



## Message from Board Chair, Loriann Garden

### Upcoming Event



### AGM & 35th Anniversary Celebration

**Day:** September 21st, 2022

**AGM:** 6PM

**Celebration:** 7:30pm

**Place:** Andaz Hotel - 325 Dalhousie,  
Ottawa ON K1N 7G1

## Dear Friends and Fellow Feminists,

These past couple of years have been ones of change and transition.



**Loriann Garden**

President Board of Directors

We are now reaching the end of the tunnel, and I want to thank all the staff, volunteers, and donors for your support. It is only due to all of you that Harmony House has been able to meet the demands that the past couple of years have created in operating in a front-line industry. Our staff works tirelessly to advance the work of our organization, and I would not be able to

speaking about any of those items without their dedication. Some of the things that we have accomplished together this year include:

- **Creation and delivery of the Boys Program, founded by The Epting Simmerling Foundation, in which boys can learn about positive masculinity, from a former resident;**
- **Continuation of our Outreach Office, where we are able to meet with women in a safe environment; and,**
- **Upgrades to our units thanks to the team at Royal LePage Team Realty Ottawa Real Estate Brokerage and Royal LePage Shelter Foundation**



In appreciation of everyone's amazing work, I invite you to Harmony House's 35th-anniversary celebration on Wednesday, September 21, at 6:00 PM for our Annual General Meeting, followed by the anniversary celebration at 7:30 PM and experience Ottawa elevated at the 16th-floor rooftop lounge, Copper Spirits and Sights.

I look forward to continuing working with all of you this upcoming year as we progress to meet Harmony House's objective and support women and children fleeing violence.

In Solidarity,  
Loriann Garden



## Exploring and Learning in Person

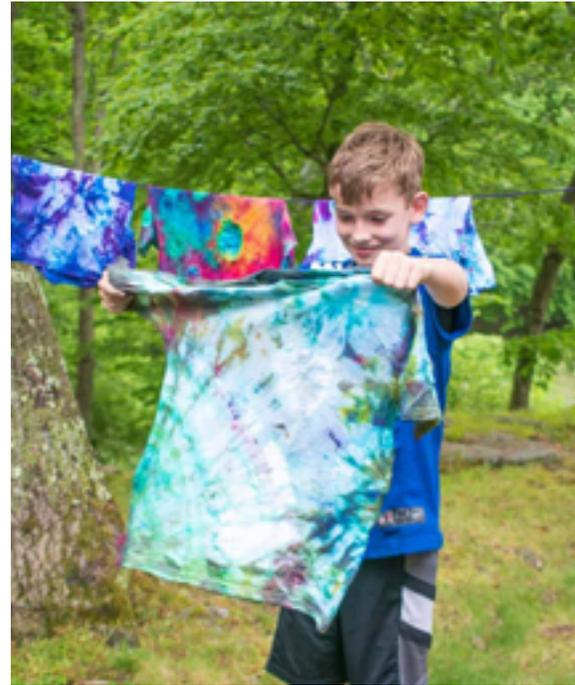
By Roxanne Poudrier, Family Support & Children's Advocate

My name is Roxanne, and I am the Family Support and Children's Advocate at Harmony House.

After almost three years of pandemic and being unable to do much with the children, I am happy to say that we can now resume exploring, experiencing and learning in person through various activities. For example, at the start of our summer recreation program, we decided to highlight and explore the creativity of the children at the shelter. So, the staff, along with the children, created tie-dye t-shirts. Each child had the opportunity to make their unique tie dye t-shirt with the colours and styles they wanted.

This activity created a sense of independence, creative freedom and accomplishment for the children. They have been wearing their shirts proudly during the summer.

*Note: Names and pictures are changed - We are committed to protecting our residents' personal information, safety, and right to privacy.*



My name is Nadia, a former resident and peer support worker at Harmony House. I consider my position unique, where I build connections and rapport with women by inspiring hope and being a role model for recovery. In addition, I support the woman individually with goal setting, help with navigating the mental health service system (relapse prevention, childhood trauma, pts. etc.) and advocacy.

I run several groups, including a community kitchen, food bank, tea and chat, sisterhood, and the walking club. Since my return from mat leave, I've added the "hairapist" and a d.i.y group. These groups are well planned and created so that it's a safe place for a woman to grow through experiential sharing, community building, relationship building, skill building, goal setting and socialization, self-esteem building, and awareness building. My goal is to promote empowerment, increase self-efficacy and self-management, promote the belief that recovery is possible and, most importantly, end the cycle of violence by helping women go from victim to survivor.

## Inspiring Hope and Being a Role Model for Recovery!

By Nadia Ngoto, Peer Support Worker

Recently a resident asked me to go with her to the doctor; she has been postponing her appointment due to her anxiety. I could see that she was struggling, so we chatted about her fears and how to work around them, we made it to the appointment, and it was a success! Walking alongside this woman on her most challenging day is what peer support is all about.

The following week, another resident struggled with self-esteem due to the complications of her afro hair, so devastated she just wanted to shave it all. When I asked her why, she said that all afro hair products are expensive and her "coarse" hair is hard to manage, an ideal situation for her would be braids, but it was just not affordable, and she did not know how to do it herself. I understood this woman deeply; being a woman of colour, I know well about the struggle and the importance of your hair, as we sometimes call it our "crown".

We made some d.i.y products with everyday kitchen items; for example, we made a detangler with an aloe plant already here at the office. The following day, she sent me a message saying that she felt beautiful, confident and overall good about herself and a big thank followed with lots of virtual hugs. This is one of the reasons why I love my job and returned to this place called harmony house, an anchor for many women.



# The Importance of Gratitude

By Trysh Smith, Outreach Advocate

I could probably spend days just listing all the things I've been taught by the women I've worked with over the years. But among the chief of these lessons has been to do with gratitude. Of course, I'm not talking about the patronizing, "there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I" gratitude. Nope, I'm talking about gratitude that grows out of resilience: that is nothing less than an ability to keep events in perspective along with an understanding that crisis can be survived and surmounted; and that one of the tools for doing so is finding and appreciating life's small gifts.

This process takes skill. Anyone can be grateful for winning the lottery or surviving a car crash. Still, it takes a specific discipline to be grateful for a quiet moment spent with a friend or for seeing a favourite rerun of your favourite tv show. And it takes real determination to find gratitude in the midst of personal turmoil.

One of the first women I met at our new Harmony House Outreach office was dealing with a horrendous personal situation in her life. She and I brainstormed together, and I then gave her a couple of referrals. Then, as she was turning to go, she gave me a big smile and said, "...but on the positive side, I was able to buy a bag of brand new socks at the thrift store this morning and this week is foodbank week, so I'll be able to get some groceries for school lunches, and I know there will be a little treat. Life doesn't get much better than that!"



**Her gratitude for these feelings of happiness diminished the crisis she was trying to navigate. But noticing and commenting on these gifts was a life-affirming action – a shot across the bow of impending despair – her way of saying that she accepted the duality of life, its storms and its promises. And for that, I am grateful.**



# Units Makeover - Help Us to Give a Fresh Look!

By Anona Kosmack, Environmental and Safety Coordinator

I have been in the Environmental and Safety Coordinator position for over a year. We have grown a lot this year and created a lot of new systems for the shelter.

Our Giving Tuesday 2021 Campaign yielded an excellent opportunity for us. The generosity of Royal LePage Team Realty Ottawa Real Estate Brokerage, Royal LePage Shelter Foundation and the community who donated gave us the means to renew each unit. The last time the units had any work was in 2009, when the kitchens were replaced. So, a fresh coat of paint has gone along the way.

The units needed several repairs and a makeover. In addition, none of the units had a cohesive design. We have successfully flipped three of the sixteen units, and the difference is staggering. We are working hard and excited to complete this project and have a space where women and children can rebuild their lives!



## The residents' resiliency and courage are truly awe-inspiring!

By Lee-Anne Lee, Housing Advocate

Greetings, as I write this short note, I am in awe of the women and children we serve. The strength, resiliency and courage demonstrated by each of them are truly awe-inspiring.

We have all heard about the need for safe, affordable housing and that we in Ottawa face a severe shortage of all forms of affordable housing. As a result, women and children are waiting far longer to access safe, affordable housing. Over the years, the criteria to access and qualify for social housing, have become more and more arduous.

Women were not able to view their units before accepting them due to Covid restrictions. Can you imagine renting an Apartment without seeing it first? Strange times indeed. We only have to look at the number of women seeking support to know that women have been profoundly impacted by covid. First, they were forced to stay at home even if a home was not a safe space; then, as things started to reopen, there were wait times and limited stays at 1st stage shelters, all impacting women and children deeply.

We are hopeful that the appointment of Marie-Josée Houle as Canada's Federal Housing Advocate (FHA) for a 3-year term will assist women and children, particularly Indigenous women. The role of the Federal Housing Advocate is to promote and protect housing rights in Canada by independently conducting research, consulting with individuals with lived experience of housing need and/or homelessness, working with vulnerable groups and civil society organizations as well as reviewing and assessing submissions on systemic housing issues under federal jurisdiction.

The Office of the FHA will be housed within the Canadian Human Rights Commission, providing administrative support, services and facilities to the FHA throughout her mandate. This appointment recognizes that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right.



## Mind, Body and Soil - Harvest time!

By Jessie Zimmerling, Root in Nature

Harmony House's residents have shown an inspiring love for their gardens. Through their flower beds, they have impacted their surroundings in a positive way, and have created something to be proud of. Residents growing their own food have been looking forward to the future, when they can harvest fresh carrots and beans and help their families eat well. Children in the residence are learning about the natural world that surrounds them and how we can all benefit from a little bit of gardening in our lives!

I've seen one woman learn about her personal boundaries and capabilities, setting limitations for herself and sticking true to them. Everyone is always delighted to see things growing in the garden, even if they're not actively gardening, they appreciate having something lovely to look at and share in the happiness and pride of the gardener when something is ready to harvest. As a whole, there is a sense of community around the garden spaces, where the women support each other and helping each other when someone is unable to tend to their garden space.

By understanding our physical and mental limitations in a gardening space, participants can exercise setting boundaries for themselves and others, set and use routines to care for the gardens and themselves, and have practiced goal setting and managing expectations.

Harmony House's participants have shown an incredible dedication to their gardens and a respect for the natural world. It is inspiring to see the work they have done in their gardens, and how it impacts everyone around them in a glowing and positive light.



Special thanks to Ottawa Community Foundation, and their donors, for a very generous grant of \$9,975 for the Horticultural Therapy Program: From Seed to Harvest, facilitated by Root in Nature. It is because of organizations like yours,

that we have been able to provide a safe and supportive environment for women and their children who are survivors of violence for more than 35 years.

# AGM & 35th Anniversary Celebration



## UPDATE! NEW DATE for the AGM and Anniversary celebration - SEPTEMBER 21st.

It is with great pleasure that Harmony House announces their 35 years of impacting the lives of over 2,500 women and children in our community!

And to celebrate this special milestone, please join us at ANDAZ HOTEL on Wednesday, SEPTEMBER 21st at 6:00 pm for our Annual General Meeting, followed by the anniversary celebration at 7:30 PM and experience Ottawa elevated at the 16th-floor rooftop lounge, Copper Spirits and Sights.



## Make a Difference, Today!

Helping women and children flee violence requires planning and resources. By providing monthly donations, you can help ensure women and children have access to consistent support and important resources.

“Just \$35 monthly will help us provide essential items to children and women at the shelter.”

Thanks for celebrating with us 35 years, impacting the lives of over 2500 women and children in our community.

Your support breaks the cycle of domestic violence!