

*Somerset West
Community Health Centre*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NOVEMBER 2023



55 ECCLES WELCOMES MAYOR SUTCLIFFE & COUNCILLOR TROSTER

This month, Somerset West welcomed Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, and Councillor Ariel Troster for a tour of our 55 Eccles Street location. The visit offered an opportunity to engage with staff; to showcase the diversity of mental health supports we offer to our community; and to discuss potential funding opportunities.

PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

MONTHLY WELLNESS CLINIC RESUMES AT SENIOR'S CO-OP BUILDING

After a pause during the pandemic, primary health care's outreach to senior's nurse has resumed monthly wellness clinics to the senior's co-op building at 100 Empress. The clinic provides an opportunity for residents to speak with a nurse about their health-related concerns. The nurse can do a brief wellness check, answer questions, make recommendations and provide education. They also provide links to community resources and support services. When indicated a home visit can be arranged for further assessment.

COMBINED COVID & FLU VACCINE CLINICS

As respiratory season is upon us, the Primary health care team is offering combined COVID & Flu vaccine clinics to clients, staff and community members. There are six vaccine clinic dates scheduled between late October and mid-November. Depending on interest additional clinic dates may be added.



LUNG HEALTH



In October, the lung health staff participated in a full day "retreat" in collaboration with several sister CHC's and partners from across the region. This full day event focussed on discussion regarding updated guidelines and relevant topics in lung health. Several guest speakers joined the team including local physicians, and the palliative care team nurse from Bruyere. The staff enjoyed this opportunity to collaborate with fellow Respiratory Therapists and Physiotherapists. Next year, the retreat will be planned again in Ottawa (alternating years).

OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE

The City of Ottawa is experiencing a significant rise in the number of refugees, leading many to seek assistance from the shelter system. In partnership with the Refugee Claimant Working Group, backed by Refugee 613 and funding from a private donor, the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC) has taken action by releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to support a short-term project. This serves as a first step in a multi-phased approach towards enhancing access to healthcare services for refugee claimants in Ottawa. The appointed consultant is tasked with conducting a thorough analysis of the current state of healthcare service models across Canada. Additionally, they will engage with local stakeholders involved in providing healthcare services to refugees. The objective of this initiative is to gather information and insights that will guide the development of a centralized and coordinated approach to healthcare services for refugee claimants in Ottawa.

Additionally, ONHC will soon welcome a new nurse practitioner and physician to aid in handling the growing number of immigrants, refugees, and newcomers seeking care at our clinic. The expansion of our staffing capacity will enhance our ability to efficiently manage the flow of clients. Our language interpretation program, Ottawa Language Access (OLA), has also experienced personnel growth. We are currently in the process of training eight additional interpreters, which will bring our roster to over 80 registered, trained, and certified medical interpreters. OLA is also actively involved in the community, collaborating with the University of Ottawa Medical Department to provide cultural competency training to residents, aiming to enhance cultural awareness and understanding for students to help inform their future medical practice.

MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING

The Mental Health and Counselling Team in collaboration with Yet Keen had the opportunity to host members from the Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing (CSIP), Links2Wellbeing-Social Prescribing for Older Adults, as well as Dr. Kate Mulligan and her research team. This was an opportunity to highlight the important work of the Alliance for Healthier Communities funded pilot that is supporting the Black-Focused Social Prescribing Program. Angella Luwukya the black social prescribing navigator was able to highlight some of the amazing cross team collaboration between the Community Engagement Team and Black Mental Health Team supporting Black Community members highlighting a recent community event. This event pulled together over 27 participants from the Black community with the support of four translators living within Ottawa Community Housing within the SWCHC catchment creating an opportunity for community to come together and have a moment of pause, enjoyment, connect and play.



FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH, & HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS

Somerset West Community Health Centre hosted 31 student placements in 2022-2023. An impressive 100% of students who completed the Student Feedback Survey strongly agreed that their placement experience was rewarding and that they would recommend our Centre to other students.

“The learning environment in the harm reduction department was very supportive, with many opportunities to ask question & recieve feedback.

“Thank you for a great placement! I learned a lot and think this was a fantastic learning opportunity. All the staff were so welcoming and knew my name. My preceptor was extremely knowledgeable, friendly, and supportive. All staff were keen to provide me with the best learning experience even if they weren't my preceptor. I loved being at Somerset West and my experience here caused me to ask for this placement again next term!

“During my placement, I had enough assistance and access to resources, which significantly contributed to the development of my abilities and deepened my understanding of the complexities associated with community participation.

“SWCHC has a great team in the Community Engagement and Advocacy Unit.



The Christmas Exchange assistance program provides those in need with food hampers or much-needed redeemable gift certificates during the holiday season, offering recipients hope and dignity during an otherwise challenging time of year. Somerset West supports clients with their applications, and our dedicated staff and volunteers are assisting with entering the applications into the Christmas Exchange portal. We have already helped 56 clients complete their registrations. Applications opened in October, and the deadline is November 24th, 2023.

We have received an invitation from the Canada Revenue Agency to rejoin and register for the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) for 2024. Somerset West has registered and recruited several new volunteers to support this demanding service.

ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE

The Rochester Heights Community House Mental Health Breakfast program takes place once a week, and served 90 meals this month. Our partnership with the Dalhousie Food Cupboard allowed us to distribute 51 food bags, to support emergency food access for seniors with mobility issues this month.

Community House staff connected with 415 units this month, to deliver key Ottawa Public Health messages and program updates.

YET KEEN

Yet Keen's cooking classes have been incredibly popular amongst the seniors. A peer volunteer hosted a class this month, featuring lemongrass grilled chicken. The class was full with 10 participants. Other dishes made over the last couple months include cauliflower fried rice, kimchi pork stew, and Vietnamese fresh rolls. We intend to continue these classes to engage the seniors in the collective food experience and healthy eating.

We resumed our collaboration with the Ottawa Art Gallery after the summer break. On Oct 27 about 25 participants made clay creatures under the coaching of the instructors from the OAG. This continues to be a popular series amongst the seniors.



COMMUNITY HEALTH PROMOTION

On October 23rd, the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres organized a forum at City Hall to amplify resident voices in the 2024 City Budget process. Residents expressed concern of the urgent attention needed to address poverty and mental health in communities across the City. Kathleen Fortin (Kitchissippi Ward resident) spoke about the lack of truly accessible, deeply affordable and safe housing for people with disabilities. The event was attended by 15 City Councillors including Jeff Leiper and Ariel Troster. As a result of the event, there were interviews on CBC Ottawa Morning, Radio Canada Les Matins D'ici, Le Droit, CBC News, the Ottawa Citizen, and the Centretown Buzz.

In late October, Somerset West CHC submitted a letter to Minister Sean Fraser - Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and Minister Marc Miller - Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to join the Alliance to End Homelessness and other local stakeholders in urging the federal government to provide \$30 million dollars of immediate funding to the City of Ottawa. The funding would support rent subsidies to rapidly re-house people staying in shelters. It would also be used towards emergency housing for non-profit agencies to enable immediate housing options to newcomers, diverting them from the shelter system.



In the Mechanicsville neighborhood a Halloween party was organized by the residents at 18 Burnside with a great turn out from the whole community. Tea and toast in Mechanicsville is becoming a place to break isolation and receive support from different service providers in the community. Sunshine hub was hosting its first big event for Halloween. A place for the community to share and celebrate together.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Neighbourhood youth were provided an opportunity to gain skills that can be used when babysitting. Our goal is to hold the Babysitting Course once per month to interested individuals over 11 years of age.

HARM REDUCTION

ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

Our ongoing weekly outreach clinic at the University of Ottawa is back in full swing and providing quick and easy access to anonymous HIV testing to students on campus.

A new partnership with the Minwaashin Lodge Monday night drop-in has been established. For the next three months, we are rolling out a pilot of monthly anonymous HIV testing sessions to take place during their drop-in. This robust drop-in program is Indigenous focused and but provides services broadly to folks living in poverty, street-involved folks, and people who use drugs. Alongside monthly HIV testing, the Drop-in will be continuing to provide their regular resources to participants: food, hygiene products, harm reduction, referrals to services, and more.

OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

Over the past 6 months the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) reconfigured working groups based on feedback from members and in order to address capacity concerns. The three working groups that support the goals and vision of the Coalition are Anti-racism Advocacy and Systems Change (ARASC), Mental Health Awareness (MHA) and Mental Health Supports (MHS). These are just some of the items that the working groups are currently advancing, in addition to Black Mental Health Week 2024 planning and the third and final 2023 capacity building workshops for members. You can also catch the latest in our learning series, OBMHC Intersections on Facebook at: https://fb.watch/o52O5v_6oR/



HARM REDUCTION TEAM

The Harm Reduction Team has been working hard on a number of funding proposals to address the sustainability of many of our key programs. We submitted an extensive proposal to Ontario Health aimed at maintaining and strengthening the peer based outreach work of the Drug Overdose Prevention and Education Project (DOPE), as well as clinical support through our Safe Supply program. We are in the final stages of completing two other proposals - one to Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions fund to support our peer outreach; and one to the City of Ottawa, to seek funding through the Alternative Response Call for proposal. The latter proposal is being led by Centretown CHC with strong support from our organization. This proposal will build on the success and lessons learned from our Crisis Outreach Program (HCOW).

In other news, the Consumption and Treatment Service has continued to expand its hours of operation as part of our return to pre-COVID hours of service delivery. The CTS hours of operation are now 9-5 Friday-Monday and 8-8 Tuesday-Thursday. This comes at a key time for clients of the program, as the days get darker and colder.

The Harm Reduction program has been grateful to receive community support for our clients in the form of two major efforts on our behalf.

Zac Murray from Sewer Pool Productions who hosted a Metal Destruction 4 Harm Reduction Show on November 4th at The Dominion Tavern. The event raised \$1,210 for our Homeless Crisis Outreach (HCOW) and Drug Overdose Prevention and Education (DOPE) teams and resulted in dozens of people being trained in Naloxone at the show!



The second was a donation of dozens of hats and scarves, handmade with love by a wonderful person connected to our organisation, who sourced the wool to make these items from her neighbours. We cannot say how much we appreciate this kind of grassroots care, it means the world to our staff and our clients!

Finally, our partners at Sandy Hill CHC and Soul Space Ottawa hosted a public screening of the documentary "Love in the Time of Fentanyl" at the Bytowne Cinema, which was well attended by many staff from the Harm Reduction program, as well as the broader community. The work of this program is so acute, we often don't have the opportunity to take time, and to build connections outside of our immediate community. It's always affirming to connect with people outside of Somerset West who share our work and values. We are lucky to have such community partners and connections!

