



### Letter From The Executive Director

Deb Berlin

Eating disorders have the second highest death rate of all mental illnesses and are the third most common chronic illness in youth in Canada. While many people have a desire to receive support, there are multiple barriers to gaining access and limited ways to seek help.

There are no publicly funded eating disorder support programs in Ontario and waitlists for hospital treatment are long. Approximately 50% of our service users cannot afford private therapy. For these reasons, we have continued to work diligently to offer, free, accessible treatment at Sheena's Place.

In 2019, we added a wider variety of group therapy programs and provided 1,455 hours of therapeutic services to over 1,100 group participants in-house. Our groups and programs were facilitated by 35 mental health professionals who are experts in health-related fields such as psychology, social work and art therapy. This expansion of service is only made possible by the generosity of our donors.

To share a glimpse of the impact Sheena's Place has in the community, in this report you will meet four amazing people connected to Sheena's Place. Ella and Jeffrey, two of our brave service users, Priya, a dedicated facilitator, and, Theresa, one of our very generous donors. We are extremely grateful to them for sharing their inspiring stories with us.

After 22 years of service at Sheena's Place, I have made the decision to pursue other professional endeavours. While this decision was made with mixed emotions, I am thrilled to be supporting the entry of a new Executive Director, John Choi. John has an extensive background in mental health and has been a passionate leader to his previous teams. It is exciting to see John's leadership and all that he will bring to the organization in 2020.

Looking forward, our board of directors, committee advisors, staff, advocates and volunteers will work together, as they continue to operationalize and deliver the three-year strategic plan for Sheena's Place. We will continue to communicate new information as it unfolds to our group participants, donors and community.

I would like to thank our board of directors, community partners, service users and stakeholders for having had the privilege of leading this incredible organization. Sheena's Place will be turning 25 in 2021 and I am looking forward to witnessing the impact that the organization will have as it continually drives towards mission and vision.

Finally, we would like to remind you that we do not receive funding from government and we are not a United Way agency. We rely solely on the generosity of donors, foundations and corporations to keep our doors open and our programs free. Thank you for all your gifts that allow us to provide the much-needed therapy and hope.

Stay well and safe.

My best always,

Deb Berlin, BSW, MSW, RSW



# Vision, Mission, And Values



### Vision

Transform lives, build community, eliminate stigma.

### Mission

We support individuals, families and friends affected by eating disorders to overcome barriers and provide effective, community-based services at all stages of recovery.

### Values

**Compassion** – We demonstrate compassion by developing caring relationships that are built on acceptance, trust, and honesty.

**Dignity** – We believe in the inherent dignity of all people and respect their right to be valued and accepted without judgement.

**Inclusion** – We recognize that eating disorders do not discriminate based on income, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or ability, and are committed to ensuring that everyone has equitable access.

**Collaboration** – We believe that we can accomplish more when we work together to achieve shared goals.

**Excellence** – We provide effective evidence-informed services, delivered by highly qualified professionals.

# Our People

### Staff



Deborah Berlin, Executive Director



JP McMIllan, Director of Development



Hema Singh, Registrar and Program Administrator



Julia Shierlaw, Operations Manager and Bookkeeper



Kaitlyn Axelrod, Program and Outreach Coordinator



Kelsey Johnston, Program Manager

## Jeffrey

### Group Participant Story

Jeffrey was working full-time as a marketing coordinator at the age of 27 when he realized he was losing his battle with eating issues. He recalls, "I couldn't stop dieting." When he decided to leave his job to complete his BA, he became even more restrictive with his diet and further preoccupied with weight and exercise.

"By the end of the group everyone was close, we acted as cheerleaders for each other."

In 2011, Jeffery was battling bulimia and anorexia. He was encouraged to complete an assessment at CAMH and was then referred to an inpatient program at Women's College Hospital. No time line was provided for him to receive the support he needed. His self-esteem had plummeted and he was still not receiving the appropriate support he needed.

Jeffrey was also directed to Sheena's Place by his medical team but felt very skeptical about walking through the door. He can reflect now on the tremendous experience of shame around his disorder. He was skeptical about how helpful groups could be. "I expected to be given cliché mantras that we just needed to love ourselves and that would cure our ED." He expected to sit with others commiserating and "feeling sorry for ourselves." He was quite surprised to find a path towards an "active approach to recovery that involved CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy)".

The facilitator demonstrated "genuine caring" and "made efforts to empathize with what we were experiencing." Jeffrey recalls. "She would help me to step outside myself and see things from a different perspective. This slowly changed the way I was thinking." Things began to improve.

"When I first entered Sheena's place, people were initially shy but eventually we started chatting and making friends. It was interesting to see how they looked at their situations and to hear their perspectives. By the end of the group everyone was close, we acted as cheerleaders for each other."

Today, Jeffrey still draws on the lessons he learned at Sheena's Place and continues to do the worksheets daily. Although he no longer attends group sessions, he says he still feels supported.

More recently, Jeffrey is proud to be outspoken and contribute to the fight against the stigma faced by the many people with disordered eating. "On the internet, everyone pretends to have picture-perfect lives. Real life isn't like that - often people just need someone to

talk to, who they know will understand what they are going through." He has written a book called Cloud Cover about his experiences, hoping it may be helpful to others.

About Sheena's Place, Jeffrey says, "This is a place where you are greeted with open arms. Sheena's Place makes you feel safe and welcome, where everyone is part of a team who genuinely cares for each other. Sheena's Place helped me get my life back."



### Ella

### **Group Participant Story**

Ella came to Sheena's Place at a time where she felt she had hit rock bottom. She had stopped socializing and felt obsessed with food and eating. At the same time, she felt that no one understood what she was going through. She looked for help but was unsure where to go and she was still partially in denial about her

condition. When her mother, who works in health care, recommended Sheena's Place, she was unsure about attending.

She imagined a sterile group therapy session, maybe in a gym or a clinic, where everyone would sit in a circle and stare at their feet. Her first experience at Sheena's provided a sharp contrast to the image she'd held. "It was a beautiful home and I felt welcome immediately. I was pleasantly surprised that everyone smiled when I came in, even though I didn't know anyone."

Ella speaks to the incredible impact Sheena's Place has had on her journey towards recovery. Having an accepting place to talk to others, whether she was feeling high or low was a welcome change from the

medical environment, where she felt less understood. No longer isolated, she enjoyed interacting with group members and learning from the experiences of others. Here, she felt "normal". She realized what she was dealing with was an illness and other people were dealing with it as well.

She attended Young Adult Support and Introduction to Meal Planning and Grocery Shopping. Before developing an eating disorder, she loved to cook and bake. Having facilitator support with shopping for ingredients, measuring out portions and cooking a meal, has helped her rediscover her love for the kitchen.

Ella feels that society can help break stigma by providing more education and accurate information

about eating disorders to the public. She says there is a need for more funding for organizations like Sheena's Place.

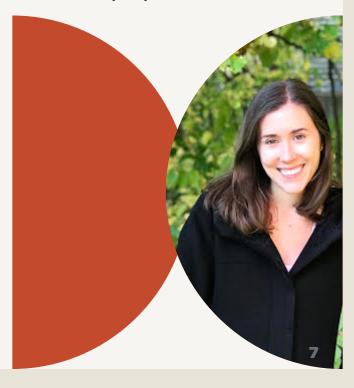
"There are gaps in the system that Sheena's Place fills, whether you're waiting for treatment, receiving it,

have been discharged, or you do not have an official diagnosis."

She adds, "I think the most important message for me is that eating disorders are not a choice and they look different for everyone. My eating disorder isn't a choice, isn't about food and it's not about 'wanting to be thin'. For me it is about my anxiety and having a way to have control. From my experience, people often view anorexia as a desire to look thin or you are obsessive about how you look, but for me (and I know many others), this isn't our experience."

"I want to give a sincere thank you to Sheena's Place, the group members and facilitators. I leave every group feelingbetter, grateful, and always come away with something I can use in my daily life."

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## 2019 By The Numbers

staff (+ 1 contract staff)

facilitators

volunteers

total group participants

hours of therapeutic service

volunteer hours

people reached through outreach initiatives

# Of our group participants...

98%

96%

91%

91%

88%

78%

felt the group space was safe and respectful

would recommend the group they attended to others

felt the group they attended met their needs

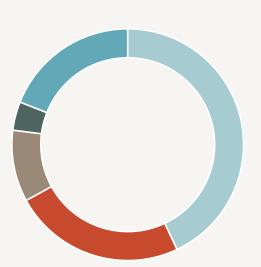
learned new coping strategies, skills, or insights

felt connected to and supported by other group members

felt the group they attended increased their motivation for change or recovery

## Groups By Category

"I really appreciate the support group participants show each other. It felt safe to share and be heard."



43% support24% expressive arts19% skill building10% body image

4% nutrition

What our group participants say about us:

"I'm so grateful to the donors who allow Sheena's Place to grow to better meet the needs of participants." "Sheena's
Place is the
only place I
feel comfortable
with body
image issues
and don't feel
any judgement.
Sheena's Place
saves lives.
Thank you."

"This has been an extremely positive and life-altering experience. I always feel uplifted after attending a group."

"Sheena's
Place
has been
an invaluable
experience. For
the first time I
haven't felt alone
in this struggle,
but now I realize
there are others
who really
understand."

### New Services Offered in 2019

Sheena's Place provides professionally facilitated group support, completely free of charge. Participation is based of self-referral, meaning that no diagnosis is necessary, making our programs accessible to many who otherwise would not be able to access care.

We offer a variety of types of programs including: support groups, skill-building groups, body image groups, expressive arts groups, recreational programs, and workshops. In 2019 we were thrilled to introduce nutritional programs, thanks to a generous donation that allowed us to transform our kitchen into a teaching space.

#### **EXAMINING EXERCISE**

This group is designed for those who identify with exercise compulsion or those interested in examining their relationship with exercise/movement as it relates to body image. Strategies to self-assess this relationship, and tools to navigate physical activity/exercise exploration in safer ways are examined.

"Thankful that it was offered as no one going through an ED program is allowed to speak about activity." – Group Participant

#### SIDELINING SIZEISM

Exploring the negative impacts of fatphobia and sizeism in our relationships with ourselves, each other and the society in which we live.

"Well-planned sessions & a MUCH needed topic at Sheena's. I look forward to seeing more fatphobia content here in the future." – Group Participant

#### **GROCERY SHOPPING**

A hands-on, skills-based guide to kitchens and meal preparation, giving participants tools to confidently prepare gratifying food. As a group, participants choose recipes, grocery shop in the community, and prepare meals together to take home.

"Sari and Corinne did an amazing job in helping to keep the group focused and moving forward in our recovery." – Group Participant

"I loved this group. The content was helpful. We approached a new topic every week to help with learning, understanding and accepting food quantity and quality. I learned soooo much." – Group Participant

"I really enjoyed this group - the dynamic was supportive and welcoming but also challenging. It not just provided concrete skills but challenged me to push myself to step outside of my comfort zone. I've learned so much in this group and it's been fantastically useful in my recovery journey." – Group Participant



## New Groups for 2020

Sheena's Place strives to fill gaps in eating disorder care by providing accessible, evidence-informed support and skill building programs for people affected by eating disorders. We are constantly updating our program offerings to reflect new innovations in the field, and to respond to emerging needs in our community. We consistently seek feedback from our community in an effort to provide programs that centre group members' current needs. We are looking forward to these new and upcoming programs in 2020:

#### **BIPOC SUPPORT GROUP**

Designed for those who want to discuss how racism and shadeism impact our relationships with our bodies. This group aims to foster a supportive environment where people can feel safe navigating the intersection between identity and their eating disorder experience.

#### EATING DISORDERS 101 (FOR CAREGIVERS & LOVED ONES)

What are eating disorders and why do they develop? Learn about common myths, community resources, and strategies for supporting your loved one in this educational workshop.

#### **NAVIGATING RECOVERY**

Drawing on the wisdom of lived experience along with facilitator insight, this group explore a variety of coping strategies and stress reduction techniques while encouraging peer support and acknowledgment for all the work that group members have done to make desired changes.

#### **COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY**

Participants in this session will learn Cognitive Behavioural Therapy strategies aimed at further understanding and targeting areas that may maintain an eating disorder. This group will include interactive learning and problem solving.

### BODY BUDDIES: BUILDING A BODY-LIBERATION-CENTRED MOVEMENT PRACTICE

Movement does a body good. Unfortunately, it's often difficult to engage in a movement practice without encountering fatphobia, sizeism or weight stigma, given that many movement environments centre weight change as the primary desired outcome of exercise. In this workshop we'll explore an alternative, body-liberation-centred approach to movement which prioritizes joy, functionality and empowerment in order to support wellbeing.

#### TRANSFORMING TRAUMA

This is an experiential Expressive Arts Therapy group. Participants will explore a variety of arts modalities and develop a relationship with themselves through the arts that can support them in living a balanced and embodied life after trauma. No previous artistic skill or experience required!

#### **EXPRESS YOURSELF!**

Group members will experiment with expressing themselves through a mix of creative writing exercises and open writing/creative space in a warm, supportive, and inclusive environment. Explore writing as a transformative tool for empowerment and healing!

### Theresa

### Donor's Story

A few weeks ago, Sheena's Place reached out to me to ask if I would consider writing a piece about my personal experience with my daughter Leah's history of bulimia and recovery. I had drafted a letter last month discussing how I had come late to learn of Leah's struggles. Leah's struggles began in high school, although I was unaware until she was in university. Leah was a strong academic student, very popular and socially engaged. I did not pick up on the warning signs that might have been present.

Once Leah confided in me, we sought treatment in New York. While this was helpful she continued to wage a back and forth war for several years with this terrible illness until last spring. She made the difficult

decision to go to a residential care facility in Arizona and then Boston. Leah spent 12 weeks committed to the serious work and learning required to manage her urges and deal with the underlying trauma.

It was during this time that I met with Deb Berlin. I can still recall the first meeting

understanding and clear message that this was a winnable war saved me and helped me save Leah.

I am happy to report she is currently doing very well. She continues to rely on Sheena's Place and works hard on meal plans and triggers. She has also learned to deal with occasional and minor set backs in stride. Our mantra is and remains - "Onward".

That is our story reduced to a nutshell. However, over the past few weeks locked in quarantine, I've found myself afraid of what might happen, fighting the urge to catastrophize events unfolding around me for which I have no control. This has brought me back to last year and the challenges my family

> and I faced with Leah's terrible illness - my feelings of hopelessness and fright for the health and well-being of my daughter; my depression, worry, and fear as I felt there was no way forward. I am reminded of my conversations with Deb Berlin and I can't help but draw the same analogy to today. These are

dark days, but I know by listening to experts, making good decisions, and keeping our focus on better days ahead we will come out the other side intact and maybe better.

The importance of Sheena's Place has never been more highlighted to me than during this difficult time. When fear, hopelessness, and a need for concrete and helpful information is the difference between illness and health, it is critical that the place providing all those things is financially healthy and robust.

and a refuge. Ontario's very limited resources for this very prevalent illness makes the seriousness of growing Sheena's Place so important. My commitment to continue supporting them is steadfast and I hope you join me in doing so. I had hoped to host a fundraiser in support of Mother's Day this spring. While we cannot do this at this time, I do encourage everyone to donate, with a promised event to follow.





### After proposing a therapeutic group focused on expressing emotions through music in March 2019, Priya's program has become a regular offering at Sheena's Place. Priya is a registered psychotherapist with a Master's Degree in music therapy. Musical instruments are provided and clients can explore making musical sounds whether they have a background in music or not. "Life is messy, chaotic and beautiful, so just like real life the different sounds of group participants working together show that these aspects of life are just a part of the journey."

chaotic and

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journey."

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She feels that exploring emotions "Life is messy, through words can sometimes be challenging but exploring them through music allows participants to work through emotions in a different way. It is an opportunity for individuals to get in touch with themselves and how they are feeling. Priya says, "The group acts as an emotional container of support, a safe place where clients can develop resources and connections with each other."

Participants have reported "gaining confidence", appreciating the modality as a "safe way to explore" and feeling the effectiveness in relieving "stress and tension".

Priya modelled elements of her group programs after her groups at Homewood Health Centre and Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. Her goal is to help facilitate social connections and foster a sense of community. She wants to support others to stay with their challenging emotions and work towards shifting them towards more desirable states. She also believes in nourishing each individuals' inner artist, "Every voice is unique and has something to say."

When asked what was unique about Sheena's Place, Priya pointed to the accessibility to free and inclusive services, which promote diversity. She added that the facilitators were so knowledgeable but always willing to learn more and keep up with new findings and research. In her opinion, that's why so many clients attend Sheena's Place, because they are meeting their needs.

Priya is proud and grateful to be involved at Sheena's Place. She says she's constantly learning, both from the facilitators and the clients and feels that it is a great privilege. She's already learned so much from

## Priya

### **Facilitator Story**

her clients who she describes as "smart, intelligent and resilient". Through Sheena's Place she's learned what a warm and loving community really looks like.

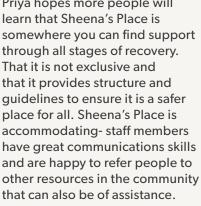
Speaking to how to break the stigma around eating disorders, she feels that talking more openly about the

> illness, emotions and underlying behaviours and patterns is important for all of us to do.

Priya hopes more people will learn that Sheena's Place is somewhere you can find support through all stages of recovery. That it is not exclusive and that it provides structure and guidelines to ensure it is a safer place for all. Sheena's Place is accommodating- staff members

Priya would recommend Sheena's Place both to service seekers and facilitators, as diversity is key to

being able to offer so much relevant programming. As far as her music groups go, she says that each weeks' group is a new composition; everyone's voice is welcome. The group wouldn't be what it is without each person's unique experience and presence.





## Strategic Direction

In 2018, four strategic directions were identified through the strategic plan development process. These directions are inter-related and interdependent, and they ensure that Sheena's Place will continue to build on current strengths and be responsive to changing community needs and opportunities. The bulleted statements are corresponding goals that are intended to ensure clarity of interpretation for Staff who will develop the operational plan.

The directions listed below are not presented in any particular order.

#### **Strengthen Organizational Capacity & Competencies**

- Develop high performing and engaged teams
- Create system efficiencies (IT/HR)

#### **Optimize the Model of Care**

- Develop programs and services that respond to unmet/emerging needs and system gaps
- Build systems that evaluate programs and services based on impact

### **Build Awareness of Eating Disorders & Sheena's Place**

 Develop clear, consistent messaging and amplify our story

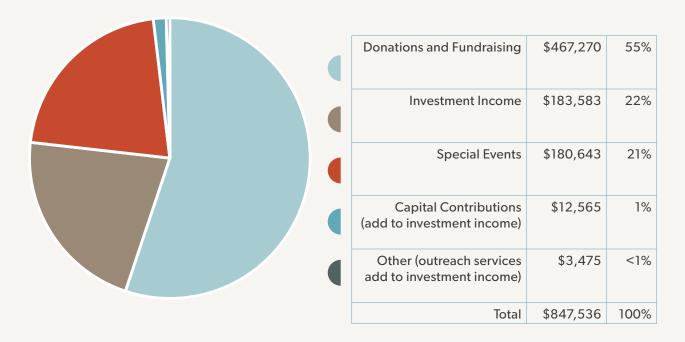
#### **Generate Sustainable Revenue**

- Create and implement a long-term plan for financial stability and growth
- Assess the current revenue mix
- Acquire new donors, re-engage lapsed and cultivate current donors
- Identify and assess potential revenue streams (ie. evaluate space limitations and opportunities)

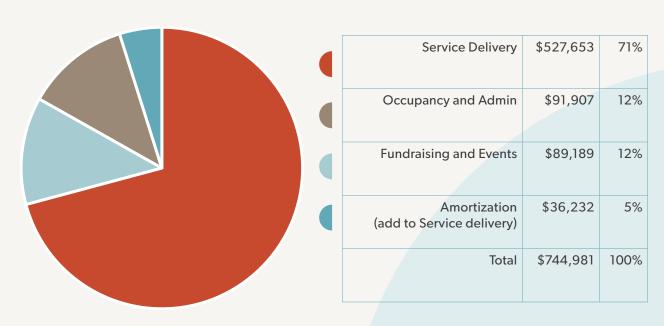


## Sheena's Place Financials 2019

### Revenue Breakdown



### Expense Breakdown



### Our 2019 Donors

Sheena's Place would like to recognize the following individuals and organizations who have generously contributed in 2019.

We are profoundly grateful for your support and apologize that we could not include all donations due to limited space.

Every gift that Sheena's Place receives helps to make a difference in our community.

Thank You!

### \$50,000+

Lem and Karen Janes Theresa Mersky

### \$25,000 to \$49,999

The Andree Rheaume and Michael Fitzhenry Family Foundation

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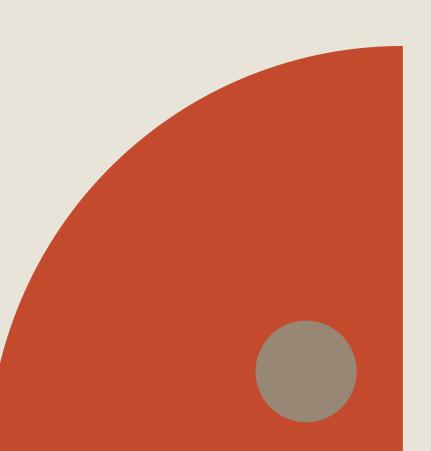
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"Sheena's Place provides a beautiful outdoor space, the Healing Garden, to group members as a place to relax and to enjoy fresh air and nature before group sessions."

"Sheena's Place has been an array of hope for me while my life was in crisis." - Group Participant





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