



massey
centre

new lives start here

THE NEW LIVES NEWSLETTER

Creating new opportunities | Summer 2019



Message from the CEO

One of the most frequent questions I am asked, by donors and other stakeholders is: what happens to the young women and their babies after they leave the Massey Centre?

The lack of resources to support young mothers living in the community has been a service gap. In 2018, we received funding from the City of Toronto Housing with Layered Support to help young mothers find housing and prevent eviction. With this new funding, we hired additional staff for our under-resourced Transitional Housing program and hired community workers to help clients find housing in the community.

Finding affordable housing in Toronto is a huge challenge for many in our city. Single parent led families face an even greater challenge—stigma. When they call for an apartment and the landlord finds out the caller is a single mom, the apartment is often no longer available. The call by housing advocates and local government for affordable housing deserves immediate attention. Young mothers who live in our transitional housing find it difficult to leave our townhouses and apartments for unaffordable housing in the community. Young parents living in our Transitional Housing program pay anywhere from \$199/month to \$299/month due to Rent Geared to Income guidelines. When they move out into the community, they could pay as high as \$1800/month for a basement apartment. Many of the young women are on social assistance and have very few resources left over after they pay their rent. Very few of our young mothers ever access subsidized housing by the time they leave the program. They are often put on a subsidized housing registry waitlist.

We are looking for affordable spaces for the young women and their children to live. If you or someone you know is interested in renting an apartment to our young women, please contact our Baby & Me: Our Home staff at 416-425-6348 ext. 225.

In addition to housing, education is also another important pillar of our service offering. We continue to offer three to four year housing for the young mothers who are pursuing postsecondary education or training. There are 10 young mothers in postsecondary education programs living at Massey Centre. We're pleased to announce that two of these women have completed their undergraduate degrees and have been accepted into Masters programs starting this fall! We are so very proud of these young women! They are also great role models for their peers.

We had one graduate in our onsite high school this year, offered in partnership with the Toronto District School Board, Aaliyah Hackshaw. This year, Aaliyah discovered a love for physics. One of our teachers saw how good she was at math and suggested that she try physics. Guess what her favourite subject is now—physics! Someone saw the potential in her and believed in her, she was open to try the subject and she learned something new about herself. Aaliyah will be in college this September with plans of studying nursing at Ryerson in the future. Please check out Aaliyah's video on our Facebook page where she talks about her love of physics. Congratulations to all the 19 students who all earned credits towards their high school diploma! We see you all trying very hard and we believe you will realize your full potential.



We Are One a poem by Tshepiso Mogomela

Tshepiso is a participant in our New Lives Start Here Program—a four year housing and educational program for young moms dedicated to pursuing postsecondary education and training. She is studying Business Administration-Marketing at George Brown College. She is the proud mom to her one year old son. In her limited spare time, she enjoys writing poetry.

In the beginning there was darkness and as the sun rose to beat the bare ground Mama Africa gave birth to sons and daughters and she prayed we make her proud

See he is my brother from another mother and I his sister from another Mister and together like the sun we rise and shine to beautify the earth that surrounds us like the moon we brighten the darkness that envelops us

We are one, children of the soil

Rich in culture, rich in texture rich in melanin, rich in minerals

Rich in more ways than ever seen fit!

Oh how blessed mama Africa is

From the North, East, West and South

Beauty only fathomed by the GREAT CREATOR

We are fearfully and wonderfully made one

They've tried to bury us they did not know that we are seeds

*We are one so pure we make their racist ignorance and narrow minded slave traders
jealous of our ancestry*

I said they try to bury us, they do not know that we are seeds

*And like plants we germinate and bloom into the beautiful flowers mama Africa has
planted*

But in the same soil we are planted in weeds grow as well

*Instead of cutting them from the roots they decided to water them with hate, greed and
machine guns*

And one by one the flowers die

Oh mama, is this what you prayed for?

*That brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, fathers and our beloved mothers to be killed
in the hands of colonialism by those who fear our great leadership*

*They deem us not humane, they view us as worthless beings that deserve nothing but to be
punished for crimes undone*

*They forget that it is in this very land that they damn to the burning fires of hell that their DNA
is created*

*They've stripped you of your clothes and battered you, they've abused you in the midst of
your children that they too have started to taunt you until they leave you barren and you
can no longer be the vibrant, beautiful, GODDESS you are*

They have turned you into a mockery

Mama Africa is this what you prayed for?

*But in the middle of your cries and wails, you've given birth again, to a daughter of the soil
who will boldly represent you and speak boldly of my mother lands suffering done to her by
her very own.*

I am not afraid of being called different for I know the land in which I was born

I am an African, I speak African, speak for Africa, dream for Africa

Yes I am an African Queen I

*A promise to my beloved continent that one day all the nations in her smooth edges and
voluptuous body will sing in unison:*

*Blessed be this noble land, gift to us from Gods strong hands, heritage our fathers left to us!
May we always be at peace! Awake awake, oh men awake and women close behind
them stand! Together we should work and serve and Save this happy land!*



Baby and Me: Our Home

Meet our Staff



Shreya, Community Worker at Massey Centre

As our CEO, Ekua Asabea Blair, mentioned in her message, finding safe and affordable housing for young families after they leave Massey Centre has been a gap in our services until recently. In 2018, we received funding to start our new Baby and Me: Our Home program. This program helps current residents and also hundreds of young moms in the community with finding housing and preventing eviction.

Tasneem and Shreya, Community Workers, are vital in delivering this program. Here is their perspective on the program:

What are the challenges the young moms face when looking for housing?

Tasneem—Rent in Toronto has skyrocketed. Apartments are unaffordable. Our moms aren't getting a chance.

Shreya—They also face a lot of discrimination because they're young, they're single moms, and they usually don't have any credit.

Tasneem—They are also facing a lot of competition. They are competing with working professionals, people who have financial stability.

What are some of the ways you help young moms find housing?

Tasneem—We show them how to look for housing listings online. I'll give them a list of the best websites and show them how to use them. I also give them a guide of what to look for – is there an elevator, where can they go to school, is there a grocery store or daycare nearby.

Shreya—We offer to go with them.

Tasneem—We accompany them to view apartments. We help them make phone calls to landlords since a lot of them are doing this for the first time.

Shreya—And of course we help with subsidies. We can give them up to \$800 a month. That really helps them get their foot in the door and have some stability.

What are the biggest challenges in your job?

Tasneem—It's easy to feel helpless sometimes with the way the housing situation is in Toronto. It can be really hard to get landlords to even talk to you.

Shreya—Sometimes we call landlords and they hang up on us. Or we respond to ads online and we don't hear back.

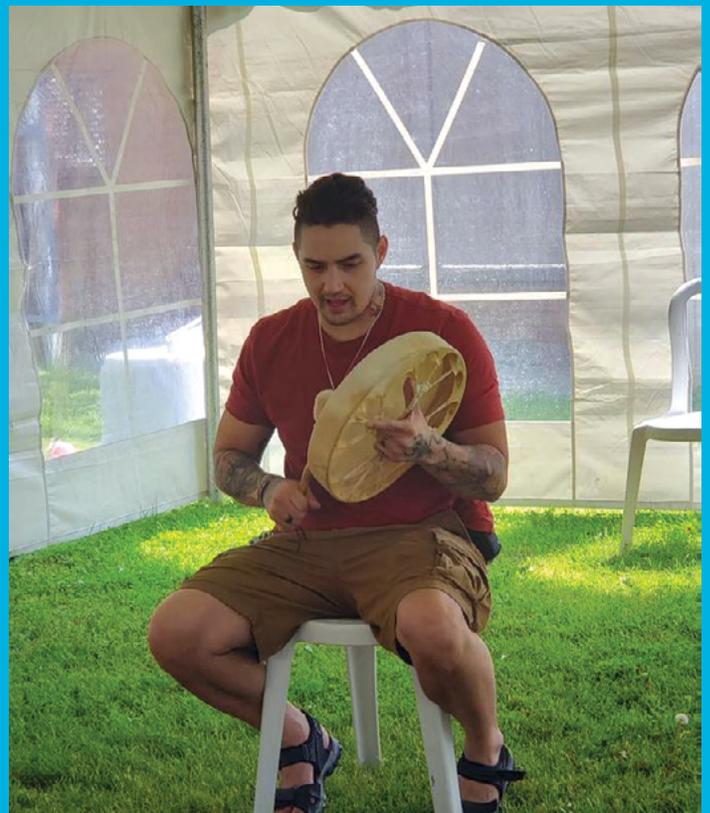
What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Tasneem—When someone finds an apartment. That's always so exciting!

Shreya—The little milestones they reach are exciting too. They often call us to share good news they have. It's nice to know that we're making a difference in their lives, little by little.

Indigenous Peoples Day

Massey Centre staff and program participants celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day this June. Young moms and their children, EarlyON families, Early Learning Centre children, volunteers, and staff enjoyed drumming, crafts, and tasting some indigenous food! Thank you to Joshua Fisher (White Feather), Bear Clan from Long Lake #58 First Nation for performing at the celebration.



Fun with Friends at EarlyON!



What a season it has been at our EarlyON Child and Family Centre! Our staff have outdone themselves with planning a variety of fun and educational programs for children 0-6 and their families. This spring, the families enjoyed outings to local attractions such as the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ontario Science Centre.

Mother's Day

We were blown away by the generosity of our community in donating Mother's Day gifts for the young moms at our centre. For many of the young moms who live here, this was their first Mother's Day and they really appreciated being recognized and celebrated. Thank you Klick Health, the Shoebox Project, Branksome Hall Parents Association, The Donway Covenant United Church, and everyone else who helped make Mother's Day a really special day for all of our families.



Klick Health dropping off Mother's Day gifts



The Shoebox Project gifts for the young moms

Massey Centre Shows Its Pride



On June 18, we hosted our annual Pride BBQ. What a great day it was! Guests feasted on a delicious BBQ served up by our staff. Over 100 young moms and their children from our Early Learning Centre, and families from our EarlyON Child and Family Centre came together to celebrate the LGBTQ2S community and recognize the work that still needs to be done so all people have equal rights and privileges. Thank you to Joe's No Frills at Bloor St. and Sherbourne St. for generously donating all of the food and drinks for the BBQ.

Get Involved

Volunteer

Give the gift of time. Our moms and babies benefit from the participation of volunteers across our programs. Each year, Massey Centre volunteers contribute more than 3,000 hours to support our programs alongside our staff.

Make a Donation

By making a donation today, you can bring real help and hope to thousands of moms, babies, and caregivers served by Massey Centre. Every dollar counts!

Donate Items for our Young Moms and Babies

The young moms and babies in our programs rely on your in-kind donations. Diapers, baby clothes, personal care items, and grocery store gift cards are always needed.

Host an Event in Support of Massey Centre

Commit to being a leader in your community by organizing a fundraising event for Massey Centre! Organizing an event is a lot of fun! Your fundraiser can be as modest or ambitious as you choose. Dinner parties, toonie drives, raffles, and bake sales are all great ideas to start with.

Leave Massey Centre a Gift in Your Will

Create a legacy while maximizing tax and other financial benefits. Give a pre-determined or residual amount of your estate to ensure that support services needed by young moms and babies are available in the future. Visit www.massey.ca or email giving@massey.ca to learn more about how you can get involved

Commencement Ceremony

June 20th was a special day as we celebrated the academic and personal achievements of our high school students! Congratulations to our 19 students this year!

The beautiful ceremony was attended by young moms and children, families and friends of our students, donors, supporters, and Massey Centre staff. We were pleased to have Emily Mills from How She Hustles as our keynote speaker. Sienna Che from Sketch Arts Group was our featured performer.



**Thank you very much to our scholarship donors.
We were pleased to hand out the following awards:**

Dunlop-Harris Memorial Award donated by Enrico and Donna Dilello

Wilma P. Spence Scholarship donated by Wilma Spence, a former Massey Centre board member

Ruby Blair Award donated by the CEO and the Blair family

Vinay Raja Memorial Scholarship donated by Bhanu Raja in memory of her late husband

George Macri Scholarship donated by George Macri

MJ Perry Award donated by MJ Perry, a former Massey Centre board member





This year's valedictorian and graduate, Aaliyah Hackshaw, gave an impressive speech. For those of you who missed the ceremony, her speech is transcribed below.

"Good afternoon everyone, I decided I am going to keep this speech short but sweet. When I was younger, I always used to dream of the day I would graduate high school, not realizing that I would still have to go to college or university after that and I'm pretty sure this happened to everyone. Now I also realized that this won't be my last graduation as I have another 5-6 years of post-secondary school ahead of me and I already feel exhausted! Although I'm tired of school, I'm excited to start the next chapter of my life. When I started high school, I never thought that there would even be the slightest chance that I could become valedictorian. Back then I was passing all my classes with the bare minimum. I had set goals for myself but the motivation was just not there. Once I found out I was pregnant when I was in grade 11, Mila became my motivation.

Every day I wake up and see her little smile and those big bright eyes and that's enough to keep me motivated. I want to keep her smiling for the rest of her life. I want to be her role model, best friend and mommy all in one. I want to show her that no matter how many challenges she may face in life, she can overcome them and accomplish her goals. I also want to encourage every young mother not to give up on their dreams just because they've had a baby, because our babies are more of a reason to push ourselves to achieve our dreams. I am not one to brag but, I am very proud that I pushed myself, made sacrifices and hard decisions to get to where I am today. I am extremely honored and blessed to be Massey Centre's valedictorian for 2019. I would like to thank everyone here for believing in me and showing me nothing but love and support. I would also like to give a special thanks to Mr. Adam for introducing me to now one of my favorite subjects, which is physics, and for guiding me throughout the school year. Congratulations Mr. Adam, you are now one of my favourite teachers! Finally, I would like to encourage the other young moms at Massey Centre to continue to work hard and do your best in everything that you do and most importantly believe in yourself. Thank you everyone for listening."



Donation Form

YES! I want to help new young moms and their babies because they need me!

Here is my gift of: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 I will give \$_____

YES! I will join the **Best Start** Monthly Giving Program* with my gift on the **last** day of each month of: \$10 \$20 \$25 \$50 I will give \$_____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Phone No. _____

Please add me to your email list. I understand I can unsubscribe at anytime.

Payment Options

I would like to give by: Cheque

My cheque payable to **Massey Centre** is enclosed.

Please charge my   

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____

Name exactly as shown on card: _____

Cardholder Signature: _____

Name for Acknowledgement Purposes (if applicable): _____

I would like this donation to be Anonymous.

I am interested in learning more about how to leave a gift in my Will to Massey Centre.

* I can revoke or change my authorization at any time in writing or by calling 416-425-6348 x 224, subject to providing 30 days' notice.

* I have certain recourse rights if any debit does not comply with this agreement. For example, I have the right to be reimbursed for any debit that is not authorized or is not consistent with this Pre-authorization Debit (PAD) Agreement.

* To obtain a cancellation form, or for more information on my right to cancel a PAD Agreement or my recourse rights, I may contact my financial institution or visit www.cdnpay.ca.

Massey Centre protects your private information and complies with all legislative requirements. We will send you information from time to time. If you wish to limit, or not receive any correspondence in the future, please contact us at 416-425-6348 x 224.

Thank you for your support!



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