

# BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2020

## Award: Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Couchiching OHT Social Determinants of Health Working Group

### Achievement: Creation of community-wide COVID-19 response strategy



Various agency partners of the Couchiching Ontario Health Team created a COVID-19 response working group that adopted a response strategy for the Couchiching area. Working collaboratively, the partners' response resulted in zero – yes, zero – cases of COVID-19 in congregate living settings.

The group aligned through a housing strategy, food distribution, access to COVID screening, mental health

support and ongoing wellness checks. The diverse organizations that made the pandemic response so successful included primary care, a shelter, a food centre, the local hospital, the district health unit, paramedics, municipal leaders, Couchiching FHT and other local organizations.

Each partner addressed the needs they were most suited to providing and the result was a synergistic and comprehensive response plan. Their actions included:

- **Safe Housing:** With the help of various partners, Lighthouse Shelter mobilized and sheltered people in a local hotel to allow self-isolation and physical distancing.
- **Assessment Centre:** A partnership of Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, Couchiching FHT, County of Simcoe, Rama First Nations Paramedics. Offered drive-in and walk-up (no appointment necessary) outreach to congregate settings.
- **CMHA Partnership:** CMHA provided mental health support and counselling for residents.
- **Sharing Place Food Centre:** Became a no-contact food delivery service and allowed community agencies to access food for their clients. Meal packages included a COVID-19 one-pager that answered frequently asked questions and a CMHA crisis line number.
- **Volunteer Program:** Organized local volunteers to support staff with pick-up and delivery of groceries for residents.

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The program can boast of remarkable success. For example, between March 12 and June 15, the Lighthouse sheltered 174 individuals. They served more than 10,000 shelter meals and distributed more than 2,500 bag lunches. Meanwhile, at the Sharing Place Food Centre, 3,112 people received a seven-day emergency supply of food, 918 children received healthy snacks, 98 seniors received emergency food support and four community agencies received more than 10,000 pounds of fresh food for their programs. In addition, 203 patients accessed the crisis line.

Although the peak of the crisis has passed, the working group continues to meet regularly, and their work informs OHT policy and decision making.

In addition, a new facility that is under construction will have a clinical treatment room to serve its vulnerable population.

#### Key Facts:

- A collaborative strategy in Couchiching OHT's catchment area resulted in an absence of COVID-19 cases in congregate living settings.
- Partner organizations created a plan that provided a housing strategy, food distribution, access to COVID screening, mental health support and ongoing wellness checks.
- Input from staff, volunteers and patients was crucial to the success of the strategy and plans.
- During the peak of the pandemic, partners provided 10,000 shelter meals and gave out seven-day emergency food supplies to 3,112 people.
- 203 patients took advantage of the mental health crisis line.
- Trusting Partnerships between: Sharing Place Food Centre, Lighthouse Shelter (Building Hope Campaign), LOFT Community Services, Volunteers, Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle, 211, Couchiching FHT, Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, Primary Care, CMHA, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, LGBTQ leadership and municipal leaders from Orillia, Oro-Medonte, Severn and Ramara.

#### Contact Information:

Chris Archer  
Project Manager Couchiching Family Health Team  
[C.archer@cfht.ca](mailto:C.archer@cfht.ca)  
705-715-2075