

Operation  
**Come Home**



Opération  
**rentrer au foyer**

1-800-668-4663

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[www.operationcomehome.ca](http://www.operationcomehome.ca)

*Operation Come Home*

*prevents homeless youth from*

*becoming homeless adults!*



# December Newsletter

## 2011

### 40th Anniversary Edition

“40 years of preventing homeless youth  
from becoming homeless adults.”

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It's hard to believe that this year Operation Come Home (OCH) is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary- 40 years of assisting youth in returning home to their families. Locally, we continue to welcome and work with more than 250 at risk and homeless youth throughout the year and I'm honoured to say that several have benefitted from new programs that we have implemented. This year Operation Come Home is proud of the continuing success of the social enterprises, BottleWorks and BeadWorks, which have provided more than 52 youth with jobs. Health Matters successfully engaged more than 67 youth in recreation and wellness activities. Our Job Action Centre registered 32 youth and, of those who complete the program, 14 found jobs and 6 returned to school. This year we are proud to be a recipient of the Rogers Youth Fund initiative. This partnership, coupled with our annual support from the Ottawa Catholic School Board and Sage Youth, has provided additional resources to our high school, now called the Rogers Achievement Centre. The school enrolled 50 students, 5 of whom graduated. Housing Works has assisted ten youth in finding and maintaining housing. The Cactus Resource Centre made 7,474 contacts and provided emergency services, crisis intervention, clinical and housing supports in conjunction with our street outreach project. Lastly, OCH is proud to have assisted 72 youth in returning home to their families. A Toronto-based organization, Measured Outcomes, assisted us with an evaluation of the reunite program. Many families were contacted to find out if they were satisfied with our services. I am pleased to announce that the report was favorable and is available to read on our website.

Operation Come Home moved to a new home this year- one that is larger and provides ample space for us to do our work. Our new location, 150 Gloucester St. is currently where we operate our six pillars of programming and our retail storefront and studio, BeadWorks. Our Board of Directors hosted a very successful "Breakfast on Rideau" this year and we have been working hard at implementing some of the recommendations in our strategic plan. With continued support from Banfield Seguin, OCH launched our "When I Grow up I Want to be Homeless" communications campaign that consists of postcards for each of our six pillars and a poster that provides our 2010 outcomes. This year, OCH has been selected for CBC's Share Central fundraising initiative, which will be held on December 16th at Ben Franklin Place. We are extremely honoured to have been chosen.

Our staff, students and volunteers work so hard to prevent homeless youth from becoming homeless adults. Imagine for a moment trying to get through a typical day in your life without a place for your pet, a decent meal, a quiet place to gather your thoughts, no one to talk to that really cares and no where to sleep that you can call your own. Now, imagine you are a sixteen year old girl, you have left the only home you knew because it was intolerable, it's the beginning of the Christmas season and the only place you feel safe is huddled with a bunch of "street youth" under a bridge in downtown Ottawa. For many youth, Operation Come Home is the only place they have to call "home". For Christmas, Operation Come Home wishes that every youth had a good job and a safe place to call home. Help us reach that goal. Joy and peace to all of you and thank you for supporting us with our vital and important work.

Elsbeth McKay, Executive Director

# The Pillars and Programs

## Education Pillar:



### **The Rogers Achievement Centre (RAC)**

The Operation Come Home Rogers Achievement Centre (RAC) provides opportunities for high school credit achievement, general equivalency diploma (GED), independent learning credits (ILC), guidance and referral services, and life skills to street-involved youth. Credit accumulation is available to OCH youth due to our continued partnership with Lester B. Pearson Catholic High School (LBP) of the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB). This year, 18 credits, 4 Ontario Secondary School Diplomas, 1 General Educational Development Diploma, and 1 Ontario Literacy Test have been granted, as well as a number of referrals to other schools and programs have been made. The students gained access to social and recreational activities, social supports and literacy support through RAC. Several community “Students Taking on Prevention (STOP)” presentations have been delivered to various local schools and organizations this year. The STOP project started several years ago due to a need to provide youth in local area schools with a realistic look at life on the streets. Also involved with the education program is a local organization called Sage Youth. Sage Youth provides volunteers for individual tutoring in RAC on a weekly basis. The Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE) provides funding for the School Breakfast Program, which allows the staff of OCH to prepare a nutritious breakfast for the students. This year OCH was the proud recipient of the Rogers Youth Fund. The Rogers Youth Fund provides funding to RAC for educational support to youth ages 12-19, especially for those who are at risk due to poverty, isolation, being new to Canada, or who face challenges at home. The Rogers initiative is a national commitment to helping Canada’s youth overcome the barriers they face in getting the most out of their education. In 2011, the Rogers Achievement Centre has provided comprehensive services to more than 50 youth.

## Employment Pillar:

### **BottleWorks**



BottleWorks is a commercial bottle pick-up service that operates in partnership with various restaurants, hotels, condominium buildings and Beau’s All Natural Brewing Company. BottleWorks employed 8 youth this year, many of whom are now safely housed and employed in a job of their own. The bottles that are collected are then recycled and the revenue is put towards the youth’s salaries. The more bottles collected the more youth the enterprise has the ability to employ. The BottleWorks social enterprise not only benefits the youth, but also the various pick up locations throughout the Ottawa area. Beaus and BottleWorks have introduced “Buy Your Beaus Online (BYBO)”, a residential delivery service that will employ more youth.

### **BeadWorks**

This holiday season BeadWorks has participated in a number of events including: The Ottawa Catholic School Board Peace Conference, The L’arche holiday artisan fair and fundraiser, Glisten at the Great Canadian Theatre Company, The City of Ottawa’s Holiday Side Walk Sale at 100 Constellation, Hintonburg’s Holiday Artisan Fair, and the United Way Marketplace Holiday Fair. Our studio continues to be busy with new and veteran beaders who create new and unique pieces of jewellery every day. Since the fall we have increased our marketing and promotion of BeadWorks with an updated Facebook group, promotional posters, and sandwich boards. We have also started to fix jewellery! In the New Year we hope to have our own BeadWorks outdoor storefront sign. BeadWorks is always looking for volunteers to help out in the studio as well as donations of beads, findings, chains, and old jewellery. Please contact Jennifer Cook, BeadWorks Coordinator, at [beadworks@operationcomehome.ca](mailto:beadworks@operationcomehome.ca) for more information.



## Job Action Centre

The Job Action Centre employs young adults who are facing multiple barriers to employment with the main goal of assisting them in developing employment skills in order to successfully market themselves to employers. This year we were able to increase the duration of the program from 8 weeks to 12 weeks, thus allowing staff to spend more time helping participants overcome barriers and better prepare them for future employment. Staff were fortunate enough to introduce 4 workshops that we felt would increase the participants' employability in today's competitive labour market: Emergency First Aid and CPR, Conflict Resolution, WHMIS and Smart Serve. Some of the years successes include 14 youth obtaining employment in their field of interest, 6 individuals returning to school, 1 participant starting his own moving company and another opening his own tattoo salon. A group of 7 participants were involved in creating a local community garden and 2 participants enrolled in college to start diplomas in Administration and Court Support Services. JAC staff are confident that the program provides participants with essential career skills and prepares them for long-term employment.



### Housing Pillar:

#### Housing Works

Housing Works provides a matching subsidy for a portion of participants' housing expenses. Housing Works had a very successful first year at Operation Come Home. Throughout the past 12 months, Housing Works has provided 10 youth with individual support. The participants of this program have sought support for employment, education, financial literacy, mental health, addictions, budgeting and – the final step in the program – safe and affordable housing.



### Drop In and Resource Pillar:

#### The Drop-In and Resource Centre

The Drop-In and Resource Centre at Operation Come Home (OCH) acts as the “first point of contact” for many of our youth. From here, youth can be referred to employment, education, and housing programs within and outside of OCH. Through our partnership with the Ottawa Food Bank and Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE) youth have the opportunity to access items on a weekly basis and are provided a daily nutritious breakfast. Our centre is equipped with computers that are available for our youth to gain access to social networking and resources such as employment and housing search tools. After our move to 150 Gloucester St., our numbers spiked to an average of 807 contacts per month! The Youth Health Clinic provides an Addictions/Mental Health Counsellor on a weekly basis to meet with youth regarding substance use, anxiety, stress management, etc. In addition to our existing programs and services, OCH has weekly supports from a Sexual Health Nurse from the City of Ottawa, an Outreach Worker provided by Housing Help, and an Addictions Counsellor from Rideauwood Treatment Centre. We are continuously introducing new programming, such as Wagging Tails for our pet owners, Oh Baby Playgroup for parents, and much more!

As successful as the Drop-In has been this past year, assisting many Ottawa street youth on a daily basis, we still continue to remember the five youth who we have lost to homelessness, addictions, and mental health. We will always remember **Steven Beriault , Tammy Couture , Jake Lawson , Jen Proulx and Leanne Lawson. “RIP”**

## Health Matters

Health Matters is OCH's recreation and healthy-eating program offered four nights a week. This program provides our youth with an alternative to being on the streets and reduces harm while engaging them in activities, and the preparation and eating of a healthy meal. Popular activities include hockey, skating on the canal, weight training, gardening, swimming, and beach volleyball. Running has also gained popularity amongst our youth: one participated in his first 5k run last March, four youth ran the 2k in Ottawa's Race Weekend, and two youth participated in the Weight Watchers' Walk-It Challenge. Health Matters also organized a trip to Calypso Waterpark this past summer, which was a huge success and much fun-in-the-sun. Since the program started in October 2010, more than 100 youth have participated in Health Matters and over 1,500 nutritious meals have been served.



### Reunite Pillar:

## Reunite

OCH is the only organization in Canada that reunites runaway youth with their legal guardian and/or parents and has returned thousands of runaway youth over the years to their families. Before the reunite program became what it is now, it was initially called the Reunification program, which began in 1971. Stories have been shared that Norman Johnston paid for the travel tickets to ensure that the youth would get home safely.

Having celebrated 40 years of service this past September, OCH continues to provide a vital service to homeless and at-risk youth all across the country. With the ongoing contribution from the Greyhound Bus Association in providing tickets needed for travel, OCH has been able to help youth from across the country.

In 2011 more than 220 calls were made to OCH and 59 youth have been travelled and this number continues to rise. OCH has also assisted with 3 missing persons cases and often provides assistance to concerned parents across the country who call in for support and help in their time of need.

### Street Outreach Pillar:

## Street Outreach

Operation Come Home continues to offer daytime and evening outreach services where support and personal hygiene items are offered to homeless and street-involved youth. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated volunteers, without whom this pillar would not be possible.



**Board of Directors in 2011**

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**Daniel Vallee**  
**Elsbeth McKay, *Executive Director***

**Volunteers**

**Judi Tedlie**  
**James Ragsdale**  
**Paula Kaiser**

**Hazel Lambert**  
**John Jorgenson**  
**Alex Dyck**

**Operation Come Home would like to acknowledge the following donor categories:**

Service Clubs	Memorial Donations
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Thanks to all of our donors for your annual support.

**Ways you can help:**

**Monthly Giving**

Pre-authorized payment on a monthly basis with a tax receipt.

[info@operationcomehome.ca](mailto:info@operationcomehome.ca)

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We accept Visa and MasterCard.

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We accept cheques and any cash donations in Canadian Funds.