

2019 & 2020



IMPACT REPORT



*“Resilience is about self-reflection
—a person who is looking into their
own capabilities and concluding,
‘I’m not going to be bothered by
these stressors because I have
created a safe space in my mind.’”*

-Nathan Harmon



[Left] Nathan Harmon, inaugural screening & panel discussion of Connecting the Dots documentary, a global conversation on youth mental health featuring participants from Stella’s Place.

[Right] Young adult council member, Lereen stands outside 54 Wolseley, the future home of Stella’s Place.

Letter from our Executive Director

As this year and my tenure as executive director of Stella's Place come to a close, it is with immense gratitude I thank you, our donors, for your trust and unfailing support over the years.

During this challenging year of COVID-19, many of you have not only continued to support Stella's Place, but have increased your financial commitments. Your support has allowed us to pivot to online service delivery, hire and support additional staff, and engage in deep organizational review and transformational anti-racism and equity work.

In my work in mental health for 30 plus years, I have seen a tendency to think of mental health challenges as a 'life sentence',



[Left] Jenny Carver and Donna Green at our Building Together event, July 2019.



[Right] Jenny speaking at the groundbreaking event for our new building at 54 Wolseley, September 2020.

one that is predictive of dependency, unemployment and marginalization. At Stella's Place, we support young people to understand their potential vulnerabilities so that they can manage their impact. And they can! It is undeniably clear that we are having an impact. We know that we are supporting young adults to see and build on their own strengths, to learn skills to self-manage their mental health, and to move forward with their life pursuits.

This year especially, our participants have demonstrated remarkable resiliency and have embraced peer support and new and innovative ways of connecting as never before. And just as we support our

young people to reach inward to find their strengths and increase their resilience, we have needed to be adaptable and flexible as an organization. With your support, we have emerged stronger than before—with increased knowledge, enhanced programming, and a new, permanent Stella's Place home scheduled to open next fall.

I could not be more proud of all that we have accomplished, thanks to your belief in our model of young adult-led and peer-integrated community-based mental health.

I am pleased to now leave the organization in the capable hands of Wangari Muriuki. Wangari comes from decades of experience spanning the non-profit, mental health and

social equity sectors. Her level of competence in organizational leadership and her commitment to accountability and quality is formidable: I have absolutely no doubt that she will shine!

It is a bittersweet time for me, as I transition from my role as Executive Director to my retirement, but having been part of the visioning, building, and creation of Stella's Place will feed my soul in the next part of my life journey. Thanks to each of you and bless you for your partnership.

Jenny Carver

2019: High Demand & Strong Outcomes

An evidence-based model thanks to donor support



2019 marked the final year of our three-year demonstration cycle and we now have an evidence-based model with solid evaluation data. We know that we have designed and are delivering a solution that is responsive to the needs of young adults, while relieving the strain on hospitals.

The young people who are coming to Stella's Place experience high levels of distress and suicidality, as well as income and employment precarity, and are increasingly referred to us from hospitals and other service providers (62%).

Our program completion rate is far above standard at 85% and, as in previous years,

participants reported significant improvements in coping behaviours and also significant reductions in emergency department visits, and in-patient hospital days.

In addition, 73% of participants reported movement towards school and employment with 36% moving from unemployed to employed status.

We continue to serve 1,200-1,500 young adults annually. In 2019, we recorded over 6,700 visits to our building to access one of the 16 programs offered or to spend time in our Café space (1,074 visits). This is in addition to our off-site peer support training and online BeanBagChat services.

DECREASE IN

- Emergency Department visits
- In-patient days
- Distress, impact of distress, depression, suicidality
- Misuse of substances (i.e., alcohol & drugs)

INCREASE IN

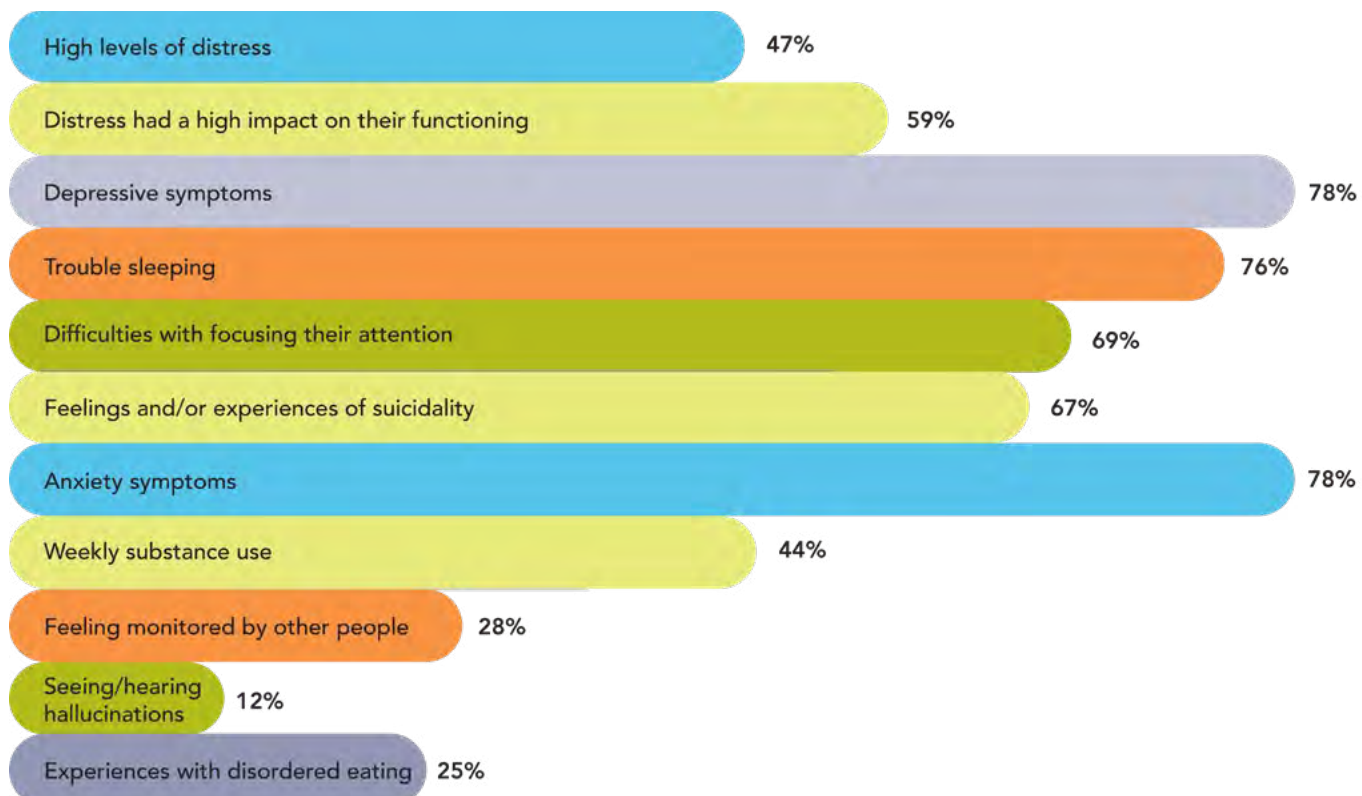
- Resiliency
- Self-efficacy
- Coping
- Self-advocacy
- Readiness for change

Participant Mental Health Concerns

Stella's Place serves a participant base characterized by complex mental health experiences. A large number of individuals are experiencing multiple mental health

concerns at the same time, as well as concurrent disorders (co-occurring addiction and mental health problems).

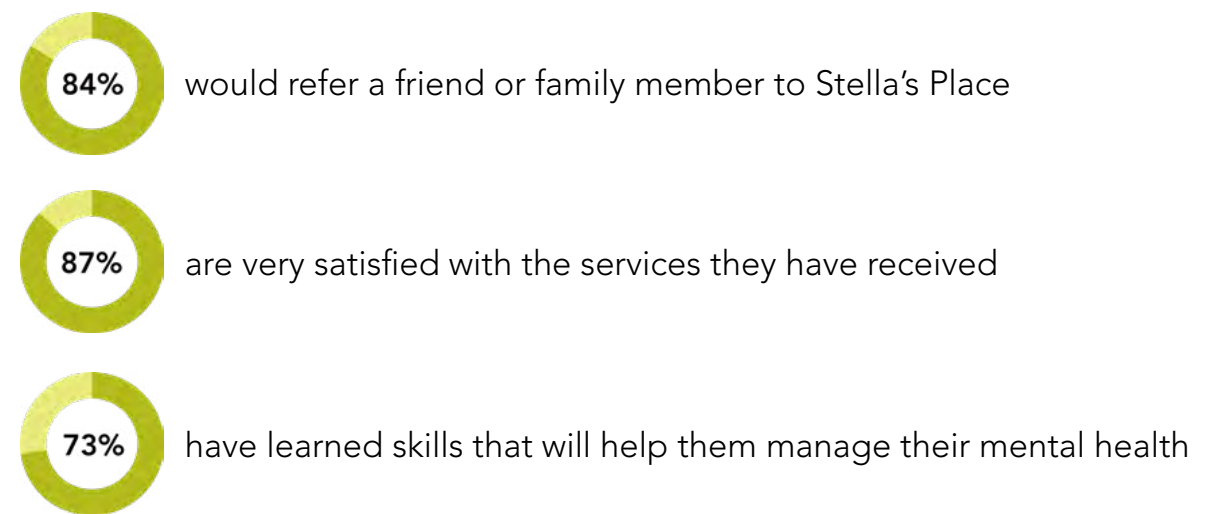
Participants Reported:



“Before coming to Stella’s Place, I guess I was lost, and felt a bit lonely. I felt like a crisis was about to happen and I needed to take some preventive action. I was able to choose several options in one place: the job connection program, figure out my financial situation, participate in WRAP with a peer supporter, and one-on-one counselling. It helped a lot—It helped to point me in the right direction. I needed to have a bit of guidance and some options.”

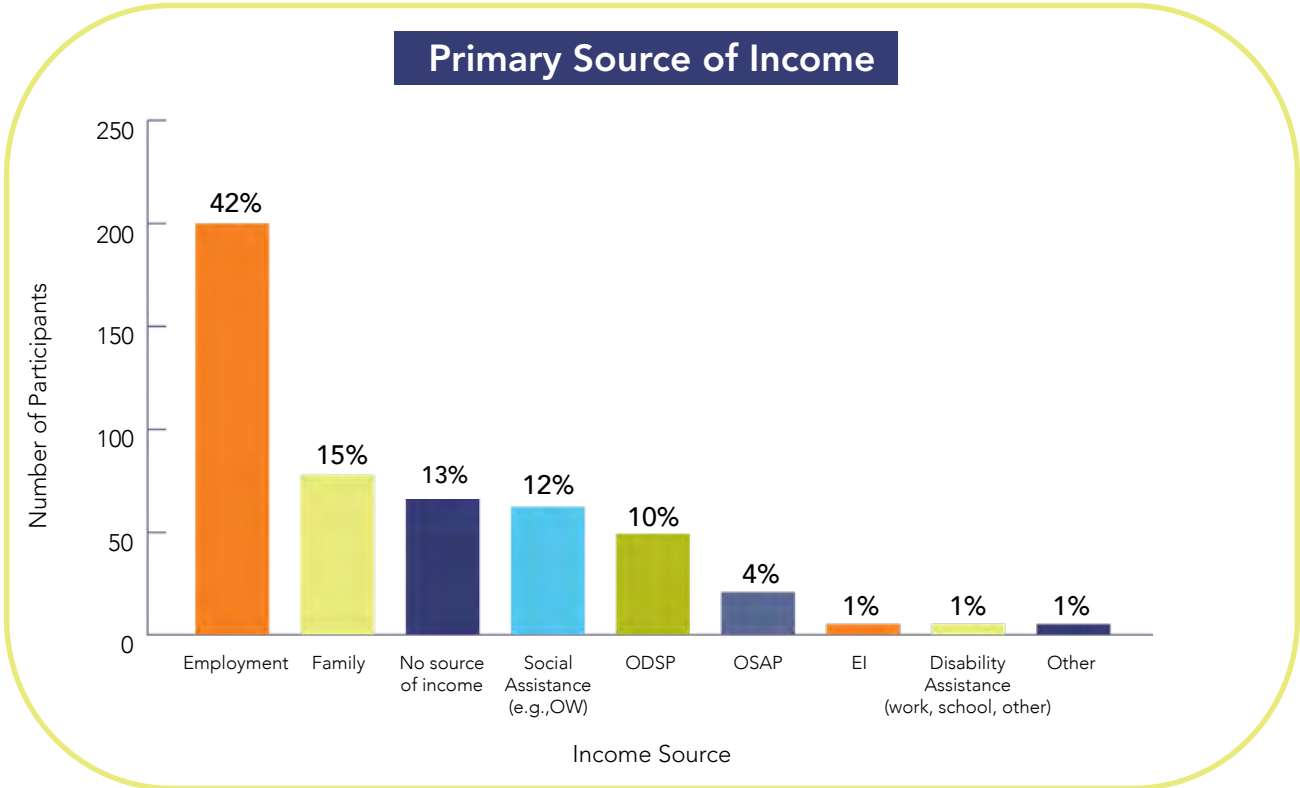
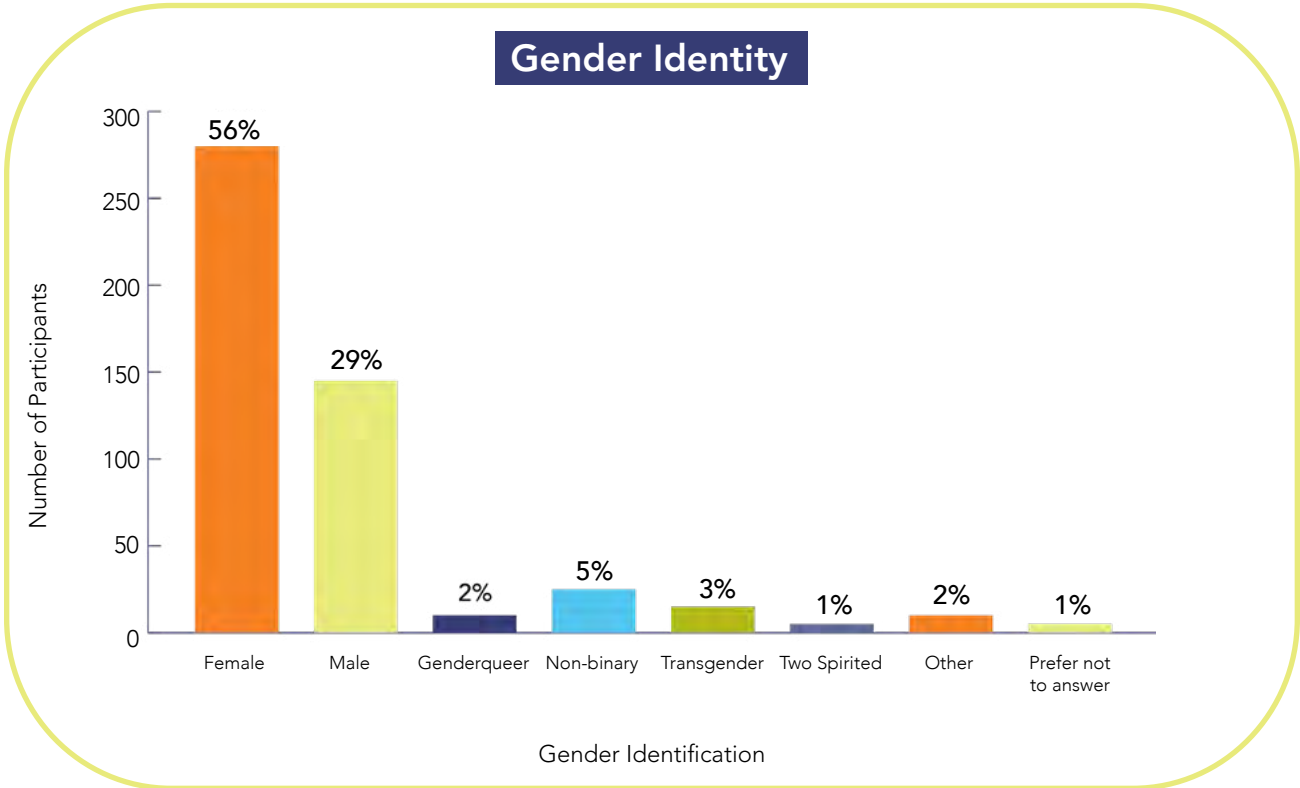
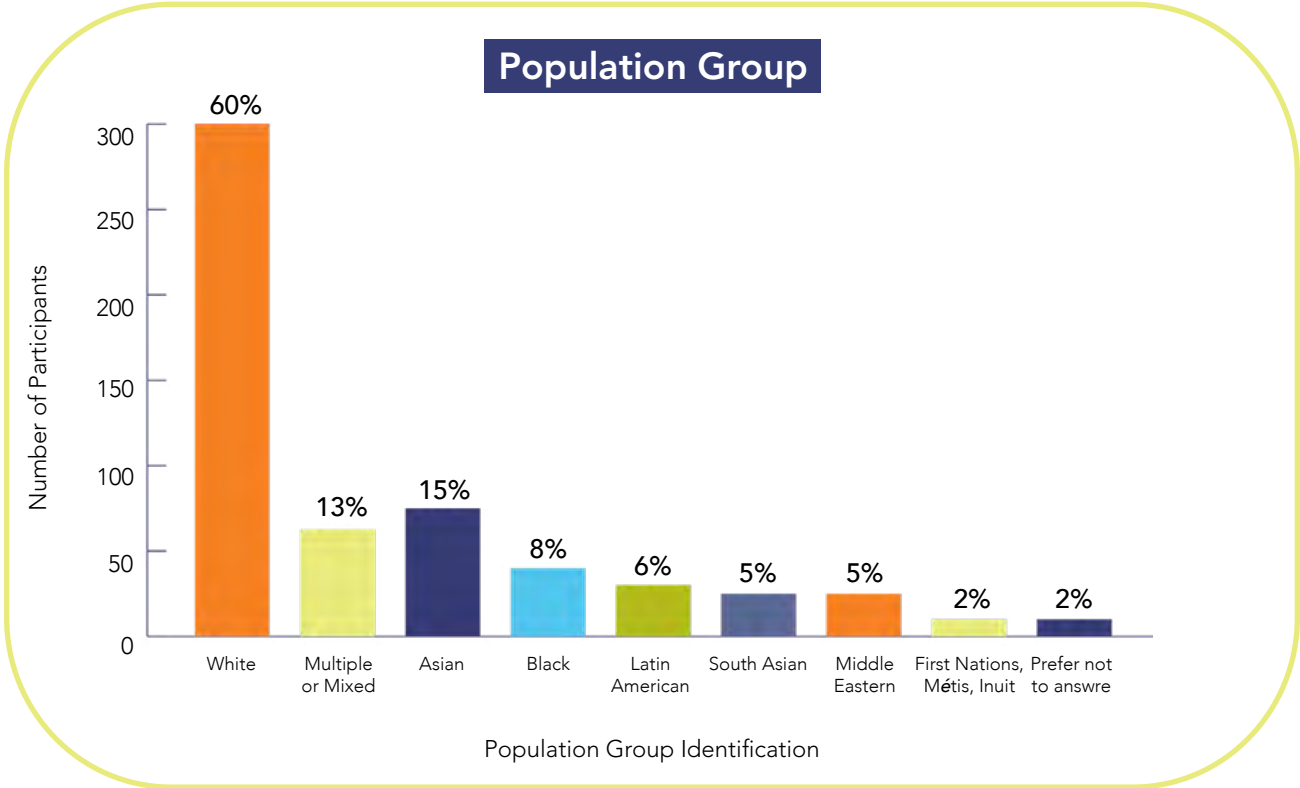
-Victoria, Participant

Participant Satisfaction:



Participant Demographics

The young people who come to visit Stella’s Place are between the ages of 16-29. The average age of participants is 23. We serve a diverse range of individuals in terms of gender identity, population group, income and education levels and housing status.



Services Offered in 2019



Access & Engagement:

- Intake Counselling & Coordination
- Interdisciplinary Assessment/Consultation Café
- NexJ: Online self-management tool

Drop-in Programs:

- Walk-in Counselling
- BeanBagChat: Online drop-in chat support
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Refresh
- Finding My Path: Navigation, life skills, career exploration
- Studio
- Art in the Café
- Yoga
- Fitness

Registered Programs:

8-session psychotherapy

DBT:

- DBT Skills (Day)
- DBT Skills (Evening)
- Weathering the Storms
- Quittin' Time

Skills for Safer Living (SfSL): Suicidality Group

People Are Scary (PAS): Social Anxiety Group

Primary Care

Psychiatry

WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan):

Peer-led wellness group

Peer Support Training Programs:

Community Healing Project

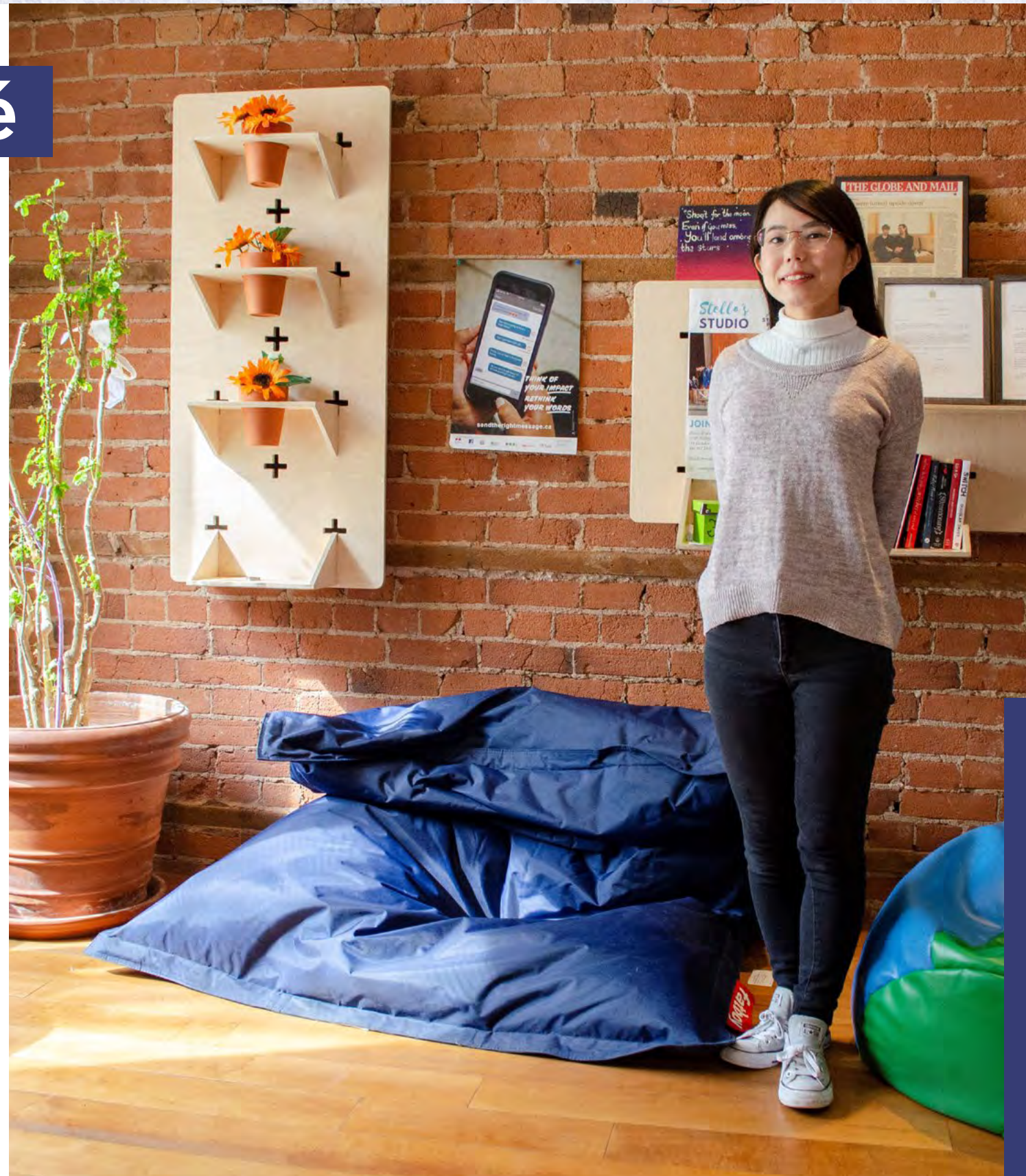
Strides Peer Support Training and
Community of Practice

Stella's Café

Developing Readiness & Increasing Access

To access effective mental health treatment, one must be willing to examine, reflect, and explore inwardly. To do this requires vulnerability, which makes trust with the support person essential. The presence of safety is necessary for trust to form.

Stella's Café was designed with the intention of creating felt safety, where individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges can experience secure engagement from their perspective. Felt safety is achieved through incorporating design elements, such as colours and furniture that were arrived at through co-design, effectively reflecting the voices of our participants. The presence of bean bag chairs, food, and artwork all contribute to the message that young adults can expect to be welcomed and heard without judgement.



How team members present also contributes to that message. Our Peer Supporters and Access Coordinators sit well back from the entrance and, to a large degree, reflect the demographics of our service users.

Continuous improvement of our Café Access Program has resulted in increased engagement and better outcomes for young adults.

"Beyond the countless skills and tools that Stella's Place helps young adults develop through programming, the sense of belonging and community that grows amongst participants fills the dark void of isolation and silence, which so often surrounds mental health. That connection can be felt the moment you enter the Café."

-Madeleine Cho, Young Adult Advisory Council Member & Participant

"We have donors who have supported us in creating a very dynamic team, one that is very flexible, so there's not just one way to access our care or support here. We truly spend time with each person."

-Heidi Sasek, Access Team Manager



From left to right: Heidi Sasek, Ajay Gallacher, Mara Howard, Anmol Samson. Photo by Daniel Fast from our Café Open House in early 2020.

2020: Virtual Pivot

During COVID-19

Your support ensured that Stella's Place would be there when young people needed us the most

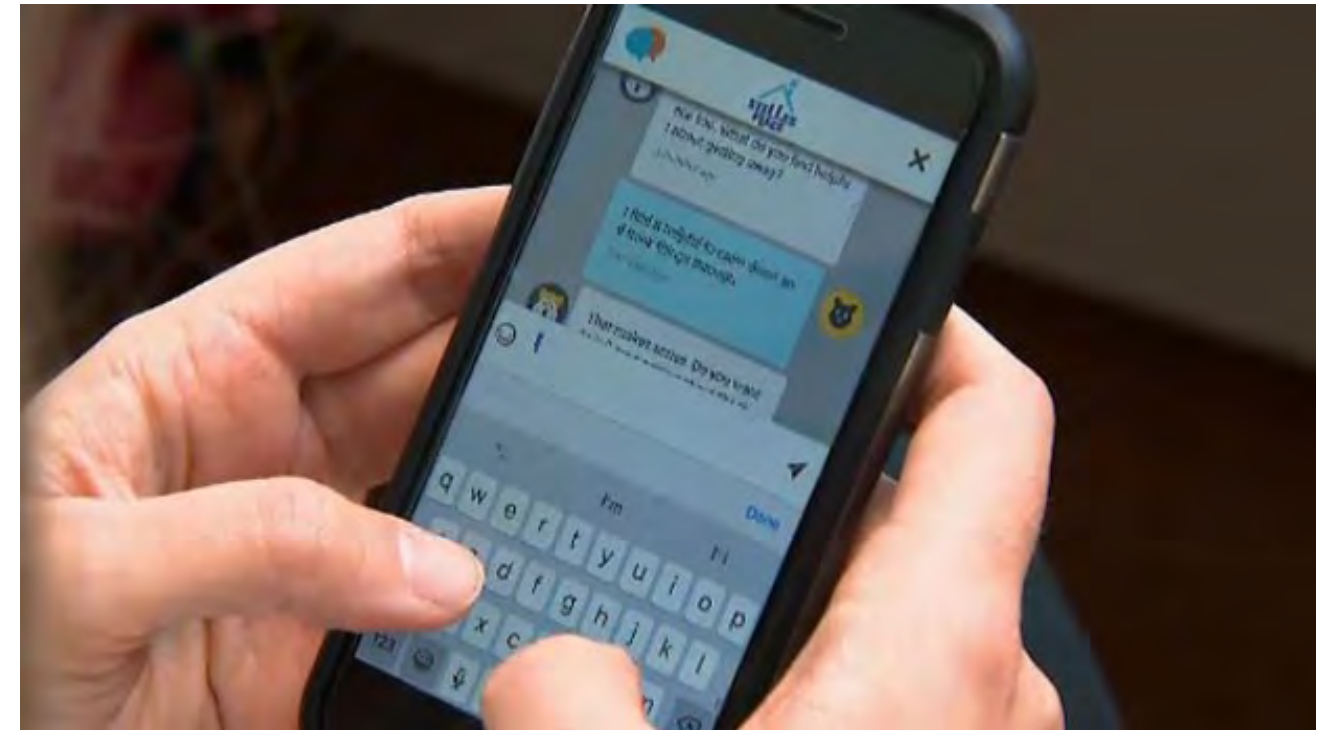
I feel hope when I talk to you since we share lived experience and I am now more in control of life.

—Participant

We started virtual service delivery on March 16th, adapting quickly given our experience with several secure online platforms, including our BeanBagChat™, Zoom Healthcare and NexJ Connected Wellness. Since COVID Week 1, we have seen a tripling of BeanBagChat™ user volumes; virtual visits to Stella's have increased by 76% and the number of unique individuals served has

increased by 109%. Requests for intake have increased from a typical 12-15 per week to the same number per day.

Despite the skyrocketing demand for services, our current program delivery, administrative and operations staff stepped up to handle the pressure. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, we hired two additional peer supporters in the spring to increase



Over **800** chats completed in 2020. Each chat is a fulsome evidence-based peer support interaction, lasting on average, **45** minutes.

access to our BeanBagChat™ service, and we are looking to further expand and enhance capacity of this platform in 2021.

The young people we speak with say they face increasing loneliness, stress, hopelessness, fear for family, friends and themselves, sadness, grief, and paranoia. Many of them are precariously employed and are concerned about losing their jobs,

their housing, and meeting their own basic needs. We know that these mental health impacts will only increase as COVID continues and beyond, in what has been called a mental health echo pandemic. They know Stella's Place is here to support them on their mental health journey—wherever they are and whenever they need us.

Peer Support Training Program & Partnerships

Community Healing Project

Since 2017, Stella's Place has been collaborating with the City of Toronto to deliver the Community Healing Project (CHP). Annually, the Community Healing Project provides 50 young adults with mental health needs from marginalized neighbourhoods with career development and support skills training. This increases their capacity to work and volunteer in this sector while supporting

I am honestly so speechless right now I can't believe I got this award as I have never gotten any award like this in my life. I'm so thankful I met you and the others and I'm so grateful to be a part of CHP. Just like people in my life doubted me, I always doubted myself too and this is huge to me. I can't stop feeling so happy right now.

—Graduate, Community Healing Project



their recovery and self-care practices through non-traditional pathways to care.

In addition, over 200 youth engage in mental health awareness and literacy workshops, designed by peer supporters from their communities. Stella's Place has received committed funding from the Federal Government National Crime Prevention Program for the delivery of 10 trainings over five years. All programs have demonstrated significant impacts on distress and coping skills, and offer a pathway to more intensive supports as needed.

This year, the program was adapted to an entirely virtual environment. Graduates from

the first cohort were able to participate in an outdoor graduation ceremony when COVID restrictions were temporarily eased during the summer. Subsequently, our team delivered a shortened six-week Peer Support training for frontline workers from other agencies, and a nine-week workshop for parents of youths from marginalized communities. This is a new training intended to help parents to be better able to recognize and support their children through mental health challenges, and to increase their capacity for sensitive conversations with their tweens, teens, and young adults.



CHP graduation ceremony in High Park. Photos by KC Harper.

UofT Mississauga Student Union Peer Support Program

The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health selected Stella's Place as the recipient of the Community Campus Partnerships grant, which allowed us to dedicate resources towards the development and creation of Peer Support Training programs and Peer Support Programs with UofT Mississauga, UofT St. George, and UofT Scarborough.

The lack of mental health resources on campuses has been well documented and students are increasingly demanding better support from their universities and colleges, and are advocating for services created by students, and for students. Drawing on their peer support training and their own experiences of navigating their mental health and substance use challenges, peer supporters will provide validation, resources, coping strategies, and guidance to fellow students who are experiencing difficulties.

This program will involve a Virtual Café drop-in space for students to touch base with peer support workers, UTMSU staff and fellow students, individual peer support services, and group peer support where students will be able to engage in a group discussion about some of the challenges they are experiencing.

Since July 2020, Stella's Place has been developing the program operations based

on best practices and years of experience in offering Peer Support services to young adults. We provided training to the UTMSU staff and the volunteers within this program. We also facilitate monthly Community of Practice meetings for the volunteers within the program, and provide on-call clinical support to them. This program opened on January 4, 2021.

- 47 Hours of program development
- 4 Days of Peer Support Training
- 46 Volunteers trained

Peer Support at Strides, Toronto

In September 2019, Stella's Place delivered a modified version of our Peer Support Training program to the Peer Support Workers within the Gender Based Violence program at East Metro Youth Services, now Strides, Toronto. Since July 2020, our Peer Initiatives Manager has been facilitating bi-weekly Community of Practice meetings to provide ongoing support, consultation and training to the Peer Support Workers at Strides. The values of Peer Support are used as guides to help ensure that staff are operating within the scope of their role, and responding effectively to participants' needs.

- 5 Strides, Toronto staff trained
- 6 Community of Practice meetings

RBC Pathway to Peers Project

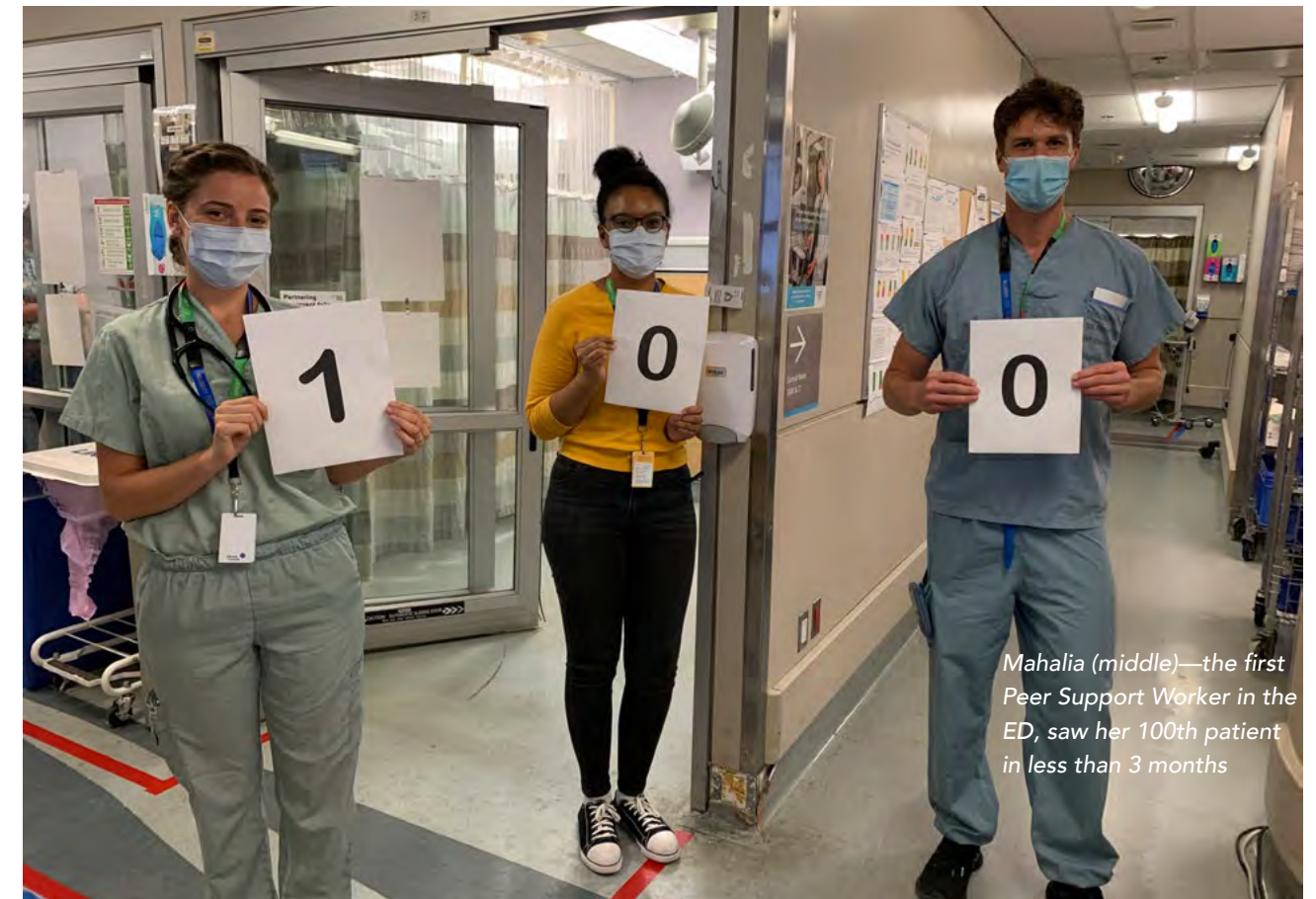
The RBC Pathway to Peers Project is a partnership program with the Mount Sinai Hospital Emergency Department. Peer Support Workers trained by Stella's Place work collaboratively with other members of the emergency healthcare team to offer non-clinical support based on lived experience of mental health and substance use.

With generous funding from the Warren and Debbie Kimel Family Foundation, Stella's Place has supported the program development, role creation, hiring, training and Community of Practice Meeting facilitation for the Peer Support Workers staffing

this program. Our Peer Initiatives Manager continues to provide bi-weekly support and mentorship.

Since its launch in May 2020, this innovative program has supported over 330 young people (16-29 years) accessing the Emergency Department, and received highly positive feedback from both patients and hospital staff.

- 2 Peer Support Workers
- 330 Young Adults supported in ER
- 92 Hours of Peer Support Training
- 7 Community of Practice Meetings



Mahalia (middle)—the first Peer Support Worker in the ED, saw her 100th patient in less than 3 months

Growing Stella's Place Together

YOU made this possible, thank you!

We gratefully acknowledge the caring individuals who donated in memory of

Shannon Hope
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We are delighted that our community of donors is growing and we are grateful for all of your support. Due to space limitations, we can only list gifts over \$500.

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Donors Stepping Up Big Time



Organized virtually and executed individually, the McGroarty family's Activity Challenge raised \$20,000 in August 2020



Shayna's 'Art of Chaos' piece, sold as a print in 2020, with donations to Stella's Place



Friends and business partners Alex & Wing sell their merch from their online store in support at www.smileage.ca



"We were impressed with Stella's Place's ability to adapt quickly and effectively with an unwavering commitment to their community and their needs. This is why our family foundation, in addition to supporting the BeanBagChat application, decided to kick off Mental Health Week with a matching gift challenge of \$100,000."

—Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation

"I'm most proud of how many people we've helped, the opportunities we've given to so many young people, how well known we are in the community. But it quickly became apparent as services opened up at our Camden Street location how great the demand was. Just a few years after, we didn't have space for staff, for research, for additional services. That's why we're building a new, permanent, and bigger home for Stella's Place, why I give, and why I am matching donations now."

—Donna Green, Founder & Chair, Stella's Place, Green Sanderson Family Foundation



[From left to right] Donna Green, Alyse Dan, Emma Woodbeck, Allison Dunning

"This year, our family decided to support Stella's Place, to assist in their response and adaptation to the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We understand how important it is to have a community-based mental health support network, especially at this time and for young people. We are pleased to become a 3-year major program partner for the Café Access Program."

—The Lang Family Foundation

Thanks to an outpouring of generosity from our donors, we were able to not only sustain, but grow our operations in 2020, increasing the capacity of our mobile chat support app, BeanBagChat™ and engaging in exciting new research projects and peer support training opportunities.

A comprehensive list of donors who supported us in 2020 will be available with the release of our next audited financial statements in June 2021. We deeply appreciate all gifts, and extend our deepest gratitude to our committed and growing donor community.

2020- 2021



co-designed by our young people and will be purpose-built for them. It will double our capacity and offer a wide range of services all under one roof.

We are in the final stretches of our 13 million dollar capital campaign. Donna Green, Founder and Chair of the Board of Stella's Place, has announced a \$500,000 matching gift challenge to help raise the funds to get us to the finish line.

When the pandemic is over, the demand for mental health services will be higher than ever before. With your help, our new building will be finished by the fall of 2021 and ready to welcome more young people.

Visit stellasplace.ca/buildingformentalhealth to learn more.

All images on page by Daniel Fast

Building Together

A groundbreaking event held at our new location on 54 Wolseley Street on September 10th (Suicide Prevention Day) marked the beginning of construction to renovate the building from the ground up. Together with Stantec architects and our building partner LCL Builds, this welcoming 11,222 square foot facility was

This is a compelling and unprecedented opportunity for individuals, businesses and communities to build something together to change and save lives.

—Jamie Goad, Cityscape Development Corporation





We are on Indigenous land

Many of us are settlers on this land, which is now named Toronto. Toronto is in the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory' which is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee. We are all treaty people who live, work and organize on occupied land. In recognizing that this space occupies

colonized First Nations territories, and out of respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada, it is important that we acknowledge our traumatic colonial histories and present-day implications to honour, protect, and sustain this land.

