



What's new under the sun - Spring 2008 Newsletter

How Horizons for Youth Makes a Difference

Evan Smith is a Case Manager at Horizons for Youth. She is responsible for the individualized counseling and support for a caseload of up to 10 youth. Hiring quality employees that are skilled, passionate, educated, and motivated to help our most vulnerable youth is a priority for Horizons. Evan is a team member that embodies our Mission, our Vision, and our Goals. This is her story.

The first time I stepped into Horizons for Youth I was broken. At seventeen years old I had just left my home in small town Ontario. Before leaving I had been beaten for being bisexual and someone had broken into my apartment, stolen most of my belongings and graffitied homophobic messages across my walls. My Dad helped me pack my belongings, we put them into an old canvas tent in my parents backyard and the next morning I took a bus to Toronto, leaving behind not only my belongings and school but also my two year old daughter.

Upon arriving in Toronto I enrolled at an alternative high school and proceeded to sleep in a number of different shelters and on the streets. Though providing me with a place to rest, many of the shelters I stayed in provided little else in terms of support. I ended up at Horizons because I had been discharged from a Christian based shelter for being too open about my sexuality. My experience at Horizons was different than that at other shelters. I was assigned a case manager who took the time to really listen to my situation and provide support. I was given subway tokens so I could attend school and was encouraged to go home for weekends to keep me involved with my family as well as united with my daughter. My experience at

Horizons was one of growth and development that I was unable to achieve anywhere else.

Nine years later I stepped back through the doorway of Horizons but this time for a job interview. Just being inside the building flooded me with memories of my time on the streets. I don't know if it was more overwhelming to be reminded of the person I used to be, or to realize how far I had come. Since leaving Horizons I have learned how to parent my first daughter who's now twelve years old, my husband of seven years and I have a beautiful one year old daughter and after being accepted into the Transitional Year Programme at the University of Toronto, I have just graduated with a Major in Women's Studies and Sexual Diversity Studies. And now to top it all off, I am a Case Manager at Horizons.

I am always very open with my clients at Horizons about my past on the streets. My hope is that through my honesty I can inspire them to make life choices that will help them get off the streets, and through my story I can prove to them that they have a future full of potential and hope. Sometimes it can be frustrating working with such vulnerable youth who often feel they have no potential and that the world is working against them, but I just need to remind myself daily that not too long ago it was I who walked through the doors of Horizons only to leave a changed person.

Evan Smith, Case Manager

Horizons for Youth is a 35 bed emergency shelter and resource centre for homeless and at risk young people aged 16 to 24. At Horizons, we offer shelter and valuable services in a safe and supportive environment. In addition to beds, meals, snacks and personal hygiene items, we also provide supportive counseling, life skills training, referrals, advocacy and after shelter support. These services assist youth as they strive to establish themselves at school, at work and in the community.

Around the Shelter



*Career Horizons first graduates
March 2008*

Career Horizons begins!

In 2006 Horizons for Youth launched a pilot program with the support of the Paloma Foundation called Job Horizons. **The program was successful and was expanded in 2008 to become Career Horizons**, with support from the City of Toronto, IBM, and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Career Horizons is designed to adapt to individual needs; assist with skill development; assess those skills in real work environments; provide pre-employment workshops that focus on the skills required to secure and maintain paid employment; and, address the needs and demands of the labour market.

Career Horizons, located in the Lawrence Heights community, will serve over 25 youth this year, with at least 15 of them securing competitive employment for more than 3 months.

The program participants in Career Horizons have a wide range of skills. Most participants will work independently, however some will require extra support as they learn the realities of competitive employment. For this reason all participants will have the support of a job coach made available to them. This support is also offered to the employer to ensure a long lasting employment relationship.

To become an employer, or offer placements please contact the program staff at 416-781-1350 or email careerhorizons@horizonsforyouth.org

DAY PROGRAM SERVICES

The Horizons for Youth Day Program offers insightful, empowering and educational programs for our youth. The programs are a combination of workshops, group counseling sessions, and classroom style lessons designed to give youth the tools they need to live **independently**. The youth are able to examine where they are in life and how their actions today will affect them in the future. In response to the young age of many of the clients, the Day Program is introducing an enhanced program for individual life skills training. This includes laundry, hygiene, budgeting, shopping, and self awareness.

Our **Creative Arts program** recently expanded to include a new and exciting relationship with the famous theatre group, **The Second City**, enabling the Horizons residents to take part in their educational programming. Our youth attend interactive workshops that emphasize teamwork, self confidence and communication skills. It has been wonderful to watch some of our more reclusive youth open up with others and really have a wonderful time while experiencing another form of art. Special thanks to producer Lanrick Bennett for creating this opportunity.

For more information about the Day Program please contact **Dwight Miller** at 416-781-9898 ex30 or email to: dwight@horizonsforyouth.org



Housing Services at Horizons for Youth

When a youth comes to Horizons they are offered all the support they need to successfully reintegrate into the community. As the housing worker I feel a tremendous obligation to help them find the best place to live when they are ready to do so. Our clients have been moving into subsidized housing, supportive housing and independent living settings.

Our youth have been able to secure stable housing benefiting from the housing allowance program. The Housing Allowance Program is a temporary allowance of up to \$350 per month to make rent more affordable, this is a program administered by Housing Connection on behalf of the City of Toronto. Our HAP client's lives have been enhanced. They have apartments, they are making a home, are picking up the pieces of their lives and progressively achieving their goals.

The 16, 17 and 18 year olds are informed of supportive housing options. Most are living on their own for the first time, and are still trying to continue their high school education; they are escorted on tours to group homes and co-ops and are encouraged to live in transitional settings so they may learn more life skills. I am pleased to say with the relentless dedication of our housing services our clients have been gaining access into high support group homes and co-ops in Toronto.

When a youth decides to live independently, they are assisted in picking affordable, clean and safe housing. They are accompanied on apartment, room and basement viewings, and I am there meeting landlords, flushing toilets, testing appliances and advocating for their rights as a new tenant.

On Thursday afternoons the Housing Program at Horizons for Youth facilitate the "Ready, Set, Home" workshops with topics such as landlord and tenant rights, budgeting, and subsidized housing, ensuring they acquire the knowledge and tools they need to maintain their housing. The housing services at Horizons for Youth give the youth hope and the assistance they need to get back on track and normalize their lives. They patiently wait for quality housing, and are fully supported when they move out. I am honored to serve the youth of Horizons and am grateful for the continued support that is so important for us to continue our work.

Makini McLeod, Housing Worker

Development News

Horizons for Youth's Second Annual "Racing for a Reason"



Through your generous support we can make our Second Annual 'Racing for a Reason' Dinner in support of Horizons for Youth our most successful fundraising event! Last year at Woodbine Racetrack, this dinner became our largest one-day fundraising event. Please join us for an evening of fun and excitement and help us make history for Horizons for Youth.

The evening begins at 5:30 pm on **Wednesday, June 25th, 2008** at Woodbine Racetrack. Join us at the trackside tent overlooking the renowned E.P. Taylor Turf Course. The trackside tent has all the luxury of the indoors, in the great outdoors, including exquisite food and beverage service steps away from a world renowned racetrack.

Join us early for a drink and enjoy time with friends and our special guests. Our reception will also give you a chance to meet the staff and board members from Horizons for Youth.

Our event is called 'Racing for a Reason' because your support will directly help homeless youth living at Horizons for Youth. We hope our evening will be short on speeches, but touching, in the same, meaningful way our staff have touched the lives of countless homeless youth.

For more information, or to purchase tables or sponsorships please contact Keith Clarke at keith@horizonsforyouth.org or call 416-781-9898 ext. 27.

April 17th is Umbrella Day!

The Horizons for Youth Signature Event is Umbrella Day. This year's event is on Thursday April 17th, 2008 with special thanks to our sponsor: Guardian Group of Funds.

Horizons for Youth has gathered together staff, volunteer supporters, board members and current and former residents, all volunteering in locations throughout the PATH and subway system.

Our goal of increasing awareness of Horizons for Youth and the issue of homeless youth will be conveyed throughout the day to many people who open their hearts and their wallets in support of Umbrella Day.

Last year Horizons for Youth Umbrella Day raised \$17,153.19. **Our goal this year is 20K!**

We can't thank our volunteers enough. Many will use vacation time, or work extra hours to come out and donate their time to raising money and awareness to help Horizons for Youth. If you would be able to give a couple of hours of your time in advance or on Umbrella Day, please contact Horizons for Youth at 416-781-9898 ex27 or email volunteer@horizonsforyouth.org

All of our many supporters had a fun and eventful day. To those of you who have a Horizons for Youth Umbrella at home – THANK YOU.

See you on April 17th, 2008 in the subway or in the PATH.

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THANK YOU!

Horizons for Youth held its first ever Open House in January 2008 to say **thank you** to the numerous people who generously donated to the shelter in 2007, especially during the holiday season.

At the end of 2007 our Direct Mail Campaign brought in over \$10,000. The incredible outpouring of support was also demonstrated through in-kind donations, gift drives, and food donations.

Because of your support the Residents and Community Support Clients of Horizons all had a gift to open on Christmas morning, regardless of their age or religion. They received knapsacks filled with essential items like warm socks, hats and gloves, and toiletries. As well, they enjoyed a few luxury items, such as movie passes and coupons for a snack, long distance calling cards to help them reach out to family, and gift cards for stores like Zellers and Shoppers Drug Mart.

Thank you to all our supporters!
Your generosity helps us help homeless youth.

Thanks to our Corporate and Foundation Donors

August 2007 – March 2008

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Horizons for Youth
is proud to be a
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*For more information
about Horizons for Youth contact:*

Jeannette Campbell – Executive Director
Kelly Ferguson – Shelter Service Manager

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Ways to Donate

- **On-line donations** can be made directly from your bank account or credit card. Go to: <http://www.horizonsforyouth.org/help/index.html> and click on "Donate Now". Using this method monthly donations can also be made. Horizons makes it simple by issuing one tax receipt at the end of the year, reflecting all your donations.
- **Mail us** your donation using the reply card and envelope provided with this newsletter.
- **Call us** at the number above and ask for Keith Clarke to give a credit card payment over the phone.
- **Donation Drive:** We are always in need of personal hygiene items and TTC Tokens. You can directly support our youth by holding a donation drive for these items at your work place, in your community, or at your event.
- **Estate Planning:** Bequests can be made in your will. Other planned giving options include: Endowments and Trusts, Securities, Charitable Gift Annuities and Life Insurance Policies.
- **Tribute** a gift in memory of someone or in celebration of a birthday or anniversary.
- **Employer gift match:** Find out from your human resources department if your employer matches employee contributions – challenge them to match your generosity!

Our Mission

Horizons for Youth is dedicated to our mission to shelter, prepare, and guide at-risk youth to be contributing community members. We help them to take responsibility for their lives, make positive choices about their future and establish themselves in the community. In conjunction with community partners, Horizons seeks to identify ways to address the causes and effects of homelessness. We help over 1100 youth each year.

We do not sell, trade or otherwise share our mailing lists. We hope that you find this newsletter enjoyable and informative. However, if at any time you wish to be removed from this or another mailing, simply contact Keith Clarke by phone at 416-781-9898 or via email at keith@horizonsforyouth.org. Please allow us 15 business days to update our records accordingly.