

*Somerset West Community
Health Centre*

CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

MAY 2025



HART HUB

On April 1st, we officially launched the HART Hub — and the response has been incredibly positive.

Since opening, we've seen strong engagement, with approximately 50 client encounters daily between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Clients are accessing a range of services, including hot showers, nutritious meals, support navigating social services and housing, and connections to primary care providers. It's been heartening to see how happy clients are to return and re-engage with the support we offer.

While some services are available immediately, others will be introduced over time.

LOOKING FORWARD:

Future phases will expand services to include direct connections to primary care, mental health support, treatment programs, permanent supportive housing linkages, and rapid referrals to withdrawal management and medical stabilization beds.

We're actively planning to expand our hours-of-service delivery and grow our program. This will include population-specific drop-in space, targeted programming, and the development of neighborhood food partnerships to strengthen our meal services and build stronger community connections.

FAMILY COMMUNITY HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

YET KEEN

April was a month of celebration and learning at Yet Keen. To mark Volunteer Appreciation Month, we hosted a heartfelt appreciation event honouring more than 45 dedicated volunteers who contribute their time and talents to our programs, services, and community events. Over 70 members and volunteers attended the gathering, which included a thank-you lunch and shared words of gratitude by members. It was a warm and joyful occasion, and we were thrilled to have SWCHC Volunteer Coordinator Doreen Ju join us for the celebration.



This month's Joy of Cooking workshop featured delicious Singapore-style noodles and century egg with lean meat congee — prepared by seniors and cooked to perfection by our volunteer chef, Fanny. The dishes were a hit, with many saying they tasted just like restaurant favourites!

April also marked the return of our Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Health Lecture Series, with sessions focused on empowering seniors with self-care knowledge through a TCM lens.



Catherine Liang, the Chinese Outreach Nurse from SWCHC, led an informative and engaging workshop titled "Digestive Problems: Understanding Constipation and How to Prevent It." The session focused on this common but often overlooked health concern among older adults, providing participants with a deeper understanding of its impact on overall health, and practical strategies for prevention and relief. Catherine emphasized the importance of diet, hydration, physical activity, and routine, and responded to individual questions with care and expertise.



The workshop was well received, with many attendees expressing appreciation for the useful, relevant information and the opportunity to learn in a supportive setting.



ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE

Rochester Heights Community House continued its commitment to providing a vibrant hub for seniors, families, and residents, by offering inclusive programs that supported health, wellbeing, and connection. With over 500 client interactions throughout the month, engagement was strong across all areas of programming.

Our Client Support Program continued to thrive. Weekly senior exercise classes led by a dedicated

volunteer brought 8–10 seniors together every Friday, while Friday morning art sessions provided a creative outlet for older adults. Children also engaged in five Wednesday art classes, each welcoming about 12 participants. We promoted healthy living by distributing 15 swimming passes and offering daily access to technology and administrative support. Our income tax clinic supported 57 clients onsite and over 20 virtually.



On the food security front, we delivered essentials to 31 tenants through the Dalhousie Food Cupboard, distributed 250 lbs of rescued food, and supported 8 individuals through our Emergency Food Cupboard. The Thursday Breakfast Club reached a milestone with over 50 seniors attending in one week—underscoring the program’s importance for both nourishment and social connection. Our After-School Program continued to provide safe, enriching care for 12–16 children daily.

We were also proud to deepen partnerships with Sunshine Hub, Cornerstone Women’s House, and John Howard Society Rooming House. Our team joined the Post-Incident Neighbourhood Support Response (PINS) on April 17 following a critical incident at 54 Primrose, ensuring tenants received mental health support when it was needed most. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to being a responsive, welcoming, and supportive space for our community.

HARM REDUCTION

The month of April marked the launch of the Peer Outreach Team. Operating from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM, the team is composed of peer-led staff who are uniquely positioned to build trust and connect individuals with resources and support, including services offered through the HART Hub. We also initiated a collaboration with the Community Response Team (CRT) to enhance coordination and service delivery. Looking ahead, we will focus on capacity building next month to further support the development and effectiveness of the team, and expanding our operating hours to better meet the needs of the community.



ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

This month, we attended the HART Hub Frontline Forum and Life Process Program training. This was a great opportunity to learn more about the phased launch of services with the HART Hub and to hear from speakers at partner organizations. We also attended the regular monthly Rainbow Service Provider Network Meeting hosted by Kind Space and the Ten Oaks Project, focusing on the upcoming summer months and opportunities to collaborate during pride season.



Linkage to HIV care is a key priority in our program, and we had the opportunity to get together with our colleagues at the AIDS Committee of Ottawa and the Ottawa Hospital this month. We continue to work closely together to ensure that clients have a smooth pathway to connect with HIV specialists and community support workers when diagnosed with HIV or looking to reconnect to HIV care.

Ongoing anonymous HIV testing sites continued this month at the University of Ottawa, at Club Ottawa, and at the weekly evening 2SLGBTQ+ testing site at MAX Ottawa. We also continue to offer regular drop-in anonymous HIV testing on Mondays at 55 Eccles Street.

ACB/HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

The ACB and HIV Prevention team had the opportunity to attend a Women's Fireside Chat organized in collaboration with Women Tech Makers, connecting with Black women entrepreneurs in a new and inspiring community setting. The event created space for important conversations around HIV/AIDS, allowing us to share resources and support prevention efforts through their unique networks. Additionally, we participated in a four-week training series on "HIV Treatment: Implications for Frontline Workers," which provided valuable insight into how we can better support individuals living with HIV and continue encouraging regular testing and care. These engagements deepened our understanding and reaffirmed our commitment to inclusive, informed HIV prevention and support.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

We're excited to share that we were successful in our application to Canada Summer Jobs! This funding will play a key role in supporting our Youth Leadership Program this summer and enhancing the quality of our Headstart Programs through additional direct service staff. At our Laroche Park After School Program, the arrival of spring was joyfully celebrated with activities that helped children explore their emotions and the environment. Children reflected on how the sunny weather made them feel and discussed ways they could take care of the park they use daily. They also practiced new emotional regulation techniques, including a rainbow mindful breathing activity, and shared what brings them peace—fostering both self-awareness and community care.

OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

In March, Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) members came together to deliver 7 days of programming for Black Mental Health Week 2025. Under the theme "For Community, By Community", OBMHC delivered all our events in person for the first time ever.

Offerings included our first ever men's event, a women's event, community expo and the Community of Practice conference and closing event. OBMHC welcomed Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, Councilor Rawlson King and Indigenous Elder Grandmother Karen at the launch on March 3rd, hosted by Suzanne Obiorah. More than 290 participants registered for events, with the conference being the highest rated and well attended. After receiving feedback from the Executive Board and reviewing upcoming budgets for 2025-2026, OBMHC members will shift to a different format in 2026 in order to maximize financial resources and staff capacity.

Funding for the Coalition will drop significantly in the coming fiscal year as CASMARI funding from Heritage Canada ends March 31 and Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) funding for Counselling Connect ends June 30. Unless additional funding is secured by June 30th, partners will no longer have funding to provide services on the portal. The portal itself is in jeopardy and discussions with JFS (who currently administers the portal) indicate that funding for the CareDove platform could end March 31, 2026.

The community of practice project, funded by Heritage Canada, wraps up on March 31st and plans are in place to leverage city funding to continue to deliver regularly scheduled, scaled down versions of group clinical supervision for participants. This group supervision will also allow the Coalition to leverage limited funding for Counselling Connect counsellors by providing supervision access to therapists from June 2025 until March 2026.

With the recent departure of Project Facilitator Basant Mohamed, OBMHC staff capacity has been significantly reduced. Basant was an incredible asset to the Coalition for 8 months, however without ongoing funding she moved on to a permanent position with benefits. After 5 years and 7 admin staff changes, staffing support positions for the Coalition continues to be a recurring and extremely time-consuming challenge. In order to facilitate coordination and provide meeting notes in a timely fashion, Otter AI and other AI products for translation etc. will be employed by OBMHC coordination staff. Looking ahead to April, OBHC members will have the opportunity to connect in person at our bi-annual all-members meeting on April 30th.



OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

The Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) recently hosted its bi-annual all-members meeting at the Bacanalle Community Hub, where members received updates on collaborative activities and engaged in meaningful group discussions to help shape the Coalition's 2025 initiatives.



On April 27, OBMHC also took part in the 4th Annual Black Business Expo — a vibrant event, bringing together Black entrepreneurs, community organizations, and the public. It was an opportunity to share culturally relevant mental health resources, build awareness, and connect with community members about the importance of mental wellness. Our presence at the Expo helped to normalize conversations around mental health and break down stigma within Black communities.

OBMHC is deepening its commitment to mental health education and support through a partnership with The Royal Ottawa and the African Canadian Association of Ottawa. Together, we will deliver three Mental Health First Aid courses tailored for African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities. These trainings will equip participants with the skills and knowledge to recognize signs of mental health challenges, offer initial support, and connect individuals to appropriate care — strengthening the community's capacity to support one another and foster resilience.

We're excited to share that the ACB (African, Caribbean, and Black) portal on Counselling Connect has received a funding extension through the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan, allowing us to maintain and expand services until July 1, 2026. This important funding will enable the continuation of culturally appropriate mental health support while also expanding language options to better serve our diverse communities.

OBMHC staff and partners are actively working to ensure service continuity beyond the current March 31, 2026 funding deadline associated with the CareDove platform. These efforts include collaborating with funders and community partners to explore sustainable solutions that will allow this critical resource to remain available for ACB communities well into the future.



PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE

Over the past few weeks, Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC) staff have been actively engaging with our community and professional networks through two key outreach events:

PHYSICIANS REFRESHER CONFERENCE

ONHC was proud to host an information booth at the 74th Annual Physicians Refresher Conference. This opportunity allowed us to connect with physicians and healthcare professionals from across the region, raising awareness about the work we do with newcomer communities. We shared information about our clinical and wraparound services, fostering new relationships and reinforcing existing partnerships. Our presence helped further position ONHC as a key player in inclusive and accessible primary care. We are also equally proud that our providers Dr. Parisa Rezaiefar was the Chair of the event and Dr. Nicolas Chagnon was one of the keynote speakers at the conference.



COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR

Our Multicultural Health Navigator participated in the Community Resource Fair at the Adult High School, engaging with hundreds of students from diverse backgrounds. This event was an excellent opportunity to build connections with both community members and partner organizations. We connected with over 50 individuals representing multiple organizations, including new staff from the YMCA Newcomer Center and representatives from the Refugee School Outreach and Social Work Team. Both groups expressed strong interest in collaborating with ONHC to deliver workshops for their clients — in English and other languages — to support settlement, mental health, and community integration.

LUNG HEALTH

Lung Health had the opportunity to attend the 74th Annual Physician Refresher Course to share information about our program. We were pleased to update providers on recent changes to the intake process for our Pulmonary Rehabilitation program. These changes allow providers across Ottawa a smoother more accessible referral process using QR codes and the Ocean platform.

We also shared information on how to access Lung Health services across Ottawa and surrounding partner programs. Providers had a chance to “play” with demo inhalers, review Action Plans, and discuss various lung health updates.

