



BECOMING PART OF THE LARGER MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTION

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Thank you Carrie, it is a privilege to work with a Board that is innovative and forward thinking. I am thrilled to share with you how Progress Place has become part of the larger mental health solution. Clubhouses are best described as places that improve the lives of people living with mental illness. We offer programs and services which provide opportunities for recovery through friendship, employment, education, housing and recreation in a welcoming and accessible environment of support, respect and dignity. We are holistic community centres offering men and women the social determinants of health - physical, social and psychological well-being. What individual would not benefit from what Clubhouses offer? We believe every individual would benefit from the sense of community that Clubhouses create, the sense of belonging, the feeling of social connectedness, and the empowerment that Clubhouses reinforce by focusing on individual strengths. It was this realization that helped us in recent years bring the Clubhouse values and philosophy into the broader mental health community. I am excited to share with you two projects that we initiated and developed, one is for adults who are 55 plus and the other is within a marginalized community for people of all ages.

It all started a number of years ago when members and staff of Progress Place were talking about transitional employment opportunities and some of the (older) senior members said they felt that they already had the opportunity to work and wanted to enjoy life by socializing as they were not in a phase in their lives where they were interested in work, career or educational goals. In essence they wanted to gear down and focus on a retirement lifestyle. This helped us to think about the potential impact on our Clubhouse. How would the clubhouse culture change if the urgency of work was no longer a prominent driver within the work ordered day?

We confronted this challenge by initially doing a scan of the local senior services sector. We found that there were no senior services that included support for people living with mental illness, only for seniors living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Additionally, their philosophy of service provision was different as the services were provided **to and for people** rather than providing the seniors with the opportunity to work **in partnership** with staff and other seniors. Then we consulted with neighbouring agencies that were working with seniors and suggested that together we develop a clubhouse for seniors. This led to partnering with other service providers who also understood the value of collaboration and integration of services. Our common goal was to bring services to a marginalized, underserved, high need community. We were successful in securing space to pilot a clubhouse for seniors within this area. Progress Place took the lead in offering in-kind or voluntary staffing resources and program supplies and fortunately our partners also volunteered agency staff resources.

We continued to pilot the Seniors Clubhouse for 2 years while we submitted proposals to our funders. We were finally successful after two years and were given funding for a full-time position with funds for program supplies.

The Seniors Clubhouse started with a handful of seniors attending the program and now has an average daily attendance of 22 people. We initially operated out of a small room and a kitchen within a community space and over the years we took over an additional room along with the kitchen. (Here are some pictures of a recent event we organized within the community as we reached out to other senior groups.)? We recently organized a senior social promoting good mental health along with combating stigma against mental illness. The reach out initiative resulted in a total of 75 seniors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds that attended a Hawaiian theme Luau where they learned to do a Hawaiian dance, enjoyed good food, company and talked about the importance mental wellness. We have successfully created a community where people feel a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose and have made social connections. The space where we offer the senior program provides barrier free health access to all, children to seniors, ensuring that people have the opportunity for improved health, by coming to a welcoming and accessible community that provides social connectedness and encouragement for people to move forward in life. Progress Place is proud of this initiative as it pre-emptively opens an area of responsibility for clubhouses to develop creative options for seniors ready to transition from clubhouses into a dignified clubhouse alternative that operates based on a foundation of the values, philosophy and principles of the clubhouse movement.

Our second community initiative is located across the city in Mt. Dennis, an underserved and high priority neighbourhood. In this instance we were actually approached by a private landlord who wanted us do develop a clubhouse for the tenants of her 2 apartment towers as she believed that many of the tenants had mental health issues and were in need of support. When we visited this community we developed a broad vision, one that would have a small clubhouse where people would have a sense of belonging, feel needed and wanted as well as have a place where health services could be accessed by everyone in the community.

We partnered with another service provider, went door knocking to many service providers in the local community and ultimately through engaging several service providers we started a Service Provider Network. We began at a grassroots level by hosting a community resident BBQ and asked residents to fill out a survey informing us about needed services and programs that were missing in the community. We drew a lot of attention from local service providers, residents and local politicians/funders. We convinced them to give us a one-time grant for a 10 week project to staff the community engagement process in order to assess the needs of the community. We hired community residents and people with lived experience to conduct outreach. The results were powerful and convinced us to advocate to the private landlord to retrofit a space along with providing us with free rent so that we could pilot the initiative. The neighbourhood is poverty stricken and known as an area with high rates of crime, gangs, unemployment along with a high percentage of newcomers. There are a lot of children that are not engaged in healthy positive activity due to the lack of funds.

Progress Place took the lead and provided in-kind voluntary staff resources along with program supplies and opened the doors officially April 13th 2015. We started by having a few residents attend on a daily basis to having over 500 individuals participate to date. We have been focusing on building trust and the sense of community by offering access to computers, Wi-Fi, photocopying, faxing and use of a telephone. We have local agencies attending the Community Place Hub providing employment resources, helping with resume writing, job interviews, and workshops for newcomers on settlement issues, a peer nutrition program for single parents and children, a summer children's program for 40 children, a weekly community coffee and on the list goes. We will be coordinating a flu clinic soon hosted by a community health centre; we hosted a community BBQ that served close to 500 children, adults and seniors,(please see pictures)? We believe that the sense of community has started with the great turn out for the BBQ. In addition we just hosted an all candidate's meeting for our upcoming federal election and 150 residents attended. The awesome news is that with all of our reach out into the community and our hard work (clubhouses are great at that!) in November we will be starting a Clubhouse work ordered day just one day a week supporting people with mental illness. We have built a

rapport with many individuals who have shared that they are living with mental illness and need a place to go and something to do. The Progress Place Board of Directors believes in our core clubhouse so much that they are allocating fundraising resources to launch this initiative without any government or foundation grants

Both the Seniors Clubhouse and the new program, The Community Place Hub are truly gratifying and exemplify the clubhouse values and philosophy of working in partnership, developing a sense of community that offers hope and belonging to various parts of the city by improving the lives of children, teenagers, adults and seniors. The sense of collaboration and the collective impact provided by service providers and residents is amazing to experience. People living in the marginalized communities have been labelled and stigmatized just like people living with mental illness yet as we have had the honour and privilege to get to know and work with the local residents in both communities, I am humbled as once again I am reminded as I have been reminded everyday within the clubhouse that regardless of an individual's ability or disability everyone deserves the same thing in life and that is hope, a sense of belonging, community, someone who believes in you, a place that gives you an opportunity to succeed. These values are what makes a clubhouse a great place to be and has helped us drive innovation and become much more integrated in the broader mental health community. The Clubhouse model is the most empowering models in the world. It is time to be bold and be fearless; we believe that clubhouse innovation in the community is the next frontier in helping to create system wide mental health solutions.