

BLT Construction invests \$105K in HSH

APRIL

Celebrate Diversity
Month

Autism Awareness
Month

National Volunteer
Week: April 18-24

- April 2 – World Autism Awareness Day (UN); Good Friday (Christian)
- April 4 – Easter (Christian)
- April 5 – Easter Monday
- April 7 – World Health Day (UN)
- April 8 – Visakha Puja – Buddha Day (Buddhism)
- April 13 – Hindu New Year; Ramadan Begins (Islam)
- April 14 – Baisakhi (New Year) (Sikh); International Day of Pink
- April 22 - Earth Day
- April 23 - Day of Silence
- April 25 – Palm Sunday (Orthodox Christian)
- April 27 – Mahavir Jayanti (Jain)
- April 28 – National Day of Mourning (Gov't of Canada); World Day for Safety and Health at Work
- April 30 – Good Friday (Orthodox Christian)



**It's April:
HSH celebrates Cultural Diversity and
National Volunteer Week April 18-24**

BLT BUILDING BLOCKS OF HOPE & HSH

Home Suite Hope (HSH) has received a \$105,000 donation from BLT Construction Services (BLT), as part of BLT’s Building Blocks of Hope (BBOH) pandemic relief fundraising campaign.

The funding announcement was made March 26 at a press conference at Joseph Brant Hospital and attended by local dignitaries, including Burlington Mayor Marianne Meed Ward and Halton Region Chair Gary Carr.



One year ago, BLT with partner Sprung Structures, led the design-build of the Pandemic Response Unit at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. Now, BLT is giving back to charities across Ontario and Quebec in each of the regions where BLT has built pandemic response structures and field hospitals.

The funding will help Halton-based HSH support its successful Homeward Bound Halton and Homeward Bound Halton Youth pilot models serving economically vulnerable single parents facing homelessness across Halton.

“When the pandemic began, our dedicated team of construction managers and design-build experts immediately shifted our focus to provide emergency solutions that would have the largest impact in supporting communities with their COVID-19 response. We pride ourselves on being innovative problem solvers and we knew we could use our talented team to help our communities and BBOH takes this one step further. From the beginning we pledged to help people experiencing homelessness by investing back into the communities where we built pandemic response structures,” said Mark Watts, President at BLT Construction Services.

“We at Home Suite Hope (HSH) have continuously seen that our wraparound model of service provision is highly successful in helping families move from homelessness to self-sufficiency. We are ecstatic that BLT Construction has provided us with the funding to support this program to single parent-led families. Helping these parents obtain all of the tools required to build successful futures for themselves and their children is key in preventing generational patterns of poverty from emerging,” said Dr. Sara Cumming, Executive Director of Home Suite Hope.

BLT WORKS TO FIGHT HOMELESSNESS

"Home Suite Hope is a pillar in our community and provides a vital support service for single mothers in Burlington and across the region. I am thrilled to learn of this good news and look forward to supporting them in their important work tackling homelessness and working to empower their clients, because everyone deserves a place to call home, a safe place to live and to thrive," said Burlington MP Karina Gould.



"Safe, affordable and accessible housing is a human right and a critical component of fostering healthy communities. When affordable housing is out of reach, Canadians feel less secure and our whole economy suffers. I am so happy to see local business leader BLT Construction Services helping Halton families move toward the security and independence. Thank you, Home Suite Hope, for supporting single parents and their families as they transition from poverty to possibilities," said Oakville North-Burlington MP Pam Damoff.

Building Blocks of Hope is a fundraising campaign by presenting sponsor BLT that will donate \$500,000 to local charities that provide resources and access to housing for people experiencing homelessness. This initiative is also made possible through the contributions of BLT's project consultants, trade partners, and suppliers, including gold sponsors Sprung Structures and Modern Niagara. For a full list of sponsors, visit <http://buildingblocksofhope.blconstruction.com>

BLT Construction Services is a leading Canadian construction management and design-build company. BLT serves clients from a broad range of sectors, including hospitality and entertainment, institutional, commercial, and residential, with comprehensive construction management services that provide value throughout the entire project lifecycle. For over 25 years, BLT has been committed to building relationships by providing tailored service experience and delivering finely crafted projects.

SWEET BOUQUETS FOR MOM

HSH PARTNERS
WITH THE
SWEETEST THING

FOR MOTHER'S DAY!

Stay tuned for the details of Home Suite Hope's latest partnership with The Sweetest Thing.

THE
Sweetest
THING

It'll be all about Mom for Mother's Day.

HSH and Erin from The Sweetest Thing are teaming up for a Mother's Day fundraiser - appropriate to COVID-19 safety protocols that will benefit the popular Kerr Street boutique bakery and the clients served by HSH and its up to four-year Homeward Bound Halton and Homeward Bound Halton Youth programs.

HOME SUITE
HOPE

HSH works to house and educate, while providing wraparound supports, single parent-led families who are facing poverty to the point of homelessness or precarious housing.

Watch our social media for updates or visit www.homesuitehope.org or www.thesweetestthing.com or on Instagram [@thesweetestthingcake](https://www.instagram.com/thesweetestthingcake).

THANKS FOR THE INPUT

WE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS:

Thank you for taking the time to complete our recent communications survey last month.

We heard you and change is coming!

We want to keep our community informed of upcoming events, fundraisers, etc., to provide transparency about who we are, who we serve and what we do, and to provide a platform where we recognize all of our amazing supporters.

We look forward to improving our communications to secure more followers of our newsletter, blog, social media and more. Stay tuned!

REFLECTING ON EDI

WHAT EDI MEANS TO US

BLOG POSTS TELL THE STORIES

Visit HSH's website (EDI) www.homesuitehope.org this month to check out our weekly blog posts of staff and participant reflections on what Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity means to each of them.

Watch for social media posts and see new blog post each Friday at www.homesuitehope.org.



STAFF COMPLETE GBA+ TRAINING

Staff and student interns at Home Suite Hope have completed the Government of Canada's Women and Gender Equality Canada's Gender-based Analysis Plus.

GBA+ is an intersectional analytical process for examining how various intersecting identity factors impact the effectiveness of government initiatives. It involves examining disaggregated data and research, and considering social, economic, and cultural conditions and norms.

Using GBA+ means taking a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to your work.



VOLUNTEER ON OUR BOARD

HOME SUITE HOPE IS LOOKING TO GROW:

CONSIDER JOINING OUR BOARD:

Home Suite Hope is looking to grow! We are seeking diverse leaders from across Halton to join our **Board of Directors**.

HSH is a non-profit organization that supports low-income, single-parent families in Halton. Our five programs aim to unite a network of vital wraparound supports for families as they journey from poverty to stability, permanently changing lives for the better.



Illustration by Angel Castro

Are you an experienced accountant (CGA, CMA), networker willing to leverage connections and resources for the benefit of the community, marketing and communication professional, strategic organizer or succession planner? Ideal candidates have a variety of skills and expertise to help set strategic direction; monitor finances; provide governance oversight and have proven interpersonal skills. Professional and lived experience are equally valuable to us. We are looking for engaged and dynamic members wanting to act in the best interest of Home Suite Hope and our inspiring participants. Home Suite Hope is transforming the patterns of poverty – to a legacy of empowered prosperity.

If you are passionate about making a real difference in people's lives, or know someone who may be the perfect fit please contact us for more information or to fill out an application at info@homesuitehope.org by April 16, 2021. We can send you an application or you can find one on our website at www.homesuitehope.org.



NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK APRIL 18-24:

Home Suite Hope celebrates its many volunteers during April 18-24, 2021 - National Volunteer Week. The theme for 2021, The Value of One, The Power of Many, reflects on the awe-inspiring acts of kindness by millions of individuals AND the magic that happens when we work together towards a common purpose. HSH sees that value and power translated into the magic for our single parent families every day. Thank you volunteers for all you do!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

LORI SIMS, MAY COURT CLUB OF OAKVILLE

Lori Sims and the May Court Club of Oakville are synonymous as being BFFs of Home Suite Hope (HSH).

The long-established Oakville service club is dedicated to serving vulnerable women and children in the community. And as its past-president and a long-time member, Lori is definitely a fan of HSH.

“The May Court Club was involved with Home Suite Hope years before I joined the organization, said Lori, explaining the service club was a major donor to the cause of addressing homelessness as far back as 2006 and 2008 when it raised \$100,000 to support HSH’s capital funding campaign as part of the club’s 50th anniversary.



Over the years, the service club’s raison d’etre and the mission of Home Suite Hope have only become more and more aligned. “Definitely our mandates are compatible,” said Lori.

HSH evolved from operating a six-unit apartment building for men facing homelessness to addressing homelessness or precarious housing as it affects single parent families, primarily led by mothers - which is a seamless fit with the May Court Club of Oakville’s goals. Both May Court and HSH support what Lori describes as “women’s resilience. Faith in women to support and find a way to make life better for their families.”

The librarian, who retired from a career with the Oakville Public Library in 2011, has made Oakville home since 1995. Her involvement in the May Court Club of Oakville began not long after her retirement. She joined in 2012 and by 2014/15 was club president. That’s when Lori was involved in grant applications made to the May Court Club and HSH was on that list of applicants.

For its part, the service club has a membership of 240, who provide service to a variety of causes in the community. Its volunteer members also staff and operate the Nearly New Shop at 200 Kerr Street – all proceeds from which financially support May Court funding investments in the community.

In addition, a bi-annual gala fashion show has become a signature fundraiser of the service club. The show, hosted downtown Oakville and supported by ladies wear store Tocca Finita and formerly M for Men, attracts an audience of approximately 500 and raises tens of thousands of dollars for May Court causes. The connections between the service club and HSH have grown over time.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

As a major funder of HSH, the service club was invited to have someone on the board of HSH. Each year, HSH would also send a representative to speak to the May Court Club members and that provided networking opportunities for individuals from the two organizations to come to know one another.

HSH invited the club to participate in its Empty Bowls fundraiser and Lori recalls organizing May Court Club Bowl Painting Parties, in addition to attending the Empty Bowls event. The club has also answered calls to action. Its members helped with gift wrapping in the recent Hope 4 Holidays campaign. It has also donated women's business attire when needed for job interviews by clients. "The organizations had quite a line of connection," reflects Lori, who is a past member of HSH's Empty Bowls Committee, a regular event volunteer and attendee.

In 2019, the May Court Club became one of Home Suite Hope's first Partners in Change, donating just over \$9,300 to cover the shortfall in funding that supports a Home Suite Hope participant over a year. It costs just over approximately \$48,000 annually to house, educate and support with wraparound services, a participant in HSH's Homeward Bound Halton program. The four-year program provides housing, life skills, and a two-year education at Sheridan College followed by job search support. It is funded through partnerships with Halton Region, Sheridan College, corporations and local group and individual donors, but still faces a shortfall of over \$9,000 per participant annually. Partners in Change help fund that gap.

"We definitely respect and are inspired by the clients of Home Suite Hope and all the work they do to better themselves and their families. They are an example to their sons and daughters and the whole community and we greatly respect that," said Lori.

HSH's ability to match client needs with community resources is compelling for the May Court Club, too, said Lori. "What I've observed since I got involved is that Home Suite Hope is an organization that moves forward and tries new things." She points to the evolution of HSH from being a landlord to being a connector of clients with community resources.

Lori also notes the education component of the Homeward Bound Halton program – achieved through a partnership with Sheridan College – aimed at jobs that are proven to offer secure incomes and job opportunities was another example of HSH "very, very wisely leveraging so many other supports in the community."

Matching client needs with societal and community needs shows insight on the part of HSH's staff and board, said Lori. And the May Court Club, as it fosters community involvement through friendship itself, looks forward to continuing to address needs in the community, particularly post-pandemic. "We are highly aware our community needs to support one another," said Lori, adding, "As long as there is need, we are happy to support the organization."

"Well done HSH. You're an example of helping others to help themselves... Home Suite Hope is a tremendous example of how partnerships can work to bring everyone's strengths together," said Lori.

Pandemic did not stop volunteers



HSH's Volunteer Coordinator

A VOLUNTEER AMONG VOLUNTEERS:



KINDA JAZEH HSH VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

I grew up in a happy humble environment in Aleppo, Syria, famed for being the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world. I studied business management and continued this at Sheridan College in Oakville via courses in office administration.

I now live in Oakville and work as an Administrative Assistant at Golf Canada. Coming from Syria, golf is a new sport for me. I remember watching the RBC Open Tournament in 2018

on TV, which was held at Glen Abbey Golf Club. I never thought at the same time in the following year, I would be in the middle of the event as one of the admin team members.

Fun Fact

At home I experiment with cooking delicious meals for my family, drawing on my international experience. For entertainment, I like to play cards and I am very competitive! How did you get involved with Home Suite Hope?

I was first introduced to HSH when I met France Fournier during an Oakville Chamber of commerce event. It was there I learned about HSH and met Sharon Richardson. Sharon later asked me to take over the responsibilities of coordinating the volunteers, which I accepted.

Why have you chosen to volunteer at Home Suite Hope?

The help that HSH gives to single parents was a major factor that attracted me to join the organization. Being a mother allowed me to know the challenges that families face while raising children, so you can imagine how difficult it is when a single parent must take on all the responsibilities by themselves.

How would you like Home Suite Hope to grow?

I would like for HSH to have a sound financial base so that efforts can be focused on helping the parents. I hope I will get an opportunity to help with this by engaging and networking with other donors and helpers to get involved.

FOCUS ON DONORS

JOANNE PETERS & MICHAEL BOWICK

The fact that Home Suite Hope helps single parents move from poverty or homelessness – to being educated, employed parents supporting their – is what keeps Joanne Peters and her husband Michael Bowick investing in HSH.

“It’s not only supporting vulnerable women and children in the community, but providing a framework to allow them to get out of poverty through education... it’s a pathway to a future,” said Michael, a recently-retired executive with 34 years experience with RBC Capital Markets.

The long-time residents, who raised their now 26-year-old twin daughters, Rachel and Laura Bowick in Oakville, have also long been involved in the community, locally and beyond. Their professional experience and community involvement guides their efforts and investment into the community.

Joanne retired from her 20 years career as a lawyer to provide hands-on parenting, but that also left room for her to get involved in the Oakville community. Joanne was on the board of the Oakville Community Foundation (OCF) for six years and served as vice-chair for two. She was also on the board of the national children’s running and reading charity, Start to Finish, for four years. She wrapped up both commitments recently. Joanne has been part of the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital Gala fundraising committee for many years. Joanne also hosted the Lighthouse for Grieving Children’s fundraiser for two years and is currently serving what has become an eight-year term on the Toronto-based Waterstone Foundation, which provides financial support for people with eating disorders.

For his part, Michael was involved in community support through RBC, having chaired the RBCCM United Way Giving campaign, the RBCCM Diversity Leadership Committee and was an early supporter of Women United, a GTA group for new Canadian women with a diverse range of support from accessing community involvement to resume-writing. He was also involved in RBC’s Race for the Kids, which began in Toronto, but grew globally to cities from London and Hong Kong, to Sydney and New York.

The couple first came across Home Suite Hope when a friend of Joanne’s invited her to join in its signature fundraiser, Empty Bowls, around 2008. At the time, the Empty Bowls committee was chaired by Cari MacLean, wife of the hockey and sports broadcaster Ron MacLean. Joanne took on numerous jobs, including that of having bowls hand-painted by local community groups.



INVESTING IN HSH

VOLUNTEERS, SUPPORTERS, FUNDERS

By 2012, Joanne was co-chairing the Empty Bowls committee with Tracy Kodama and was instrumental in securing St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School as an alternative event venue to the original Appleby College venue.

Under the co-chairmanship of Joanne, Empty Bowls successfully raised a total of almost \$300,000 over 3 years, for HSH programs.

In the past couple of years, Joanne has helped with Empty Bowls again, securing bread and desserts for the event. She works with Kevin Ker, the owner of Cobs Bread on Lakeshore Rd, who has been a long time very generous partner of Empty Bowls.

Financially, Joanne and Michael have been very generous donors to HSH since 2008. According to Michael, addressing issues such as food insecurity, homelessness and a focus on vulnerable women and children, are top of their list of where they want to give support.

It's important to provide support in a crisis, but the couple likes that both HSH and its participants make a long-term investment. That can be up to four years that encompasses housing, childcare and life skills stabilizing, wraparound support and case management, education and employment search support. This is delivered through HSH's Homeward Bound Halton and now, the new pilot, Homeward Bound Halton Youth, programs.

Michael said it can be shocking to see how many people, including children, are without shelter, or food security in Canada. "That resonated with me." Joanne said she knows anyone can be one job loss or one illness away from insecurity – and that many factors that can lead to challenge are often outside of one's control.

As far as why Joanne and Michael continue to support HSH... Joanne said, "We like that you're helping families become self-supporting and not just helping through a crisis." The long-term investment and education HSH provides its participants are what Michael points to, noting success is seen when the participants not only become self-supporting, but step up to give back to others in the community.

And much like Joanne and Michael watch for the success stories of HSH participants to grow beyond initial intentions, Joanne admitted she similarly watched as the fundraiser Empty Bowls (forced to become a virtual Empty Bowls At Home event due to COVID-19) proved very popular, so much so that she predicts, it, too, may grow beyond initial intentions – with lots of good bread to go with those soups, of course.



FUNDRAISING VOLUNTEER

MICHELE WHITCOMBE:

I grew up and currently live in Oakville; a town I am very happy to call home. I am a recent graduate of the Humber College Fundraising Management Postgraduate Program, and I also hold an MA in Arts and Cultural Management from King's College London and a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the Smith School of Business at Queen's University.



I've also recently made the great leap from school into the workforce and am enjoying my first professional role as an administrator for the Weston Family Foundation. In addition to my volunteer work with HSH, I also volunteer with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.

What is your volunteer role with HSH and how did you come to volunteer for the organization?

I am a Fundraising Volunteer for HSH. As I was completing the Fundraising Management Program at Humber College, I felt inspired to become more involved in my local community and I thought doing so would be a great way to further my education in practice. Catherine Meagher, one of HSH's Board Members, kindly introduced me to Krystal Valencia, HSH's superwoman Director of Development, and things took off from there! My first volunteer experience with HSH was at Empty Bowls in 2019 and since then I have been supporting Krystal in developing fundraising plans and materials for HSH and was kindly welcomed to support the Fundraising Committee.

What attracted you to HSH?

It is the actual impact HSH has achieved in this realm that made me want to be more involved. When I volunteered at Empty Bowls, I had the privilege of speaking with a few HSH participants and heard their first-hand accounts of how HSH as had a transformational impact on their lives.

I also have to say, the community of people who make up HSH's Staff, Board, and Volunteers. These individuals are inspiring and authentic leaders with so much passion and wisdom and it truly is an honor to be working with and supporting such a wonderful group of people.

FUN FACT

I would say "learning" is a favorite hobby of mine. I love learning about new concepts and developing new skills through reading books, watching educational YouTube videos and TED Talks. I am also just beginning to venture into the world of Podcasts.

Community Partnership

PARTNER IN THE SPOTLIGHT: FOOD FOR LIFE

COVID-19 negatively affected many individuals and organizations over the past year. In fact, not-for-profits have been one of the hardest hit sectors with substantial decreases in individual and corporate funders as well as an inability for organization to hold in person fundraising events.

To-date, Home Suite Hope has been able to weather this storm, in part because of the amazing individual and corporate donors that came to our aid, but also because of the amazing partnerships we have with community, corporate and government partners.

Today we want to honour our partnership with Food For Life. Food For Life is a staple organization throughout the Halton Region and has been an exceptional partner to us here at HSH offering our clients fresh food baskets, delivering to their door during COVID-19 and helping us with food literacy classes. Additionally, Food For Life is our partner for our second year in a row on our Empty Bowls at Home COVID 2.0 Edition virtual fundraising event.

Food for Life knows that good surplus food can be a powerful tool for change and that is a driver for their partnership with Home Suite Hope to expand the capacity to change lives through Homeward Bound-Youth initiative. Through this program they provide quality GOOD food each week to ensure the families eat healthy and engage with participants once a month through virtual cooking lessons to expand the self-sufficiency of Home Suite Hope families.



Rescuing Food is what they do, Improving Lives is the outcome of that work, alongside helping our environment in the process.

Food for Life is the regional leader in this sector providing healthy food to a network of Food for Life programs, non-profits and allied partners who offer food support programs. Food for Life is a thought leader in the sector, built on a unique supply chain model that is driven by environmental sustainability. In 2020, Food for Life rescued 4 million lbs of edible food from landfill, and during COVID-19 provides over 3,000 GOOD food bags each week to seniors and families in communities across Halton and Hamilton.

Learn, volunteer, and join the movement: www.foodforlife.ca.

THANKS SOFIA

Home Suite Hope thanks Sofia Samson, our BSW student intern from York University, who joined HSH this past year to complete her fourth-year field placement.

Sofia was involved in an array of areas and projects that included case management, grant research, training and working alongside other student interns, program development and being a great support with the Homeward Bound Halton Youth life skills program.

We wish you all the best Sofia! We are confident that you are going to thrive in your social work career and future endeavours. Thank you for all your help and support! And congratulations on completing your Social Work Degree!



A TREAT FROM TIMS

A year after Home Suite Hope staff last all saw one another together – except virtually in a hybrid world of virtual meetings and individual in-person pandemic work - HSH staff met to make deliveries of International Women’s Day gifts to its participant single parents. Adding to the special flavour of the moment was the arrival of Tim Hortons Oakville Restaurant Owners #TimsforGood Danyelle Smith, who dropped off (safely) Take 12 containers of coffee and individually-wrapped cookies to say thanks to those continuing to work and support our communities through these unprecedented times.



CHANGING THE PATTERNS OF POVERTY TO A LEGACY OF PROSPERITY