



# The “Coup de main”

## A Home for Cynthia

First published in *The Lowertown Echo*

IMAGINE YOU ARE ALONE raising four children aged 7 to 16 and you have no other choice but to live in a small two-bed motel room, and you have been there for ten months. No play space, no kitchen, no privacy. This is precisely the situation of Lowertown resident, Cynthia, and one that is all too familiar for many of the 879 families in Ottawa who experienced homelessness in 2016. The two City-run family shelters are unable to keep up with demand and so families are placed in motel rooms.

Cynthia describes their situation: “The biggest challenges about living here are figuring out how to cook meals, doing laundry, where to take the kids during the day in summer. We do our dishes in the bathtub. It’s a bit rough having two beds for five people.”

However, Cynthia is not complaining about her family’s plight. They have had to deal with much worse. “Our country is in conflict so we fled in 2016”, she says with a tinge of sadness. She strives towards something better and seeks to make the best of things in the present. “You have to learn to adapt to whatever situation life presents you with – what has allowed me to get through it all is patience and perseverance!”

*879 families in Ottawa experienced homelessness in 2016*

“And the Lowertown Community Resource Centre helps us a lot. The kids go to the homework club – it keeps them busy after school so they aren’t hanging around the streets. It gives them a quiet place that is just right for getting their school work done. The collective kitchens allow us to connect to our community, to help each other out, to prepare food – to feel a sense of belonging.”

The Centre-run Community House offers residents of Lowertown a food bank, a clothes bank, a washer-dryer and internet access. The Centre also provides Cynthia the chance to give back as a volunteer at community



*Cynthia (centre), with Anabelle and Catherine of the LCRC.*

events such as the annual Lowertown Celebration event in Jules-Morin Park.

Despite the challenge, Cynthia and her kids are doing well: the children are getting good grades and Cynthia has even found some part-time work. She is hopeful that her family will soon be able to move into a home of their own. She smiles and says “we will heave a big sigh of relief!”

To view the video, visit: [www.crcbv.ca/cynthias-story](http://www.crcbv.ca/cynthias-story)

## Programs and Services

- **Parents, babies and kids** 0-6 years (Playgroups, counseling, etc.)
- **Camp and after-school activities** for ages 6-21 (Homework club, sports, etc.)
- **Adults** (Counseling, emergency support, etc.)
- **Seniors** (Zumba, Yoga, Swimming)
- **For all** (Food and housing help, community activities, volunteering, resident-led initiatives, etc.)

Service available in many languages – Interpretation services available.

**THANK YOU to Ottawa Community Housing, Mathieu Fleury and our great volunteers for their help with the community house painting project!**

## PLEASE GIVE!

**HELP US** support vulnerable residents from our neighborhood. Your contribution to our Emergency Fund will directly assist people in meeting their **basic needs**:

- Food, diapers, medication, and school supplies for families
- Transportation to medical appointments
- Support after fire or loss of home

Visit our site (<http://www.crcbv.ca>) to make a donation and learn more.



**THANK YOU to Mann Lawyers LLP for their generous gift of furniture!**



# THE ISSUE

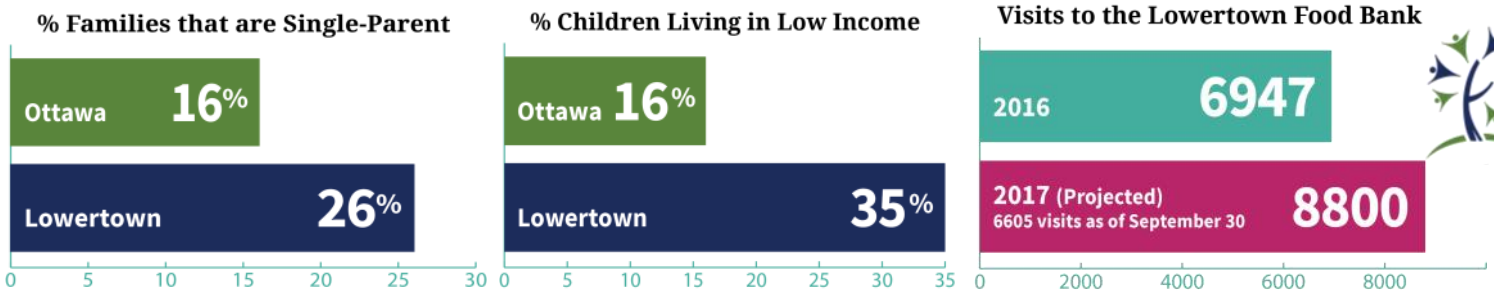
## Responding to Hunger in Lowertown

LOWERTOWN IS A FANTASTIC COMMUNITY in so many respects: multilingual, multicultural, bustling with life, bordered by the Rideau River, the Rideau Canal and the Ottawa River. But some numbers highlight the challenges faced by many in the community: over 35% of children in Lowertown live in low income households; 34.7% of residents live alone; 26.1% of Lowertown families are single-parent. These statistics also point to a high prevalence of “food insecurity.” According to the Dietitians of Canada, “Households experience food insecurity when there is not enough money for adequate, secure access to food, after paying for rent, utilities and other basic living expenses... Among adults in food insecure households, there is a higher prevalence of mental health conditions including depression. Children



Ibrahima (back, left) and Community House volunteers helping on a food distribution day.

who repeatedly experience severe household food insecurity are two to four times more likely to have poorer health or a diagnosed chronic condition.”



# OUR RESPONSE

IN RESPONSE TO THIS CHALLENGE, the Lowertown Community Resource Centre offers the following:

- ◆ **Food bank:** Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings, the LCRC’S Good Neighbours Community House on Beausoleil Dr. serves more than 1,200 residents households every year for a total of over 8,000 visits. And this in a community of 14,000 residents!
- ◆ **Children’s programming:** Our afterschool programs provide **healthy snacks** for over 80 kids every day and our summer camp provides daily **lunch** for all of its 100 campers.
- ◆ **MarketMobile:** a not-for-profit mobile grocery store which operates out of a retro-fit trailer and truck. Every Tuesday from 5PM-6:30PM at the Community House.
- ◆ **Good Food Box:** affordable boxes of delicious and nutritious vegetables and fruits can be picked up at our Centre once a month.
- ◆ **Good Food Markets:** small markets that set up shop in different buildings in the community to sell a variety of healthy foods at great value.
- ◆ **Community gardens and raised beds:** at 40 Cobourg St., in front of the Community House on Beausoleil Drive and at other locations in the neighbourhood.
- ◆ **How do you like your eggs?** Free breakfast made to order on Monday at the Community House – began

in April and now over 50 residents show up every week!

- ◆ **Canning and couponing workshops** Offered on a variable schedule.
- ◆ **Community kitchens:** groups of residents are brought together to cook, socialize and share a meal. They can bring some food home and they learn techniques for making healthy food at low cost.
- ◆ **Grocery store vouchers** for residents who are in a bind.

All of these activities speak to the importance of not simply giving a handout. Our approach is multi-faceted and involves the provision of food, learning opportunities, connecting with neighbours and access to other supports such as counseling and recreational activities.

**To get involved, contact us about volunteering or donating to the LCRC!**

### LCRC Highlights

- The Centre is **Open** every **THURSDAY** evening until **7pm!**
- **Bilingual Prenatal group** every Wednesday from 9am to 11am at 40 Cobourg.
- **Youth Basketball (13-21 yrs):** 7-10 pm Monday nights at Routhier Community Centre, 172 Guigues.