


LIFE  SPIN

*Celebrating*

30 

*Years*

Fall 2023

# The Beginning

## 1989

Life Spin was founded around a community garden & a kitchen table on a goat farm in Kilworth, Ontario.

## 1990

- The Life\*Spin team began drafting "How to Get There From Here," a guide focused on the rules & procedures of accessing Social Assistance.

## 1991

- Life\*Spin's first temporary office space was in St. Andrews United Church manse with our sisters in social justice, Susan Eagle, as well as Beth Porter & Beth Tellache, who later became Bethany Centre.
- Our first social action resulted in tuition fee deferrals for low income students enrolled at Western. This win still holds today.
- Published the 1st Edition of *How to Get There From Here*.

## 1992

- Life\*Spin moved across the driveway into the first permanent office space, inviting our friends from Bethany Centre to join us.
- The 2nd edition of *How to Get There From Here* was published
- Our first coverage was in *The London Free Press*.

## 1993

- Beyond Food Banks conference foreshadows things to come.
- We start drafting our first by-law.
- We become incorporated!

## 1994

- Women's Community Economic Development workshops (100+).
- We started a food buying club to reduce food costs for members.
- Start working with West Coast Development for Board Training & meet the "god-father" of CED, Stewart Perry.
- By-Law is approved by membership.
- Advocates begin meeting with the City & NLS joins us.
- Started looking for property in the Old East Village area to house our growth.
- Christmas Sponsorship Program is launched.
- First Pocket-Sized Farm is established at Northbrae Public School.
- The Social Assistance Advisory Council was dissolved & reborn as The Ontario Social Safety Network.

## 1995

- Income assistance shelter amount & basic needs are cut by 21.6% on October 1st, so we take our food buying group city- wide as The Green Market Basket & help coordinate a city- wide "Well-Fair" in Harris Park to help as many low-income families as possible & launch the Ontario Social Safety Network "Telling our Stories" project.
- Free Store is launched. LIFE\*SPIN publishes the "Advocate Manual" & invites London agencies to "Advocates Training".
- First CED training workshop at Fanshawe College.

## 1996

- Two of our clients launch the "Spouse-in-the-House" Charter Challenge.
- How To Get There From Here 3rd Edition.

## 1997

- Peer Loan Circles program starts accepting participants.
- Green Market Basket farms Jeremiah's Field.

## 1998

- Through the Peer Loans-two businesses are funded.
- Feasibility research on CED housing initiative begins in earnest.
- Advocacy to save heritage fire hall on Adelaide Street in full swing.
- LIFE SPIN moves into Fire-Hall #5.

## 1999

- Extensive renovations & Grand Opening of our new local.
- Pocket-Sized Farm curriculum is published.
- We publish "Broken Promises: Welfare Reform in Ontario" for the Ontario Social Safety Network.
- Peer-Lending Circles support several new business start-ups.
- We publish "Community Development Financial Institutions".
- THAW program is designed & launched.

# 2000s

## 2000

- Women's Economic Literacy Program launched.
- LIFE\*SPIN's first website wins a design award.
- Purchased property on the corner of Dundas at Ontario to provide permanent affordable housing.
- Self-Employment Development Training program launched.
- Spouse-in-the-House case won in the Ontario Court of Appeal.

## 2001

- Funding secured to open a provincial legal clinic to deal with Charter Challenge Issues & the Income Security Advocacy Centre is launched.

## 2002

- Expert Witness to the Coroner's Inquest Into the Death of Kimberly Rogers.
- LIFE\*SPIN resumes management of the housing initiative.

## 2003

- The 3rd Edition of the Community Advocates Manual is published.
- Community Advocates Training Program completed. Patricia is one of the graduates.

## 2004

- "Walking on Eggshells" Research report published; LIFE\*SPIN hosted the London research forums.
- We decide to sell Fire Hall #5 & begin work on retrofitting a commercial unit on Dundas Street to house our new office.
- Farewell Christmas celebration in the restored Fire Hall.

## 2005

- LIFE\*SPIN hosts "The Take" screening & panel discussion at U.W.O. Special Diet Allowance-application clinic coordinated at City Hall.
- Restorative Justice Forums & neighbourhood development leadership activities.
- Green Market Basket delivers the last food basket as the clientele shifts; it was an amazing 10 years.
- LIFE\*SPIN moves to the Dundas Street property.



## 2006

- LIFE\*SPIN removes the bungalow at 417 Ontario & goes door-to-door in the neighbourhood to find out what folks would like to see in our community.
- Aeolian Hall provides space for a community forum to design the community space & a landscape design sets the plan.

## 2007

- Board Policy Committee begins work on revising & updating LIFE\*SPIN policies.
- Major renovations on the housing initiative begin: new windows, doors, plumbing, electrical, pointing, roof, fire-escapes & our innovative storm-water system.
- New garden shed for Old East Common.
- Pocket-Sized Farms offered on-site.

## 2008

- Tree Planting: 20 shade trees. Installed garden fencing on the north side of the property.

## 2009

- Community Forum in March leads to opening commercial space for the Free Store.
- Volunteer Income Tax Program launched.
- Installation of basketball net, garden patio & south fencing.

# 2010s

## 2010

- With most events at capacity, we start looking at our other commercial spaces to house the resource centre.
- Garden entry arbour & east fencing installed.
- Creative Chaos Women's Art Program is launched.

## 2011

- "Me to We" community development forum starts a series of 34 events in the heritage east resource centre we call the Living Room.
- We get support to install an accessible washroom, upgrade the antique heating element to make the space comfortable & safe.
- Recycled rubber, accessible pathways in the garden.
- Garden Grooves music festival tradition begins.

## 2012

- LIFE\*SPIN undertakes major renovation to house the Artisan Bakery & Medium Gallery joins the community.
- Youth design Garden Gates planter boxes & start the construction. "Living Roof" shed is donated & rebuilt on-site.
- March Break Seed Planting Party gets a head start on the Pocket-Sized Farms.

## 2013

- Application for Microfit to install solar panels on roof.
- Design façade restoration & begin a quest for funding.
- Our community resource centre, the Living Room, is reopened following renovations.
- "Just for Us" tween girls program begins.

## 2014

- Solsmart is hired to install Solar Panels across the roof of the LIFE\*SPIN CED Housing Initiative.
- As of October 2023, the solar panels have generated significant environmental results: Coal burned: 66 k, Gas Consumed: 6.7 K, Miles Driven: 150.1 K, Trees Planted: 995.4
- Restoration of the Heritage Façade begins on the East side of the building.

## 2015

- Heritage Restoration continues on the façade, including the installation of flower grill-work on the lower windows of 868 Dundas Street.
- The Nutrition Program & the Harvest Dinner Fundraising event are launched.

## 2016

- We join the Jack Richardson Music Awards to facilitate the Ken Palmer Music Bursary.
- We received an award from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario for our heritage restoration of the building.
- Awnings are installed on the façade & we receive our heritage designation from the City of London.

## 2017

- Canada 150 Grant enables us to rebuild the rear portion of 868 Dundas to house program support for the Living Room.
- The 7th Annual Garden Grooves Mini-Music Festival in Old East Common is held on Canada Day 150, including a stop in Queens Park to bury a time-capsule for the Old East Heritage District.



## 2018

- Home Depot Team Argyle completely renovated an apartment for a special needs tenant.
- LIFE\*SPIN celebrates our 25th Anniversary since we incorporated in 1993.
- A 2nd memorial award is established to acknowledge a member who has made a significant contribution to our environmental restoration work, in honour of former Board Member Sally Galsworthy.

## 2019

- We break our own records: 7,117 registered Free Store shoppers, as well as 7,507 calls from clients & potential clients.
- Our beloved Patricia Runciman retires after years as our Community Advocate.
- LIFE\*SPIN also agrees to be one of the partners administering relief for families affected by a gas explosion & fire in Old East Village.

## 2020s

### 2020

- Flexibility keeps us going during the Covid-19 pandemic. Programs like Advocacy go online, while others are adapted, such as giving the 325 children in Pocket Sized Farms soil & seeds for home gardening, & with curbside pickup for the Free Store & Christmas programs.
- To help vulnerable people cope with isolation, support for seniors & new moms is stepped up.
- Fresh food is delivered regularly to 1500 families through our partnership with On The Move Organics.

## 2021

- Welcome Baby becomes an ongoing program after we made & deliver over 50 hampers to new & expecting moms
- The Community Food Box also becomes an ongoing program, delivering 1,450 boxes of fresh produce to low-income families.
- The Free Store serves 1,862 shoppers in 752 families, with online ordering & curbside pick-up.
- We begin to offer our services in Arabic, including registrations, publications & workshops.
- Christmas Sponsorships bring joy to 4,228 children in over 1,100 families.

## 2022

As public health measures ease, the need for many services increases.

- The Free Store returns to in-person shopping, serving 3,166 people in 1,298 families.
- Help with income saw 414 families gain benefits totaling \$1,986,052;
- The Community Food Box delivers fresh produce to 8,452 people in 2,193 families;
- 4,024 children in 1,467 families are served in our many kid's programs, including Project Ploughshare, new backpacks & Christmas Sponsorships.
- A special one-time donation of 75 bicycles as well as the countless sponsorships give 1,350 families a merrier holiday season.

## 2023

- The tax program still operates remotely, but in-person events & workshops make a return to the Living Room, with funding for staff & a refurbished floor.
- The Free Store closes for the summer & re-opens in September with an additional 400 sq ft of space.
- 30 years of growth since incorporation in 1993 are celebrated in 2023, as a match is ceremonially put to the paid-up mortgages on our heritage building.
- 3,744 children in over 1,400 families receive presents through our Christmas Program.

# Volunteer With Us!

**Free Store:** Dedicated volunteer teams support the store being open 2 days a week. Choose either Tuesdays from 10 am-2 pm or Wednesdays from 3:00-7:00 pm. Commitment needed: 1 year

**Christmas Drivers:** Driving teams deliver bags of toys to children living in low-income families throughout the season. Let us know your availability during the day, as it will be getting dark earlier & it's easier to find addresses in the daylight. We help load your vehicle & provide a detailed delivery list.

**Board of Directors:** Interested in supporting all the programs of LIFE\*SPIN? Volunteer with the Board of Directors! For those interested in a lot of planning & hands-on work. Our Executive Director will meet with you & help you select a Board committee to gain the necessary leadership experience. 60% of our Board must be members with low-incomes.

**Computer/Technology Support:** Creating driver sheets for 100 Christmas deliveries a day is challenging at best. If you are tech savvy, we need you, & not just at Christmas.

**Housing Development:** Experience working on developing housing would be a great asset for our organization in the coming years. If you have these skills, we would welcome them to our committee.

**Fundraising/Promotion:** We're always working on several plans, programs & promotion at once, and we need your help! Reaching out to networks, businesses & organizations that can provide what we need to make everything work is a unique challenge.

Fill out the volunteer form at  
<https://www.jotform.com/form/10252515472>  
OR scan the QR Code.

