

good food access fund

This spring, we were grateful to receive a significant grant from Community Food Centres Canada called the Good Food Access Fund, which provides emergency relief during this time of national crisis to our most vulnerable neighbours. With this opportunity, we distributed food boxes to those in Ark's community filled with:

- high quality produce, which we obtained by partnering locally with the Mobile Food Market,
- gift cards to grocery stores, which gave recipients choice and dignity in their shopping.

2009 Minimum wage: \$8.60

2009 Average rent for bachelor apartment: \$638

2021 Minimum wage: \$12.95

2021 Average rent for bachelor apartment: \$1,200

mutual support

We invited one woman; she began inviting her friends; a collaborative of women with toddlers coming together for mutual support, friendship and connection. We moved outdoors to the park across the street once the lockdown eased, and now it seems to be growing on its own as women in the park approach us to ask what is going on. A beautiful exchange of mutual friendship.

restoring the city

We've been honoured and thrilled to encourage & walk alongside some of our alumni youth as they become co-partners in the community. Their lived experience brings so much knowledge and wisdom to community development as they've started programs and joined outreaches to meet needs during the pandemic and beyond. These rich conversations have been encouraging and are affecting positive community impacts.

the pandemic

Like many of you, the days going forward from March 2020 were filled with wondering, uncertainty, fear, lockdown, relief, concern, sadness, goodness, time... We stayed connected and met with people over facetime, assisted folks applying for CERB, drove around the city delivering food, eventually met with people in yards and on sidewalks, and assisted folks navigating inadequate housing and lack of housing options.

"I want to acknowledge that living through this pandemic is a trauma. Parts of our brain have shut down in order for us to survive"

~ J. Yaeger, LPC

The colour orange in this newsletter was chosen to honour the indigenous children, families & communities who suffered through residential schools



It's hard to believe that just a few weeks after CNOY 2020, the pandemic arrived in Canada. As the year went on, lockdowns came and went, and it was difficult to imagine CNOY 2021. With lots of brainstorming, creativity, adaptation, and dedicated participants, it began to take shape! With direction from the CNOY

head office, we developed a virtual event. We dearly missed gathering in-person with food and music, but we were still able to connect with our teams as we dropped off packages filled with toques, snacks from Starbucks, fundraising materials, walk-day activities and more. Thirty-five teams walked their own route, or the one Ark created, during the month of February. Over 200 dedicated walkers helped us raise over \$57,000. For any of you who participated (walking or donating) we are incredibly grateful!!

affordable housing

As things open back up and you find yourself driving back downtown or going for walks in parks in HRM, you might come across some tents or 6x8 sheds covered in Tyvek.

“Jim Graham, the executive director of the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, said it [the 6x8 sheds] shines a light on **homelessness** in the Halifax area, a problem that he said has become much more visible during the pandemic. But the shelters are temporary solutions to a much deeper issue, he added. ‘The root of the problem right now is not so much shelter space as it is affordable housing, and there's no quick answer,’ Graham told CBC Radio's *Maritime Noon* on Monday. ‘Housing takes time to put in place.’” (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/homeless-shelters-municipal-land-mutual-aid-1.5886881>)

To be considered **affordable housing**, no more than 30% of a household's income should be spent on rent, utilities, and property tax. While the tents and sheds are a visible reminder of the affordable housing crisis in our city and country, this crisis is also invisibly affecting single parents and families that can't afford safe, adequate housing. How does a single parent of two, making \$1000/month, afford rent, electricity, clothes, food and other expenses? If we truly put ourselves in these situations, how do we live well?

“It's absolutely terrifying for anybody to be in this situation.... It's not a personal problem. It's a provincial, **systemic problem**”: this quote is from the parent of a young family in Nova Scotia struggling to find housing. (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/housing-crisis-nova-scotia-1.6106314>)

Beyond our province, this is a national issue. Over the last year, our contacts across the country have seen an explosion of tent cities. Yet even before the pandemic, the average Canadian was spending about 50% of their income on housing, and half of Canadians were living paycheque to paycheque. Any significant drop in income, which has

Thank you all for your sustaining generosity & support, encouragement, care & prayers.

- Gill, Dorothy & Beth

happened to so many throughout the last year and a half, threatens millions of lives.

HRM ordered eviction notices to those living in the 6x8 sheds in the city at the beginning of July and they are slowly being removed; tenants are being offered 10 weeks in a hotel. “The Halifax Regional Municipality recognizes that all residents deserve a home. It has adopted an *empathy-based* human rights approach to homeless encampments that recognizes the human dignity of people experiencing homelessness.” (<https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/public-safety>)

And after 10 weeks... what then...

Earlier this spring, a number of us participated in a month-long symposium, ‘*Beyond Housing to Homefulness*’. **Homefulness** is the idea that everyone has a seat at the table; we all have a consciousness of other peoples' humanity; we are part of one another's lives; and the only way we affect lasting change in our community and country is by working together.

Across the country, there have been some really neat initiatives along these lines such as repurposing old buildings and church parking lots that are underutilised and transforming them into beautiful community housing: Indwell (Hamilton), Co:Here Housing Community (Vancouver), AHANS (Nova Scotia).

We invite you to join others and become part of the bigger story toward affordable housing in Nova Scotia. What resources do you have? Underutilized buildings/churches, parking lots, land, expertise, creativity, finances... Please contact us if you would like to dialogue further about this.

Ark is funded solely by donations from individuals, churches, and community grants.

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E-transfer or cheque payable to Ark;

Pre-authorized monthly plan (of \$20 or more)

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