

# Progress Place News

MENTAL WELLNESS

SPRING 2017  
ISSUE 15



## CELEBRATING PROGRESS PLACE'S FIRST ANNUAL TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS BREAKFAST



Over 275 attendees in The Vanity Fair Ballroom at the OMNI King Edward Hotel.



Employers receive recognition for their partnership in our Transitional Employment Program.



Keynote speaker Christina Barbarasa with Toronto Chief of Police, Mark Saunders.

Our first ever 'Taking Care of Business Breakfast' event was successful in many ways. In fact, we expect to see results increase throughout the year.

First, the sheer number of people in attendance achieved our goal to raise our profile. There were 275 business people in the Vanity Fair Ballroom at the King Edward Hotel at 7:30 in the morning!

Second, to date we have raised \$30,000 with more promised. This came from 160 donors of whom 120 were new to Progress Place. This generosity will provide Progress Place members an opportunity to work on the newly launched Podcast *Radio Totally Normal Toronto*.

Third, we had the opportunity to profile our Transitional Employment Program. Recognized as a professional and meaningful alternative when hiring for entry-level positions, it also provides people living with mental illness an opportunity to return to work. We received six offers of employment immediately after the breakfast and continue to have many ongoing conversations.

Fourth, our Mental Health Awareness Training Program received its first unsolicited corporate application.

Fifth, many of our guests offered in-kind support such as new clothing for our boutique and data processing support.

Most importantly, in preparation for the breakfast every member of the clubhouse was able to offer help in some way. Members and staff from the First Floor Unit designed printed materials such as invitations and posters. The Café Unit baked, wrapped and tagged three hundred cookies. The Clerical Unit printed labels, assembled gifts for our employment partners and prepared our guest lists. Many of our members and staff were on hand at the breakfast to help guests find their seats and to participate in the podcast that was recorded immediately following the event.

Please stay tuned for details of our next 'Taking Care of Business Breakfast' event in the next newsletter. We look forward to seeing you there!



# Progress Place Launches Innovative New Podcast



Progress Place member Gaetan Genesse interviews members of the public for Radio Totally Normal Toronto.

“It gives me the confidence to be real in the community, because the people that hear the podcast will understand who we are and where we’re coming from. It becomes less about us and them. It validates our presence in our community and confirms that we are contributing to the common good and to our community as a whole.”

- Progress Place member



Radio Totally Normal Toronto interviews former CBC News Anchor Hilary Brown.

In January of 2017, Progress Place members launched a new monthly podcast aimed at eliminating stigma about mental illness and strengthening the voice of the mental health community.

**Radio Totally Normal Toronto (RTNT)**, the new podcast, was inspired by the work of Fountain House Stockholm, a clubhouse located in Sweden.

“**Radio Totally Normal Toronto** gives a voice for community mental health, providing a forum for organizations as well as people with lived experience to share their stories and celebrate their innovations,” says Progress Place staff member Vanessa Sparks.

The debut episode, “Origin Story”, features a discussion about mental health, music, and an audio tour of Progress Place. Episode 2: “Creativity and Mental Health” explores comedy and theatre as ways of understanding what it means to live with mental illness. The episode features *Laughing like Crazy*, a program that teaches participants how to develop and deliver a stand up comedy routine based on their experience in the mental health system. The episode also features *Justify*, an autobiographical spoken word piece performed by Progress Place member Grant Ellis, and an interview with Toronto writer and performer Laurel Brady discussing *Surfacing*, her one-woman show about a young woman opening up to her mother about her experiences with anxiety and depression.

“We want to strengthen the voice of community mental health and one way to do that is to connect with other organizations that highlight the great work that is happening throughout our community,” Sparks added.

The hope is that the podcast can engage and grow the community while educating the general public about contemporary concerns in the field. So far, the feedback from members has been overwhelmingly positive.

“It gives me the confidence to be real in the community, because the people that hear the podcast will understand who we are and where we’re coming from,” one member says. “It becomes less about us and them. It validates our presence in our community and confirms that we are contributing to the common good and to our community as a whole.”

To learn more, visit [radiototallynormaltoronto.org](http://radiototallynormaltoronto.org)

Watch for Episode Three: “Mental Health and Red Tape” which examines stigma, social assistance and practical advice for people living on a low income.

# Study Published in International Journal of Mental Health

## International Journal of Mental Health

March 2017; Vol. 46

Progress Place's positive impact on the lives of people living with mental illness received acknowledgement from the academic community in an article published in the March 2017 issue of the *International Journal of Mental Health*.

The article detailed a study conducted by researchers from the Department of Psychology at Ryerson University on the implementation of the clubhouse model at Progress Place. Progress Place's psychosocial rehabilitation program offers a variety of services including employment opportunities, housing support, case management and social recreation activities. The study specifically identified changes and outcomes experienced by Progress Place members resulting from their participation in the clubhouse.

In the first phase of the study, focus groups comprised of members, staff and board members identified activities, processes and the outcomes of clubhouse membership. Through a participatory approach involving members in the evaluation, administration and process, researchers identified the mechanisms that create change for Progress Place members. In the second phase they identified the outcomes of these mechanisms.

The research showed that Progress Place provides:

**A sense of personhood** - An individual is seen as a person first, beyond the mental illness.

**A sense of feeling better** - Members discuss feeling at peace, happy, and having a sense of enjoyment.

**Opportunities to acquire skills** - Members develop many transferable social, employment, computer, and life skills.

**An empowered community** - An emotional oasis which empowers people to pursue their dreams and goals.

The article acknowledged Progress Place's distinct ability to see a person first, beyond their mental illness and role in clubhouse life. It also reveals how Progress Place goes beyond a reduction of psychiatric symptoms and instead focuses on a humanistic view of the person as they see themselves at peace with their mental illness.

Click here to see the full article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00207411.2017.1278964>

## Women's Post Celebrates Progress Place on Bell Let's Talk Day!

Katherine DeClerq, editor of Women's Post, toured Progress Place and interviewed Executive Director Criss Habal-Brosek. Women's Post released the interview on January 25, 2017 coinciding with Bell Let's Talk Day. We are so thrilled to receive such great and timely media attention.

### From the article:

Progress Place has helped over 7,000 people since it was founded in 1984, and firmly believes that "empowering people can cure." In fact, they claim that 90 per cent of their members are not re-hospitalized after being a part of the clubhouse for two years.

The success of Progress Place is thanks to its dedicated employees, including Criss Habal-Brosek, Executive Director and a veteran employee of 32 years. "I feel like I can relate to the staff when they first start. The Progress Place model keeps you very humble and I think that's really important for people to remember — everyone has issues and struggles and everyone deserves to be treated respectfully and equitably, and everyone deserves opportunities. The goal is to instill hope."

Visit this link to see the full article:

<http://womenspost.ca/woman-of-the-week-criss-habal-brosek/>

## WOMEN'S POST

### Woman of the Week: Criss Habal-Brosek

WP [womenspost.ca/woman-of-the-week-criss-habal-brosek/](http://womenspost.ca/woman-of-the-week-criss-habal-brosek/)

By Katherine DeClerq

January 25, 2017 at 1:48 pm



"Everyone deserves to be treated respectfully and equitably, and everyone deserves opportunities. The goal is to instill hope."

- Criss Habal-Brosek



# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## Become an Employment Partner

For over 30 years Progress Place has been working with businesses in the community to create work opportunities for people living with mental illness. Members work in a variety of industry sectors filling entry-level positions, completing high volume repetitive tasks, and meeting the demands of peak-time work flow. To find out more about Progress Place's Transitional Employment Program and how it can benefit your workplace, please call our employment line at 416-895-8005 or email [partners@progressplace.org](mailto:partners@progressplace.org).



## Make a Donation

You can also support the members of Progress Place by making a monetary donation. Making a donation goes directly to helping Progress Place continue improving the lives of the over 1,000 people who turn to Progress Place every year. Donations can be made by cheque or credit card and can be sent by mail, phone, or using our secure online donation link at [www.progressplace.org](http://www.progressplace.org). Consider joining our Hope Fund monthly giving program by setting up monthly credit card donations or preauthorized withdrawals. Call 416-323-0223 to speak with Georgina Patko for more information.

## Thank You to our Supporters

Progress Place wishes to thank all our kind donors for their contributions and generous support. In addition to a number of anonymous donors, below is a list of those who have made donations between October 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017. With your support, we can make progress.

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MENTAL WELLNESS

### CONTACT US

Mail: 576 Church Street Toronto ON M4Y 2E3

Phone: 416.323.0223

Fax: 416.323.9843

Email: [theclub@progressplace.org](mailto:theclub@progressplace.org)

Web: [www.progressplace.org](http://www.progressplace.org)

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