

A HOME OF JENNA'S OWN

Since 2010, donations of more than \$5.6 million have given 67 people new lives, living outside their parents' home, working and contributing to their communities. In addition, 274 more families have signed up with LIGHTS and another 59 families are currently in the process of securing an independent future for their loved ones. LIGHTS has made an impact in the lives of many, especially Jenna - who wanted to share her story with you:



Jenna at her desk in her very own home!

“Growing up, I always thought I’d have my own place. As I got older that seemed kind of hard, but four years ago the real journey to living on my own began. I had achieved many milestones like graduating from Humber College, getting a job and volunteering at a recreation centre. These all gave me confidence and I learned things like being patient, flexible and to communicate better.

I wanted to live on my own but was worried. My family told me that I was always welcome in their home but as a grown woman, I wanted to move out. We took some time to plan and research what it actually meant to move out. I attended ‘Steps to Independence’ where I learned about cleaning and cooking. My parents also had a great idea to try things out by living in their basement apartment. I learned a lot about how much work it is to keep things clean, take care of myself, and spend free time by myself. At first it was kind of weird, and sometimes lonely, but with my parents upstairs I felt safe and after a while it started to feel good. Then my parents told me that they had sold the house and were looking at places to move. I thought to myself, I’m going to lose my apartment and I don’t want to move in with them. I like my independence!

I had been chatting with Laura Starret, a Program Manager at Community Living Toronto, about LIGHTS so I called her and she connected me with Zoe, the Senior LIGHTS Facilitator. Zoe said she would help me find roommates. I was so excited to find out that my friend Sophia, and her friend Karen, were looking for another roommate! After we met a few times, we decided what kind of place we wanted to live in and started looking. Even our moms got together and we all worked with Baker Real Estate who has partnered with LIGHTS. We looked really hard to choose an apartment in a neighborhood we liked. We found a place close to the subway so that we can travel to work and see our friends and family easily—I was really happy because I grew up just down the street!

When I signed my name on the lease I felt both happy and nervous. Moving out was scary! Zoe and all of the LIGHTS support we received was great. She answered all of my questions – I had a lot! I was even able to apply for a start-up grant through the Webster Capital Resource Fund, which helped me get some things for the apartment. Our apartment looks beautiful because we all work hard to keep it clean and organized. The thing I like most is the gym that has a pool and a hot tub. We are pretty lucky. Every day we are learning how to do things ourselves and what we need support with.

I miss my parents a lot. And I know that’s okay. I have them over for visits and I visit them too. I don’t think I would have been able to move out so soon without all of the support of everyone involved with LIGHTS; not only me, but my roommates too. Thank you.”

A gift to LIGHTS helps provide funding for those in need and seeking a home of their own. For more info visit: [LIGHTS.to](https://lights.to)

