

Newsletter – August 2012

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LIGHTS makes supportive housing a reality for individuals with an intellectual disability, through partnerships with families, philanthropists, government, and established agencies. The result is a better quality of life for these citizens and their families.

That was and still is the mission and mandate of LIGHTS. Today, a mere year and a half after its inception, LIGHTS is a radically successful working model of innovative housing support for people with intellectual disabilities.

Over our first 18 months, we received no fewer than 130 inquiries from families. Of those inquiries, 55 families have engaged with LIGHTS. Of those families, 15 adults with intellectual disabilities are now in new, independent living arrangements, with LIGHTS as a supportive partner.

That's a 27 per cent follow-through rate, in 18 months! If you'll forgive our immodesty, that's quite an achievement. LIGHTS set out to address the pressing need for new housing for people who have intellectual disabilities. We have already made a mark, and we've only just started.

And the LIGHTS model is working dynamically, as intended. Three individuals we helped have already moved on from LIGHTS, after receiving permanent funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services through their Individualized Residential Model Initiative.

This has always been the LIGHTS plan—that each family we support and establish in a home of its own will ultimately be well positioned to secure funding from government or other sources, whereupon LIGHTS can help someone new.

We currently have 6 more families who are on the cusp of applying for LIGHTS funding, ready to transition into permanent situations.

Of course, LIGHTS isn't just a new way of financing housing for people with disabilities: it's a new way of thinking about, and empowering, the lives of individuals with disabilities. We believe families benefit tremendously from the greater freedom of choice and personal responsibility that LIGHTS offers them.

Let us give you a few examples.



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John, a 34-year-old young man with Down syndrome, now lives with 2 friends and a caregiver. LIGHTS pays the caregiver's salary, helps the family with John's budget, and connects them with other families. His parents, retired, and his 2 sisters (who live on their own) now have some peace of mind and look forward to seeing John on weekends. As for John himself, he's thrilled with his newfound freedom, and is enjoying a daily program tailored to his needs and interests.

Graham, a 30-year-old young man with intellectual disabilities and cerebral palsy, is excited to be moving into his own home with friends and a caregiver, thanks to financial support and guidance from LIGHTS. Before LIGHTS became involved in his life, Graham's mother had to work from home in order to care for Graham during the hours he was without caregivers.

Both these families have gladly accepted personal responsibility for the management of their sons' lives in return for the opportunity to give them an independent life.

The families with whom we partner establish their own realistic budgets, to which they contribute at least 20%. To help them with financial support, LIGHTS has raised over \$2 million thus far.

LIGHTS isn't a give-away program, but it is a cost-effective housing model. It is guided by principles of affordability and sustainability, a model that other Ontario communities and agencies are now examining.

LIGHTS time has come. Families and service agencies are looking for more creative, flexible, entrepreneurial strategies such as the LIGHTS model--a system of funding that embodies the real meaning of "community living," that engages entire communities in the process of helping its less advantaged members live independent, contributing lives. Private citizens are providing a valuable public service! Families can't do it alone.

You, our donors, give us the capacity to advance our mission. Thank you for your generosity and for recognizing the importance of what LIGHTS is. John and Graham are living lives of their own in homes of their own, and their families have a better quality of life. They have you to thank for those great gifts.

Warm regards,

Mary Pat Armstrong and the team at LIGHTS