

Building Community



GRATITUDE REPORT 2021

This report of gratitude is a celebration of your commitment to helping youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness and sex trafficking.

Thank you for being a part of our community.



**Covenant
House**



What You Help Achieve...

When Covenant House Toronto opened our doors in 1982, the shelter program offered 30 beds to young people experiencing homelessness.

With your support, over the last 40 years the services and facilities have expanded to support the changing needs of the young people in our community.

Together, we have provided programs and care for over 100,000 youth.

As we commemorate our 40th anniversary and reflect on how far we've come, we also look to the future and reaffirm our commitment to helping youth achieve brighter futures.



1982

Opened doors to a 30-bed shelter



1988

Opened on-site high school



1992

Launched employment services program



2002

Opened longer-term residence, CIBC Rights of Passage



2011

Launched culinary arts program, Cooking for Life



2016

Opened The Rogers Home transitional housing for victims of sex trafficking



2019

Opened two new supported lodging homes



Present

Commemorating 40 years of helping young people transform their lives

With Our Sincere Thanks

Covenant House is a special place where young people can find the support they need to rebuild their lives. Located in the heart of the city, it is a beacon of light and hope for youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness and sex trafficking.

This year marks 40 years since we first opened our doors serving over 100,000 young people. Our programs and services have grown and adapted to meet the ever-changing needs of youth and our community.

We have witnessed firsthand remarkable achievements as young people move bravely forward in their lives, setting goals and believing in their own potential, even when it is hard and the future seems uncertain.

Our staff team have dedicated their life's work to help make Covenant House a welcoming place for young people to find hope and opportunity – to find the strength for their journey ahead.

We are grateful to our incredible community of supporters for your commitment to ensuring our young people have safety, acceptance, love and the support of caring adults in their lives.

As we commemorate 40 years of service, the lives forever changed, and a community that believes in the potential for something better – thank you for joining us.



MARK ASTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Aston'.



AMANDA LANG
BOARD CHAIR

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Lang'.

40 Years of Support



Michael and Ellen Howlett

“It’s hard enough to be young. It’s hard to know what to do, what direction to take. Kids need guidance and support.” – Michael

Michael Howlett and his late wife Ellen were among the very first donors to Covenant House Toronto. Their remarkable support has continued for 40 years.

The Howletts raised four children of their own and understand and deeply care about the struggles young people face. “When adults have let their children down, we have to come together and support the kids,” says Michael.

Michael has worked hard all his life. His first job at 16 showed him that without an education it would be a challenge to get ahead. His father helped him go on to university and achieve a successful career as a mechanical engineer. Ellen devoted her career to her community, supporting local seniors and community initiatives through their church.

Through supporting organizations like Covenant House, Michael and Ellen have helped countless young people find their path. It was important to them to do what they could to help young people who were disadvantaged and set a strong example of compassion and generosity for their children.

Now a proud father, grandfather and great grandfather, Michael continues to honour his beloved wife Ellen by giving to charities and causes that were dear to her. Her legacy will live on as the Howlett family puts commitment to community and supporting others at the top of their list.

Thank you, Michael and Ellen, for 40 incredible years of support. We are grateful to be part of your legacy.



Creating Pathways

Photo provided by: Girls E-Mentorship

Covenant House is proud to receive \$1 million to develop a new model of care for young women experiencing or at risk of homelessness or sex trafficking.

This new program will address the complex needs of young women by providing a holistic solution to help break down barriers to housing, education and employment and enhance the path towards independent living.

Young women whose journeys have included homelessness or trafficking are more likely to have already experienced trauma, abuse, exploitative relationships, discrimination, poverty and barriers to housing, education and employment. We know that a holistic solution is needed as we work together to help support brighter and more equitable futures for women and girls.

The Slaight Family Foundation is donating \$15 million to 12 organizations across Canada focused on supporting some of the unique challenges faced by women and girls. This initiative will fund programs that reduce gender-based violence, support those in emergency situations and increase opportunities for education and jobs, with a special focus on Indigenous, Black, racialized, refugee and immigrant women and girls.

We are grateful to the Slaight Family Foundation for their remarkable investment in innovative programs supporting women and girls facing significant barriers in our community.



The Slaight Family Foundation was established in 2008 by John Allan Slaight and managed by his son Gary Slaight.

The Foundation supports charitable initiatives in the areas of healthcare, at-risk youth, international development, social services and culture.

A Lifelong Career of Giving Love, Hope and Encouragement

Alan Finlayson started at Covenant House shortly after it opened its doors 40 years ago.

Alan says, “I came to the opening curious about the agency and was very impressed. In talking to the staff that were here from the New York location, Covenant House’s first site, I expressed my interest in a job and was asked, ‘when can you start?’. I started part-time, became a Shift Supervisor and eventually a Case Manager.”

For Alan, the young people motivated and inspired him in his day-to-day work. “It’s the enthusiasm of the youth for me. I’ve always enjoyed working with young people – they have plans for the future, hope, goals and dreams and I find them interesting and incredibly motivating...Every day, youth are achieving milestones and to witness them happening is incredibly encouraging,” says Alan.

It was also the staff, Alan explains, “all of the people that I’ve worked with are unique and wonderful. It takes a very special personality to work in this environment and deal with crisis situations.”

Alan retired last year and although there are lots of people he will miss, he looks forward to more free time for painting and creative projects. Throughout his career, Alan enjoyed sharing his passion for painting with youth in art sessions, “with just a little paint, the youth become more themselves and lose a lot of the walls they have built up around themselves and speak more candidly... The youth who come to us are incredibly creative and these workshops were a lot of fun to be part of.”



“Every day, youth are achieving milestones and to witness them happening is incredibly encouraging,” – Alan



Offering a Hand to Youth in Need

After 25 years, George can clearly recall his time spent at Covenant House. Kicked out of his family home at only 17 years old, George was angry, confused and terrified. He never expected to be on his own.

George was determined to work hard, stay in school and make something of himself. He made his way to Covenant House where he found safety and the support of a caring team.

George still remembers many of the young people he encountered during his time with us and pivotal moments of both sadness and immense joy. He recalls how much his youth worker believed in him, how much she cared and worked to connect him with services and longer-term housing.

“I was willing to take the hand that was offered to me. Sometimes the people who need help live in so much darkness,

that the darkness becomes comfortable. That is all they know. They think nobody can understand. When they take the hand, they will find their way,” says George.

Now a successful finance professional, George feels grateful to have the life he has: a loving wife, a beautiful home and a successful career. George does not take any of it for granted, **“I have a good life. Things I never thought I would have.”**

George is committed to giving back. His firm is offering employment opportunities to youth at Covenant House. Giving youth a chance to build skills and earn a steady income, is one way to make a lasting impression and lend a hand to a young person who really needs the opportunity.

Thank you, George, for finding your way back to Covenant House.



Power of Community



It can be challenging to match young people with the right employment opportunity. There needs to be a willing employer who can offer something to a youth that aligns with their goals, a youth who is ready to take on a new challenge and a support system around both the youth and the employer, that ensures success.

Recently, a donor reached out to Covenant House with an interest in hiring a youth. Jenna, a young person at Covenant House was ready for a new challenge.

With a strong support system of youth workers around her, Jenna had a full team rally around to support and encourage her toward her goals.

She received new clothing for her new job and counselling to navigate the new workplace. Seeing Jenna and the team applying themselves to their fullest is encouraging and inspires me in my own work.

Jenna is working in her new job and the employer is very impressed with her work ethic. Covenant House offers young people a community of support right from the beginning and throughout their journey. It takes a community to enact a lasting change.

Anthony



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Sprott Foundation Nutritional Centre



The Sprott Foundation has been generously supporting the young people who come to Covenant House for 20 years and we are incredibly grateful. As the leading supporter of our food program, The Sprott Foundation helps ensure that every young person is fed and has access to this essential need.

When Founders Vizma and Eric Sprott set up The Sprott Foundation in 1988, their assertion was that, “hope is central to a person’s journey from merely surviving to genuinely thriving.” The Sprott Foundation supports organizations that uphold that principle.

At Covenant House, we believe that every young person has the right to food and shelter. The Sprott Foundation shares in this belief and “chooses to support healthy food and safe housing because they are basic human rights, and everyone deserves dignified access to these necessities,” says Juliana Sprott, Chief Giving Officer at the Foundation.

“We feel that all people deserve the same opportunities to thrive, and that nourishing food, and reliable housing are the entry points for meeting one’s full potential,” says Juliana.

Ensuring that food is readily available to young people is central to our work. Offering regular meals helps us earn the trust of young people and sitting down to share a meal together is an opportunity to connect with youth, to learn more about how we can best support them.

Juliana explains, “nourishing the body and mind with healthy, nutritious foods that respect people’s preferences and requirements, helps people thrive. It is important to us that people, regardless of their housing status, have access to quality meals.”

Thank you, to The Sprott Foundation for truly understanding the importance of food.

“We are proud to be a long-time supporter of Covenant House because their programming is respectful, inclusive, and continually evolving to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness – but most importantly for us, they treat the youth accessing their services with dignity.” – Juliana



Juliana Sprott



Sharing a Meal and Building Connections

Every day, staff and youth come together in the dining hall for meals. It's an opportunity to engage with young people in a natural setting and to discuss their day. In all our interactions, we strive to build trusting, authentic relationships with youth to help support them in their plans for the future.

Over lunch one day, I connected with Ramon. He had just arrived in Canada and did not speak English well. Hesitant to speak about his past, I noticed that Ramon was studying to learn English and tried to spark a conversation.

With time and the help of a peer translator, Ramon and I came to know one another. I introduced Ramon to our on-site life skills and housing program, CIBC Rights of Passage (ROP). Eligible to stay for up to two years, Ramon would be able to complete his

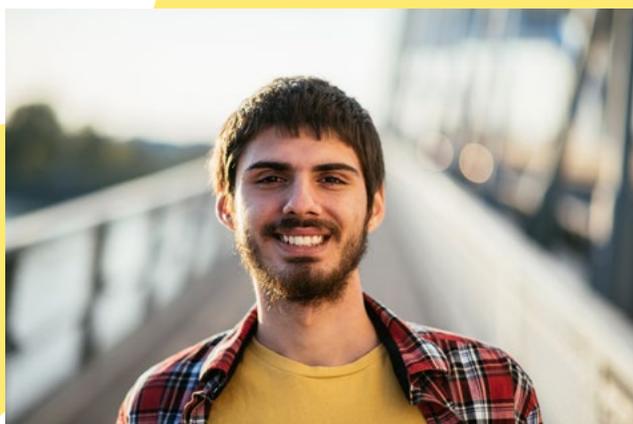
immigration claim, build valuable life skills, save money and work on learning English in a shared living environment.

Because of the language barrier, I was not sure that he understood the full conversation but soon after, he applied and was accepted into the ROP program.

When the pandemic started and schools closed, Ramon was worried that he wouldn't be able to continue learning and practicing his English. Although his language skills had improved immensely since we first met for lunch, he was eager to keep learning.

Together, we came up with a plan to continue his learning and worked through reading and writing exercises. Ramon was also interested in exploring employment opportunities and got the help he needed to put together a resume and prepare for an interview.

Despite all the challenges of the pandemic, Ramon has come a long way. He now has a part-time job at a grocery store and when we can, we still meet for a meal together as a way to catch up.



Genieve



HOUSING WORKER



A Great Match: Volunteering at Covenant House

Ken has been a loyal Covenant House volunteer, playing chess with youth for 28 years. For Ken, volunteering means that he gets to help create an enjoyable, social environment that youth want to be in at Covenant House.

Board games are a social activity and a great opportunity to interact with young people and engage in meaningful conversations. Ken says, **“I personally greatly enjoy having friendly conversations with youth. While playing a board game, we talk about whatever subjects they wish to talk about.”**

Over time, Ken has had many wonderful conversations with youth and has met some who are excellent chess players. Getting to know the young people is one of the reasons Ken has stayed a volunteer for so many years.

“The youth who reside and visit Covenant House are intelligent people. They possess

enormously valuable potential; many of them possess unique personal qualities and when they are placed in a healthy environment, they are better able to bring to life these qualities,” says Ken.

During the pandemic, Ken continued volunteering by playing online chess with youth but he’s very much looking forward to the day when he can once again play games in Covenant House’s Great Hall.

Ken explains, **“my experience at Covenant House has been greatly enjoyable and self-rewarding knowing that I have made a positive impact, although admittedly it is a small contribution, to the development of the lives of youth at Covenant House.”**

Covenant House volunteers provide young people with so many unique opportunities and we are very grateful to Ken and the many others who give their time.



Connecting with Youth in the Community

Covenant House was home to Davion during a pivotal time in his life. He first stayed at the emergency shelter and later moved on to CIBC Rights of Passage, our on-site life skills and housing program.

During the years when Davion called Covenant House home, he developed a special bond with Sam, one of the Covenant House Community Liaisons.

Davion recalls that with his strong presence and listening ear; Sam had a tremendous impact on his young life. They shared many conversations about life, the importance of choices, dealing with hardship and anger, respect of others and so much more.

Sam's gentle way of listening and giving heartfelt genuine advice helped Davion feel valued and worthy of good things in life.

Davion has gone on to complete a certification to work in the film industry. He credits Sam for steering him in the right direction.

Davion still comes by weekly to visit with Sam – who he sees as his mentor. He beamed with pride when he recently showed Sam his diploma and pictures with his new coworkers on the film crew.

It is evident the respect Davion has developed for Sam over the years. The connection that started in the courtyard has grown to be a special friendship. This is a reminder of the great potential we all have to make a positive impact in the lives of youth at Covenant House.



The Covenant House Community Liaison Team build positive connections with youth, our neighbours and the community. Located at the two main entrances to Covenant House, Liaisons are welcoming to youth coming to access services and help maintain a calm, safe and peaceful space as youth gather outside our doors.

Caralee

 SHIFT SUPERVISOR
PROGRAM SERVICES



Celebrating 10 Years of Sleep Out

Paula Courtney, Event Chair Executive Sleep Out

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Covenant House's Executive Sleep Out event. Ten years ago, fifty business executives and community leaders slept out for the first time, giving up the comforts of home in support of the young people at Covenant House. In its first year, \$495,000 was raised.

Over the years this event has grown significantly, and participants continue to raise awareness and vital funds for youth experiencing homelessness. In 2015, the event became a \$1 million fundraising event.

We are thankful to have many return sleepers who commit to sleeping out year after year. Paula Courtney, current Chair of the event is, **"proud to say that I've actually slept out nine times and this year, I've had the privilege to Chair this event... as leaders, we have the opportunity to impact the lives of so many young people."**

Many participants remark on how inspiring the event is. Bruce Shewfelt, a ten-time sleeper and past Chair of the event says, **"every year that I have done the Sleep Out, I have been absolutely amazed by the resilience of the youth and the love, support and care that Covenant House provides."**

Sleepers have gone on to talk about this meaningful experience, encouraged others to get involved and many continue to give generously in support of the young people who come to us. The success of this event led to the creation of our Sleep Out Champions and Sleep Out Women's Unite events and for us, a Sleep Out movement.

In the last ten years, we've hosted 22 Sleep Out events and 1,200 sleepers have raised more than \$14.8 million for the young people who come to Covenant House. To all our sleepers and those who have generously donated to this event, thank you for your leadership and remarkable support.

Recognizing Your Generosity

Covenant House Toronto is honoured to recognize the following individuals and organizations that made contributions of \$1,000 or more in 2021.

Also included here are event sponsors, third-party fundraisers and those who provided in-kind items and services that are essential to our operation. We also wish to thank those donors who have chosen to remain anonymous.

FRIENDS \$1,000+

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“This is a vital place... so much healing and guidance goes on here because they address the total person. This is a way to carry on my life’s work and shows these kids that someone cares about them.”

Adele



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“I like the fact that the youth are encouraged to set goals for themselves because it empowers them to take charge of their lives...when we help others, we’re giving them the chance to be successful.”

Frances

 COVENANT HOUSE VOLUNTEER

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THIRD-PARTY EVENTS

Ron Batuigas Annual Birthday Party
Fundraiser
Fred Cacciotti's Guitar Music Campaign
Amanda Coneen (Amanda the Jedi) Stream
Shiyamala Devan-Ramdas Birthday Run
Fundraiser

**"It's important to have a
place where youth can talk
and truly be heard. Only
then can they start to think
about their future."**

Mike



COVENANT HOUSE DONOR

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Josh Woodcock (Play Games Talk Jesus)
Stream

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It is with the generosity of supporters like you that Covenant House is able to provide 24-7 care. Your commitment shows that you believe in the potential of the young people we serve.

The youth who come to Covenant House continue to show their incredible resilience and every day, we see how they are working to better their lives. With the right care, it is our hope that young people can move beyond emergency shelter and forward on their journey.

To learn more about the impact of your support please see our [2021 Impact Report](#).

Despite difficult times, there have been some incredible achievements in the last year – many of which you helped make possible.

Thank you for all you do to help ensure that young people have the care they need.



Covenant House helps youth ignite their potential and reclaim their lives. As Canada's largest agency serving youth who are homeless, trafficked or at risk, we offer the widest range of services. Since 1982, Covenant House has supported more than 100,000 young people.

Covenant House Toronto

20 Gerrard Street East
Toronto ON M5B 2P3

Connect With Us

info@covenanthouse.ca
CovenantHouseToronto.ca

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Land Acknowledgement Statement

Covenant House Toronto acknowledges that the land on which we meet is the Traditional Territory of many Indigenous Nations including the Ojibway, the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. Today this territory is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land and the importance of working to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people here and across Canada.