

LIGHTS



A LIGHT in your community

February 2019



Local singing classes led to recitals at Java Joes

From the outset, the team behind LIGHTS has believed that there was nothing they could not achieve and thanks to you, our partners, that is the reality! With your generosity, we have raised \$7 million; over 3,000 families per year are being provided with resources, direction and hope; and more than 100 individuals who have an intellectual disability are now living independently, drawing on their own resources and life skills, thanks to LIGHTS.

LIGHTS was created as testimony to the value of this independence for people who have an intellectual disability. It can, however, be very daunting to face the challenge of helping a loved one to be more independent and supported in his or her community. The following story, from a mother's perspective, illustrates this challenge in a powerful way.

Here is **Helen Leask's** story about creating a new life for her daughter....and letting go.

It's only in hindsight that our lives seem to have any kind of pattern. Our paths are, in reality, more like random stepping stones across a stream. All I can really claim about transitioning my daughter to her own place is that I kept my eyes fixed on the far bank – a vision of safety. Psychological safety. Physical safety. For both of us. The rest was just trying not to slip, fall and drown.

A genetic disease called PCDH19 stole the daughter we knew – and created a load of misery for her. The damaged PCDH19 gene affects nerve connections in the brain and the chaos gets worse as the brain grows. The result: learning disability by Grade 1 progressed into intellectual disability, epilepsy and, finally, at aged 19, psychosis.

My daughter fought us. Fought the hateful prison she believed her life had become. We became afraid of her – and for her. I hid the knives, put a bolt on my bedroom door. I couldn't leave her alone because of the seizures. She wouldn't leave the house, so respite was useless: I wandered around malls. Once, I slept on my office floor.

Out of the desperation emerged an idea. I'd get my daughter her own place, with a support worker during the day; my ex-husband and I would share the nights. Within three months I had sold my four-bedroomed house, bought my daughter a condo in the suburbs and moved into a rental apartment with my son.

I relocated my daughter to save myself, but it ended up saving her. Over the months, her aggression faded as the joy of her own space shone healing sunshine through her beleaguered brain. The support worker, Jen, understood what my daughter needed. She didn't attempt to parent her. She caught her during seizures, helped with the remote, administered meds and kind words, and rode the bus with her to activities.

That was five years ago. How does LIGHTS fit?

At the time of the move I didn't know LIGHTS existed. Doing it alone was the most complex, painful, expensive thing I've ever done.



My daughter's first sleepover with her cousin in her own home!

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When I finally met Laura and Zoe I felt like crying: everything LIGHTS stood for granted me absolution. I wasn't a selfish parent who had thrown out my disabled child. I had "transitioned" her. It was a thing!

LIGHTS helped with the practical side too. I sold my house to buy the condo but what about the magical Jen, the taxes, insurance, fees, food, activities – the set-up we'd created and now had to finance? In short, our own money started to run out. Without being asked, LIGHTS stepped up and organized some extra funds.

It transformed the future for all of us. Gradually, a life built up around my daughter, a life we thought was lost forever. She became a regular at Creative Village Studio and exhibited in the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. Corbrook, Community Junction and Special Olympics soccer, basketball and softball fill her schedule. She sings in concerts, hosts sleepovers and proudly displays her beautiful art on her walls.

"I like my place," she told me recently. "I like living alone. It makes me feel happy. I love my life."

Thank you, LIGHTS. For families in mid-stream, you're the steady hand guiding us to that far, green bank of safety. ©Helen Leask 2018

LIGHTS builds and supports this kind of independence in individuals who would otherwise be solely dependent on their families and government to live. We do this with YOUR HELP....our individual donors, corporations, foundations, and government. The new Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services respects the benefits of early intervention and supported independent housing, but has yet to find the funds for a clear path for the future for our families.

And so thank you, again, for your incredible generosity and ongoing belief in our mission. And thank you, Helen, for sharing your personal story. As a team, we are giving people who have an intellectual disability remarkable opportunities for successful independent living and we are giving their families peace of mind and excitement about a new way of living for their sons and daughters.

Play It Forward— November 20, 2018



Denis Shapovalov and Frank Dancevic share a hug after their match.

This event was inspired by Denis Shapovalov, a 19 year old Canadian professional tennis player who wanted to give back to his community, and Prestantia Management Group, under the incredible leadership of Andrzej Kepinski and Debbie Bush. Denis is the youngest player to break the ATP Top 50 since Rafael Nadal in 2004. The goal of the event was to promote a greater awareness of LIGHTS and to raise funds for people who have an intellectual disability.

The evening included an amazing exhibition tennis match between Denis and Frank Dancevic, the Canadian Davis Cup Captain; an incredible fine dining experience overseen by Mark McKewan; and entertainment by Charlotte Day Wilson and Madeline Merlo, with a guest appearance by tennis professional Vasek Pospisil on guitar (he was supposed to play against Denis but was injured). All this took place at Toronto's newest luxury hotel, Hotel X. Sponsors included TAG Heuer, Nike Canada, the Armstrong Family, BMO Nesbit Burns, Focus Asset Management, Milborne Realty, Soroc Technology, Prestantia Management Group, Yonex Corporation, Cross Family Office, Mancinelli Family Office.

Media coverage had an estimated audience of 41.6 million and an ad value of more than \$500,000, all with 127 pieces of coverage (print, online, TV and radio) over the span of 6 hours! AND WE RAISED \$150,000.

An overwhelming thank you goes to our generous sponsors, donors and ticket purchasers, the creative energy of Prestantia Management Group and our tennis stars, Denis Shapovalov, Frank Dancevic, and Vasek Pospisil!



Musician Charlotte Day Wilson entertaining the guests.

Our Mission

Through partnership with families, philanthropists, government, and established agencies, LIGHTS will make supportive housing a reality for individuals with an intellectual disability. As a result, these citizens and their families will have a greater quality of life.

69 

People have moved into independent living after LIGHTS facilitation.

35 

Families have moved on from LIGHTS.

48 

Families have chosen LIGHTS funding.

290 

Families have received advisory services.

175+

Presentations to date, reaching more than 3,000 attendees.

LIGHTS was founded in 2011 by a group of concerned community members and families.

2011

Partnerships

- Government of Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services)
- Community Living Toronto
- Community donors (foundations, corporations, individuals)
- Families

Funds Raised To Date **\$7M**

- **7 million** pledged to date
- Funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services for Facilitators

Funding to Families **\$20,000/yr**

Variable of approximately **\$20K annually per family** funded. Some families do not need funding but still benefit from LIGHTS facilitation.

Operating Costs **\$5,000**

Our only salaried positions are paid for by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the majority of other costs are a gift-in-kind partnership with Community Living Toronto. Printing, some communications materials and brokerage fees are less than \$5,000 per year.

Result **98%**

A cost effective program that enables about **98%** of our private donations to leverage our government funding for the staff who create the opportunity for person-directed living arrangements that would not otherwise exist.

Through LIGHTS, there has been increased parental job productivity and a broad increase in quality of life for both individuals with an intellectual disability and members of their family. In addition there has been an opportunity for developmental services staff to learn and build an innovative program while providing person-directed supports to individuals with an intellectual disability. Because of LIGHTS, long term societal opportunities for inclusion and a more fulfilling life are increasing for these individuals, and costs to society are decreasing.

Our Vision

Enabling citizens with an intellectual disability to live in a home of their own, thereby enriching our communities.

Thank You!

LIGHTS is a perfect partnership between donors, volunteers, families, agencies and government. It ensures that the dollars raised help young people in our community in their pursuit of a home of their own. The following represents all LIGHTS donors with cumulative or committed gifts of \$5,000 or more. There are many other donors who have generously contributed who are not listed here.

\$1,000,000 +

Robert and Mary Pat Armstrong, Li Ka Shing (Canada) Foundation

\$250,000 to \$499,999

Anonymous, The Harold E. Ballard Foundation, John Clark, The Minto Group

\$100,000 to \$249,999

BMO Financial Group, CIBC, The Cochrane Family Foundation, George and Katherine Dembroski, Harry E. Foster Charitable Foundation, The John C. and Sally Horsfall Eaton Foundation, The Henry White Kinnear Foundation, PLAY IT FORWARD Tennis Gala, TD Bank Group, R. Howard Webster Foundation

\$50,000 to \$99,999

Patsy and Jamie Anderson, E.W. Bickle Foundation, Rick and Priscilla Brooks-Hill, W. Robert and Gail Farquharson, Roger Greenberg, LIGHTS Golf Gathering, The McLean Foundation, Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, RBC Foundation, Scotiabank

\$25,000 to \$49,999

Donald Brown, CIBC Mellon, Henry and Victoria Eaton, An Evening with Arthur Fleishman, Robert Grundleger, Robert Kerr Foundation, Tom and Catharina MacMillan, The Greey Lennox Charitable Foundation, Don K. Johnson, Kopas Family Foundation, The Honourable Margaret McCain, Skate the Six, Daniel F. Sullivan, The Ward Family Foundation

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\$5,000 - \$9,999

The Ralph M. Barford Foundation, Capital Group, Janet Charlton, The Christina Mary Hendrie Trust, Robert Comish, Barry Cooper, Jordan and Lynne Elliott Family Foundation, Bruce and Karen Etherington, David and Judy Galloway, Robert and Karen Glass, Ira Gluskin and Maxine Granovsky Gluskin Charitable Foundation, Carol Gray, Chris and Diane Keating, Kiwanis Club of Toronto Foundation, Robert W. Korthals, F.K. Morrow Foundation, George E. Nutter, Robert Ogilvie, Barbara Payne, Duff and Patricia Scott, David and Jan Stewart

The work achieved is made possible with the support of many. Please use the enclosed envelope to renew your gift. Help spread the word about the housing crisis for people who have an intellectual disability by sharing this newsletter.

**Additional copies and e-versions can be obtained by contacting
Sylvie Labrosse, Manager, Fundraising at 647-588-9465 or sylvie.labrosse@cltoronto.ca**

All cheques are payable to Community Living Toronto or donate online at LIGHTS.to

The above information is correct at the time of printing. We apologize for any omissions or errors.

LIGHTS

c/o Community Living Toronto

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Attention: Angela Bradley

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