

Progress Place News

MENTAL WELLNESS

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ISSUE 19



Progress Place staff member distributes a meal to a Progress Place member; a Progress Place member receives her daily meal from the Clubhouse; and Progress Place staff prepare meals for the community

PROGRESS PLACE TRANSFORMS TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING ITS COMMUNITY

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Progress Place will remain committed to serving our community. We are doing everything possible to compensate for the valuable in-person services that, because of COVID-19, are not available to our members at the moment. From virtual meetings with members and additional online events, to extended Warm Line hours and meal takeout and delivery, we've come up with new ways to ensure service continuity to members.

We continue to be a hub of support and stability for our members — but we need your help.

Read below for more details on how Progress Place is transforming its operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and what you can do to help us.

HOW PROGRESS PLACE IS WORKING WITH MEMBERS DURING COVID-19

- **Connecting with members through virtual meetings**
Like many organizations, Progress Place has switched to accommodating our members virtually to continue providing inclusive and accessible service.

We continue to hold member-only meetings — now virtually, via Zoom — daily at 9:30 AM and 1:00 PM. The topics, such as fun online ideas, keeping busy in your home, and home comfort, are both practical and engaging. These meetings also include French and Spanish conversation groups, Sit + Be Fit, yoga, meditation, and dancing classes.

- **Extra events open to the community**
In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, we know the community may need an extra helping hand. By popular

demand, we are offering seven additional support activities every week — one each day — open to anyone.

Besides the additional sessions on the same topics as the member-only meetings, we have added Virtual Double Recovery public meetings twice a week for everyone in need of mental health and substance abuse support.

- **Extended Warm Line hours**
To help our members alleviate the extra stress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Progress Place has extended its [Warm Line](#) hours. This peer support service is now operating seven days a week from noon till midnight until further notice.
- **Takeout/Delivery Meals From The Clubhouse**
To help our members lead healthy lives despite the COVID-19 turmoil, we are offering takeout meals at the Clubhouse and delivering meals to members with complex health issues that don't allow them to shop or cook for themselves.

“In times of isolation Double Recovery has provided valued online meetings that meet my recovery needs by reinforcing the principles of the 12 step program and allowing me to connect with others seeking recovery. I am full of gratitude for online meetings. I always leave feeling fulfilled and confident. I am putting my recovery first.”

- BRANDON

“Progress Place is a special place to me. It’s somewhere I can be around others and be myself, and where I can be productive without being overwhelmed. So when I heard that the clubhouse was closing temporarily due to the virus, I was more than upset. But since Progress Place started having online meetings, I have had a routine again, I have met members I didn’t know, and I have even tried new things that I wouldn’t have been confident enough to try in person, like the dancing group. I am so happy that the staff found a way to keep going in these strange times and so grateful that these online meetings exist.”

- CLAIRE

BRENDA SINGER RECEIVES ORDER OF CANADA FOR HER VISION AND LEADERSHIP OF PROGRESS PLACE

When Brenda Singer first learned last May that she was being appointed to the Order of Canada, she was stunned. “I didn’t believe it,” says the former executive and founding director of Toronto’s Progress Place. Her surprise quickly turned to elation.

Brenda received the prestigious honour for her work as a passionate champion for community-based mental health services — and for introducing the clubhouse approach of psychosocial rehabilitation to Canada, through Progress Place. She joins more than 7,000 exceptional Canadians who have received the award over the last five decades.

“This award will hopefully help shine a bright light on mental health recovery, on the great work of Progress Place and the individuals in the community living with mental illness,” she says.

Brenda’s inspiration was initially sparked by a visit to Fountain House in New York City more than 40 years ago. Based on a clubhouse model, members there took an active role in all aspects of operating the program and that participation enhanced their recovery from mental illness. “It was a beehive of activity and, that day, my life was changed forever,” Brenda recalls, she was determined to one day develop a clubhouse in Canada.

That day came in 1982, when she walked into a North York social recreation program for people with mental illness. Called Progress Place, the program focused on crafts and other social and recreational activities. Brenda immediately recognized that much more could be done to help members recognize their full potential as productive and engaged members of the community.

Through her insight and guidance, the Progress Place program shifted to integrate members into the day-to-day workings of Progress Place, based on the successful and innovative Fountain House model. Members became engaged in all operational duties, including answering the phone and preparing meals. They made choices



Brenda Singer, 2019 Recipient of the Order of Canada

about what they wanted to do and how they wanted to participate.

“This clubhouse model has helped members become more confident and independent people,” she says. “Work is a conduit to developing relationships and it’s how recovery happens,” Brenda explains. “The empowering comes from within.”

“Through the years, Progress Place was a place of inspiration that sustained me,” Brenda says of her 33 years with the clubhouse. “It was never my dream job — actually, it was my dream life.”

Brenda was invested as a Member of the Order of Canada at a ceremony held in Ottawa on November 21, 2019.

Although retired from Progress Place since 2015, Brenda continues to be actively involved in advocacy work for people with mental health and other life challenges.

ANNUAL 'TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS' BREAKFAST ATTRACTS RECORD LEVEL ATTENDANCE



Toronto Mayor John Tory addresses the Business Breakfast audience; Progress Place member Sophia Morgage and Progress Place Executive Director Criss Habal-Brosek address and thank guests of the Business Breakfast; and Bill Morari, Rotary Club of Toronto member and Carrie Shaw, Progress Place Board Chair welcome attendees

More than 300 business leaders, clubhouse partners and special guests participated in Progress Place's fourth annual 'Taking Care of Business' breakfast on March 5 — the highest attendance ever. The event raised over \$51,000 for the clubhouse's recovery-centered [employment programs](#).

Co-hosted by the Rotary Club of Toronto, the annual breakfast is designed to celebrate the clubhouse's achievements and generate more partnerships for Progress Place employment programs which help individuals move past the stigma of mental illness and find a way back into the workplace.

Attending local dignitaries included Toronto Mayor John Tory, Toronto Centre Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and Toronto Centre MPP Suze Morrison. The event was emceed by Stuart Knight.

Mayor Tory encouraged business leaders to create more transitional work placements and spoke of the self respect and renewed confidence that Progress Place fosters in its members. "Let's do more," he urged.

POWER OF SHARING & DIALOGUE

Keynote speaker, mental health advocate and veteran broadcaster, Michael Landsberg, shared his own, personal journey with depression. He noted that, despite growing awareness, the stigma related to mental illnesses is still an issue in 2020.

"Until we get to the point where we don't think someone is 'brave' to talk about their mental illness... the stigma is still strong."

Other speakers included Toronto Rotary Club member Bill Morari; Progress Place Board Chair Carrie Shaw; Progress Place Board Member Alan Booth; Julie Eifert, with Raymond James, one of the employment partners;

Progress Place Executive Director Criss Habal- Brosek; and Progress Place members Hersi Hassan Hersi and Sophia Morgage.

MEMBER TESTIMONIALS

A clubhouse member for six years, Hersi gave a moving testimonial about the challenges of living with schizophrenia. He explained how becoming a member of Progress Place had helped him regain his motivation and confidence. He is now thriving in an employment placement five days a week.

Sophia, who has been a member for three years, explained that she initially hoped to work in a transitional employment placement, but since the spots were all taken, she decided to go back to school to obtain her Social Service Worker diploma.

Progress Place helped her apply to the program and provided support to help her find a job once she graduated. She now has a part-time job in the social service field. "As you can see the opportunity to work for someone who lives with a mental illness is like a dream come true," she said.

At the end of the event, guests filled out action cards indicating how they would like to support Progress Place and learn more about the Transitional Employment Program.

Visit the Progress Place [Facebook](#) page for photos.

PROGRESS PLACE CELEBRATES 35 YEARS



Toronto Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam presents Criss Habal-Brosek and Brenda Singer with Certificate of Appreciation for Progress Place's 35 Year Contribution to the community

The Clubhouse model is the only global mental health program that is available around the world. Progress Place, has been a part of this global network providing a meaningful sense of community for over 35 years. The model originated at Fountain House a clubhouse that started in Manhattan New York over 70 years ago. Today there are 303 clubhouses available in 32 countries supporting over 100,000 people living with mental illness.

Progress Place hosted their 35th anniversary at an event on October 10, 2019, on World Mental Health Day. Over 200 members, staff and partners joined the festivities. Dignitaries Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and MPP Suze Morrison provided greetings and spoke at the celebratory event.

"I'm really grateful for everything that Progress Place is doing. The meal program and food security is so beneficial for our community, especially at a time like this. It's a challenge to access food on a limited income, so it's provided us with a sense of hope that we're going to be able to get through this. The meals have been both delicious and healthy and I want to thank everyone involved at the clubhouse and beyond as well those considering helping out our community further."

- DOMINIC

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Progress Place has been working hard to transition itself into a virtual entity and to make the necessary changes to ensure that crucial services are still accessible for people with severe and persistent mental illnesses when they need help the most.

But we can't do it alone. These adjustments require an immense amount of time, resources and money, and now, more than ever, Progress Place needs your donations.

Please extend your kindness and donations to those who are most vulnerable in our community.

[Click here](#) to donate.

Progress Place staff can be reached by phone at 416.323.0223, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM, if you have questions or need assistance.

Stay up to date with our latest COVID-19 changes by visiting progressplace.org/covid19 or by following us on social media:



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