



The “Coup de main”

On the Menu: Squash Soup, Social Benefit, Homemade Bread, Entrepreneurship, Curry Chicken and Collaboration

By The Lowertown Community Resource Centre
(as published in the Lowertown ECHO)

Want a recipe for innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurial spirit in the community benefit sector? How is this for an ingredient list?

- Multiple organizations working together to try something new...CHECK
- Transforming a sparingly used communal room and attached commercial kitchen...CHECK
- Providing youth with developmental and / or social challenges an opportunity to develop skills for meaningful employment...CHECK
- Increasing access to healthy and affordable food...CHECK
- Helping reduce social isolation for low income residents...CHECK

Since March, the Mac Manor Bistro has been open three days a week to residents of 123 Augusta St. (otherwise known as MacDonald Manor), an Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) building in Lowertown. Clients can order a healthy lunch for \$2 or bring home one litre of soup for \$1.

“It’s an excellent program...a lot of people are benefiting”, says Bob Mather, a resident of the building.

So how does it all work? The Bistro is the product of more than two years of discussions among five partner organizations. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board refers students who have struggled to complete high school due to developmental disabilities or social / behavioural challenges to Algonquin College’s Kitchen Steward program. This program teaches safe food handling, basic food preparation, kitchen sanitation and table service. Rather than learning at the College itself, students get hands-on training in a real but less stressful restaurant environment. Just ask Mitchell, one of the Algonquin students: **“Here, we’re interacting with real people, real clients, real issues and [learning] how to deal with that. It’s lessened my nervousness around talking to people. We’re always working on different dishes. Some of the dishes have been difficult to make but we’ve learned. We make everything, even the bread!”**



Algonquin students Mitchell and Beulah cooking up a storm at the Mac Manor Bistro.

Algonquin and Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) invested to upgrade the kitchen space and brighten the common room on the top floor. Social workers and support staff from OCH, Options Bytown and the LCRC are present to support residents, to

encourage them to come and to ensure that the program meets community needs.

“Coming up here, it’s friendly, it’s kind. They make you feel welcome and I like to support the students.” says another resident, Diane Meldrum. “I don’t like eating alone... here you’ve got company and the food is marvelous! It’s a nice place to be.” Algonquin student, Beulah, also likes seeing people and getting to know them. “In the future, I’d like to open my own business. This gives me experience”, she adds.

For now, the Bistro is only available to residents of the building. However, the partners are exploring ways of adding to the project and finding ways for it to generate revenue for reinvestment in the community. At the Lowertown Community Resource Centre, we are proud to be involved in such a partnership and see it as a model that could be replicated in many other buildings across Ottawa.



THANK YOU to our AWESOME Youth Worker Team that consistently offers outstanding service, attentive care and many positive experiences to the children and youth of Lowertown.



Chanelle and Jacob, LCRC senior youth workers, in front of the Youth Centre



THE ISSUE

EQUALITY of opportunity is a cornerstone principle of our society but in practice it is not easy to ensure. Many factors contribute to this reality. While growing up in a low income home or not having access to enough healthy food don't automatically mean that person is headed for less success in life, we do know that they are among the extra barriers that make it more difficult. In Lowertown, youth are considerably more likely to face such barriers than in most other parts of Ottawa. For example, the rate of single parent homes is twice that of the City of Ottawa. **Over 37% of families with children are living in low income** in Lowertown compared to **12%** for Ottawa. Upon entering school, Lowertown youngsters are more likely to already be behind the average child in many domains of childhood development (see the accompanying graphic). It is therefore critical that we support families and try to level the playing field as a community.

THE RESPONSE

IT IS AMAZING how much something as seemingly simple as an afterschool program or summer camp can have **multiple impacts on a family and on a community.** It is first and foremost a **safe place for kids to go** when the school bell rings or during the long days of summer. Anyone who visits one of our child and youth programs at the Lowertown Community Resource Centre will quickly see how they provide a vibrant place for kids to socialize, stay active, eat healthy food and get help with homework. What might not be apparent are the ripple effects.

For many families and especially single moms, having such a place for your children means

...**that** you can find and maintain employment. Our programs are free. Imagine having to choose between a keeping a \$14/hour job or paying \$20 per day for each of your three children to attend a summer camp—the math doesn't work.

...**that** 12-14 year olds need not be left at home all day long. ... that your children are surrounded by positive older role models (all of our youth workers minimally have a College-level diploma in a field related to youth)

...**that** if your family is forced to live in a local motel for many months on end, your children can have access to computers to complete their assignments and can find respite from sharing a room with your three other siblings and mother.

THANK YOU to the International Joint Commission for their kind donation of furniture! We now have comfortable couches and chairs in the Youth Centre, new office furniture at the Centre and Community House.

School Readiness (EDI 2014)

Children in the Lowest 10th Percentile  Ottawa  Lowertown

For physical health and well-being



For language and cognitive development



On at least 1 of 5 EDI scales



For more information on Early Development Indicators (EDI), please visit: edi.offordcentre.com

615 children / youth aged 6-14 live in Lowertown
Over 85 of them attend Club310

160 youth in Lowertown aged 6 to 14 attended LCRC summer camps



All our programs are FREE!

Young ladies from the Keeping Youth Connected afterschool program run out of the Community House



More than just a place to go...

- ★ At the LCRC we have many programs for youth run by qualified staff who offer a safe, welcoming and healthy environment for Lowertown kids. Every program is free and serves healthy snacks, helps with homework and runs fun physical activities for the youth after school.
- ★ Enrolling kids in our programs often gives families their first contact with our Centre which allows them to be connected to all of the other supports we offer such as youth counselling, our food bank, help with housing and walk-in counseling.
- ★ To know more about our **Children and Youth Programs**: Afterschool programs (such as Club310, Transitions, Keeping Youth Connected, Homework Club, etc), Lowertown Swordfish Swim Club, Youth Basketball, Parenting Programs and Youth Counselling, or to learn about the other programs we run at the LCRC, please visit : www.crcbv.ca