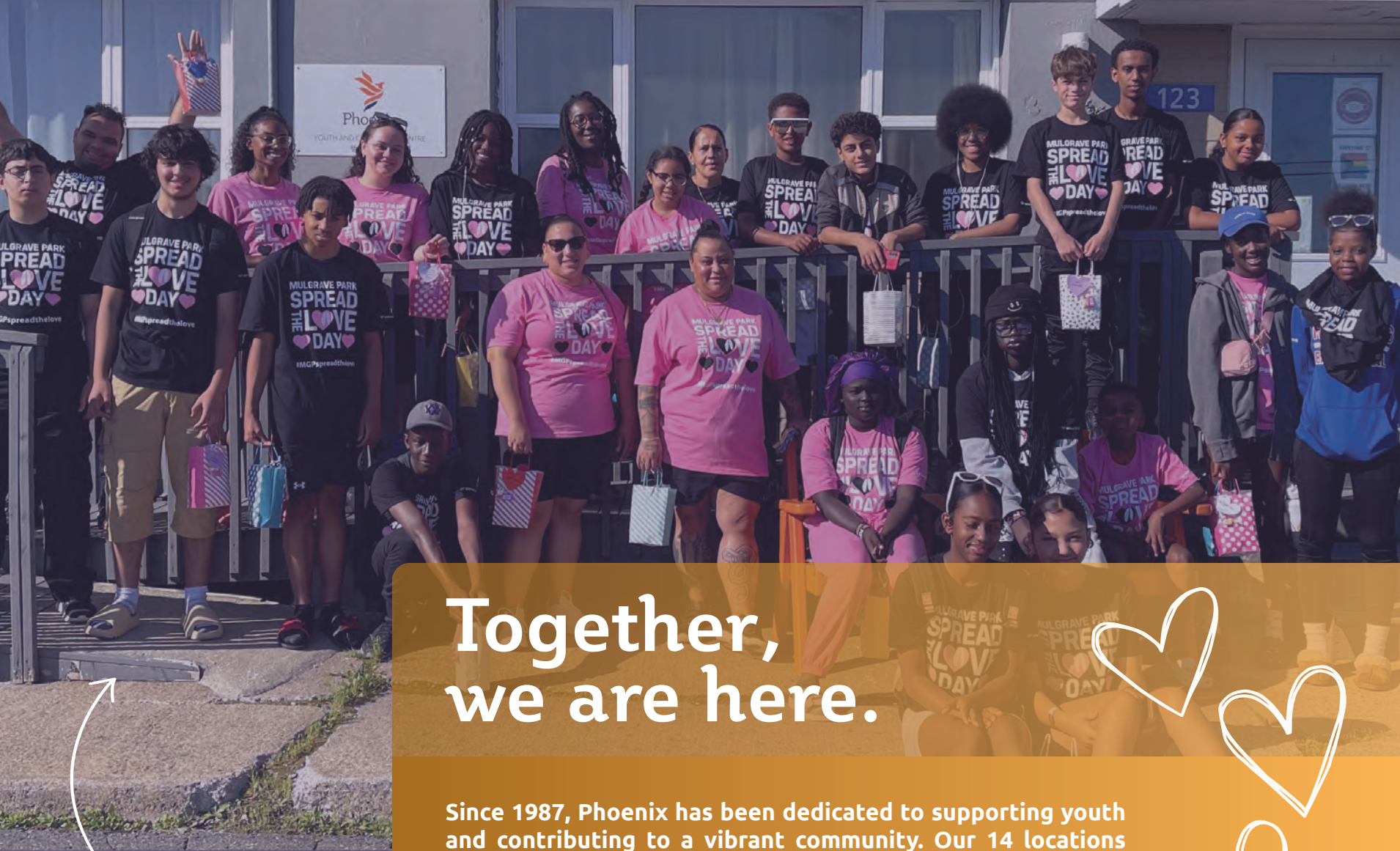


2023
2024



REPORT TO THE

Community



Together, we are here.



Since 1987, Phoenix has been dedicated to supporting youth and contributing to a vibrant community. Our 14 locations (and counting!) across Halifax/Kjipuktuk provide a continuum of care for youth ages 11-24 and their families. We offer important services and programs including shelter, food, housing support, health care, parenting support, recreation, education and employment services, and clinical therapy.

Our team of caring professionals recognize that each person who comes to us has individual needs as well as strengths. People are leaders in their own lives; Phoenix is a leader in supporting them.

Acknowledgement

At Phoenix, we acknowledge that it is a privilege to live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We confirm our commitment to respectfully walk in friendship. We are all treaty people, and we must act today to advance the progress of truth and reconciliation.

Nova Scotia has over 50 historic African Nova Scotian communities with a long, deep, and complex history dating back over 400 years. We recognize and celebrate the culture, legacy, achievements, and contributions of people of African descent – past and present.

Youth and Phoenix staff celebrate the 10th annual Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day! Read more on page 14!



2023 - 2024

Report to the Community

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Thanks to Our Staff



At Phoenix, we truly have the privilege of working with the most talented, compassionate, and dedicated people, and we would like to take a moment to recognize their valuable contributions. This year has not been without its share of hardships, yet your commitment to the youth, families, and communities we serve has never wavered. Every day we witness the incredible work you do, and your efforts do not go unnoticed. From bearing the elements to support those living in encampments, to providing youth with opportunities to become leaders in their own lives, your collective impact is nothing short of remarkable.

Each and every one of our staff — past and present — has helped shape Phoenix into the organization that we are today. For that, we offer our deepest and most heartfelt thanks.

Here's to another year of making a difference!

2023 Milestones - Years of Service

Celebrating our staff for their hard work and dedication. Congratulations!

1 Year (Live-in Staff)

Alisha Vaz

3 Years

Amanda Boulegon
Candice Brigley
Janel Comeau

5 Years

Becka Hartling
Jesse Thomson
Melissa Dillman
Michelle Spavold

10 Years

Marianne McTague

35 Years

Timothy Crooks



Living Our Values



This past June, our teams gathered in beautiful Shubie Park for an agency-wide Values Day. The objectives: to identify the beliefs that fuel our passion for the work, to explore the meaning and practice of Phoenix's Values and Guiding Principles, and to celebrate and appreciate staff contributions that lead to meaningful impacts for youth, families, and communities.

Throughout the day, as teams engaged in conversations unpacking each principle, core themes arose – four of which were identified as integral to our work. These themes will lay the foundation for the stories contained in this year's Report to the Community.

-  **Impact**
-  **Advocacy**
-  **Community**
-  **Growth**

Phoenix's Values & Guiding Principles

1. Commitment to Social Justice
2. Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
3. Empowering Language, Narratives, and Stories
4. Growing Healthy, Meaningful Relationships
5. Self-determination
Client-centered
6. Cultivating Meaningful
Community Connections
7. Pursuit of Excellence: Creativity,
Innovation, and Values Alignment
8. Cultivating Joy

”

“I know how different my story might have been if Phoenix hadn’t been here.”

- Bai

Impact



The Year in Numbers

210 youth accessing Phoenix Youth Programs for the first time

1,847 drop-in visits and appointments at Phoenix Centre for Youth

At Phoenix Youth Shelter...



16.7%
increase in the number of intakes from 2022 - 2023



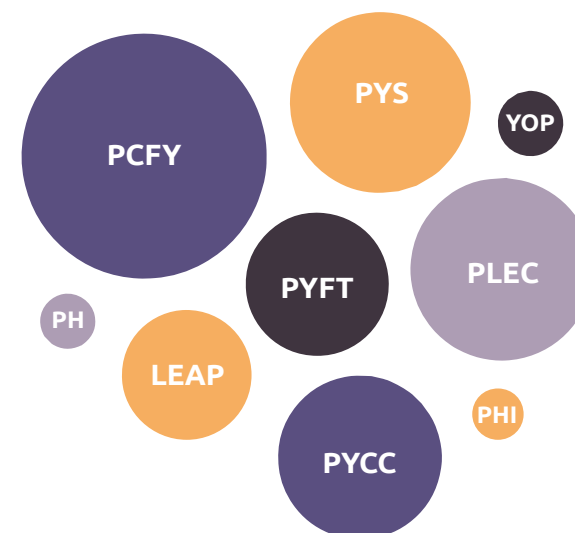
27.3%
youth aged 18 or younger at time of intake



24.8%
youth who came directly from a loss of stable housing*



50.7%
youth who came from areas outside of HRM*



*of those reporting

Youth, Families, and Community Members Served by Program

- 296** Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY)
- 164** Phoenix Learning & Employment Centre (PLEC)
- 83** Learn & Explore at Phoenix (LEAP)
- 132** Phoenix Youth & Community Centre (PYCC)
- 21** Youth Outreach Program (YOP)
- 101** Phoenix Youth & Family Therapy (PYFT)
- 13** Phoenix Homes for Independence (PHI)
- 161** Phoenix Youth Shelter (PYS)
- 15** Phoenix House (PH)

Program Highlights



GARDEN GLOW-UP AT PHOENIX YOUTH SHELTER

Check out these green thumbs! When youth expressed interest in wanting to learn how to grow their own food, we decided it was time to give the Phoenix Youth Shelter garden a much-needed makeover! Last May, staff and youth weeded the entire garden bed, replenished the soil, and planted tons of vegetables, herbs, and sunflowers to enjoy throughout the season.

THAT'S A WRAP ON THE STEP PROGRAM!

This year officially marked the end of the Skills, Training, and Employment at Phoenix Program. Over the project's 3-year life span, 37 youth completed the Employment Skills Training, 36 youth engaged in work placements, and in total, 48 youth received wraparound supports to help further their success in their employment journeys. Congrats to all of our STEP grads – exciting opportunities await you!



Canada The STEP Program is Funded by the Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program

This experience is exactly what I needed to boost my confidence!
- Youth Participant, STEP Program



BBQs & BUCKET HATS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL

LEAP and PCFY joined forces to host a back-to-school BBQ in their best bucket hats! Staff and youth enjoyed hot dogs and hamburgers fresh off the grill, followed by lawn games and a dance party!



KAYAK ADVENTURE WITH YOP

The Youth Outreach Program spent some fun in the sun last Summer! Staff and youth enjoyed a picture-perfect day kayaking on Long Lake, making memories while learning new skills and building confidence.



A PERFECT PATIO FOR PHOENIX HOUSE

The backyard at Phoenix House got a refresh last Summer! Working together, staff and youth spruced up garden beds, pressurewashed the deck, and created a relaxing patio space to be enjoyed all season long.

LEAP CELEBRATES THE LEAP YEAR WITH A LEAP PARTY!

What better way to celebrate the leap year than by throwing a LEAP Day party? Staff and youth had a blast playing bingo, snacking on sweets at the build-your-own sundae bar, and posing for polaroids to remember the occasion! Even though we have to wait 4 years for the next leap year, we hope we don't have to wait that long for the next LEAP party!



WEARING THEIR EMOTIONS ON THEIR SLEEVES

We love a little friendly, festive face-off here at Phoenix, and this Halloween, the competition was turned upside down and *Inside Out!* After an agency-wide vote, one might say the Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy team was overJOYed when they heard they won Best Team Costume!



Celebrating at the Holiday Luncheon

Our caring community showed up in a huge way at the **2023 Phoenix Holiday Luncheon**, raising over \$100,000 to help support youth and families.

Presented by Stewart McKelvey, this year's event was a truly remarkable occasion filled with incredible food, an insightful prayer from Monique Fong Howe, and outstanding entertainment by Owen "O'Sound" Lee and members of the Emmanuel Baptist Church Choir.

There were many heartwarming memories shared between friends and colleagues, but perhaps the most impactful moment was when Phoenix youth, Bai Cham, took to the stage to share his journey.

From arriving in Halifax as a 19-year-old refugee, to now pursuing his education and career goals, Bai's story is a testament to the strength and resilience of young people in our community.



Excerpts from Bai's Speech

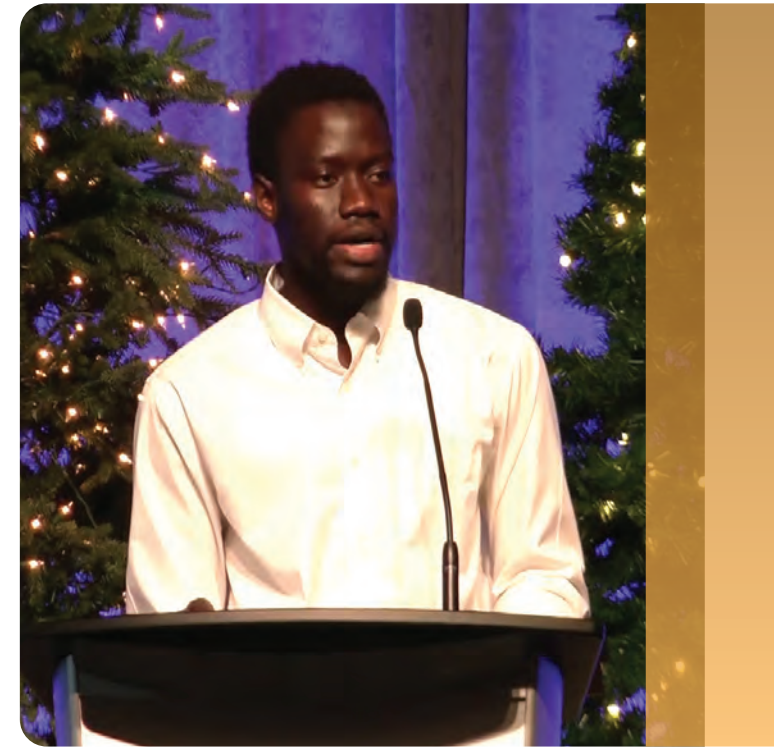
"Thank you everybody for attending this important gathering today. I feel very thankful to God to be here. I am honored and humbled to stand before you and to share my journey with Phoenix.

I arrived at Phoenix Youth Shelter in November 2019. Having lived in a large household growing up, I easily adapted to living with other people, but I felt homesick, lonely, and sad. I didn't know how to move forward.

I started working with my Key Worker, Cheralyn. She, and other staff members like Meaghan, always worked tirelessly to ensure our needs were met. Their positivity made me feel as if I was part of a family, which was a huge help in making me feel positive too. [The staff] guided me in figuring out what steps I needed to take, so that I could start building my new life here in Halifax.

I always believed that education was very important but didn't think it would be possible. I began working with Kathleen at PLEC who helped me see that I could get an education... [She] helped me register for upgrading courses through Dalhousie, which I completed in 2020. I applied to programs at both Dalhousie and NSCC, and I was accepted at both schools.

I have begun my studies at Dalhousie University, taking a Bachelor of Sciences. I am working toward my long-term career goal to someday become a medical doctor. Helping others, and saving lives is a deeply held passion of mine.



[I] have been employed part-time since, at a local nursing home. Working in healthcare has only solidified my determination to become a medical doctor. I love creating positive experiences and an uplifting environment for residents.

I am now living at Phoenix Homes for Independence with a few other youth, and a live-in support worker while I continue my studies at Dalhousie, work at the nursing home and play soccer on the weekends.

I am excited about what my future holds. I know how different my story might have been if Phoenix hadn't been here. I will be forever grateful for the support, positivity, care, and love they have given to me.

Thank you so much Phoenix and thank you everyone once again for listening."

Thank you to our
Presenting Sponsor



Scan to watch highlights
from Bai's speech on our
YouTube channel!

”

*“Phoenix staff make such a difference...
I didn't think that I had the potential,
but you guys helped me recognize that.”*

- JC

Advocacy

Advocacy in Action

At Phoenix, we uphold a deep commitment to social justice, recognizing that everyone possesses inherent dignity, worth, and potential.

This commitment is more than just a statement. It informs the design of our programs and spaces, and drives our actions in promoting equity, dignity, and justice at every level of our work.

We are a voice for social and economic justice at local, provincial, and national levels, we've collaborated with other organizations and community members as we address individual and systemic challenges, and we've engaged in brave and challenging conversations, fostering growth, understanding, and change.



This year...

1

With an increase in the number of youth coming to Phoenix directly from a loss of stable housing (fixed-term leases, student accommodations, renovations), we have ramped up advocacy efforts with a focus on eviction prevention. Day-to-day work for our **frontline teams** often involves rental subsidy applications, helping youth understand their rights while navigating various types of leases, and liaising with landlords, employers, and community services.

2

In response to growing concerns from Mulgrave Park community residents over the Province's efforts to address overhousing issues, staff at **Phoenix Youth and Community Centre** went to work. In partnership with DAL Legal Aid and the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, we hosted information sessions to ensure that tenants know their rights and have started working with Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency to ensure community's voice is reflected in the new policy changes.

3

Through representation on the community advisory committee for the **NS Office of Addictions and Mental Health (OAMH)**, we provided feedback and suggestions on OAMH initiatives. Areas of focus included a Community Crisis Response Model, Patient Rights Advisory Service, Recovery Houses Standards, Health Service Insurance Act, Integrated Care Model for individuals experiencing homelessness and intersecting severe and persistent mental health and substance use concerns, and Universal Mental Health and Addictions Care Evaluation.

4

We collaborated with community partners to develop and launch the **Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA)** and hold representation on the Board of Directors and Communications Committee. NSNPHA is a non-profit, membership-based organization, dedicated to supporting, growing, and mobilizing the non-profit housing sector through advocacy work at provincial and national levels.

Forging Her Own Path

A Conversation with Amy-Lea and Trish

Amy-Lea is no stranger to overcoming adversity.

Having grown up in foster care, to now starting a career in a male-dominated industry, the journey hasn't been easy, but with the support of Trish and the team at PYCC – and her pal Zeus by her side – she's well on her way to achieving her goals.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself.

A: My name is Amy, I'm 23, and I just graduated from the two-year Welding Program at NSCC.

Q: Why did you first connect with Phoenix?

A: Actually, it was by complete coincidence. I was taking my dog for a walk and ran into a friend I grew up with in the Pubs. We started talking and I was saying that I wanted to go back to school, and she said that someone named Trish was helping her go back to school, so she gave me Trish's number.

Q: When did you contact Trish?

A: Oh, it was literally that same day. I was trying to go back to school, but I was homeless for a bit. I found a cheap place in Dartmouth, but it took almost 7-8 months to get a hold of a social worker to help pay my rent. I was just trying to pay my bills and go to school and have a job, and it was a lot. Trish helped me a lot with that.

Q: What kind of support did you receive?

A: If Trish didn't advocate, I don't think I would have gotten a social worker to help me. You know, I'm a very cut and dry person. I work in the trades and that's how we speak, so it was challenging. But Trish was able to communicate with them to help get my rent taken care of.

T: A lot of the advocacy I was doing was just helping Amy-Lea to know her rights and what she was entitled to. The post-care tuition waiver was supposed to pay for her tuition for the first year, and we fought but it was denied. We went to student loans, because we didn't want her to lose her seat. In the end, we were able to get her tuition covered.

A: I also got support from Doug (Academic Coach) my first year; a lot of my math courses were online which was challenging. I did a lot of my work at the tutoring program at PYCC (Phoenix Youth and Community Centre). But I've been in the industry for a year now and I'm learning from people who know how to weld and it's way different. I love it.

Q: What are some challenges you've experienced?

A: My life has been hard. I grew up in foster care, you know? Waking up every day is hard. You can't afford food, rent, groceries... and gas is super expensive. Like, I slept in my car the first winter that I was in school for 4 months. But staff supported me with a lot. Five-star review. (both laugh)

T: Amy-Lea is really independent. When she comes for support, she's already done a lot of the work. When she was sleeping in her car, she'd be working two jobs and only came to us when she was in a jam trying to make ends meet. She's incredibly resourceful.

Q: What is an accomplishment you're proud of?

A: Graduating. Graduating was very exciting. I have ADHD and I have a really hard time with reading, so it took me way longer to get through the program than everyone else, especially with trying to keep up on bills. There were times when I was picking whether I was going to pay my bills or get groceries. When I graduated, I really felt like... "I deserve this."

Q: Tell us about Zeus.

A: Oh man, Zeus has been here for the whole ride. I got him just before I was kicked out. I bring him everywhere. When I would get off school, I'd go home, pick him up, and bring him [to PYCC]. The only time we've been apart was when I was sleeping in my car. He stayed with a friend of mine, but I was still paying his pet insurance, his food, his vet bills... he's my best friend. He helps me get out of bed every day. We're locked in for life.

Q: What do you hope the next chapter of your journey holds?

A: I'm just waiting for my program to open back up so I can go to school, take my test, get my hours, and take my Red Seal exam. If I could take the exam tomorrow just to be in a better place financially and live comfortably, I would. Welding isn't like any other job I've had my whole life. It's definitely my favourite, but it can be really hard on your body, so maybe I'll start my own business, be my own boss one day. But for now I'm very, very happy with my job and this career and I don't regret this path at all.

Q: What advice would you have for other youth?

A: Advocate for yourself even if you don't know all the answers. If you don't know how to do something, find somebody who does. Like, I wouldn't be where I'm at today if I didn't run into my friend and got connected with Trish. There should be a Phoenix Centre in every community, especially the lower income communities.

T: Amy-Lea came with a dream. Welding was her dream. When you've been turned down by your social worker, getting no help, homeless...school is usually the last thing on your mind, but she really is the driver here. It's been challenging, but we continue to fight together. And yeah, I keep going back to that because your story will remind people, we can overcome this system. We can beat the system like sleeping in your car to graduating, to apprenticeship and we're going to keep moving... and I'm so proud of her for that.

“When I graduated, I really felt like... 'I deserve this'.”





Celebrating 10 Years!

Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day

In 2014, a group of youth at Phoenix Youth and Community Center (PYCC) decided they had had enough with how their community was being portrayed in the media.

Led by former youth Naykia Hum and Nykeala West, the group was determined to reauthor the harmful narratives often associated with Mulgrave Park. "The youth wanted to do something to challenge those perceptions and showcase the positives," explains Phoenix's Director of Community Programs, Maurice James.

So, the group came up with a plan of action. They spent that summer writing over 500 positive messages and affirmations on cards and attached them to candies. They used markers and scissors to turn t-shirts into works of art. Then, on what would become the first ever **Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day**, they took to the streets of downtown Halifax handing out candygrams and smiles to anyone they met along the way. "It was truly a youth-led initiative," explains Maurice. "There was this real sense of ownership and pride in what they had created."



"It gives people a chance to...know they are loved in this world just for being exactly who they are."

As part of the original group who created the event, Naykia and Nykeala understand the deeper significance the day holds. "It was a way of "taking our power back" in a positive way... to demonstrate that we are more than the media and surrounding communities had perceived us to be," they explain. "We are a family that comes together through the good, the bad and the ugly, and it gives people a chance to feel the love and know they are loved in this world just for being exactly who they are."

Over the years, the initiative continued to grow in scale and impact. From a group of 12-15 youth, to crowds now consisting of 50 or more, and upwards of 3,000 candygrams, Spread the Love Day has evolved into a truly impressive event, even introducing The Hon. J. Michael MacDonald to Phoenix Youth Programs (*who you may now recognize as our Board Chair!*).

For Naykia and Nykeala, from day one to year 10, the journey has been unforgettable, and is far from over. "We've been recognized through the city of Halifax, we have been talked about in the news, and each year the group gets bigger and bigger. Hopefully it continues to grow with more groups being invited to join... or going to different communities, or even celebrating and recognizing individuals for the good they're doing in their everyday lives."

For Maurice, Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day serves as a reminder that youth are truly the leaders in their own lives. "This is the beauty that can happen when you give youth space and autonomy to make their own decisions. We're just here to help amplify their voices."



Check out our Mulgrave Park Spread the Love Day video on our Youtube Channel!

”

“Phoenix is like a family because everyone’s always there for each other.”

- Armon

Community

Raising Dough for a Good Cause

For more than 15 years, Freeman’s Fairview has played a pivotal role in the community.

They’ve hosted school supply drives, family BBQs, and at one point, even a community parade. “The parade ran from here right down Dutch Village Rd.,” recalls one staff member. “As the years went on, it grew. We had face-painters, crafters, fire trucks... and then one year it just got too big (laughs). So I joined the Fairview Community Association, we brought it up to Piercy Field, and that’s how Fairview Family Day started.”

Raising Some Dough for a Good Cause

Earlier this year, patrons grabbing a bite at any one of Freeman’s four locations (Quinpool, Downtown, Fairview, and Sackville) could enjoy some good eats for a good cause. Pizza lovers across HRM came together to show their support in a huge way – 800 large pizzas to be exact! A portion of each sale was donated to Phoenix in support of youth and families in our community. Now that’s a delicious way to raise some dough!

Fairview Family Tree Lighting

In partnership with the Fairview Community Association, every year Freeman’s Fairview hosts a Family Tree Lighting event to kick off the holiday season. Community members are invited to show up and partake in the family-friendly celebration, which includes live music, a free turkey giveaway, and even appearances from Mr. and Mrs. Claus! Attendees are encouraged to bring monetary and in-kind donations in support of a local charity, and this year Phoenix was thrilled to be chosen. Not even a snowstorm could stop our staff from joining in on the fun!



For Freeman’s, the decision to support Phoenix Youth Programs was an easy one. “With everything going on with the cost of living and the housing crisis... it just seemed like a perfect fit,” explain staff. “When community organizations like Phoenix come to us looking to partner or asking for support, [we’re] just so grateful that in some way, we can be a small part of that.”



”

“Sometimes you don’t realize you’re making a difference in the moment, but you will later on.”

All About Community

A Conversation with Candice

From a young age, Candice has always been passionate about working with communities.

From Kentucky to Kijipuktuk, she shares the journey that led her to Phoenix, the lessons she’s learned, and why representation matters.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself.

C: My name is Candice, and I’m the PHI (Phoenix Homes for Independence) Team Lead. I was born and raised in Mulgrave Park for most of my childhood and lived in the community on and off throughout my life.

Q: What are the different positions you’ve held during your time with Phoenix?

C: I was hired at the shelter as a relief worker in February 2020, did a few training shifts and then COVID hit (laughs). That Spring I became a full time Key Worker. In 2022, I went to PYCC (Phoenix Youth and Community Centre) as a Community Outreach Worker for about two years, and I did my BSW student placement at PCFY (Phoenix Centre for Youth). After a short term as Team Lead at the shelter earlier this year, I became Team Lead with PHI.

Q: What led you to working with Phoenix?

C: I’ve always been into community work. I remember as a teen trying to get involved with my local rec center and working as a junior leader there, and throughout school I attended a lot of residential camping programs through the YMCA. After high school I took a year off, then went to university for recreation management and community development. At the time, the school I was attending didn’t really have supports for racialized students and I had unfortunately experienced a lot of oppression and racism. In my second year, I was invited to a conference at St. FX and I fell in love with the campus and school atmosphere. It was evident that they had a lot of support for racialized students, so I transferred there and finished my degree. Then, I started working for the Tim Horton’s Children’s Foundation at their camp in Kentucky, and that’s where I fell in love with social services. We worked with a lot of inner-city youth from all over the US. One year, I was working with a group of preteen girls and towards the end of the week we saw people who didn’t want to return home. Occasionally there would be disclosures, so it was a race to figure out a solution or find somewhere safe for this kid to go, and this challenging work inspired me to get into the field. I applied for my social work degree when I returned home, but I wanted more hands-on experience. So, I searched for organizations that would allow me to gain experience while in school, and that’s when I found Phoenix.

Q: Tell us about Nike.

C: (laughs) So I got Nike the first December of the pandemic. He’s helped me a lot, especially then, because I got to go home and talk to him about my day, and it’s like he doesn’t understand, but at the same time he does. He’s always there to comfort me at home. For a lot of people, pets are huge emotional or therapeutic supports, and a lot of shelters don’t allow them. Nike would often come with me to the shelter, and youth have taken him out for walks. One time during COVID, we did a fashion show with some of the clothing donations, and the youth dressed him in a reindeer costume! I’d bring him on overnight shifts, but he would snore really loud (laughs). The youth really seemed to enjoy having him there.

Q: What do you find rewarding about the work?

C: I would say... making a difference. Sometimes you don’t realize you’re making a difference in the moment, but you will later on. For example, there are times at the shelter where youth will intake and leave pretty quickly, so you might not feel you connected with that youth in a meaningful way, but later you’d be in community and run into that youth and they would say “Oh hey! Remember me?” Seeing the growth in youth who started at the shelter, who are then at Phoenix House, who are then at PHI and now living on their own... that’s a great feeling.

Q: What is something you’ve learned from working at Phoenix?

C: The biggest thing I’ve learned is that there’s no right or wrong way to do something. A youth’s journey doesn’t need to be a linear trajectory, often it’s not. Organizations have an idea of what needs to get done and in what order, but at Phoenix, youth guide their own path and we meet them where they’re at. Youth aren’t going to fit in one of fifty boxes to check off...it’s better to walk in with a blank piece of paper and let the rapport build more naturally, more openly.

Q: Is there anything you’d want people to know about the youth we work with?

C: Representation is important. I remember what it was like when I was growing up, and when I get to know the youth and hear their stories, I’ve sometimes seen myself in them. And you know, a lot of the youth we work with get told these horrible things about themselves and start to internalize them. It can be hard to provide the hope they need, especially in today’s world with systems failing all around us. And when I think of the intersectional qualities of their identities and how that all plays out... coming to a shelter is one thing; coming to a shelter as a visible minority is another. For example, not having access to essential items like hair care products. I remember one time a youth staying at the shelter needed a brush but wasn’t comfortable going to staff to ask for it, and the ones we had weren’t going to work for them...they were so thankful just to have that comfort of being able to do their hair after I brought them one. Sometimes it’s just about seeing themselves represented in the staff to feel comfortable enough with expressing what they need. Representation is a huge thing!

A Big LEAP for Pride

For youth and staff at Phoenix, taking part in our city's annual Pride Festival is something to look forward to every year.

"We've joined the parade for years now," explains Katie, Learn and Explore at Phoenix (LEAP) Coordinator, "and we've won awards too! We've received Best Nonprofit Float, Best Nonprofit Walking, and Best Not-for-Profit Group. Youth love being in the parade, but it's not always accessible for everyone."



Between the crowds, heat warnings, and steep Halifax streets, the parade poses challenges for youth with various access needs. Moreover, with the increase in parade registration fees for nonprofit organizations, it became clear to Katie that it was time to try something new. "I met with the other staff on the Phoenix Pride Committee, and we asked ourselves... what if the drop-in centre was our float?"

With youth consultation and a focus on accessibility, a new Pride tradition was born at Phoenix. Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY) was transformed into a Pride hub, featuring button-making, a face-painting station, and a fenced-in area so young parents could celebrate with their children.

Indoors, a low-sensory space was curated with A/C, dim lighting, and fidget toys so folks feeling overwhelmed could still find ways to participate in the festivities.

A highlight for many was the afternoon performances by drag kings Rhett Torical and Manny Dingo. "For a lot of our youth, this was their first time experiencing a drag show. There's so much anti-trans and anti-drag rhetoric in the media, so for them to see some positive representation... it was really impactful."

"I'm really happy that we were able to create a safer space for youth to engage with Pride, especially our 2SLGBTQIA+ youth," explains Katie. "We'll definitely be hosting Phoenix Pride for years to come."



2023 has been a difficult year for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community due to a disturbing uptick in anti-trans and anti-drag rhetoric, legislated transphobic violence, and policies which jeopardize the safety of trans and gender-diverse children and youth in schools.

Following a nationwide string of protests in September that intended to promote anti-2SLGBTQIA+ bigotry and hate, Phoenix staff decided to respond by decorating program spaces and windows with posters, art, and words of love and affirmation in support of trans and gender-diverse youth.

Staff also attended workshops, presentations and trainings led by Queer Momentum Canada and the Youth Project, two 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations who strive to advance social justice, promote awareness and education, and create safer spaces for queer and trans folks.

Everyone deserves respect and the freedom to be who they are. As a social justice agency, Phoenix is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for our 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and colleagues — one that honors histories, promotes representation, and cultivates joy.

”

“Because of the support I received from Phoenix, I know I can achieve anything I set my mind to.”

- Nykeala

Growth



A Culture of Continuous Learning

We continue to promote a culture of continuous learning at Phoenix, recognizing we are most effective when we work with intention.

The challenges encountered by youth and families in recent years have increased in both intensity and complexity, and staff have been going above and beyond to find meaningful and creative ways to respond. This requires us to carve out focused time for relevant training and critical reflection that is grounded in social justice and draws from best practices.

Here are a few highlights from this year:

1

We now have 13 staff who can provide in-house training for:

- Framework of Practice / Living our Values
- Anti-oppressive Practice
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
- First Aid
- Documentation
- Self-harm
- Substance Use and Harm Reduction
- Shelter Diversion (with focus on working with families)
- Motivational Interviewing (in partnership with the IWK)

2

We've learned from these incredible speakers and educators:

- Roy Ellis**, on loss & grief, and self-care for staff
- Faye Johnstone**, ED of Queer Momentum, on advocacy
- Ecko Aleck**, Sacred Matriarch Creative, on decolonizing pathways
- Kai Glasgow and Roger Burrill**, NS Legal Aid lawyers, on staff legal rights and police encounters
- Lee Cohen**, immigration lawyer, on navigating the immigration system

3

Senior Leadership Teams are engaged in a visioning process to adjust to the increased complexity of needs and the intense pressure this puts on programs and staff, with a focus on clarifying program mandates.

4

The Social Justice Advisory Committee (SJAC) is now fully formed and active. SJAC has circulated important educational pieces that include history and context, recommendations for supporting impacted communities, and suggested actions and events.

Ready to Give Back

A Conversation with Rachel and Andy

Rachel still remembers the first time she came to the door at Phoenix Centre for Youth (PCFY); she was 21 and expecting her first child when Andy and the team welcomed her in.

Twelve years later, Rachel finds herself walking up those same steps to that same door — but this time, she's ready to give back.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself.

R: My Name is Rachel, I'm a mom to a 6 and 11-year-old, and I'm a Social Services student at NSCC. I'm doing my placement at [Phoenix Centre for Youth], and then I graduate.

Q: Why did you first connect with Phoenix and what was that experience like?

R: I feel like I've always been connected to Phoenix, but it started when I first got pregnant, I was 21. I was in this limbo of not having anywhere to live and not being able to get income assistance, but not being able to get IA because I had nowhere to live. So that's when I decided to come [to PCFY].

A: I think I answered the door.

R: Yeah, you did (laughs). I already knew Andy, so it was nice seeing a familiar face.

A: At the time, to qualify for income assistance, you had to have an address. I remember having the conversation with you about not wanting to go to the shelter, but to qualify you had to go for at least one night so you could use the shelter address.

R: Yeah. I was like, 7 months pregnant at the time. My lease ended... I was staying with my friend because she found an apartment; I didn't have one. I had no money. I knew I needed IA, but I just remember feeling so horrible about being pregnant in a shelter. I had been in shelters and group homes before, and got out of that, so it felt like a giant step backwards. I only stayed one or two nights, but in the end it all worked out... I was able to get a housing supplement and then I was finally able to move somewhere a month before my baby was born.



"Phoenix was one of the first places where I wanted to start giving back because the support I received here was so life-changing."

Q: What kind of support did you receive?

R: I participated in a program through Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre (PLEC) and got connected with Killam. I did a work placement there while going to NSCC for Office Administration, and I had one year's rent covered and then another year's rent reduced, so it was very helpful. PLEC staff also helped me apply for school, paid for the registration fee, and helped me with all my bursaries. I also went to the Trustee [at PCFY] and the therapy program; Mel, my therapist was so wonderful. I also had Donna and Marsha, my housing support workers.

A: So you were more connected to Phoenix than I realized, I wasn't aware you were that connected with PLEC.

R: Yeah, I feel like I was in every location (laughs). I've always said, if you used Phoenix the way that it was intended, you could get help with pretty much anything you need. Whether it was school, rental supplements or places to live, I feel like I utilized everything.

Q: What advice do you have for young people?

R: Education is really important. I know not everybody can do it, and it was always a big struggle for me, but I feel like my life would have been much harder if I didn't go to school. I would be struggling financially so much more than I am now. I can picture my life being so much more unhappy if I wasn't where I am today, if I didn't go to school then maybe I would have become homeless or have to live in an unsafe environment. I wish I would have gotten my education sooner, but I think that's the biggest thing I would say.

Q: What are you proud of?

R: Being able to provide my kids with a stable life and that I didn't repeat any cycles. I got to keep my kids and go to school, and I got to, you know, get good enough jobs that we can take little trips and have pets and a place with a yard, that kind of stuff. I didn't think that was going to be possible. I came from living in a shelter and group homes, and now I have two kids and a bunch of pets and a working car and... yeah. It feels nice to be here. Even though life is still very stressful, and I feel like I'm sometimes 10 steps behind everybody else, my kids don't have to feel that way.

Q: Why did you want to come back to Phoenix for your student placement?

R: I wanted to do [the Social Services program] because I received so much support, and I just felt like if I could be a part of that for somebody else, how good that would feel. Phoenix was one of the first places where I wanted to start giving back because the support I received here was so life-changing. And growing up the way that I have and living where I've lived, I got to know people as people and see past, you know, homelessness or addiction or other things that people are struggling with, and I know not everyone can do that.

Q: What do you hope the next chapter of your journey holds?

R: My dream would be to open a group home on a farm, that's what I would love to do. I grew up on a farm, and it wasn't until I ran out of foster homes, so to speak, that I had to move to the city and it was a huge culture shock. I just think, what if I had the opportunity to go to a group home in my community and have the connection with animals that I had growing up in a safer environment? I think it would be so beneficial for youth to be a part of taking care of something and having connections with nature and animals, not being stuck in the city where there's wrong choices at every corner. Hopefully one day I'll do something like that.



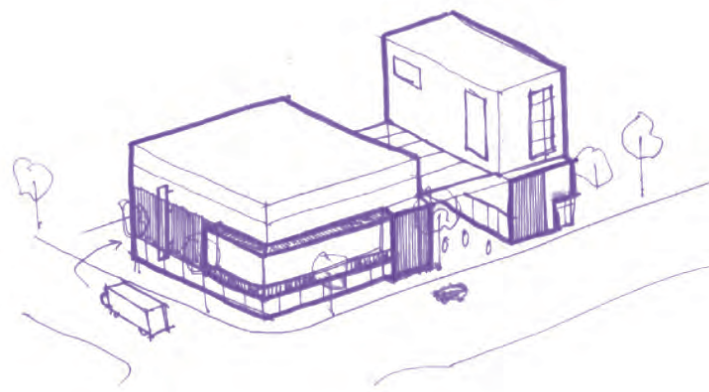


together we will

Every young person deserves to dream big and choose their own path.

Phoenix is working on something BIG - a real solution to the ongoing crises. Until youth help us name it, we are calling it the Multi-Service Housing Centre (MSHC). The MSHC is a wrap-around solution that will include integrated services, affordable housing for youth, and health supports.

The MSHC will focus on prevention, early intervention, and stability. With 20+ collaborative partners in space and greater access to programs and services, young people will be better supported to live the life they see for themselves. Reducing the effort required for a young person to access food, income, education, housing, health care, childcare, life skills, and other resources will reduce entry into crisis. This will have a significant impact on individual and communal health and wellbeing.



A draft, conceptual rendering by Nycum + Associates

Together

We're bringing together service partners in our community to offer a wide range of services under one roof to better tackle the complex crises facing youth and families.

We

We're all witnessing the crises and we can all be a part of this solution.

Will

Youth will have access to support to create the future they want for themselves. Staff will have the resources they need to support young people effectively. The community will join us in creating a solution we all can be proud of. It takes the collective will to make real impact and change.



This Year....

Thanks to the Community Housing Transformation Centre, Phoenix received two grants through the Community Housing Growth Fund. One will support land identification and acquisition options for both scattered site housing and the multi-service housing centre. The second is for design and pre-development work for these new developments. Nycum + Associates continue to help us with this work, reducing costs by offering in-kind support.

Phoenix understands that we are not an expert in all areas and this project requires many partners grounded in social justice and rooted in the social determinants of health in space. This will reduce appointment attrition and stress, and enable improved collaboration and other relevant services for youth from multiple providers. One intake -- multiple service connections -- straightaway.

Our team continues to meet with many organizations to share the concept of the MSHC, learn about their future objectives, and see how we can support each other through the development. These are exciting discussions that we will deepen as the project progresses.

A look inside the space...

- 20+** partners working within the space
- 24 - 42** truly affordable, dignified housing units
- 1,000** additional youth supported annually
- 80,000** square feet
- \$60 million+** project

MSHC Steering Committee

Dr. Michael Ungar
Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience at the Resiliency Research Centre, Dalhousie

Sarah Veinot
Partner, MNP

Omar Gandhi
Principal, OG Architects

Deanne MacLeod
Partner, Stewart McKelvey

Kristan Hines
Senior Vice-President, Public Affairs, NATIONAL PR

Todd Schindeler
Partner, Stewart McKelvey

Be a Part of Something **BIG**



Join the *Together We Will* story and help us turn this vision into reality! Scan the QR code or contact us for more information.

The CHGF provides grants to support, strengthen and develop the Nova Scotian Community Housing sector with funds committed from the Province of Nova Scotia and the Centre.

Our Caring Community

The community has been a pivotal part of Phoenix since the beginning in 1987.

In addition to the continued support we receive from all three levels of government, our community helps ensure that Phoenix is able to continue meeting the needs of youth and their families through diversified funding activities.

Each person's circumstances and relationships are unique to them, but many people choose to maximize their giving potential by utilizing alternative giving methods, such as gifts of securities and leaving a gift in their will. When you donate appreciated securities directly to Phoenix without selling them first, you can avoid taxes on the capital gain and still receive a charitable tax receipt for the full market value of the security. Most commonly, gifts that are written into wills come in the form of cash and securities, though you can also choose to leave retirement funds and life insurance, all which will reduce your taxes owed and still allow you to financially care for your loved ones.

Choosing to give to Phoenix is a thoughtful and personal investment into the future of your community. By doing so, you are being a voice for social justice and will support Phoenix youth in their journey to thrive for many years to come. As the demand for our services grow with poverty rates at an all time high, we hope we can continue to count on your support whether it be through grants from private foundations, participation in special events, hosting your own fundraising initiatives, corporate partnerships, individual donations, or volunteering.

Your support makes a difference!



Stories of Support



GIFTING STOCK & SECURITIES

Malcolm and Lynne Barkhouse have been loyal supporters of Phoenix for more than 24 years! They have been involved through a variety of ways, including giving gifts of securities. Malcolm encourages more people to consider this giving alternative, and calls it "a win-win approach for contributors and the charitable organization". Thank you to the Barkhouses for continuing to walk alongside Phoenix; we are fortunate to find ourselves in your company and care after all these years!

A TRIBUTE TO RAINBOW YOUTH

Every year, the Asher MacDonald You First Award recognizes young leaders for contributions in uplifting trans and gender-diverse youth in our communities. This year's recipient is Ash Tomlik, a young advocate and athlete who promotes social justice, acceptance, and gender inclusivity in sports. Together with support from Cape and Cowl Comics and Asher's family, they decided to gift their \$500 award to Phoenix! Thank you for spreading the support and love, Ash!

GETTING IT DONE TOGETHER

Manulife chose to wrap their arms around Phoenix this past year through a variety of ways; grant funding, employee matching programs, dedicated volunteer days including beautification projects, support at the Phoenix Holiday Luncheon, and so much more! The right partnerships have huge impact and we are so thankful for all of the support that Manulife has sent our way.



Thank You to Our Donors

We gratefully acknowledge that every gift is meaningful and has transformative impact. By removing giving tiers, we endeavor to highlight the importance of all contributions through equitable and inclusive recognition.

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**Refers to monthly donors with cumulative gifts over \$100.*

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Some donors make memorial gifts to honour close friends and family. Others make gifts to honour individuals during the holidays, for weddings, birthdays, and to recognize individuals for their outstanding service to our community.

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Message from Leadership

Dear friends,

This past year has been unlike any other that we have experienced in our province's recent history. While many of us are still unpacking the effects of last year's wildfires and floods, the cost of living continues to soar and affordable housing options continue to vanish, leaving many families to face a new, unsettling reality – at any moment, they too could find themselves with nowhere to go.

Phoenix has always been adaptive to meet the mounting needs of youth and families, but in our 37 years as an agency, we could never have anticipated what challenges would await us. Today, Nova Scotia has the highest poverty rate among all provinces (13.1%), and more than a quarter of residents (28.9%) are experiencing food insecurity. * In Halifax, 31 affordable housing units are disappearing every week, and the number of people experiencing active homelessness is 6 times higher than what it was just 5 years ago. **

Yet, despite the prevailing circumstances that surround us, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the well-being of the youth and families we serve. This year forced us to adapt in ways we could have never imagined; including tents and emergency supplies on our Holiday Wishlist, helping young families move from one hotel to another, and providing outreach support to young people living in encampments.

As we look to the year ahead, rest assured we will be here. From the tangible, day-to-day support of our frontline teams, to collaboration with local and national impact organizations all the way to Parliament Hill, we will continue to be a voice for social justice, advocate for affordable, dignified housing, and cultivate moments of joy. We believe joy is an essential part of being human, transformative in its power to build resilience, foster connection, and support well-being.

* Poverty Report Card. Food Banks Canada. (2024, May 22). <https://foodbankscanada.ca/poverty-report-card/>

** HRM Homelessness Statistics. AHANS. <https://www.ahans.ca/hrm-homelessness-statistics>

To our partners in community, in government, and to you our loyal friends, we offer our most heartfelt thanks. If this year has taught us anything, we know that when communities rally around one another, the impact is undeniable. We deeply value the support you have shown us throughout the years, and we hope that the stories contained in this year's report serve as a reminder that the work we do would not be possible without you.

With deep and abiding gratitude,



Timothy Crooks (he/him)
Executive Director,
Phoenix Youth Programs

The Hon. J. Michael MacDonald (he/him)
Former Chief Justice of Nova Scotia
Chair, Board of Directors, Phoenix Youth Programs

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Thankyou

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