

camh

Gifts of Light

Impact Report

2024



A Note From

Quinn Kirby

I want to begin by saying thank you. With your support, we are continuously revolutionizing the way CAMH patients and front line clinicians experience and provide mental health care. I have seen this program create joy, recognize autonomy and prioritize dignity, all thanks to you.

Your belief in this program has powered us to new heights and accomplishments I had never dreamed possible when I first took on this position. You taught us that everyone plays a role in this work as community engagement and participation is paramount to a positive patient experience. We've also learned the value of igniting a patient's passions, hobbies and purpose by curating intentional partnerships with some of our city's highest quality program facilitators.

Gifts of Light is an active contributor and proud partner in quality improvement initiatives that span every corner of the hospital. We nurture strong relationships with partners who, like us, believe in supporting dignified patient recovery and celebrate the diversity of those we are here to serve.

There is no other program like this in hospital-based mental health care. Gifts of Light is changing the way we look at patient experience. It is no longer just a project, we are known as an active partner and contributor in daily operations that impact not only patients, but also CAMH front line clinicians. Reaching over 36,000 patients last year—nearly every single patient who passes through our doors—is a shared accomplishment of which we can all feel proud.

We are so proud to bring our shared vision to life. Your commitment to this work is creating powerful change for the care and recovery of CAMH patients. We would not be where we are today without your passion, advocacy and initial dream of what Gifts of Light could become. Your generosity and leadership knows no bounds.



In admiration and with endless gratitude,

Quinn Kirby
Manager, Gifts of Light

Numbers of Light

Gifts of Light By the Numbers

3,029



Patient programming hours facilitated by Gifts of Light vendors and partners

17,887



Patients served through the Gifts of Light Store and inventory

12,256

patient participants in GoL-funded programs

4,500



Total Gifts delivered during the holidays

42



On-site volunteer days

46



Special events and experiences with

1,379

attendees

20



Comfort Fund requests from CAMH frontline staff fulfilled

1,544



Client haircuts provided by our Gifts of Light onsite barber



36,162

patients impacted by Gifts of Light in the 23/24 fiscal year

CAMH Sunshine Therapeutic Garden

The CAMH Sunshine Therapeutic Garden is one of the early examples of horticultural therapy developed in the healthcare system in Canada. Since the establishment of a partnership between CAMH and Foodshare Toronto in 2002, the garden's operation has been based on the principles of organic food production and environmental sustainability through a partnership with Foodshare Toronto. This program has served many CAMH clients since then and continues to be a cherished resource today.



The Garden serves as an outlet for CAMH clients to enhance their mental and physical health by offering the opportunity to engage in and learn about gardening.

Participating clients are educated on the role of biodiversity in supporting a successful ecosystem, the intricacies of food production, environmental sustainability and climate change.

Most importantly, the Garden offers the space and tools to grow fresh and nutritious food to CAMH and its neighbouring communities to build a more inclusive and food secure community, strengthen the sense of community and overall improve community health.

In March of 2023, Foodshare Toronto appointed Javad Mozafari as the new Garden Coordinator, transferring supervision and responsibility of the Garden to him.

Supported by a well-equipped greenhouse, the Sunshine Therapeutic Garden is considered a forest garden composed of urban ravine trees, small fruit shrubs, a perennial garden and a vegetable production area. It serves as a local hotspot for conservation of crucial native pollinators and overall biodiversity.

2023 Accomplishments and Activities



Crop production and management:

- Growing more than 10,000 seedlings of over 60 crop varieties with a 100% success rate
- Distribution of seedlings to approximately 30 community gardens/farms across the city
- Harvesting approximately 1,700 pounds of fresh produce



Organizing work equipment and premises:

- Transforming vegetable plots from traditional flat beds to raised beds
- Developing the workplan of the growing season and preparing the plantation map
- Re-establishing and improving the drip irrigation, planting terraces and plant trellis systems



The Sunshine Garden Market, held on the CAMH Queen Street Campus, sold fresh produce every Thursday in August and September of 2023 without fail, with three special sales in June and July for seedlings and early produce.

Horticultural Therapeutic Program

Funded and supported through Gifts of Light, the Horticultural Therapeutic Program for CAMH clients was conducted during July to October of 2023. The program facilitated a total of 104 sessions in 17 weeks, with six sessions per week. It was well-received with 47 clients and 23 clinicians attending. Participants of all ages from all across CAMH participated in various activities such as planting and transplanting crops, monitoring their growth and caring for their needs. High participation rates in the first season indicates a growing trend in interest and impact.

Gifts of Light was honoured to fund a part-time patient vocational opportunity to work along the Foodshare team throughout the planting months. Michael, a CAMH inpatient, was the successful candidate chosen to bring his knowledge, expertise and passion for gardening to this position.



Gifts of Light Programming Updates

Trauma-Informed Yoga and Tai Chi

Evonne Sullivan has been a vendor with Gifts of Light since 2018. As a person in long-term recovery, Evonne credits her ability to manage challenges with anxiety and depression to living consciously, and exercising the mind-body connection. Her yoga program is rooted in being trauma-informed, which is an invaluable approach when supporting patients as a community service provider.

Anne Low has been a volunteer with CAMH for many years, and more recently came back as a movement instructor, working with us through our community partnership with Fitness for Mental Health. After realizing the connection between mind, body and breath, and how this supports both mental and physical health, her mission is to guide patients to experience this connection through Tai Chi, QiGong and Yoga and showcase a practical way to engage in mindfulness.

Gifts of Light offers both of these programs on a weekly basis in multiple inpatient units at times that rotate throughout the year. Within the Therapeutic Neighborhood (TN), CAMH's centralized programming space, the programs are offered year-round and once a week within the Patient Family Learning Space (PFLS) since last year.

By scheduling our programs this way, a patient has the potential opportunity to engage in the program on their unit, continue the experience with other patients in the TN, and even as an outpatient or once discharged from CAMH through the PFLS, participating in programming alongside other members of the community.

Recognizing the value that programs like yoga have in supporting individuals in managing their mental health, this continuity supports patients in navigating participation barriers around accessibility.

After-Hours Programming

The Gift of Light's after-hours programming initiative is a response to the recognition that patients would benefit from having access to high-quality programming during the evenings and weekends. We believe that providing patients with programming opportunities outside of regular business hours can greatly support their overall perception of care and mental health management.

At this time, we are working closely with Fitness for Mental Health to provide a variety of fitness programming during the evenings on weekdays and throughout the day on weekends. Programs include traditional fitness groups, dance fitness, tai chi, yoga and a unique mindful warrior program (integration of mindfulness into non-contact muay thai).

Workman Arts is also able to support us with providing after-hours programming. Because this initiative requires a change in the way inpatient teams are traditionally staffed, we are continuing to work to identify champions to trailblaze this new initiative with us.





Gifts of Light Showcases

Gifts of Light Showcases provide our clients with a platform to share projects they have been working on with the support of our specialized programming vendors, with the internal CAMH community and stakeholders. These performances are the result of months of work and are a testament to the creative capacity of our clients when given access to these types of resources. What has been so profoundly impactful to see is the change in perception within clinicians as they come to see what “going to group” could mean for a client. This supports Gifts of Light in our mission to improve the attitudes that exist around the value of recreational programming and the place it has in mental health recovery. We regard the performances within the showcase as a full-circle experience, and it is wonderful to witness the confidence and pride clients have to share their talents with their peers.

Diversity in Programming

Gifts of Light places a big emphasis on providing a wide range of specialized programs for clients to engage in, as we recognize the opportunities they hold for individualization and recovery.

We want clients to feel a sense of autonomy when considering how to spend their time while in hospital, so we strive to expose them to as many platforms for self-expression and guide them to find the most appealing options for recreation and mental health management. These platforms are informed by client voices and clinical perspectives.

By opening up the diversity that exists within fitness or art, for example, a client can explore what they like and spend time fostering the skills where their interest lies. This strategy encourages clients to find the value in other forms of activities after recognizing the benefits they received from engaging in their interests. Our wide range of programs give clients the chance to develop and reinforce a multitude of skills and character strengths that contribute to their identity as a person.

Gifts of Light Events

Highlights

Painting in the Park

Guided by a talented facilitator from Vibe Arts, a valued nonprofit partner, participants gathered in the serene park just outside the CAMH Emergency Department. With a picturesque canopy of trees overhead, they created the perfect atmosphere for a painting session. The team was also able to recruit a few participants who were waiting to be seen at the Bridging Clinic—an unexpected bonus. The artist facilitator skillfully led patients through each step of the painting process, empowering them to unleash their creativity and produce their own unique masterpieces.

The event had a lovely client join from the geriatric unit. She arrived ready to paint but was skeptical of her abilities at first. Once the session started, you could see the concentration on her face and the joy she was getting from following the facilitator's instructions to the best of her ability. At the end, when she was finished her piece, she was beaming with pride. She was so proud of herself, stating, "I can't believe at my age, I am still able to do things like this!" The team asked if she would like a picture with her painting and she was so excited, the smile on her face said it all. Her staff were blown away. This is a woman that rarely smiles, but that day because of this event, she was beaming.



Patient Holiday Party

After a three year hiatus, the team was delighted to welcome back the Gifts of Light Patient Holiday Party. Clients were treated to a night of food, dancing, photo booth with Santa, caricature portraits and prizes. With over 250 people in attendance in the Arrell Family Auditorium, Gifts of Light was able to bring the community together to celebrate the holiday season again.

Toronto Humane Society Experience

CAMH Inpatient Units 1 to 4 received funding to support a team experience for 11 patients and accompanying staff at the Toronto Humane Society. The Humane Society offers the opportunity to experience connection building at their facility in Toronto. Participating clients were taught about shelter operations and what it takes day-to-day to help strengthen the human-animal bond. They interacted with and participated in projects that helped to enrich the lives of the animals. For our clients, these projects included filling bags of cat food from food donations, cleaning cages and socializing with the animals. Our clients had a wonderful time, sharing that interacting with the animals was very fun and that it made them feel calm.





Annual Caribbean Carnival

The fourth annual Gifts of Light Caribbean Carnival was another great success with over 125 inpatients and outpatients in attendance. The energy on the campus was electric with clients, staff and volunteers enjoying soca dance performers, steel drums, Caribbean cuisine and tropical specialty drinks. Working with community partners like Crown Mas and King Catering help make this event a booming success every year.

Music Showcase

This collaborative event co-hosted by three of our music programming partners, Drumming with Nicholas, Songwriting with Katie and the MAP Program, featured performances highlighting the incredible musical talent CAMH clients have to offer. The intention of these showcases is that through witnessing the talent and potential that patients share in the Gifts of Light showcase, clinicians will have a renewed perspective on the value of arts based programming and work with us to nurture and expand these partnerships.

The event also featured two Recreational Therapists who spoke about their experience collaborating with Gifts of Light and our program partners to bring these experiences to their patients. We hope to continue these showcases and increase to a semiannual event to showcase even more talent.



Gifts of Light Testimonials



The Annual Caribbean Carnival always stands out as a memorable event for us, and the celebration was particularly well-received by the patients on CCC4. Among them was a patient who, despite facing auditory difficulties, bravely chose to participate in the event. Much to her surprise, the carnival went beyond what she had imagined, filling her with happiness and a deep sense of connection to the lively environment. She was captivated by the stunning, vivid costumes and even joined in on a dance lesson. Expressing her joy, the patient shared that the carnival was extraordinary and she cherished the interactions with other attendees, volunteers, and staff members.

Regina

Recreation Therapist CCC 4



The Patient Family Learning Space (PFLS) weekly fitness programs, funded by GOL, are going very well. It slowly rose from only having a couple participants in the first couple weeks, to now, 10 to 14 on average. There are both people from the community who are attending on a regular basis, looking for mental and physical health resources for their wellness, as well as current or former clients I have taught on inpatient units, wanting to continue their practice. The community that is being developed between the regular participants is great to see, and adds an additional benefit of social health to the overall experience. The participants are appreciative and the PFLS staff are very supportive. There are a great variety of people attending such as: current or former CAMH clients, individual searching for mental health or wellness activities on Eventbrite, people who have seen it posted on social media and some staff.

Evonne Sullivan

Gifts of Light Community Yoga Facilitator





“

Thank you so much for hosting the holiday event! It was a lot of fun and my patients on PRT 7 had the best time. You couldn't take us off the dance floor! The food was fantastic, the photo booth was a big hit (with Santa too) and the DJ played great music! Thank you so much for providing this opportunity to the patients. It was the talk of the unit the next day!

Cassandra

Recreation Therapist PRT7



“

I had fun in the animal shelter. Made me think about the horses and how they made me feel calm

CAMH Client

Unit 1-4



“

The Music Showcase is always something that the MAP team, CAMH staff and CAMH clients look forward to every year! It is an incredible opportunity for participants of the MAP program to further hone their creative skills while getting the opportunity to perform original songs for a large audience of their peers. These types of events exemplify the incredible work that Gifts of Light is doing. Reinforcing that the CAMH is much more than a hospital, events such as the Music Showcase display just how vibrant and creative the CAMH community really is! Clients look forward to this event every year and spend many hours writing and rehearsing which really shows!

Wes

Mobile Arts Program Facilitator



On behalf of CAMH, I want to thank you for your part in building this community. Your continued commitment to Gifts of Light has had a direct impact on the wellbeing of CAMH clients and on the success of the program itself. Because of your generosity, more of our clients benefitted from another year of creative and inclusive programming, and we could not be more grateful.

I am consistently thrilled to see how much impact this program has on our clients, their families and our community. The effort that the team puts in to ensure that all Gifts of Light programming is fun, safe and beneficial is only possible because of you.

I hope that you felt pride while reading this report, as all of the joy and dignity we've been able to give our clients is our shared accomplishment.

Gifts of Light plays a critical role in us building a future where no one is left behind. Thank you for helping us change the future of mental health care forever.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Deborah Gillis".

Deborah Gillis

President & CEO, CAMH Foundation

Thank you



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