

Covid-19 Special Programs

Donor Appreciation

By-law Revision



Building Community Foundations for Self-Reliance

**Spin
CYCLE**
Volume XXX. Number I. 2020



Greetings from the Board of Directors of LIFE*SPIN



On behalf of the Board of LIFE*SPIN, we welcome our members, guests and friends to the Annual General Meeting of 2020. This has been an incredibly difficult year, and coming together as a community is more important than ever! We are pleased to have this opportunity to connect, reflect, and plan for the upcoming year, thank you for joining us virtually.

As we all know, COVID-19 has changed our world and our daily lives. It has made us question what we once took for granted, it has highlighted and exacerbated inequality in our city and across the world. Thankfully, our Executive Director, Jacqueline Thompson, and LIFE*SPIN's dedicated staff and volunteers have been supporting those living on a low incomes, as well as those who have had to ask for help for the first time. Although the LIFE*SPIN team is small, we are mighty. We have been able to turn on a dime as health directives and community need shifted, seemingly overnight.

Over the past eight months LIFE*SPIN has done an incredible amount of work to respond to this crisis. LIFE*SPIN has always served people on the margins, but this year the stakes were so much higher. LIFE*SPIN's programs were (and still are) rapidly meeting needs as they arose, often before government policies addressed these needs, if they did at all. Our services have always been a lifeline for vulnerable individuals and families in our community. That is why we went from business as usual to offering our services entirely online. Here are just a few examples of how LIFE*SPIN has shifted to serve the community:

When access to food was scarce, and going to the grocery store was unsafe, we partnered with On the Move Organics and LOLA Bees, to offer an affordable food box program that provided 4681 individuals from 1290 families with a reliable source of healthy food.

When a long and lonely summer was looming, we organized an online summer camp, which brought together children and youth mentors from across the city to engage in fun and meaningful online programming.

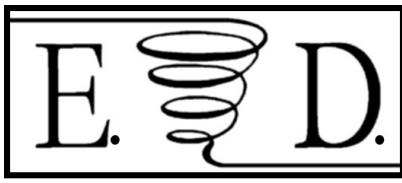
During this period of massive layoffs, the Free Store has been able to offer curbside pickup. and provides business casual clothing to people looking for new jobs. Our staff are handling hundreds of emails daily, answering questions and providing support to those who are struggling during this time.

These initiatives are just a few of many! It has been incredibly inspiring to see the dedication, grace and positivity the team displayed while implementing innovative and much needed community programming. Additionally, we would like to thank everyone who donates their time, energy and money to LIFE*SPIN. Without you, LIFE*SPIN would cease to exist. Your contribution to LIFE*SPIN makes a noticeable difference in the community. We are forever grateful to you!

As we move into the winter months and into an uncertain recovery, we are blessed to have such a responsive and powerful group advocating for the needs of people living on the margins, bringing the needs of the vulnerable to the attention of policy makers, politicians and our neighbours. LIFE*SPIN has always highlighted issues that most can't bear to face, and this will most certainly continue, as decisions are made, dollars are allocated, and things return back to "normal".

In a year where there has been so much loss, despair and uncertainty, LIFE*SPIN has been the light for so many people, and will continue to be. Thank you for joining us on this journey, and thank you for your unwavering support. We could not do this without you!

Kathryn Callahan and Frances Moore, Co-Chairs



We are living through strange times. It has been difficult not spending time together in person, sharing meals, listening to music, brainstorming, and just hanging out together. LIFE*SPIN leadership took quick action in March to ensure the safety of staff and adjust our base budget to get us through the difficult days ahead. We took on new leadership challenges, new programs, and adjusted our services and programs to continue to serve our community.

The Community Food Box Program, the revised children's summer program, the Ploughshares Project and the Virtual Free Store, Advocacy and Income Tax services have demonstrated an incredible level of commitment from staff and volunteers to continue to provide care and support to low-income Londoners. The adjustments taught us new skills and new ways of working together. The month ahead will challenge us, with everything we have learned over the past nine months, being condensed into four weeks.

Louie and I had the office to ourselves for three months, while our amazing staff worked from home or alone. Odie, Bruce, and Kyle have managed the Free Store, and two transport trucks of donations, assembling orders, sorting and distributing to our virtual shoppers. Leia set up a social media platform, to enable her clients to talk to her, not just via phone calls, and continued to advocate for folks when social workers and doctors were less able to provide the usual contact and supports. Wellness checks with all advocacy clients and our most senior income tax clients help us to know what additional supports have been critical for them. During the first three months of the shut-down, Myrna researched and compiled a resource booklet to distribute to more than 200 clients, by mail and for the website. She filmed gardening videos and interviews to keep us connected, and she helped keep up with the barrage of emails that face us each morning. The summer programs and the student practicums are possible with her support and leadership. Len successfully advocated for a mechanism for us to complete income taxes for our clients, and Deb took over the online intake and bookings. Working remotely has its own challenges, but this team has provided a touchstone for folks living in isolation as well. Gerda researched seniors' resources to add to our website, which has been beautifully and professionally update by Isabelle. We have done great things together this year.



The world of zoom inched its way into our lives. The children's summer program utilized a zoom classroom to interact daily with the campers. The Board of Directors meetings were possible with the technological skills of some of our Directors, and particularly Kathryn, whom we will all greatly miss. The picnic table enabled two or three of us to gather in person, outside. More than a few committee meetings and meals happened in the shade of the garden. I am deeply grateful for the extra efforts to stay engaged.

I recently lost a dear friend of 30 years. She left us at 103 years of age. She was an outstanding human being, who taught me that family is the people we care about. I am uplifted by all of you who make up this LIFE*SPIN family. Thank you for staying home, staying safe and staying with us.

*Jacqueline Thompson
Executive Director*





Office of the Community Advocate

Public Legal Education
Community Development
Law Reform
Casework
Summary Advice
Referrals
Volunteer Tax Specialist
Vouchers

The Office of the Community Advocate has had an interesting year, as we transitioned from the leadership and incredible work of Patricia Runciman to Leia Beland, our new Community Advocate.

As well as the changes that came with this transition, we soon found ourselves navigating client advocacy in Covid-19. This presented a few challenges, but also resulted in significant growth, as we moved services online, and were able to find creative ways to meet with clients and remain present in their lives. Some of these measures included over 200 printed resource booklets for clients who do not have access to online services, and moving all relevant resources to our website so that clients might access them directly. These are updated frequently by the wonder and force of Myrna Pronchuk, who is diligent and endlessly creative.

Over the months of isolation, we were able to serve more than 100 individuals, 80 new parents with welcome baby kits, and 25 seniors through our nursing outreach team.

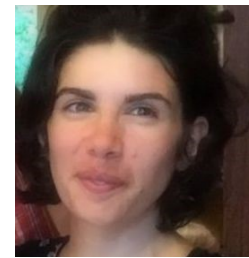
As leader in the London Community Advocates Network, we were able to support the call for action on tenant rights, as emergency measures wind down and we see an increase in evictions & Ontario works claw-backs.

We completed 46 applications for Canada Pension Plan and for the Ontario Disability Support Program, as well as assisting over 50 individuals with housing issues and applications for subsidized housing.

We have missed Karen McLaughlin, who worked alongside the community advocate until COVID-19 measures were set in place. Karen's role was invaluable and, although we are happy she is healthy and safe, the days are not as exciting without her warm presence.

As the new community advocate I feel lucky every day to work alongside amazing individuals, and to be supported by strong, wonderful and compassionate co-workers. Despite the darkness of this year, there has come much light. I would also like to thank the members of the Board for their extensive and incredible work.

Leia Beland—Community Advocate



Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

Since 2013, Len Roozen has been helping low income individuals and families file their current and prior year tax returns, as part of the Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax program. Returns are completed and filed free of charge. In most cases, returns are filed electronically and instantly, which helps ensure that people receive any tax refund they are owed as quickly as possible, and that they qualify for the Climate Action Incentives, HST Credits, Ontario Trillium Benefits, and Canada Child Benefits to they are entitled. Len, assisted by Debbie, Eliesha and Gerda, is often able to help clients who are behind in filing, to recover refunds and benefits they may have missed for up to nine prior years, giving them access to badly-needed funds.

Last year (2019) alone, we helped our clients file 1104 tax returns, securing over \$2,400,000 for them.

Although 2020 started out normally, the preparation of tax returns stopped abruptly in March, after COVID 19 struck the community and made face-to-face meetings impossible. We were not able to re-start the preparation of returns until the CRA approved a "virtual" process in mid-May. Now, Len meets with clients by phone and prepares their returns after he confirms their identities through the CRA's website. Despite these challenges, Len had prepared 517 returns by the end of October.

LIFE*SPIN offers free tax preparation services by phone year-round for both current and prior years' returns. Returns are prepared by appointment only, ensuring confidential and personalized service to our clients.



*LIFE*SPIN—Children's Programs*

Pocket Sized Farms ~ Ploughshares Project

LIFE*SPIN supported low-income families with children, by providing home-based start-up food garden kits and online classroom activities this summer. Since 1994, LIFE*SPIN has been offering a free day-camp program, Pocket-Sized Farms, to teach young children about environmental protection, organic food production, literacy, and building community. With the onset of Covid-19, we reached out to our community to find ways to continue providing education and support to the children.

Each ploughshare kit included a garden shovel, sheep manure/compost, topsoil, vegetable seeds, and instructions on how to get started growing food at home. Volunteers provided no-contact drop off to their home and, when a child registered, we invited the 249 children who were registered to join our on-line classroom where they could watch instructional videos, learn practical tips on how to grow these vegetables, harvest and cook them. They also participated in a ZOOM classroom. where they could ask leaders questions, share recipes and pictures from their gardens.

This was an opportunity for us to increase residential food gardens, and come together as a community to support children in low-income families through a very unusual summer.



Back—Pack Program

The students registered in the Ploughshares Project were able to sign up for a new back-pack filled with school supplies and handmade masks. Nurse Karen did a zoom tutorial for the children on how to safely put on and remove their masks. We love her helper.

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LIFE*SPIN FREE STORE

As the province slowly began to lift the COVID-19 restrictions, our clients began thinking about returning to work, school, worship, or visiting with friends and family. With two transport truck-loads of donations, of new clothing, we began on-line shopping with curbside pick-up. We can provide shoppers with an outfit or two to face the world as we now know it.

While the LIFE*SPIN Free Store is currently not open to the public, we invite our program participants to shop with us remotely. They can select the gender and sizes on the order form and we put together a box containing new and gently used items them to pick up by appointment. We have a selection of sizes, and do our best to match the requests to donations available.



Listen to a few words from Odie, our Free Store Manager at <https://youtu.be/3sOmjVD82bY>

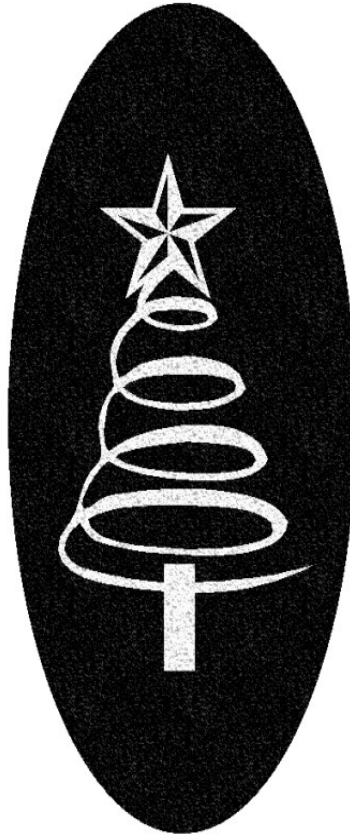
*LIFE*SPIN Christmas Program*



For the past 25 years, LIFE*SPIN has been coordinating a successful Community Christmas Sponsor Program for London's low-income community. The holiday spirit is about giving, and last year we distributed over 1,400 Christmas hampers to families in need, which is an enormous accomplishment with a most heart-warming outcome. Your support has enabled us to help reduce hardships that many low-income families and their children face each day.

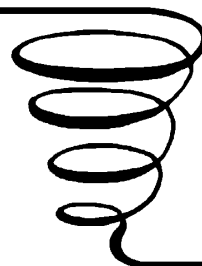
This year has offered new challenges in serving the most at-risk families in our community. Throughout the year, we continued to help with food security, children's programs, access to disability supports, housing, filing Income Taxes, the Free Store and health supports while making innovative adjustments for Covid-19 and the very high-risk population we serve.

Christmas is a particularly difficult time for many struggling to raise children in poverty, and this has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. These are difficult times and we all look forward to returning to the fun of shopping for the children in the future.



Christmas Lights and Sirens

On Saturday December 5th, the London Firefighters Association will be hosting the annual **Christmas Lights & Sirens Toy Drive** with London's Emergency Services. The event has been adjusted, due to the pandemic. There will be a drive-through donation station at Fire Station #1 at 400 Horton Street. Emergency Services workers will volunteer their time to accept toys for kids in need, and helped fill the emergency vehicles full of donations. These gifts will be provided to children who did not get sponsored for Christmas, to ensure they received something special over the holiday season.



Seniors Christmas Social Tea

For the past ten years, LIFE*SPIN volunteers have hosted a Christmas social for our older clients who are isolated during the holiday season. This year, our nursing team completed a 'wellness check' with those who would normally be invited to join us. They are now assembling Christmas gift bags that include hand-crafted lap blankets, made by the Crochet Club of London. The gift bags will also include items that the seniors requested during the wellness check. We miss the ceremony of hosting a formal Christmas Team, the music and laughter, but we are happy we can still reach out and deliver some Christmas cheer.

Our Board of Directors must have a minimum of 60% low-income representation. We can have three to twelve Board members, as long as we maintain this balance. Any nomination from the floor will need to retain this balance or will need to be balanced by an election of the required number of directors. Nominees must read and agree to the Conflict of Interest Policy. The Board Slate presented below meets the requirements of our Bylaw.

We have a slate being proposed by the Nominating Committee, following a process by which members put forward names of nominees, who then submitted their biographical information, including confirmation that they do not have a Conflict of Interest that would prevent them from participating fully on the Board.

The following 6 current members of the Board of Directors have completed one year of their two-year term, and have indicated that they wish to continue on the Board.

KATHY EDDINGTON
PATRICIA FYFE
DAVID MURPHY
RICHARD NANCARROW
ROSE MARY WHITE
MARIE RIOUX

We present to you the following nominees for the vacant positions on the Board.

Three current Board members, whose two-year terms are expiring

LAURA ROSEN
DREW GARDINER
FRANCES MOORE

Two new nominees include: one member who has served on the Board in the past, and has indicated a desire to join the Board once more. MEAGEN CIUFO

And one member of LIFE*SPIN who was appointed by the Board in the past term. LARRY MCKENZIE

We will be saying farewell to KATHRYN CALLAHAN, who has served as Co-Chair of the Board, and to ANTONIO ZUNIGAS CUENTES.

The biographies of the Board Members can be read at

<https://www.lifespın.org/board-of-directors>

Food Security ~ Community Food Box Program

The Community Food Box program was an urgent hunger relief program to help folks get through the state of emergency this summer. This program was initiated by LIFE*SPIN in partnership with local businesses, organizations, and funders. By working together, we supported fixed-income families, seniors and expectant mothers, who are at-risk, with direct access to food, delivered right to their doors.

It is critical that we understand that staying at home increases the expenses of residents living on fixed-incomes, while it may decrease some expenses for those families with middle or higher incomes. Lower income families that are staying home miss out on the resources that would normally get them through each month, such as trips to the food bank, community meals at the local senior's centre, community organization, or soup kitchen, or access to diapers and formula. However, average families are saving some money on transportation, eating home cooked meals and enjoying entertainment at home. We have all heard the phrase "isolation dividend" to represent the money you may be saving by staying home. We invited our supporters to donate their "isolation dividends" to buy a food box for a family that may not be able to leave home to shop, and which has very limited financial means.

We were able to serve 4,681 individuals in 1,290 families, including 1,968 school-age children, 530 seniors, and 58 mothers who were pregnant or nursing. In addition, Welcome Baby Hampers were assembled and delivered to 50 expectant mothers identified through the Community Food Box Program. These included print resources from the Middlesex London Health Unit, diapers, receiving blankets, washcloths, new clothing, and hand crocheted baby bonnets.

LIFE*SPIN and On The Move Organics were nominated for a Community Collaboration Award for the change we created together. You can view the story here: https://youtu.be/u40puFvFU_4





*Donations of time and expertise made to LIFE*SPIN are critical contributions that enable us to serve low-income individuals and families in London.*

*LIFE*SPIN staff and Board of Directors gratefully acknowledge these generous and heartfelt gifts.*

Alexander Judge	Gladis Orozco Bravo
Alexandria Hasketh Pavilon	Hanna Barltrop
Alice Hwang	Heather Kane
Alison Frances White	Home Depot East
Amanda Thompson	Isabelle Naumavski
Amanda Wilcox	Jacqueline Nathaniel
Andrea StrathIdee	Jacquie Thompson
Andrew Thompson	Jamie Hartley
Annie Joseph	Jason Thorne
Antonio Zuniga Cuentas	Jenna Coulton
Anupriadi Sultania	Jesse Helmer
Aram Abu-Jazar	Jessica Kelly
Arthur Tyndall	Jonathan Courey
Ashania Abdollahi	Josh Ruolph
Ashley Nicole Stevens	Juhee Jeong
Bob Earhart	Karen Jenkins
Bob Maginnis	Karen Maginnis
Bruce MacDonald	Karen McLaughlin
Cantelon Wise	Kathryn Callahan
Chris Stroud	Kathy Eddington
Cindy Thomas	Kim Spriet
Conor McGarvey	Kristen Tomen
David Murphy	Kyle Leung
Deborah Ratz	Kyle Mackie
Dellie Calander	Larry McKenzie
Diane Halpin	Laura Rosen
Donna Creighton	Leia Beland
Drew Gardiner	Len Roozen
Edna Hamilton	Lewis Seale
Eliesha Hammond	Lianne St. Thomas
Elora Sinnot	Lida Lashkari
Erin Hartley	Linda Dittrich
Ethan Hurrion	Linda Torek
Farah Motea	Louise Mullins
Frances Moore	Lucas Agonsalves-Kleinhert
George Kalantzis	Lynn Ann Buschemeyer
Gerda Korthof	Madeline Braney

Jessica Kelly	Oscar Hernandez
Jonathan Courey	Patricia Fyfe
Josh Ruolph	Patricia Runciman
Juhee Jeong	Peter Fragiskotas
Karen Jenkins	Rachel Thorburn
Karen Maginnis	Rachna Sharma
Karen McLaughlin	Rasika Timm
Kathryn Callahan	Rebekah Ferris
Kathy Eddington	Rebekka Timm
Kim Spriet	Richard Nancarrow
Kristen Tomen	Rick Booker
Kyle Leung	Riley Bradley
Kyle Mackie	River Christie-White
Larry McKenzie	Rob Couto
Laura Rosen	Robert Dawdy
Leia Beland	Robert Duff
Len Roozen	Robynne Kell Smith
Lewis Seale	Rose White
Lianne St. Thomas	Ryan Innes
Lida Lashkari	Ryan Talbot
Linda Dittrich	Samantha Phillips
Linda Torek	Samar Joshi
Louise Mullins	Sandra Abdelmalek
Lucas Agonsalves-Kleinhert	Sandra Alvarez
Lynn Ann Buschemeyer	Sandy Mikalachki
Madeline Braney	Sara Mills
Madison Shelby Lausanne	Sarah Colacitti
Maria Mikaela Bata	Sharon Li
Mariam Niazi	Susan Forde
Marie Rioux	Sydney La Pierre
Marisa Thorburn	Terence Kernaghan
Maryam Al-Witry	Terri Lynn Wilcox
Matt Hendry	Terry Hughes
Maureen Caissie	Thabo Mahono
Melissa Parrott	Theo Korthof
Mera Michel Atalla	Tina Capalbo
Miranda McDonald	Ting Yan
Muhammed Hatib	Valerie McCourt
Myrna Pronchuk	Vivian Tram
Narcise Datura	Weenguish Phillips
Nicole Spriet	William Chapman
Noah Clarke	Yae Ram Kim
Odilia (Odie) MacDonald	

*LIFE*SPIN ~ Building Community Foundations For Self-Reliance*



Stewards Committee Report

The highlight of our year so far is the replacement of the Inverter on the solar panels. This means that all the panels are back online, and are turning nature's gifts into core funding. The benefits to the environment are astounding. LIFE*SPIN installed solar panels in February of 2014. They have since generated significant environmental results: the 69.22 MWh are equivalent to 1,185 trees planted=51,498 kg of CO2 saved=equivalent to 390 vehicles removed.

Due to Covid-19, some of the garden plans were changed. Team Home Depot was scheduled to replace the fence on the south side of the property, but social distancing measures made this impossible. Instead, they donated 50 garden kits to our Pocket-Sized Farms families. The March Bread Seed Planting event was also put on hold. Volunteers, under the leadership of Rose White, planted seeds for our children's garden, which was turned over to the housing tenants for food production. We had lots of tomatoes, but the squirrels ate most of the vegetables; without the children in the garden, wildlife reclaimed it as theirs.

Myrna produced a series of videos that promote gardening at home. Rose taught us how to plant vegetables and make a potato planter. Kaleb, the baker at Artisan Bakery, introduced us to the world of composting.

We hired two youths to work on the grounds this summer. They kept the weeds under control and the property looking neighbourly. Ryan, a member of our HRDC summer leadership team, made sure the Living Roof Shed was maintained. We were kept busy on many projects related to upkeep of the housing units. Most work was routine, or renovations related to move in/move out. Extensive renovations were completed on one unit, including a complete bathroom and new flooring throughout the unit. We are grateful for the winterizing donation from Erin and Jamie at Scope Gap Contractors Inc.



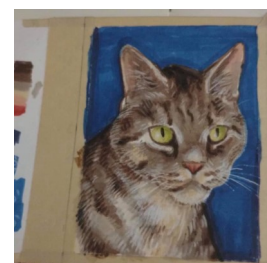
Old East Common

We hope to have our garden full of laughter again next summer. Home Depot has already been on-site, measuring for a new fence along the south edge, new boulevard planter boxes, and an arbor which can withstand the temptation of children to climb.

The Composting Video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/7KrPFBc3BD0>

Pet Portrait Fundraising for Christmas

We are grateful to the Fundraising Committee for the extra effort this year in light of the pandemic. We could not host our Annual Harvest Dinner, but this initiative helped to raise funds and put some fun into Fundraising.





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Jack & HAY
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Kathryn Turnbull
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Liz Barrie
Lois Lozon
Lori Carter
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Lorna Erickson-Fraser

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Luis Domingues
Lulu Burstzyn
Lynn Dunikowski
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