the previous year and continued to enjoy improvement in its financial stability. Our cash position remained stable and we celebrated the full elimination of a debt that was a significant yoke to organizational development. A relatively small debt owed a patient creditor has been paid down and expected to be completed with payment in full by Fall 2008. At which time, the Unity Project's financial obligations can be more fully directed to its residents, staff and facility.

Balancing our needs and the related expenditures to our revenue stream requires a team effort and everyone who assisted in this task warrants the communities' deepest appreciation including the Board members and our General Manager, who have generously shared their knowledge and experience, our bookkeeper, Marie Kelley, who works very hard to respond on an as needed basis and prepare monthly financial statements critical to the Board's oversight responsibility. We are very fortunate to have Mike Evans and Deb Juby of Davis Martindale providing the audit report on our financial statement and their sage advice to our growing organization over the years. It has helped greatly in making the Unity Project a stable and accountable organization.

Although the financial position has improved significantly over the years, our work is never done and we will continue to face financial challenges in expanding revenues to increase our capacity to effectively serve residents and contribute to the London community.

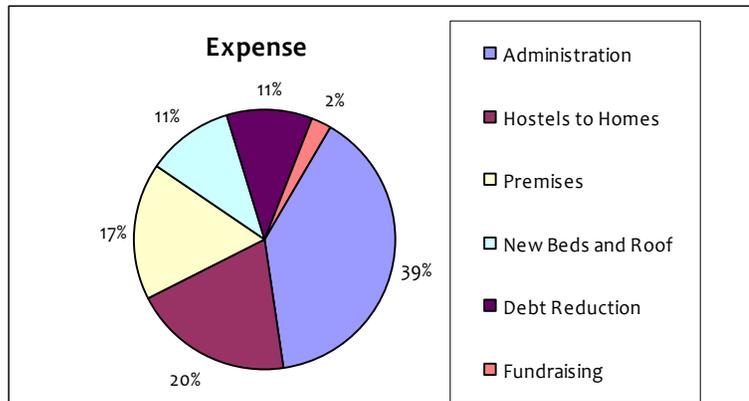
## Revenues Mar 31 07 to Apr 1 08

City Per Diems	427,990
Hostels to Homes	45,000
Rents	41,895
Donations - Union	23,300
Foundations and Gov't	38,100
Donations - Corporate	13,225
Donations - Individual	10,247
Golf Classic / Events	8,849
Employee/Designations	3,924
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$612,530</b>



## Expense Apr 1 07 to Mar 31 08

Programs/ Services	379,755
Administration	89,001
Hostels to Homes	44,851
Premises	38,332
New Beds and Roof	24,724
Debt Reduction	23,800
Fundraising	5,596
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$606,059</b>



\* These figures may not correspond to the audited financial statement due to classification differences. Davis Martindale Chartered Accountants reported on our financial statements for the fiscal year April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008. Audited financial statements are available on request.

# HOUSE REPORT

Charlene “Chuck” Lazenby

Despite all the challenges in operating an under-resourced organization committed to providing quality services to marginalized people, I continue to grow in my commitment to and love for the Unity Project. Recently, I have been assembling its history of photos, media stories, brochures and any other interesting bits and pieces I can get my hands on to develop a central archive to account for it all. It is amazing how far we've come and how many people in this community have been a part of it and continue to provide their greatly needed support. A mass of diverse, quality people have committed to making this project work even when it may have seemed an impossible task.



Above all, it is the staff and residents who really make the Unity Project operate in a safe and supportive way day-to-day. At first glance, it would not appear that our facility would support effective service. Our building is not that much bigger than a middle-class suburban home and yet we house 35-40 people a night and accommodate 10-20 who drop in each day. The kitchen is smaller than the average family's, and the residents cook two meals for everybody daily. The food is good and healthy. We get the dishes done after each meal. No kitchen, janitorial, or maintenance staff - frontline staff and residents do it all.

Three dorms accommodate 10 men, 4 men, and 6 women, each of which is not much bigger than many of our own individual bedrooms. Prior to renovations completed in February 2009, frontline staff was crammed behind a tiny front reception desk. These are not complaints, rather convey what we can do with hearts and minds in the right place, demonstrate how much we can accomplish with so little, and how we have turned "cramped" into *community* since our days in tents. It's getting better with each year.

The Unity Project has seen much positive change over the past year, including the development of a genuine fundraising program to ensure the sustainability of the organization. But nothing has been as dramatic as the recent renovations completed over the winter of 2008/9. Floors, walls, doors, windows, kitchens, bathrooms, electrical, plumbing, roof, brickwork, foundations ... *everything* was transformed above, below and all around us. These massive core system upgrades were completed with the financial support of CAW's Social Justice Fund, the City of London, Arcangelo Rea Family Foundation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Shelter Enhancement Program provided over \$270,000 in a forgivable loan. A beautiful facelift enhanced the functionality of our small space and gave residents some much deserved comfort and stability. It is a real satisfaction now to mop the floor *clean* and to have enough space at the front desk to not require cuddling with your coworker all shift. We look forward to the warmth of late spring to have a formal celebration in which to invite everyone to celebrate what we have accomplished, together, in unity.

The Unity Project saw 668 individuals stay in 2008. 133 were women and include 30 couples. The Unity Project also provided transitional housing to 46 men and women. We saw 30% of Unity Project residents achieve housing after leaving our shelter or transitional housing, and while that is a respectable statistic, we must note that we cannot provide qualifying measurement including the safety and stability of the housing or how long it was maintained. Further, we believe that almost all residents of the Unity Project gather and contribute something important from their experience here, and that each one enjoys some success by any measure. In the business we are in we could not escape mourning lives lost by those individuals who could not escape poverty. May real compassion and vigorous social strategies breathe new life into our city.

# HOSTELS TO HOMES

**Matti Paquiz** 

**“Social service work has been too long disconnected from the movement to eradicate poverty. Hostels to Homes is a small step in the right direction.”**

London has been one of six Ontario municipalities participating in the provincial Hostels to Homes program (H2H), beginning January 2007. The goal of this pilot program is to provide vulnerable Londoners with support, advocacy, and referral to resources to integrate back into the community. H2H prioritizes a focus on achieving and maintaining safe, appropriate, and stable housing.

One-hundred and ninety (190) volunteer participants (143 adults and 47 children) were drawn from 3 at-risk populations, chronically affected by homelessness and relying on shelters, including:



<u>Hard to House</u>	<u>Families</u>	<u>At Risk Youth</u>
Individuals who had been living in shelters for more than 6 months or had multiple shelter stays and often have serious mental health/addictions issues.	Population was comprised of parents and children who were residing in emergency shelter;	Individuals between ages 18 to 24 who were identified as homeless and accessing support services and shelters.

Participants in the City program are supported by two dedicated Ontario Works caseworkers and five community support workers at each local emergency shelter and at partnering agencies, and other community based services working together in an integrated manner.

The H2H pilot is based on strong community-based partnerships that promote the coordination and integration of services. This foundation is greatly enhanced during the project through increased integration and teamwork in providing services in the shelter sector and strong community and agency based engagement and support throughout London. Other programs and services are currently being designed, based on the London H2H model - 'Jails to Homes' is an example.

Community Support Worker Matti Paquiz works with 30 H2H participants to develop Individual support plans that recognize strengths and cover all aspects of life skills. These plans maintain a primary focus on obtaining housing and integration back into their community and families as appropriate. Matti provides intensive case support to participants including assisting them with the advancement of their goals for stability and self-sufficiency, working in service collaborations with agencies ranging from medical providers, corrections, Ontario Works, Children’s Aid Society, and addictions treatment providers, liaison with landlords and providing tenant advocacy.

H2H participants benefit from the frontline experience that Matti, a founding member of the Unity Project, brings to his job. Matti accommodates the individual’s goals first, exercising the principles of community that informs Unity Project’s service. Matti has helped many to find and keep affordable and appropriate housing despite the challenges of a serious lack of affordable housing and the deeply inadequate level of welfare income to meet participants’ basic needs.

# LONDON CARES

## Rachel Ayres and Mike McGregor

Rachel Ayres and Mike McGregor have been representing the Unity Project through the London Community Addictions Response Strategy (London CARES) since August 2008. After three and a half months of training with partner agencies, they have been feet on the streets two evenings a week. Their focus has been on reducing the harms associated with addictions through street-outreach to mostly homeless and low-income populations, providing harm-reduction supplies, basic needs items, support, advice and referrals.



Mike and Rachel engage with local businesses and individuals within the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods in an effort to reduce the stigmas faced by homeless individuals, drug users and those affected by mental illness, while increasing profile of London CARES and the Unity Project within the community.

The opportunity to bring their social justice backgrounds, community values and experience as frontline support workers and founding members of the Unity Project out into the community through London CARES has been a satisfying experience for Mike and Rachel. Working with London CARES has created new opportunities to build and deepen partnerships with other social service agencies in our community.

London CARES is an integrated strategy designed to improve the health of street involved and homeless individuals who live with the effects of poverty, addiction, and mental illness. London CARES is an action plan to build a support network to improve the health for those living with addiction, reduce the incidence of homelessness, and enhance the quality of life in London's core.

### London CARES Community Partners

- AIDS Committee of London
  - At^lohsa
  - London and District Distress Centre
  - London Harm Reduction Coalition
  - London Police Service
  - Mission Services of London
  - Ontario Works London
  - Salvation Army
  - Street Connection
  - WOTCH/My Sister's Place
  - Unity Project
  - Youth Opportunities Unlimited
- And in partnership with other community services



# VOLUNTEERS HOLD OUR WORLD UP!

Sherry Fama

**“If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven’t been in bed with a mosquito.”**

At the Unity Project we believe Martin Luther King Jr. was onto something when he said,

“Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t even have to make your subject and verb agree, to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”



Unity Project volunteers are individuals and groups who give freely of their time to compliment and support services offered to residents, including offering frontline support or contributing in areas of planning, fundraising and volunteering on committees with special projects. Volunteers are essential to the Unity Project’s work.

Sherry Fama was a student placement volunteer before joining the frontline staff of the Unity Project. Now as Volunteer Coordinator, she applies that experience to providing volunteers with opportunities for personal growth and the practical application of social work theory in an empowerment model service.

UP’s Volunteer Program has had the honour of hosting 30 volunteers since I joined as Volunteer Coordinator in February 08. These good folks have been an enormous asset in supporting the frontlines, including doing important research, helping in administrative and support tasks and generally providing community support to individuals who are homeless.

We thank Fanshawe College, TriOs College, Medix School and the St. Leonard’s Society for the many frontline volunteers placed with us and we are grateful for the good service of all. We are fortunate to have some of these quality individuals joining as frontline staff upon completion of their training.



The Unity Project no longer publishes volunteer names in our Annual Report to protect individual privacy. *Thank you volunteers. You hold our world UP!*