

Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness
Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness
Annual Report
2004-5

MAILING ADDRESS: 956 DUNDAS STREET, P.O. BOX 46023 LONDON, ON N5W 6B2
UNITY PROJECT (EMERGENCY SHELTER): 717 DUNDAS STREET (REAR)
UNITY HOUSE (TRANSITION): 719-721 DUNDAS STREET
SHELTER AND TRANSITION TEL 433-8700
ADMINISTRATION TEL 433-8809 FAX: 433-6300

Board of Directors

Executive Officers

Chair, Silvia Langer
Past-Chair, Rick Odegaard
Secretary, Christina Benedict
Treasurer, Gil Warren

Directors

Susan Eagle
Glenn Sands
Donna Sharon
Michael Klug
Paris Meilleur

Fundraising Committee

Committee Chair: Silvia Langer
Members: Donna Sharon, Gil Warren, Paris Meilleur, Linda Moore, Betsy Odegaard

Organizational Development Task Force

Committee Chair: Christina Benedict
Committee Members: Rachel Ayres, Matti Paquiz, Glenn Sands, Chuck Lazenby, Jeremy McNaughton

Staff and Board Committee

Committee Chair: Paris Meilleur
Members: Rick Odegaard and Michael Klug, Rachel Ayres,

Front Building Committee

Committee Chair: Rick Odegaard
Members: Chuck Lazenby, Pete Beer, John O'Handley,
Guest: Sarah Merrick, Old East Village BIA

UP with Art! Committee

Committee Chair: Paris Meilleur
Members: Linda Moore, Rachel Ayres, Mary Young
Thanks also to Tamara Moro, for expertise, support and the Guildhouse Gallery venue

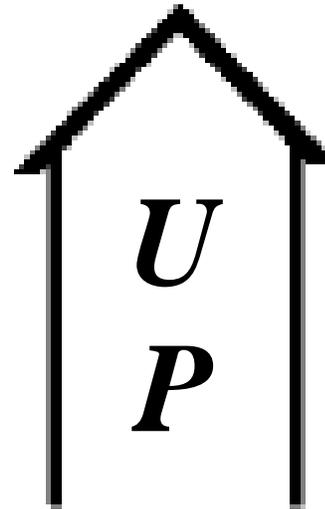
Staff

Management Staff

House Manager, Charlene (Chuck) Lazenby

Front-Line Staff /Members

Matti Paquiz
Trevor McNaughton
Mike McGregor
Jim Corbett
Rachel Ayres
Shirley Gordon
Linda Moore
Pete Beer
Vydel Sands
Mary Young
Kara Downer
Lawrence Boom



Thanks for your your compassion, initiative, hard work ... your involvement. A good year. Well Done!
Silvia Langer, Board Chair

Thanks to generous donors over the past year and since our raucous beginnings!

Labour Organizations

London and District Labour Council

Canadian Auto Workers Local 27

CAW Local 27 Retirees Chapter

London and District Labour Council

Canadian Auto Workers Local 1520

Women's Committee and Youth Committee

CAW 1520 Retirees Chapter

Steelworkers Humanity Fund

Past support also from:

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 741

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 154-G

Canadian Auto Workers National

Canadian Auto Workers Area Skilled Trades Council

Canadian Union of Postal Workers Local 566

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 107

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4222

Canadian Union of Public Employees Regional Office

Elementary School Teachers Federation

Labourers International Union of North America Local 1059 Ontario

Public Sector Employees Union Local 109

Ontario Public Sector Employees Union Local 110

OPSEU London and District Area Council

Ontario Public Sector Employees Union Region 1

UWO Graduate Teachers Association Union, PSAC Local 610

United Steelworkers of America, South Western Area Council

United Steelworkers of America, Local 2699

Corporate Donors

Kellogg Canada Ltd.

Duo Building Ltd. – Pat Malloy

Blueline Design – Simon Coles

McCormick Canada

Marriott Residence Inn

Roto Static Carpet & Cleaning Services - Steve Cline

Jamieson Delivery Services – Denise Brown

Quintet Design - Kristen Odgaard

London Business Forms – Nick Niro

The London Club

Maggie's Restaurant

Community Donors

7th Day Adventist Church

London East Lion's Club

The Bread Guys

Yesterday's Treasures

Parkwood Hospital

Grants and Government Support

Service Canada - Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative

Staff Contribution

Underpaid by a minimum of \$5/hr and yet giving so generously of themselves every day. With this view, staff are the largest donor, individually and collectively. . . \$45,000 annually!

Unity Project Golf Classic Committee Members (\$5,750)

Names of individuals withheld from web version of Annual Report to respect and protect privacy

London Calling Ultimate Frisbee Tournament

London Ultimate Frisbee Association and participants too!

Community Builders (\$1000+)

Colliers International

FKS Land Surveying

Community Contributors (\$10 – \$999)

Names of individuals withheld from web version of Annual Report to respect and protect privacy

In-Kind Support

Names of individuals withheld from web version of Annual Report to respect and protect privacy

Fence-building and Front-line Volunteers

Names of individuals withheld from web version of Annual Report to respect and protect privacy

Message from the Chair

It has been a good, hard year for the Unity Project.

From its activist origins as a tent-city in a downtown park protesting the crisis of homelessness to the establishment and operation of a 32-bed emergency shelter and transition housing facility, the Unity Project has faced and met many, many....many challenges. Some we have overcome. Others are a challenge in process (pun intended).

Since doors opened August 11, 2003, over 1200 residents have benefitted from the support of a community-built and community-driven shelter that offers a home-like atmosphere, life skills development and processes of peer support. This year, like those that came before, we have accomplished *a lot*. We have renovated key areas of the facility to improve resident safety and security as well as the community-living experience. We expanded our program with the launch of a "Stage-II Transition" pilot project in the front building (Unity House). We effected enormous changes in the way that almost all who connect with the Unity Project, be they resident, staff, volunteer or board member, value themselves, each other and their community. We have managed in the face of obstacles by believing in our vision, finding strength in our principles and values, by treating everyone with respect and dignity and by staying together, in unity, to carry out our mission.

From an organizational perspective, funding remains the major challenge, especially as a new organization, in a competitive environment of scarce resources. Moreover, the Unity Project struggles under a 23-bed funding cap, with the effect that we are not funded for at least one-quarter of the emergency services we provide. Chronic under-funding forces staff to remain underpaid, facility systems to deteriorate and needed improvements to go unattended.

But there is considerable respite this year with aid of Service Canada's *Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative* funding for capital costs in the first of a three-phase plan for property improvements, and other funding developments promising to ease this chronic problem. A shelter contract review that would equalize the Unity Project with other emergency shelters and lift the funding embargo is necessary, being discussed and might actually occur without an enormous fight. Registered charity status was recently achieved which improves our fund development outlook and we are beginning to see an expanding, renewed and upgraded donor pool among corporate, union, and individual donors. Cost reduction measures are being examined (e.g. energy efficiency) and pursued (e.g. in-kind donations). We are preparing a number of fundraising events. Labour organization support has been stalwart as has the continued support of old and new individual donors. Third-party events have been a major source of support for the Unity Project including the Canadian Auto Workers Local 1520 Golf Tournament, the London Calling Ultimate Frisbee Tournament, the CAW 1520 Women's Committee Classic Car Show and Scavenger Hunt and the 1st Annual Unity Project Golf Classic was a success.

Special mention need be made of the Unity Project's own fundraising event, the UP with Art! show, which brought out well over 100 individuals in loving support of the Unity Project and made considerable cash to advance our work. The contributing artists, their number and quality, deserve our deepest thanks and appreciation.

Our history still informs our values and vision, underpinning the processes and functions of our emergency shelter and transition housing facility. The Organizational Development Task Force spent the year improving policies and procedures, and is working on by-law improvements to provide mechanisms through which to better animate our values and vision in our governance procedures and structures.

The most disturbing challenge however, is that of homelessness and of poverty itself. Occupancy rates at the Unity Project, and by all accounts, at all other shelters in London are alarmingly high and increasing monthly. As winter approaches we expect these numbers to climb even higher until we haven't got a chair, nook or cranny to offer for a night's warmth and rest. This is not Unity Project's challenge... not ours alone. It is for us, for you and for all, in unity, to reinvigorate efforts to address homelessness outside of institutional stop gaps and through to genuinely socially transformative processes and actions. ***Thank you, Silvia Langer***

Charlene Lazenby
House Manager Report

Unity House

A new transitional housing program opened in October, 2005 at 719-721 Dundas St. The building is being called 'Unity House'. Three residents moved in initially, to begin the program on a 6 month trial basis. We are starting slowly, moving residents in who are approved through admittance criteria. We have up to 9 individual rooms, with shared kitchen, laundry, and washroom facilities. Unity House residents will be able to stay a longer period of time than the shelter can provide, while living in an independent environment. We now have office space for staff to utilize and finally able to provide meeting spaces for groups or on a 1-1 basis. Monthly progress reports are provided monthly to Board of Directors.

Emergency Shelter Statistical Data Notes:

Our average amount received from our monthly invoice to the city has increased due to improved billing methods and communications. Yet we are still not able to invoice for many of the individuals to whom we provide services, due to limits imposed to invoice for a maximum 23 people/night, though our occupancy is often significantly higher. Occupancy has increased dramatically over the past year from an average of 109% to 121% to some months going up to an average 131% capacity, an experience shared all over London. Unfortunately, this indicates a difficult winter ahead of us and especially for those who are on the streets. Everyone in the community has felt the difficulties this increased occupancy has presented us with, such as a decrease in personal space, a strain on our food budget and greater chances of conflicts arising. The community, however, still continues to function effectively with many residents and staff contributing much more than what is expected in order to make this happen.

I'm often uncomfortable presenting outcome statistics. The numbers take away from the individual lives to which each outcome refers, which are each too complex and diverse to reflect in one number and/or as a result of our program. The resident outcomes indicate where individuals went when they left emergency shelter or transitional housing. These outcomes are not necessarily indicators of our 'successes' or 'failures' as an organization. As an

example, the amount of individuals leaving emergency shelter or transitional housing to enter housing has increased from 25% to 30%, which may indicate a 'success', though we have no way of telling whether the person entered a safe and stable environment, or if the individual maintained their housing. The amount who went to another shelter upon leaving jumped from 9% to 27%, which may indicate a 'failure', though we cannot qualify how exactly we have 'failed'. These outcomes are used to help examine trends over time.

RESIDENT STATISTICS		
a) Occupancy		
	2004 (Jan-Dec)	2005 (Jan-Oct)
Average/mo. Shelter Occupancy	109%	121%
Average/mo. Daily Occupancy (Shelter)	25	28
Total Individuals served	578	566
Total Men in Emergency Shelter	211	153
Total Women in Emergency Shelter	94	77
Total Men in Safe Beds	368	419
Total Women in Safe Beds	99	62
Total Men in Transitional	28	22
Total Women in Transitional	10	5
Total Couples Served	32	25
b) Outcomes		
	2004 (Jan-Dec)	2005 (Jan-Oct)
Achieved Housing	91 (25%)	75 (30%)
Entered Treatment Centre	23 (6%)	12 (5%)
Discontinued (absent or suspended)	49 (16%)	20 (8%)
Incarcerated	7 (2%)	4 (2%)
Other	38 (10%)	7 (3%)
Left the City	32 (9%)	14 (6%)
Returned to Family	16 (4%)	1 (<1%)
Other Shelter	32 (9%)	66 (27%)
Transitional Housing	36 (10%)	20 (8%)
Unknown	50 (14%)	37 (15%)
# who left shelter or transition	361	247

Home Comfort Project

The Home Comfort Project will renovate key areas of the rear facility to improve health and safety, optimize interior functionality, increase accessibility, reduce maintenance and improve the resident community living experience. The *Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative* funding has supported the purchase of institutional quality mattresses, the installation of security gates to mechanical room and storage, the purchase of new washer and dryer, floor repair and finishing, and the installation of a 6' fence surrounding the property. Much needed bathroom remodeling for greater functionality and wheelchair accessibility is likely to be forthcoming. Funding applications in process would support the second leg for additional bathroom repair, kitchen and dining room renovations, roof replacement and a new furnace. Phase 3 focuses on exterior with greenery, outdoor seating, lighting and recreational areas. Greater resident involvement as well as improved capacity to effectively serve more residents and drop-in clients are to be achieved.

Up with Art!

The Guildhouse Gallery provided the perfect venue for a fun-filled evening of music and art with a social conscience. *UP with Art!* on November 11th, was an art show and sale, a fundraising event for the Unity Project, a good party and the first step in a program that aims to empower gifted but impoverished local artists. *UP with Art!* featured artwork by Unity Project residents, staff and local artists, donated to support the Unity Project. A percentage of proceeds from the silent auction sale of the donated works contributes to *Art in the Community*, a grassroots initiative with plans to encourage the talents of artists among the homeless and the Old East Village population. Outreach workshops and art supplies will be offered to shelter residents and interested East London residents. Some of the work produced will be donated to seed future shows. *UP with Art!* grossed close to \$3,000!

Corporate Information

The Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness in London is a Registered Canadian Charity
Charitable Business Registration Number: 859628851RR0001

Financial Highlights

For the 2004/5 Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2005

Revenues

Per Diems	\$320,640
Donations and other Revenue	<u>\$27,545</u>
	\$348,185

Expenditures

All	\$355,335
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A full audited financial statement is available upon request from the Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness in London, Inc.

Auditors
Davis Martindale Chartered Accountants

Unity Project History

The Unity Project grew out of a collective action in the summer of 2001 when 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 counselling and held meetings to identify and solve mutual problems. The experience encouraged the movement to form an organization with a "community assets" vision, and the values of mutual respect, interdependence, cooperation, and compassion. 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 move from a tent city, to the Salvation Army warehouse, to a farmhouse on the edge of town and then to purchase and open its own facility. Doors opened August 11, 2003, exactly 2 years to the day of the occupation of Campbell Park and tent-city history.

The Unity Project purchased the property 717, 719-721 Dundas Street, with a vendor take-back mortgage from the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. With a grant from the CAW Social Justice Fund, the Unity Project renovated the rear building in time for opening. Global House remained in the front building until August 2005. In October 2005, the Unity House transformed the front building and launched a Stage-II Transitional program as part of a 6-month pilot program. Up to 9 individuals living mostly independently will be accommodated.

Mission Statement

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

Community Assets Vision

The Unity Project embraces a "community assets" vision leading toward the development of policies and activities based on the capacities, skills and assets of residents, staff, volunteers and the London community as a whole. The *principles of community* are central to the UP vision and a program of peer-based support that offers residents opportunities for healthy association through which to collectively respond to threats and celebrate strengths.

Mandate

The Unity Project aspires to:

- Serve people seeking shelter and support by providing 24-hour access to an involved and caring staff and their support services;
- Empower and engage residents, staff and volunteers to meaningfully participate in and contribute to the mission and development of the Unity Project;
- Provide a stable, home-like setting for residents in which individual needs can be assessed and addressed by staff and through processes of peer support and with the help of all available community services;
- Encourage and develop understanding of the Unity Project values to increase the ability of residents to live within a community environment;
- Facilitate the development and/or strengthening of life skills among the residents.
- Help residents to develop a better understanding of their own needs and to undertake a the mission to pursue personal goals with an understanding
- To always improve the staff and community supports available to residents and prevent homelessness

Values Statement

The Unity Project will function on four basic principles.

Mutual Respect

We are all equal. All persons can make worthwhile contributions to enhance the community. Within that 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 and 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.

The Program

Ending the Revolving Door Syndrome... The Emergency Shelter with an Emergency Exit

The Unity Project provides emergency shelter and transition housing services founded on a peer-based and community model of support. The Unity Project offers:

- 23 emergency shelter beds, 12 unfunded safe beds and 8 transitional accommodations
- Up to 10 Phase II Transitional accommodations with continued staff support
- a safe, secular, home-like setting, open and staffed 24 hours every day
- a co-ed environment with comfortable dorms for women, men and couples
- a community of support where residents take responsibility for the functioning of the shelter
- staff-facilitated processes of peer support and empowerment for residents
- diverse, involved and caring staff who support each resident's unique needs and personal growth
- transitional housing and support for residents moving on from emergency shelter
- practical in-house programs to help residents develop important life skills
- START Guide certification assuring a safe and healthy atmosphere for clients aged 18 to 24

Board of Directors, Staff and Membership

The Unity Project maintains an 8-12 member Board of Directors, a House Manager, and 10 Front-Line Coordinators, each undertaking specific initiatives and functions in addition to their front-line support to residents. Staff, residents and volunteers are members of the Unity Project, contributing to the planning, development, governance, policy and day-to-day functions of the organization.

Events on Schedule 2006

- January - Donor Appreciation Gala
- June 14th – 2nd Annual Unity Project Golf Classic
- August 11th - Anniversary Celebration
- October – Annual General Meeting
- November – UP with Art II