

LIFE*SPIN HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

Supporting families towards self-sufficiency is about really embracing them when they have fallen into the despair of poverty, and showing them kindness and thoughtful care. What keeps LIFE*SPIN unique and innovative is this foundation of personal experience, peer support, and a profound sense of caring for each individual who is courageous enough to reach out to us when they need a helping hand.

LIFE*SPIN offers a number of programs, but the current demand to create more affordable and safe choices for housing is one of our priorities in the coming year. Building housing is not just about buildings; it's about the people who become the human energy that drives our community forward.

LIFE*SPIN remains a place for low-income families to come year round for support, clothes, household items, education, medical supports, housing, and children's programming, and is a place to re-build their lives with a sense of community support around them. At a time of fear and uncertainty, LIFE*SPIN provide tangible supports and a sense of community care for so many.

LIFE*SPIN adjusted all our programming at the onset of Covid-19; a devastating situation for low income families. Those most at risk that are still wary of their health risks, thus missing 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, soup kitchen, or access to diapers and formula.

LIFE*SPIN programs continue to meet the needs of our clients, including:**Basic Needs**

The LIFE*SPIN Free Store continued on-line ordering with curbside pick-up, until the store reopened in June for personal shopping. We are receiving donations at the Free Store (872 Dundas Street) every Tuesday from 10:00 – 2:00 and winter clothing items are now in great demand. With the storefront open, we are also able to serve more drop-ins from the community who are living without shelter, and not much hope. (<https://www.lifespın.org/free-store>)

Children's Programs

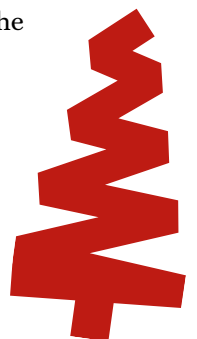
Our free summer program enables low-income children to stay connected to learning throughout the year, improving their education outcomes. Children living in homes where English is a second language particularly benefit from the online Zoom Classroom for STEM learning activities. Leaders designed several learning levels to meet the needs of an expanded age group of participants. Gardening kits and craft supplies for the lessons were provided to 166 children, with no-contact delivery to their homes. This program was also utilized to distribute our Back-to-School Program. Keep an eye on the website for signing up for the summer program in May.

Food Security

When Covid-19 threatened the community, we initiated a Community Food Box program. While this started out as a temporary program to help combat pandemic-related food insecurity, there are still many families with high health risks, limited mobility and limited financial means, who need this support. You can register for this program, on-line at <https://www.lifespın.org/food-security>, but please be aware that we only open the registration form when there are donations available.

Education Bursary

With added support, we were able to assist three students beginning post-secondary education this year.



Income Tax Clinic

LIFE*SPIN continues as the only organization in London that provides year-round access to CRA's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program. This year, we met with senior staff of the CRA to assist them in understanding how to make the program more accessible, and to continue to serve low-income families and seniors, whose income is whose income is detrimentally impacted when taxes are not filed. In 2022, we filed 579 tax returns for those who needed this assistance, bringing \$1,986,052 in benefits directly to these low-income residents. We are now fully booked until the new year, but the registration link will be available again in January, at <https://www.lifespın.org/taxprogram>. We start booking appointments for 2022 taxes in mid-February, as soon as you have T-4 slips available.

Access to Information Resources

Throughout 2021, we improved our website, to enable residents to access support resources more easily, and make applications for outreach supports and programs. Access to on-line resources is complemented with mail-out resources, for those who lack financial resources or the technical savvy to use internet. We also made program registrations available to Arabic-speaking residents, as this was the second language identified as most common among our clientele.

Community Advocate

Throughout the pandemic, LIFE*SPIN has continued to assist low-income Londoners through times of extreme and critical need. Our clients face additional health risks, related to poverty, age, and disability. We hosted numerous Zoom educational workshops last year, and published a manual for folks trying to acquire assistive devices to improve their quality of life. This is available on our comprehensive website, but also on "Your Legal Rights", a data base of public legal education resources, available to disabled people across the province. Our support programs, outreach, and resources are provided with no-contact, such as the work of our Doula team, who continue to assemble resources for expectant mothers, and a team of volunteers who complete wellness check-ins with our most elderly people who live alone.

We continue to provide supportive affordable housing to individuals and families who require community support to live independently and, as our housing initiative reaches sustainability in 2023, we hope to add housing for 13 more families, and those who needs accessibility in their homes.

With the support of remarkable volunteers, we were able to assist thousands of families who sought our assistance last year. We strove to help alleviate the pain and desperation experienced by those continuing to live in poverty, and also the newly poor, resulting from the dramatic downturn in the economy due to the pandemic and the changing economy. You are all a vital part of the community we build here. We deeply appreciate the time you take to explore the resources on our website, to help improve things for your family.



Please visit our website at <http://www.lifespın.org/> for information on programs and resources. Again, we are enormously grateful for the incredible efforts of the volunteers who made all this possible.

