

THE NEW LIVES NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021



massey
centre

new lives start here

Message from the CEO

Happy New Year from all of us at Massey Centre!

As I think back on our last few months, a lot of words come to mind – fear, exhaustion, hope. But the word that sticks in my mind the most is proud. I'm so proud of our staff for coming in everyday and putting their best foot forward to support our vulnerable clients. Proud of our donors and supporters who rallied around us during difficult times. Most of all, I'm proud of our clients for persevering under the most difficult circumstances.

It has been a tough few months in many ways, but we still have a lot to celebrate. This newsletter will introduce you to new programs we've launched, share the stories and successes of current and former residents at our centre, and much more.

As the pandemic continues, I'm so thankful to the many organizations that are helping us keep our clients and staff safe through onsite testing and enhanced protocols. I'd also like to thank our funders who gave us the flexibility required to pivot our work to deal with the pandemic, and who funded these emergency costs.

The vulnerable moms and babies we support are dealing with a lot right now. Some are giving birth in hospitals alone while others struggle with trying to keep up with their online classes and parenting newborns. It is very difficult for them to distance from their friends and family, and their mental health is suffering. We've introduced new online counselling to help them, and have hired additional staff to provide more mental health support.

Although we've made a lot of progress over the past few months, the work never ends. Every day, we have more young moms seeking our support. This won't change without systemic changes to how we as a society support our most vulnerable. We will continue to advocate for stronger mental health services from birth to adulthood, and for supports and services that will help young moms become independent and successful.

Thank you for being a part of our family. I look forward to welcoming visitors back to our centre as soon as it is safe to do so.



Ekuia Asabea Blair
Chief Executive Officer

Britney's Story

"Finding out I was pregnant was a huge shock. I wasn't mentally ready to be a mom and felt like I had let everyone down. I was confused, depressed, and scared; how could I have a baby if I didn't have the support of my family? I had talked to my doctor about my options, but knew deep down that even though I didn't feel ready to be a mom, I needed to try for the small life growing inside me. It was one of the most difficult decisions of my life.

Without my family's support, I didn't know where to start. I had no home and no way to get supplies for my baby. It was from a caring friend that I heard about Massey Centre, and the supports they offered.

Being here I've become more confident as a mom, and I am able to raise my son, Genesis, my way. Massey Centre has given me a place to live, helped me develop life skills, and supported me going back to school. Currently I am finishing my grade 12 science, and still have a few more credits to work on. I have a dream to start and grow my own business one day. Eventually, I would like to go to college or university for cosmetology. I have a passion for it.

Even though COVID-19 has made things more difficult, I like to look at it in a positive way. I feel like it's slowed life down, and really made us appreciate the time we have with the people we love. I cherish the time it's given me with Genesis.

I am a strong mom, and an independent young woman. I want Genesis to see that in his mom, and I want to provide the best future I can for my son. "

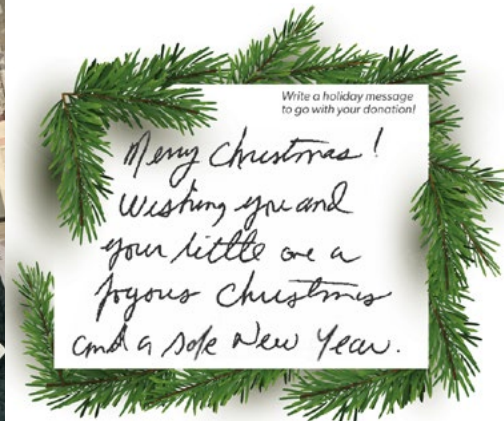
-Britney

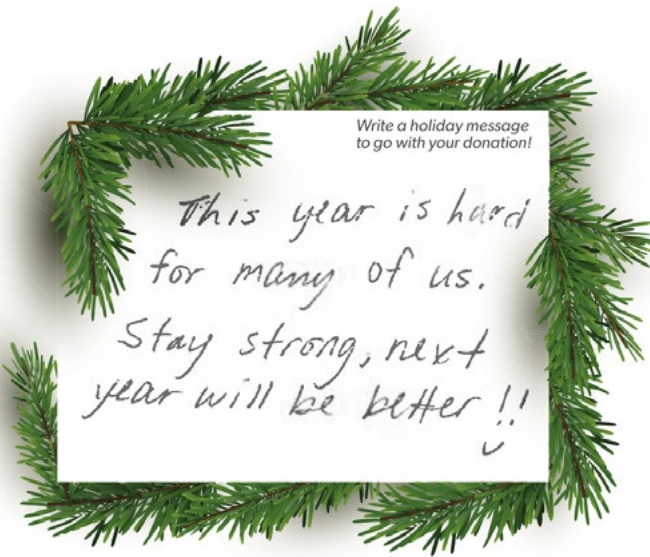


Home for the Holidays

Although the holidays were set to look a little different this year, the families at our centre had a wonderful time. Each year we are amazed at the generosity, warmth and kindness of our partners and donors. This year, many went above and beyond to make sure our young moms and babies were able to celebrate. Thank you very much to all the donors who sent gifts, care bags, treats, and more! The families also had fun with socially distanced outside visits with Santa, a holiday dinner, and door decorating contests.

Thank you so much for helping make the 2020 holidays special!





New Program Highlight: The Kuumba Project



We're excited to announce we have launched another new program called The Kuumba Project: Addressing Social and Emotional Issues Amongst African Canadian Students. The program, funded by the Ministry of Health, is a new addition to our Maternal Infant Mental Health (MIMH) services and will greatly expand our reach to more vulnerable children and families. Through this program we were able to hire two permanent MIMH Coordinators!

Our staff will work with local schools in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas to ensure that African Canadian and racialized children get their best start at life! Working with teachers, parents, and kindergarten students, The Kuumba Project is offering evidence-based development screenings for children, Ages and Stages Questionnaires. Based on the results of these screenings, we will work with teachers and parents on strategies for children with identified risks to support healthy physical, social, and emotional development.

Our staff will also conduct parent trainings and consultations and develop educational materials for parents, based on each family's needs. This will be individualized for children at-risk and will include specific recommendations, treatment, and referrals.

This program will support up to 400 individuals each year! We're so pleased to be able to offer this program throughout Toronto and reach even more families who need our support.

New Program Highlight: Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers (SEAM)

Sometimes all that is needed is a little help up to begin moving forward. In September 2020, we launched a brand-new program called Success in Employment for Adolescent Mothers (SEAM), that does just that for single mothers between the ages of 15 and 30 years.

Led by a job coach and a job developer, single moms receive 4-weeks of paid job training, and complete a 14-week job placement to help them gain real work experience. Returning to work after pregnancy can be difficult for many women, but for young mothers, lack of experience in the workforce can be a large barrier to being able to gain employment. This program aims to teach them essential workplace skills and give them work experience, with a goal of finding and maintaining permanent employment. This program is generously funded through the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program at Employment and Social Development Canada.

If your employer or someone you know is interested in hiring one of our participants for a paid job placement, please contact seam@massey.ca.





Paying it forward

Message from Trisha Carter, former Massey Centre resident

As I gathered things together in my living room to donate, there was no question in my mind who I'd give them to. I couldn't help but to reflect on my time at Massey Centre. Over fourteen years ago at the tender age of twenty years old, I found myself pregnant and penniless. Scrambling for a place to stay, an online search led me to a place called Massey Centre.

After reaching out to them, within no time I was in their office going through their intake process. I went from being alone and scared senseless to having a dozen roommates from all walks of life. Over the course of the year and a half I lived at Massey Centre, no day was alike. One day would be jam packed with continued education, prenatal classes, endless laughs and the next would be more drama than an episode of MTV's Teen Mom.

Located on the property were rent reduced spacious apartments. When a vacancy was available, you'd transfer from the main house. There was always a great deal of excitement around when your name was coming up on the list to move there. My experience resonates with me more now today than it did then.

Massey Centre was a safe haven for women who would otherwise be homeless and left with little to no support. It taught me responsibility, budgeting, gave me a plethora of information on how to take care of my baby, and access to resources. But most of all it taught me compassion and the importance of paying it forward.

Eat4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge 2020!

Our 2020 Eat4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge launched in August, and saw 7 teams and 23 individuals sign up to raise an inspiring \$13,809! Each participant was challenged to eat off the typical budget of a teen mom for 3 days (\$8/day), while raising funds for our centre. It was eye-opening being able to watch and hear how our fundraisers made their \$8 a day stretch. Thank you for helping raise vital funds for teen moms and their babies.

We are looking forward to having the Eight4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge return in 2021!



Staying Healthy and Safe



In October we were delighted to partner with East End Community Health Centre who offered an onsite flu vaccination clinic, and the Anishnawbe Health Healing Team who provided a mobile COVID-19 Assessment/ Testing clinic in our parking lot. Our sincerest thanks to these wonderful partners for helping make these services accessible for our community, and the young moms and babies we serve.

Best Start Monthly Donor Spotlight: Anne-Marie



The work we do is only made possible thanks to the generosity of donors. Best Start donors are individuals who have made an ongoing monthly commitment, choosing to make an impact that lasts all year.

Anne-Marie, one of our amazing Best Start Monthly Donors, is also an employee here at Massey Centre. Anne-Marie has been with us as the Executive Assistant for over 4 years, helping lead our admin team. She has also actively participated in the Eat4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge. We asked Anne-Marie, **why is being a Best Start Monthly Donor so important to her?**

"I strongly believe that it is important to help each other out, to acknowledge that I see you and you are important to me. Sometimes it's a cup of sugar for your neighbour, other times a seat on transit or a smile for a stranger and sometimes a small monthly donation for a helping hand for those in our community– this is why I choose to support the great work the Centre does for our wonderful, courageous young mothers here in the Centre and in our community."

Benefits of signing up as a Best Start Monthly Donor

- Convenient – You can donate monthly by credit card, automatic debit from your bank, or cheque.
- Flexible – You choose your monthly donation amount and can change the amount or cancel at any time.
- Effective – Your monthly gift provides us with a steady source of income that allows us to plan and support more vulnerable young families.

Are you interested in becoming a Best Start Monthly Donor? Please fill out the included donation form or contact the Resource Development Coordinator at giving@massey.ca or 416-425-6348 ext 289.

Get Involved

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!

Become a Best Start Monthly Donor

Consider becoming a Best Start Monthly Donor to offer ongoing support to our young families – just \$5 or more a month can help provide formula, diapers and infant care items to one family.

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. For an updated list of items we are currently in need of please visit our website.

Team up, fundraise, and take our Eat4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge in 2021!

Returning in 2021 is the Massey Centre Eat4Eight: Teen Mom Budget Challenge! Join our mailing list or follow us on Facebook and Twitter to get up to date information on the next fundraising challenge.

Leave Massey Centre a Gift in Your Will

Create a legacy while maximizing tax and other financial benefits. Gift 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.

Green4Good

Working from home more often? We've teamed up with Green4Good on a new way you can support us, while updating your home office. We'll receive 10% of the price of any electronics you purchase at <https://shop.green4good.ca/massey> . Please share the link with your friends, family and colleagues.

Visit www.massey.ca or email giving@massey.ca to learn more about how you can get involved.



Your donation provides education, life skills, and self confidence.

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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