



ANNUAL REPORT

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Colin Corcoran, *Director of Finance and Administration*

Nancy Hollett, *Director of Development and Communications*

## Message from the Executive Director & the Chair of Board of Directors

### Facing Change While Opening the Doors to Opportunity

While closing a chapter of our Supportive Housing program, which has been in existence since Choices for Youth was established in 1990, we've found innovative ways to open new doors for our programming and to maintain an essential level of support to the youth we serve. With this came a new program, Supporting Youth with Transitions, a restructuring of our Outreach and Youth Engagement program and enhancements in our already well-established programs like Moving Forward and Train for Trades through a new tiered support model. This year we moved into our newly renovated Duckworth Street building which now houses our administrative offices, Moving Forward, Train for Trades and additional space for a social enterprise clothing boutique soon to be operated by Moving Forward.

With these changes, what has stuck out most in our minds is the resiliency of the youth we serve to adapt, embrace the new approaches we have been taking and to push forward against any personal challenges. What has also been impressive is our staff—from directors, coordinators and those at the frontline—to step up in all capacities, and show their irreplaceable value, dedication and hard work. We ask a lot of our staff and they face these challenges head on, with their heads up supporting each other all along the way. As we continue to grow, we continue to remember where we have come from, where we are going and all of those who have made the work we do possible. As we continue to open doors in our community—for housing solutions for youth—we strive to provide the best options for each individual youth we serve.

Kevin Harnum  
Board Chair

Sheldon Pollett  
Executive Director



# Making Progress and Checking Off Our Strategic Goals

## Housing

- ✓ Developed positive partnerships with private landlords to foster housing first approaches
- ✓ Started building development for affordable supportive housing units in our community
- ✓ Purchased property for our Young Parents Resource Centre and continued planning and design preparations

## Youth Involvement

- ✓ The Youth Leadership Council is in full swing and has developed a clear mandate, terms of reference and are leading workshops for our staff and the community!
- ✓ Actively fostering peer mentoring in the 3rd phase of our Train for Trades program and Jumpstart

## Employment & Education

- ✓ Engaging private sector job market for our Jumpstart program with the support of Raising the Roof's Youthworks project
- ✓ Developing a clear organization wide evaluation framework that focuses on client centered outcomes and transparency

## Support Services

- ✓ On call protocols have been developed to provide 24 hour support when youth need it most

## Mental Health & Addictions

- ✓ Delivering formalized staff training for mental health and addiction support across all programs
- ✓ Offering addictions support group for young men through support of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation

- ✓ Reorganized our Outreach and Youth Engagement program to connect community, government and health services resources for effective wraparound of services

## Advocacy & Public Awareness

- ✓ Participated in a variety of national studies to enhance awareness and prevention of youth homelessness

## Organizational Capacity & Development

- ✓ Enhanced human resources supports through coordinator/supervisory training
- ✓ Critical staffing for our 24 hour housing services at the forefront of resource needs
- ✓ We've hired a Director of Finance and Administration

# A Fresh Start

In a housing emergency finding a safe and appropriate place to stay shouldn't add stress to an already stressful situation. Our Shelter for Young Men provides a safe space for residents to stay and access services. That's why when volunteers from the Atlantic Lottery Corporation came to participate in our United Way Day of Caring the work they did went a long way!

A fresh coat of paint added a new face to our shelter space where residents are looking to start anew. Not to mention a HUGE upgrade to the basketball court! When it comes to the safety of our staff and youth we make sure the place they work and live is properly maintained and the support from the community help us meet those goals.



## Our Shelter for Young Men...

- Had **229** admissions this year
- Our 9 bed shelter has a **95.7%** occupancy rate
- Provided over **500** emergency food bags during off-hours
- Had to turn away **259** youth because we had no beds available

# Housing First: Beyond the Front Door

Providing access to barrier-free housing options is essential in preventing youth homelessness. That's why Choices for Youth's programs and services are developed with accessibility in mind. Getting youth housed is our first priority. Along with providing and connecting youth to housing our supports go even further to ensure they can keep their housing while identifying the support they need.

## Our Outreach and Youth Engagement Program Provided:

- More than **700** youth came through the door seeking multiple supports last year
- **6,151** meals served
- **276** requests for basic need items
- **500** requests for employment support
- **186** requests for education support
- **414** requests for housing assistance
- **460** requests for nursing care

## THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF HOUSING FIRST FOR YOUTH INCLUDE:



*Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements*



*Youth choice and self-determination*



*Positive youth development orientation*



*Housing Supports*



*Supports for Health & Well-being*



*Supporting Access to Income & Education*



*Individualized and client-driven supports*



*Social and community integration*

*Housing First supports must be youth oriented.*



*Complementary Supports*



*Opportunities for Meaningful Engagement*

*Supports must be driven by the needs of the client, rather than the structure of the program.*

## HOUSING FIRST IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY HOUSING

### RallyHaven our Supportive Housing program

Of the **41** youth residents since 2011:

- **14** went back to school or started an educational program
- **16** became employed or enrolled in a pre-employment program
- **15** maintained their housing for more than one year
- Of the **31** individuals who have become former program residents: **18** receive significant follow up support for more than 6 months from the RallyHaven team (ie: housing, navigating school systems, support with health care needs, employment, and life skills)
- During the past year, **4** youth in the program have connected to formal counselling supports for mental health concerns and/or addictions

# RallyHaven

## Our New Supportive Housing Program

Sometimes changing the name of a program can help explain what it is we do more clearly to those who need to know about it the most. Following a large program restructuring last fall it only made sense to rename our Transitional Housing program to be fully inclusive of its scope. Our former Transitional Housing program is the definition of what housing first is all about, so RallyHaven—a name developed by the youth in our program—was born.

### **RALLY:**

- To support, encourage
- To improve
- To call together for a common purpose
- To assemble, come together, regroup
- To muster for a common purpose
- bouncing back from a setback
- a marked recovery of strength or spirits

### **HAVEN:**

- a place where you are protected from danger or trouble
- a place offering favorable opportunities or conditions
- shelter or safe place



Credit: Painting done by participant in art wellness program

## Never Forget

Take today to be thankful,  
For all of the things you have ample,  
The food on your table,  
The clothes on your back,  
Think of what you have,  
Not what you lack,  
Pray for those less fortunate,  
The homeless and the kids who are orphans,  
They're just as special,  
They're just as great,  
They're still just as beautiful in every way,  
So think about them this very day,  
Do what you can to share what you have,  
Do what you can to lend a helping hand,  
Live by these rules and you'll do fine,  
Just remember,  
No poor soul ever left behind.

—Matthew Pinto

## Addressing the Needs for Young Moms with Supportive Housing and Wraparound Services

Since 2008, Choices for Youth has been taking the lead within the community in developing solutions for an identified gap in services for young pregnant and parenting moms. Making sure we are doing it right and fitting those needs can be a long process. In partnership with Daybreak, government and community partners we are developing a Young Parents Supportive Housing Resource Centre and finding innovative solutions to connect new moms to the supports they need while making a fresh start for themselves and their families.

### Our Momma Moments program...

- Supports **30** young moms and **35** children with ongoing group support
- Provided **800** interventions including:
  - **86** employment/education
  - **78** housing related requests
  - **50** requests for financial assistance support



## Kayla's Story

### Focus, Determination and the Supports to Succeed

When Kayla first started with the Momma Moments program two years ago, it was through word of mouth. One of her friends had been attending the newly established group in Conception Bay South. Connecting to moms proved to be a little difficult when we first set up shop in CBS, so it was through a closed group on Facebook where we were really able to connect to moms. Jeannie Piercey, our Program Facilitator fostered a variety of partnerships with groups in CBS to get this program going, including an essential one with the Anglican Parish Hall.

With support from their women's group—who provide weekly meals and surprises like handmade cookbooks for all the moms on Mother's Day—they added to how effective this kind of support program can be. It was through this kind of supportive relationship that Kayla was able to pursue her passion to follow in her family's footsteps to become an Ironworker. This spring, Kayla made her dream a reality and graduated from the Ironworker program at the College of the North Atlantic with the financial support of the provincial Diversity Fund program.

# Choices for Youth Takes the Provincial Lead in National Survey by CAM-H

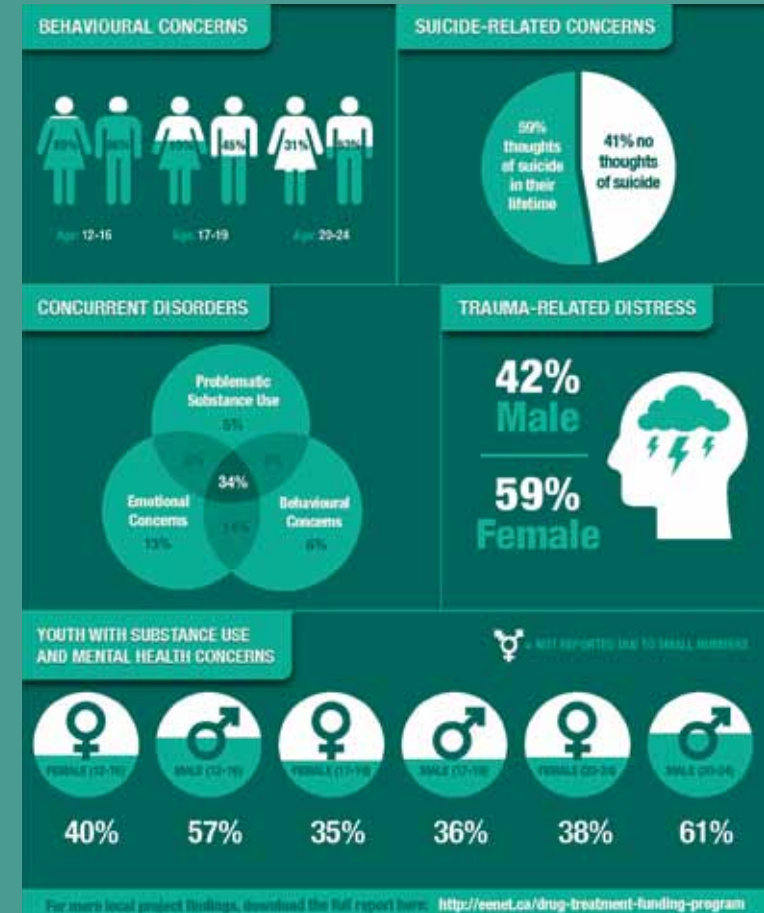
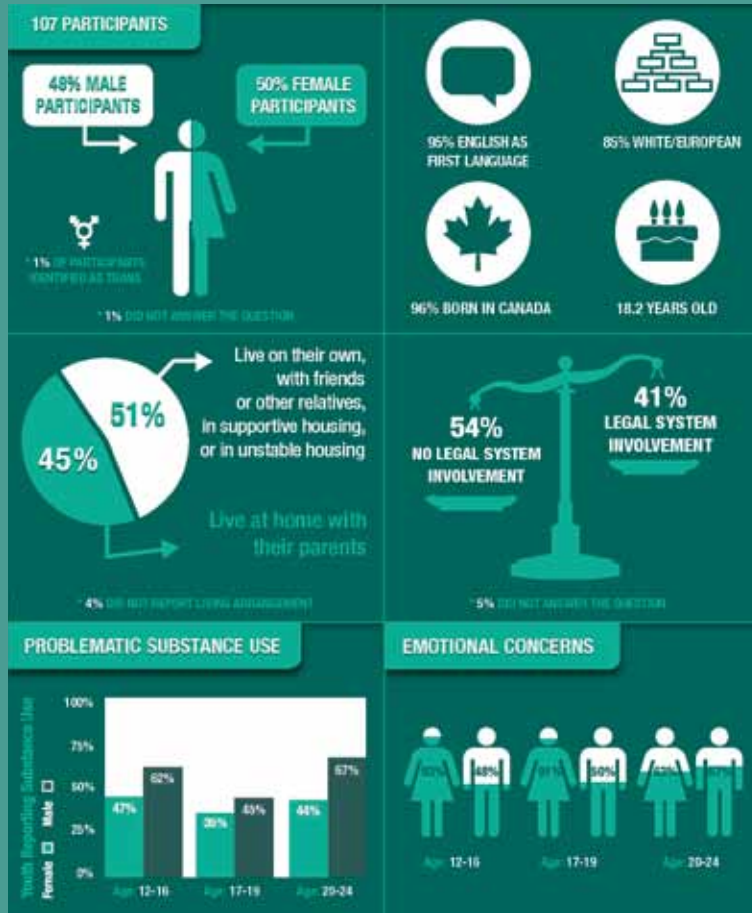
In order to continue enhancing the services we provide, especially to an ever-growing population of youth dealing with addictions and mental health issues, also known as concurrent disorders (CD), we participated in The National Youth Screening Project (NYSP), *Enhancing Youth-Focused, Evidence-Informed Treatment Practices through Cross-Sectoral Collaboration* with the Centre of Addictions and Mental Health. The project worked collaboratively with youth-serving agencies in eight communities across Canada and implemented a common screening tool for youth substance use and mental health concerns.

As the network lead in St. John's we connected agencies to the study who represent three or more sectors, including substance use, mental health, justice, child welfare, education, housing, outreach and primary health care. The key project activities included capacity building, network development, screening implementation and data collection.

The overall objective of the NYSP is to enhance service provider CD capacity, increase early intervention opportunities and improve pathways to treatment for youth aged 12-24 years with substance use concerns and CD. This was achieved by building sustainable stakeholder collaborations and providing CD-related capacity development opportunities. We are gearing up for another cross-sectoral screening to enhance our ability to assess the progress and impact this research has made.

## In Our Moving Forward Program:

- We were able to stabilize **75%** of our participants' housing situations from an housing-first framework
- **954** scheduled visits and appointments occurred in the past 6 months.
- **80%** of participants attended their medical, psychiatry, legal, school, dental, optical and counselling appointments as a result.





## Connecting Through Lived-Experience

Establishing an addictions support group was key to connecting youth who regularly access our services—and are struggling with addictions—to have a place to go where they have built trusted relationships. Through the support of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation we have been able to provide a skills based addictions group for young men in partnership with an addictions counsellor with Eastern Health.

We learned early on that this kind of group isn't about going in with pre-conceived notions of how the group will operate, but a truly grassroots approach to connecting to youth's lived-experiences when developing skills to combat addictions.

The young men who come to the group are on a spectrum of recovery and over the 8 weeks of the program brought their own experiences and personal triggers to the group to develop ways to cope.

## We're Not Horsing Around with Support

Providing consistent and intensive support is what Moving Forward has to be ready to provide. That's why Program Coordinator, Paula Soper, is constantly developing innovative ways to address the ever-changing needs of the youth in her program, and fostering a strong sense of leadership and teamwork in her staff.

In part, this requires innovative programming models that incorporate a variety of services that foster engagement with their youth. Pictured here is the Moving Forward program taking part in equine therapy at Clovelly Riding Stables with Tinker the horse.





## Adding a Dash to our Jumpstart Program

At the core of our Outreach and Youth Engagement program is our daily drop in meal services and a weekly community supper. Stephanie O'Brien, our Head Cook, loves coming up with the healthy meal options we provide, especially because she knows they are often the only meal the youth we serve will eat that day. Stephanie has a lot of pride about working with these youth and what it all boils down to for her is showing her passion for cooking through the amazing food she prepares everyday!

### In Jumpstart:

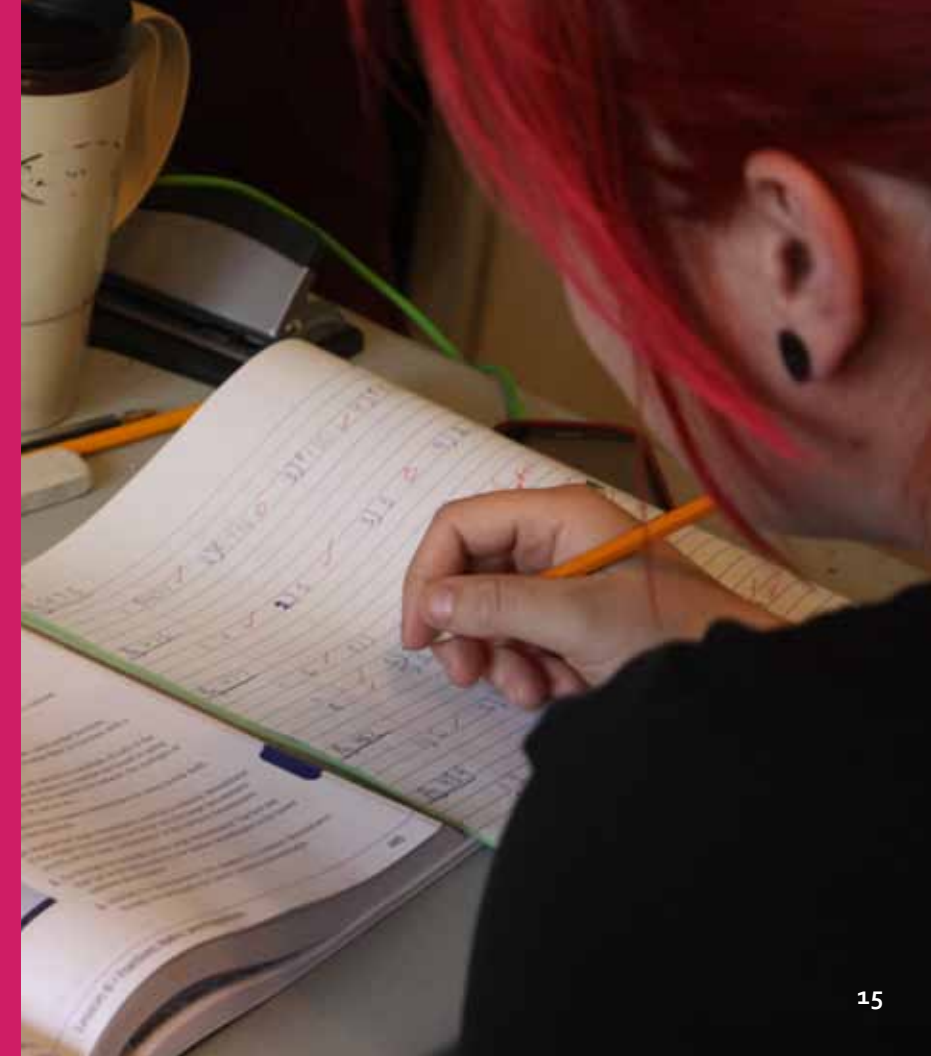
- 29** youth completed our Jumpstart Pre-Employment program
- 16** were connected to education programs
- 23** assisted in gaining employment
- 28** youth assisted with finding/maintaining stable housing
- 29** youth were supported in getting financial supports



## Making the Grade

Since one of the most significant barriers faced by youth in our program is low education levels, the Train for Trades program has created a unique opportunity for youth to upgrade their education and gain their GED on the worksite itself. The group has retained a retired teacher to deliver this program on-site for three hours a week. We currently have **6** youth in the GED program that are expected to write the GED exam in approximately six months. We had **4** youth recently write the exam and are waiting for the results. **3** out of these **4** youths are registered for post-secondary trades in September.

Getting their GED is really about opening a lot of doors they wouldn't have been able to access without it. By having a high school equivalency they can now enter post-secondary education, which is so essential to their success in this program. In fact, **75%** of the graduates from Train for Trades are able to go into trades school or straight into employment. Because they've been able to build their skills in the program and complete the educational requirements these youth are ready to make this next step.





## Hands on Training Leads to Full-Time Employment

We currently have 20 youth in the Train for Trades program. To ensure the success of these youth it's important to take it one step at a time. We have developed a new 3 step tier system for the Train for Trades program which provides youth with the opportunity to advance their skills as they work their way to full-time employment.

### Tier 1:

- Consists of 10 youth who are new to the program
- Completing energy efficiency retro-fits on NLHC Housing Units
- Provided with safety training at the Carpenters Millwrights College
- Need hands on work experience, intensive supports and life skills for the first 44 weeks

### Tier 2:

- Youth that have completed Tier 1
- Participants are able to work more independently and with less supports
- Currently have 6 youth in this phase and will run for one year
- Youth will have an additional year of specialized work experience and increased life stability
- Enhanced ability to sustain long-term employment or education

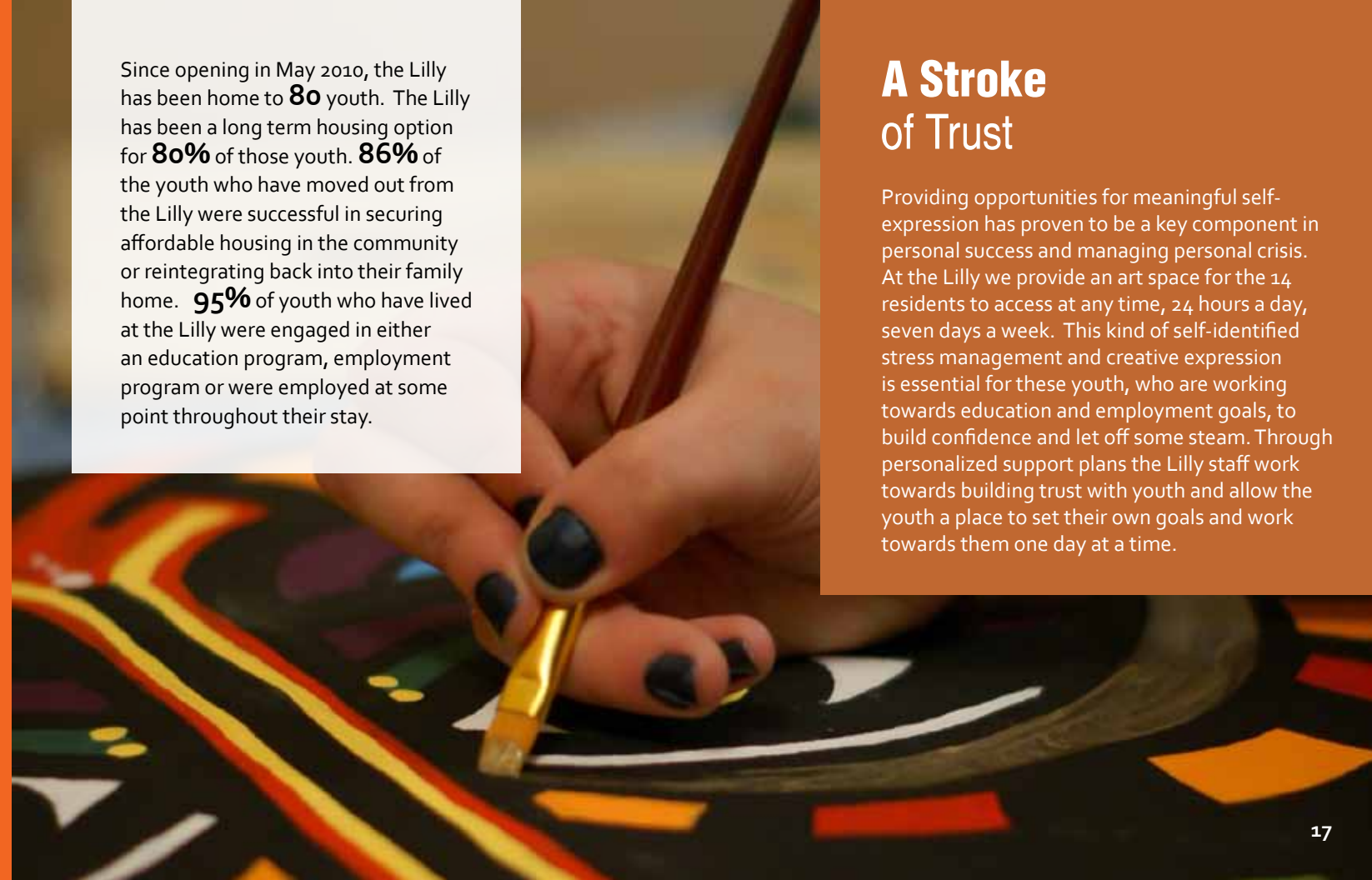
### Tier 3:

- Developed to enhance the social enterprise and sustainability of Train for Trades
- Youth have completed Tier 1 & 2 and are able to work independently with minimal supervision
- This tier has no time limit for completion
- Youth will be hired under the social enterprise and will be given a competitive wage
- We currently have 3 youth in this phase

Since opening in May 2010, the Lilly has been home to **80** youth. The Lilly has been a long term housing option for **80%** of those youth. **86%** of the youth who have moved out from the Lilly were successful in securing affordable housing in the community or reintegrating back into their family home. **95%** of youth who have lived at the Lilly were engaged in either an education program, employment program or were employed at some point throughout their stay.

## A Stroke of Trust

Providing opportunities for meaningful self-expression has proven to be a key component in personal success and managing personal crisis. At the Lilly we provide an art space for the 14 residents to access at any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This kind of self-identified stress management and creative expression is essential for these youth, who are working towards education and employment goals, to build confidence and let off some steam. Through personalized support plans the Lilly staff work towards building trust with youth and allow the youth a place to set their own goals and work towards them one day at a time.





**25** Stories of Hope  
Days of Kindness

## Christmas Volunteers Giving with Kindness!

This Christmas it was the help and kindness of volunteers who made our Christmas Campaign a success. The purpose of our campaign is two-fold; to raise awareness about the work we do year round and to raise funds and collect donations for our youth for the upcoming holiday season. With an amazing in-kind donation from m5 we were able to develop a Christmas campaign to do just that. To kick off the campaign, our Board Vice Chair Jon Duke and his posse helped us hit the street to start the buzz!

## Making a Three Point Shot for Health, Nutrition and Wellness

Becoming engaged in a healthy fitness program can be quite the challenge. When Choices for Youth was approached by a volunteer, Ben Trevorrow, to lead a weekly fitness group we jumped at the chance. With the support of a provincial wellness grant we were able to purchase fitness equipment to offer a circuit style fitness program for youth as a weekly drop in at our Outreach site.

In fact, one youth was so motivated by this added routine in his life that he's been getting up earlier, eating healthier and making better decisions for his health. Working alongside Ben this young man has been able to use this group to address stress, anxiety and manage his anger.

At the Lilly, it was the unhealthy eating habits of their participants, and the financial constraints that these young people face, that led to the development of the breakfast program which provides healthy choices to our youth as they start their day. The feedback has been very positive and staff have even noticed youth getting up earlier to avail of the program.



# Funders



Government of Canada  
Service Canada  
Homelessness Partnering Strategy  
Affordable Housing Initiative



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation  
Department of Advanced Education and Skills  
Department of Child, Youth and Family Services  
Department of Health and Community Services



# Donors



RBC Foundation\*



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A young man with dark hair, smiling broadly, is leaning against a dark door frame. He is wearing a red and black plaid jacket over a black hoodie with a graphic design. The background shows a brick wall and a green abstract shape on the door.

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