



STRENGTHENING THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR COMMUNITY



"To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts". – Henry David Thoreau



Neighbourhood Link
Support Services

OUR MISSION STATEMENT



To promote the Independence and Dignity of people within their own Community.

With this mission statement to guide us, our agency through its community health services, employment and housing, provides client focused, cost effective assistance to those in need.

Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link is an innovative community support service agency with a history of cutting edge advocacy work and strong roots in the community.

Serving the area since 1975, this agency combines responsive community support services, advocacy and research initiatives.

Our mandate is to develop and promote better community, government understanding and knowledge of the problems, issues and needs of our clients with a view to encouraging community participation.

We keep in the know through extensive training and education for caregivers and staff and by utilizing up to date procedures and best practices. We regularly refine our programs and services, revitalizing internal operating procedures and policies to be a better part of the continuum of care.

"The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps - we must step up the stairs." – Vance Havne

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Every year brings changes and challenges. Would we want it any other way?

The major change in 2006 was Judith Leon's retirement, after almost 27 years as Executive Director. Her vision and drive built the agency, first meeting the needs of seniors living in the Beach and then expanding services to those seeking employment, newcomers to Canada and the homeless. The newly amalgamated Neighbourhood Link Support Services employs over 140 people delivering services to 23,000 clients.

Judith understood that people need common sense, practical supports to remain independent. We are now able to bring together a wide range of services to meet the individual needs of our clients.

The statistics only give the numbers of people facing social challenges. As expressed in the United Way's Poverty by Postal Code report, "[the] family poverty rate rose from 46% of all neighbourhoods in 1981 to 66% in 2001." However, every individual counted in these statistics is just that, an individual who needs specific supports. Our staff work with the individual to ensure that the services offered are the ones that will help that person to live independently and with dignity. We have a breadth of service and a commitment to the community that lets us tailor our work to be effective.

We would be unable to succeed if it were not for the involvement of our dedicated volunteers – an impressive number who give their time, talents and expertise to ensure that our clients receive the best possible supports and that the agency thrives. Through their efforts, every \$1 of funding is stretched to \$1.40 worth of service.

There are many opportunities to make lasting changes in the lives of our neighbours, and we will continue to work hard to make our community one which we all can be proud to call home.



Mary McGowan
Executive Director





"Knowing my mother is surrounded by staff that go the extra distance with patience and compassion, re-inforces my decision to enroll her in the Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link Adult Day program. I could not cope without their support."

Francis J.

Adult Day Programs

Participants in our Adult Day Program spend their day socializing, sharing meals and enjoying a variety of activities.

For those experiencing memory loss, a day at "The Club" is failure-free and extremely popular. Because of short-term memory loss, this program offers a few hours of relief from the stress of remembering to eat properly, take medication on time, lock the door or take part in any difficult daily chores. Activities are specifically designed with their restrictions in mind. For seniors living alone, their participation prevents further isolation and offers them a social occasion to look forward to.

The benefit of this program for family members or caregivers is a respite from their daily responsibilities.

The "Folks Group" for frail seniors to join in activities such as fitness, word games, outings, speakers and musical entertainment. They enjoy a three-course lunch with transportation available upon request.

These crucial programs allow seniors to have fun, meet friends and remain active. Both groups are thriving and filled to capacity.

Personal and Home Support Services

Assisting seniors to live independently

A wide variety of services are available to our neighbourhood seniors. Friendly visiting, security checks, congregate dining, personal care and homemaking all contribute to ensure our seniors are not forgotten or become isolated.



A client since 1994, 82-year-old Isabelle is in early stages of Alzheimer's as well as having macular degeneration, cataracts and respiratory difficulties. Slowly we have formed a relationship of trust and arranged to have Isabelle use an asthma tube inhaler and have corrective eye surgery.

Senior Link was able to get necessary repairs done to her aging accommodations and a new refrigerator enabled Isabelle to purchase and keep her food fresh, allowing her to enjoy a healthier diet.

Widowed for 13 years and without family support, Isabelle has gone from a person who described her self as "lonely and ill" and having little contact with world; to someone who is more confident and self assured.

Akwasti

Our *Akwasti* Project was designed to enable extremely frail elderly clients whose needs are so great their only option would be placement in a long-term care facility. With our innovative and intensive personal support program they are able to live with independence and dignity in their own homes. The strength of this program rests on the commitment and skills of staff and volunteers who contribute patience, consistency and common sense as they focus on each individual's specific needs.

Helen a client since 1993 suffers from macular degeneration and memory loss. She has an outgoing gregarious personality and is quite determined to remain in the home she was born in. In the past, both she and her husband worked as volunteers for Senior Link and Helen never imagined she would one day be a client. Now living on her own, her son contacted Senior Link to ensure his mother would have the necessary supports needed to live at home.

Our staff co-ordinate a team to ensure she eats healthy meals, takes her medications and participates in social activities. Even with her failing eyesight, she insists on helping with the gardening and continues to knit on a daily basis.

Helen is positive about her future.

"Having the ladies from Senior Link help me is like having a cup of tea



Warm, relaxing and comforting. Their visits make a big difference to me and take away my worries when I can't do things for myself. Now I can get to the doctor, read labels in the grocery store and even go for walks on my own. They have helped me to help myself and my health has improved."

Isabelle

"I lived in fear of being sent to a nursing home. Without the kindness and consistent help I get from Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link staff, I would have to leave my home behind. I can't praise them enough, since they are never critical of me even if I do something silly.

Their patience is really appreciated and I truly enjoy their visits."



Helen



Newcomer Programs

The various *Newcomer Programs* are designed to assist families of diverse cultural backgrounds to integrate into the community by addressing social, educational and employment issues. By sharing support, information, and understanding, every participant adds to the group dynamics, giving hope of community and a better life in an unfamiliar land.

The *Canadian African Centre* is a collaboration with the Ugandan Canadian Community Centre of Toronto in partnership with Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link and several service agencies such as Family Service Association of Toronto. They are assisted by community volunteers and offer support and referrals to immigrant families, youth, seniors and professionals, as they transition into our Canadian culture and systems. A variety of recreational, educational, networking, employment programs as well as community resources are available to support them through uncertain times.

Community Support Programs

Our programs are designed to address the real life issues of isolation, health, physical and social needs. Clients can choose from a number of appropriate and accessible activities that suit their immediate or specific needs, whether they are seniors or newcomers to Canada.

Clients participate in congregate dining, and a variety of recreational and social activities.

In addition to providing programs for the Chinese community our *Mandarin Community Support Group* was established in 2003 to accommodate our diverse neighbourhood population. This program brings together community members of all ages who may be isolated by language barriers or cultural differences.

"All human beings are part of the tapestry of the universe, part of a pattern which connects. Nothing exists in isolation, in separateness." – Satish Kumar

Ming and her husband arrived from China five years ago under the sponsorship of her daughter's family, Canadian residents for ten years. It was a difficult transition during which she became responsible for her grandchildren and the household chores. Regardless of her contributions, she did not receive the respect of her son-in-law. Feeling completely isolated, the situation grew to be unbearable and Ming contemplated suicide.

After contacting the Mandarin Community Support Group she initially joined as a volunteer, offering her many talents to the group. We were able to assist her in applying for social assistance and ultimately found more suitable permanent housing for Ming and her husband. After a year of living independently, Ming and her husband are happily contributing to the community and are enjoying the dignity and independence they longed for.

Success in Building a Stronger Community

The Beach Solar Laundromat and Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link partnered to provide employment opportunities to new Canadians. Beach Solar Laundromat provided the venue and Neighbourhood Link provided staff to operate a Wash & Fold Service. Their combined efforts would offer newcomer staff a chance to improve language skills and become familiar with Canadian business culture and integrate into the community. We are very proud of this successful program and we wish all our graduates the very best for a positive future in Canada.

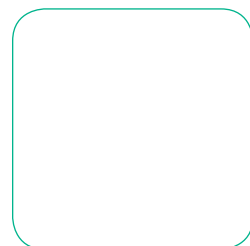
Susan, one of six employees graduated from the program, was a Doctor of Acupuncture in her homeland. She has moved on to finalize her Canadian qualification studies to enable her to practice her profession in Canada.

"We are very proud of the progress our newcomer staff have made. The program was a huge success and we wish all our graduates the very best for a positive future in Canada".



"Without the opportunity you have given me to improve my English, I would not have been able to continue my studies. Also, I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn about Canadian business practices which will help me when I open my own practice."

Susan



*"Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons."
–Ruth Ann Schabacker*



"Being middle-aged and unemployed for an extended period of time left me vulnerable and in a state of depression. It depleted my savings as well as my confidence. This program was my 'life saver' and provides hope for clients to acquire the necessary skills to move forward in a positive direction. Ability is ageless."

Barb



Meeting the challenge of unemployment

Employment Resource Centre

The *Employment Resource Centre* introduces programs to address ongoing requirements for employment related assistance for clients in all age groups. We continue to create workshops that are filled to capacity, striving to satisfy the growing demand for innovative solutions to address employment challenges.

The *East Toronto Newcomers Program* is a one-week intensive job search program for job-ready newcomers to Canada. The classes continue to be full with 60-80% of clients obtaining successful employment within six months.

The *Job Finding Club* is a three-week job search workshop for clients receiving employment insurance, or who have received it in the past three years (Reachback program). Within a three-month period after participating in this program, 70% of clients found employment.

Our *Ageworks Program* assists with the employment needs of the experienced worker, 45 years and over. The age requirement has since been dropped to 40 years of age to accommodate the growing demand for this program. Why a special program for this age group? Because the older worker faces significant barriers in getting re-employed. Clients learn how to transfer their accumulated skills to new work opportunities by attending a series of vocational assessments and workshops to prepare for today's workplace.

Barb has benefited greatly from this program and is now employed as an instructor.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." – Nelson Mandela

Youth Options & Opportunities

Youth Options and Opportunities is an exciting four week program assisting at-risk youth between the ages of 15 and 29 in the development of life and employment skills. A series of assessments and activities lead youth down a path of self-discovery to identify their strengths, skills, interests and values. Employment, academic and training opportunities compatible with their results are then explored. Clients receive training in such things as resume development, job search techniques, interview skills, CPR / First Aid and WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems) to increase their chances of successful employment or further educational and training opportunities.

In a Better Place

Oriana was referred to the Youth Options program by the Ontario Works program. The twenty-three year old self identified as having no positive direction in life and expressed feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness. Suffering from a learning disorder and living in an abusive environment created obstacles in finding and maintaining employment. After attending the workshops, Oriana gained insight on her skills and abilities and obtained employment in a field of interest. Improved self-confidence and awareness allowed Oriana to overcome the hurdles she faced. She is no longer in the abusive situation she once found herself in and is taking steps to realizing her goals both personally and professionally.



"A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are." – Ara Parasheghian



Homelessness - Mental health - Identification

Coming home

Due to physical or financial limitations, some seniors experience great difficulties in securing appropriate housing. Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link believes the most effective long-term solution for their stability is permanent, affordable housing with the availability of comprehensive and continuing support services. Our housing team assists homeless or marginally housed clients to find suitable accommodation to meet their physical requirements and their fundamental needs.

Mr. D was referred to Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link by a crisis centre who discovered this depressed senior with declining health and living in inappropriate housing. His rooming house was under construction and he had neither a phone nor a kitchen available to him. Although Mr. D required heart surgery as soon as possible, he was unwilling to have the operation until he found accommodation with an elevator. Since he could barely climb the steep stairs in his present building, he knew he would be unable to do so while recovering from surgery. Our housing team advocated on his behalf to rectify this urgent situation. Mr. D was offered a bachelor apartment with elevator access, large windows and a spacious kitchen.

Although he was extremely excited to move in, Mr. D's next barrier was that he had no bank account and TCHC required a void cheque. He had been robbed several times and since he had no identification he was unable to obtain a bank account. Our staff referred him to our P.A.I.D. project (Partners for Access and Identification Project). On his behalf, they obtained proof of status in Canada and with this, he opened a bank account for the first time in years. Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link collected donated household items to assist in his transition to his new home.

Mr. D was finally able to undergo heart surgery and his health has greatly improved. Having access to a kitchen has made a significant difference in his life since he can now prepare healthy meals to maintain his strength. His new accommodation has given him back his independence.

"Now as never before, we have within our grasp the means to eliminate abject poverty once and for all." – Gordon Brown, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer

Mental Health and Personal Identity

A social worker from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (C.A.M.H.) referred her client, Doug to our P.A.I.D. staff. Doug was homeless and about to be released from the in-patient care unit and needed appropriate housing. Homestay, a supportive housing service offered him an apartment that would allow Doug independence and a supportive environment when needed. A copy of his birth certificate (which he did not possess) was required in order to complete the housing application. The offer of this housing unit was very time-sensitive.

Both the P.A.I.D. and the C.A.M.H. worker joined Doug at an ID clinic the same day to complete a birth certificate application. When completed, our staff faxed the application to the Office of the Registrar General along with a request to expedite the application. In addition, the P.A.I.D. worker verified with Homestay that Doug was born in Ontario so the unit would be held.

Within a week, Doug was able to get his birth certificate, sign his lease and move into his new home.

Community Dinner

Our weekly *Community Dinner Program* continues to attract over 100 new clients each year. Since we provide between 130 to 150 meals per week on a budget designed for 60-70 clients, we continue to experience the challenge of meeting their needs.

Approximately 10% of clients served each week are children under the age of 12, and 9% are seniors, confirming the need to sustain this program within our community.

This program gives us the opportunity to connect with clients on a personal basis to identify any other needs. We can then assist them to access additional services to see them through a period of uncertainty.

During the holiday season we are further able to support our clients by delivering seasonal food hampers to provide some relief during this stressful time of the year.



"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the and the blind can see".
– Mark Twain



Housing portfolio

Neighbourhood Link Homes offers 290 units of housing within our community plus an additional 25 units underway. 42 of our present units offer wheelchair accessibility.

- **Jean Dudley House** is a senior's family home for ten frail elderly with staffing 24 hours a day.
- **Cecelia Murphy Building** offers 174 units to seniors, 6 are 4-bedroom units for seniors with special needs.
- **Norm Houghton Complex** has a family building with 62 units at 11 Main St. and 44 units for seniors at 680 Kingston Rd.

Property development

Construction is underway at 2802 Danforth Avenue to develop a new 25-unit building for marginally housed and homeless seniors. Our new project is to be completed by late 2006 with programs and services customized for this specific clientele.

The building boasts a variety of environmental considerations and will be the first non-profit housing site in Ontario to have both a green roof and solar assisted thermal heating. Our "Pride in Green" will reduce operational costs as well as eliminate 11 tons of fossil fuel emissions per year.

Mother Nature always has the last word!

By the fall of 2006 solar panel retrofits will also be added onto our buildings at 11 Main Street and 11 Coatsworth Crescent. Collectively the solar installations on all buildings will eliminate 80 tons of emissions per year, more than surpassing the 'One Ton Challenge' standard encouraged by our government. .



"Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors." – Jonas Salk, Inventor of the polio vaccine

Transportation

Transportation is a continual dilemma facing seniors, the disabled or anyone who confronts an accessibility situation both current and on-going. Sixty-five percent of trips we provide are for medical purposes. Along with transportation, personal escorts are available upon request for those requiring assistance.

Long term benefits

Twenty-seven year old Steve was left legally blind after a basketball accident in his early teens. Married to his high school sweetheart, he is now in college studying to become a chef.

Although he was trained by CNIB to use the TTC, getting to class safely was an obstacle due to traffic volumes at the school intersection. He requested twice weekly drives to the college since his training with CNIB made him ineligible for Wheeltrans pick-ups.

Due to high volume requests at this peak time, our transportation department had difficulty confirming his drives. Getting him to school on time could not be guaranteed. Arrangements were made with Toronto Ride to deliver him right to the door, so crossing at the corner would no longer be an issue.

He is only able to contribute a portion of the additional transportation costs as he still has his regular TTC fares to pay. Neighbourhood Link staff arranged for a subsidy through a private donor in the community, wishing to assist with his expenses.

Steve has a great positive attitude, wants to be self-sufficient; only requesting assistance when no other avenue is available to him. He is maintaining dignity and a greater independence with the involvement from partnering agencies and the community. This small financial investment will reap long-term rewards.

Steve will graduate in the spring and will be able to seek employment to realize his dream.

*"The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear".
– Aung San Suu Kyi*

Moving Forward with Research

Our partnership with the Canadian Research Network for Care in the Community addresses “Shifting Between Hospital and Community: Policy Implications for Care, Clients, and Providers.” The objective is to develop alliances among researchers, social service providers, consumers and policy makers. Our aim is to transfer knowledge regarding the important role of community services, a crucial, yet under-active research area in Canada, thus, building and disseminating evidence on community care and its role within the continuum of care.

This study follows on the heels of *When Home is the Community*, a research project with Ryerson University and the University of Toronto. Survey results studied the effects on seniors living in supportive housing vs. housing without available supports. This research verified our belief that seniors living with supports live longer, healthier and more productive lives. It also enabled us to use the outcomes to advocate for additional funding to increase seniors’ services.



Solutions: East Toronto's Health Collaborative

The *Community Rounds Project* was initiated to improve communications between hospitals and the community service sector. This project will test a common assessment tool process to determine the discharge needs of patients aged 75+ returning to the community after hospitalization.

The results will allow us to measure existing gaps in health and social service referrals and to identify reasons why these gaps occur. This will allow for a smoother transition upon discharge and allow intensive case management and extended services to be implemented ensuring seniors are not left to fend for themselves when they are physically or mentally unable to do so.



Volunteers – Closing the Circle of Community

In 1975, Senior Link was launched by three local volunteers who gave their time, skills and care in order to support seniors within the neighbourhood.

996 volunteers worked alongside our staff donating 50,278 hours to assist in providing essential services to the community. Their contributions enable us to fill the gap between our funding and the actual costs of running our programs.

There are not enough words to express our gratitude for their valuable support.

Community is the Circle ... Volunteers are the Link.

Service Partnerships provide real solutions for real people.

We undertake alliances and partnerships to leverage our expertise in the exchange of knowledge, capacity building, resources, strategic planning, public policy and advocacy.

Alzheimer's Working Group	Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
Association for Community Living	OSCA
Beach Arms Lodge	Pegasus Community Project
Beach Garden Society	Providence Villa Centre
Birchmount Residence	Red Cross
Bridgepoint Centre	Ryerson University
Canadian African Centre	Solutions:East Toronto's Health Collaboration
Centennial College	South Riverdale Health Centre
Central Neighbourhood House	St. John's Ambulance
Community Care East York	Street Health
Community Care North York	TANS
Community Centre 55	Tobias House
Comprehensive Rehabilitation & Mental Health Services	Toronto East General Hospital
George Brown College	Toronto Police 55 Division
The Heart and Stroke Association	University of Toronto
Homestay	Versa Care Centre
Humber College	VHA Home Healthcare
Iranian Centre	Vigilarm
Liberty Place	VITAL
MacMaster University	Wellesley Health Foundation
Meals Here and There	Woodgreen Community Services
Mondial Energy	
NEXUS –and CCEY	
Ontario Community Support Association	

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can." -- George Bernard Shaw



**United Way
of Greater Toronto**

Special thanks to our Donors and Supporters:

Senior Link/Neighbourhood Link is a formidable cornerstone of the community and recognized leader in the provision of community services, whose strength lies in our community connections. We wish to acknowledge the kindness and generosity of private community members who have left a legacy in recognition of our work. We warmly thank our funders, donors and neighbours whose financial support allow us to continue to promote the independence and dignity of all members within the community.

Federal, Provincial and Municipal Representatives

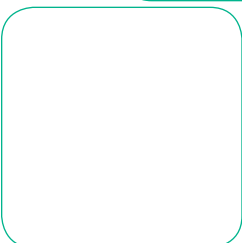
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We apologize for any errors or omissions.

"In every community there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart there is the power to do it." – Marianne Williamson



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