



# The LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

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## No Greater Pain Than Losing a Child

by Samia Saad

Rosa and her children, Darian (age 5) and Peter (age 3),\* enjoyed the games, the swimming and the artwork made during the summer family camp last year. Rosa a wonderful mother, caring person and loyal friend to The Lighthouse took the leadership training course and did her practicum during the camp. She wanted to learn how to be a better leader at home and in her work within the community.

Rosa and her children came once a week for six weeks for the training, and then every day the second week of August for the summer camp. Rosa always came early because, according to her, the kids loved coming to The Lighthouse. Many times during the days of training, little Peter left the kids' room to see his mom while she was in class, and in a loud voice he would say something like "mommy, I am tired" or "mommy, I want to play with you." No matter what I was teaching at the time, I would always laugh and invite him to play close to his mom. In a very Latin American way, other mothers would hug him and offer their laps for him to sit on. We had an enjoyable and productive summer program with wonderful volunteers and children like Rosa and Peter who brightened the day.

A week after our summer camp ended, Rosa and her children went to a birthday party where there

was a swimming pool for the children and adults to play in. Things happened very fast, and before anyone noticed, Peter had lost consciousness while in the water. After many efforts to revive him, he died. This was a terrible tragedy that still lives with us. Even as I write this article, my hands are cold with the memory of this incident.

A few weeks later, The Lighthouse hosted a get-together at 1008 Bathurst Street in memory of Peter, where friends and family gathered to celebrate the short life of Peter and to offer support to Rosa and her family in concrete ways. Though steeped in grief, Rosa was consoled by the great support she found in us and in God. As many of our readership will know, one of The Lighthouse's core values is Community, recognizing that wellbeing and healing is facilitated through positive relationships. It was so important that we take this time to celebrate and grieve together, and The Lighthouse was honoured to be able to facilitate this very special memorial gathering.

During the camp, Peter, Darian and other children their age made a big robot out of cardboard and coloured it very carefully. They all loved this robot, and after the camp



ended, many children asked me what I was going to do with it because they all wanted to take it home. I didn't have a clue, but on the day of Peter's memorial we all wrote little notes to Peter's brother, Darian, and placed them on the robot. Darian loves his brother and still wonders when he is coming back. We wanted to do something special for Darian by giving him that robot to remember his brother and the great work they did together. Rosa told me it was the best thing we could have done. It made Darian smile, and now he has it in his room where he cares for and plays with it. This robot is very special for Darian because he and Peter made it together during a time and in a place of happiness for both of them.

*Continued on page 2...*

## Income Tax Clinics

by Janet Elliot

The Lighthouse has a long history of completing tax returns for low-income people. Rita Wong started the clinics in 1983, and a whole host of volunteers have been involved over the almost 30 years. In the past few years we have moved from paper to computer programs and as more clinics open around the city our numbers are smaller than in years gone by. Rita says that once volunteers would complete 400 plus returns each year as where in more recent times we do about 250.

It is so important that people file their taxes in order to get the benefits they require. Newcomers often do not understand the system or have language challenges that make it difficult and many other low-income people do not have the skills or confidence to do their own taxes. One of the groups we do many returns for is clients of Community Living Toronto. People return year after year and many, especially seniors give donations to The Lighthouse.

If you are comfortable with income tax software and want to help, there is training provided on-line by CRA and we would welcome your assistance in March and April.

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We at The Lighthouse are grieving the lost of this child. Rosa, her husband and Darian come on a regular basis for family counselling / support and for family programs. Rosa is also taking a haircutting course, which is helping her be connected to others and where she finds support. She also volunteers with The Lighthouse's seniors program where she may feel useful and productive notwithstanding her grief. The pain of losing a child is widely considered to be the worst pain a person can experience. The process of healing is extremely hard, and the pain is never entirely relieved. But by God's grace and the support of the caring churches and individuals forming part of our community, The Lighthouse is able to offer meaningful support during this time of grief. Rosa and her family are grateful to God that a place called The Lighthouse exists. Let's keep this family in our hearts.

\* Names have been altered to protect the identity of the people involved.

## Visioning Day

*On January 11, staff and Board of The Lighthouse gathered to focus on communications at their annual Visioning Day. It was a day of learning, laughter and listening, and led to identifying communication goals and important commitments for 2014. What a blessing!*



## Christmas Celebrations @ The Lighthouse



*Chinese  
Christmas Party*

*Hispanic  
Christmas Party*



See our website and Facebook page for more pictures from our Christmas celebrations.



*Vietnamese  
Christmas Party*



## Food for Empowerment by Tiffany Kwok



With participants from the Vietnamese program, Thuy Tran, the Vietnamese Counsellor and Program Coordinator, began a catering service here at The Lighthouse. Speaking with Thuy, a clear reason for initiating this service stems from her concerns about poverty, particularly for the recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), a specific kind of social welfare for people with disabilities.

Although ODSP provides secure long term financial assistance, for many families on ODSP, poverty is still a prevalent issue. As of the latest social assistance rates, a single parent with two children under the age of 18 can only receive a maximum \$757 for the family's basic needs. While ODSP provides a maximum of \$816 for shelter, many families do

not live in subsidized housing. The cost of rent alone can often exceed the maximum \$816, thereby forcing families to draw from the basic needs allotment of \$757, in order to provide adequate shelter for their families. And even with the supplementary Ontario Child Benefits, families continue to struggle for financial security. Thuy's hope for the catering service is for it to develop into a full-fledged program providing an additional source of income for the participants without jeopardizing their social assistance.

Recently, the catering service cooked for the Chatham High School students, creating a wonderful cultural experience for over 30 students and teachers. As well, the catering service provided wonderful lunches for the staff and board at both this year and last year's Visioning Day. Last year, the catering service actually donated their earnings from the Chatham High School visit back to The Lighthouse, in support of the Vietnamese program.

Two ladies, Vanessa and Mindy\* sat down with Thuy to talk about their experiences being part of this catering service.

What is your favourite part of being involved in the catering service?

Vanessa: When I am cooking with the catering service, I feel empowered because I am participating in something worthwhile. Since I am generating my own income, it reduces my stress about finances. As well, when I am prepping the food, I am able to be active and move around the kitchen. I also feel happy working with the other women, and when I see customers enjoying our food. As we cook, we are creating new friendships and support networks for one another.

Mindy: I am happy that with my own labour, I am able to generate a little income and contribute financially to my family.

For full interview, go to [lighthousecentre.ca/lives-changed](http://lighthousecentre.ca/lives-changed)

\*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the client.



### ***Welcome to 3 new Board members!***

***Kasih Nguyen***, with expertise in finances & accounting

***Juan Rojo***, with expertise in communications & web design

***Fadi Sharaiha***, with expertise in program development & evaluation

### **Event Updates:**

This past fall, The Lighthouse was able to raise over \$38,000 through our Annual Dinner & Silent Auction and three terrific benefit concerts. Thank you for your continual support and prayers.

Just a reminder, our annual Phone-a-thon will be coming soon in May. Stay tuned!

## From the Desk of Rob

When we opened our doors again in January, everyone wanted to talk about the ice storm. Clients and staff shared stories about the length of time they were without electrical power. Some didn't lose any power while others had no power for 3 or more days. Everyone shared how they coped during the ice storm, and it seemed to bring us closer together.



Now we are going through another cold snap. Once again people are sharing stories about how they are coping. Some say that they stay inside their homes as much as possible while others make sure they are bundled up. Everyone is sharing their ideas and concerns.

With these two events, I recognize how we Canadians rely on the various services, such as power and water provided to us. I am also reminded how The Lighthouse relies on you. Without our supporters, we wouldn't be able to provide services to new immigrants, refugees, and low-income people. We need you.

Thank you for supporting The Lighthouse in 2013. Thank you for your ongoing commitment, love, prayers, and resources. With you, 2014 promises to be a year of important work, renewed energy, and strengthened programming.



### Board of Directors

Alex Chan  
Adrian Helleman  
Jessica Miedema  
Jane Moore  
Kasiah Nguyen  
Juan Rojo  
Jeanette Romkema (Chair)  
Fadi Sharaiha  
Roger Visser

### Staff

**Rev. Rob Datema**  
*Executive Director*

**Rita Wong**  
*Chinese Program Coordinator*

**Samia Saad**  
*Hispanic Program Coordinator*

**Thuy Tran**  
*Vietnamese Program Coordinator*

**Janet Elliott**  
*Administration/Food Bank*

**Tiffany Kwok**  
*Administration*

**Madeley Perez**  
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**Tracy Dang**  
*Vietnamese Assistant*

### Helping People Changing Lives

*Thank you for being partners with us in this ministry.*



Yes, I would like to help with a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque enclosed

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#### Other Ways to Help - Contact us for details

- PAR PreAuthorized Remittance
- Monthly Visa or MasterCard donation - makes it easy for you and for us
- Canada Helps on line at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)
- Giving through Christian Stewardship Service
- United Way Payroll Deduction-just provide our CRA # and address
- Matched Corporate Giving - many companies match employee donations

Please mail your contribution to:

**The Lighthouse**  
**1008 Bathurst Street**  
**Toronto, ON M5R 3G7**

Receipts will be issued in the New Year.  
Canada Revenue Agency #13036 3740 RR0001