



The

# LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

416-535-6262

info@lighthousecentre.ca

Fall 2020

## Navigating COVID-19 With Our Clients

Paulina Busa and Kellei Nguyen

### Interview with Chiro



**Paulina:** How has your daily routine changed during COVID-19?

**Chiro:** My daily routine is recovery. A lot of recovery! I'm a recovering heroin addict. For me Heroin is a bigger disease than COVID. I have to do the work, I have to go to the programs, meet doctors, go to the hospitals. When I was addicted to heroin, I had pneumonia. If you have pneumonia now during COVID, you're more likely to die. That makes me more careful as I need to protect myself. These days I do Zoom meetings with my sponsor. I used to go into church and I hope it opens up again. I'm a year and eight months sober and I'm happy to be alive. When I went into the program I was scared to tell my doctor, my therapist... but now, I'm not scared to tell anybody about my past. I should've died so many times from overdoses and blackouts. I thank God I'm alive today.

**P:** Have you been able to receive support during this time?

**C:** Yes, from my sponsor and friends and you guys have been such a blessing to me. I like the walk here and I like the people here. I've never been here before Covid. You guys stayed open during Covid and I saw people coming here. That's how I knew to come. I'm just so happy to get food.

### Interview with Conrad

**Paulina:** What are some negative impacts that you've experienced due to COVID-19?

**Conrad:** I am actually stranded here. I visited [Toronto] from the States and I was supposed to go back on March 22 but everything got locked down. Then I was supposed to go back to the Philippines on May 7th but again, I could not. A family member wanted to pick me up from Montreal, but it's the same story; the border is closed. But, I would rather stay here than in the Philippines; there are a lot of cases of COVID there.

**P:** How do you keep in touch with your family in the Philippines?

**C:** I video call them and message them through Facebook Messenger.

**P:** What are the positive experiences you've had during this time?

**C:** Although I am stranded in Canada, the advantage of being here is that I have family here. I can bond with my grandchildren and we can go to the parks. In the Philippines, senior citizens are prohibited from leaving the house. They're just sitting at home waiting for the governments' [monetary] goods to come every so often. At least here I can go out with my grandchildren. I can also come here to the food bank and I can help my family with some of the expenses.





## Did you know that The Lighthouse Community Centre partners with Daily Bread Food Bank?

A lot of the food we receive comes from Daily Bread Food Bank, Second Harvest, and donations from our amazing supporters. During the start of the pandemic, The Lighthouse had to drastically modify how we operate our community food bank. From the start of the pandemic we have seen a 74% increase in food bank usage at our centre! According to the *Covid-19 Impact Report*, recently published by Daily Bread Food Bank, during this pandemic there has been a 200% increase in new clients accessing food banks in Toronto. There is certainly a strong need for support that has arisen during this time. While it can be overwhelming at times, we have been blessed to be able to bless our community members with the amount of support we have received to manage this increase. Thank you to all those who have reached out and upheld The Lighthouse during this difficult season. If you are looking to support The Lighthouse please consider doing so financially and by praying for our clients, staff and our volunteers!

### Interview with Boris

**Kellei:** What are some negative impacts that COVID-19 has had in your life?

**Boris:** It brought a lot of uncertainty and anxiety.

**K:** Were you able to access resources to help you cope with the stress of this pandemic?

**B:** I've tried. It's very frustrating. Whenever I try to access resources to help me cope like counselling, a psychiatrist or a doctor, you always get stuck talking to a machine. You always press option one, option two and 45 minutes go by, you're on the line, nothing happens, you get frustrated. This system is falling apart. Whenever I try, it ends up taking a lot of time and it's very frustrating. You're just sitting around talking to robots and then in the end, the best thing they can do is send you to another office, go through the whole process again and just give you prescription pills. I have very low confidence in anybody I talk to, I try to avoid people as it is and with COVID, I avoid them more.

**K:** I'm sorry to hear that it's been hard to access these kinds of resources. May I ask if there are any strategies you have to cope and remain positive during COVID?

**B:** I try to spend a lot of time walking my dog. I have a little dog, he's a senior, very cute and fun to hang out with! So I try to spend as much time with him. I also try to stay happy like on the weekends, I ride my bike and things like that, but during the weekdays there's very little to do. I try to stay positive but I get depressed, I just tell myself "It'll pass, it'll pass."

**K:** Would you say The Lighthouse has been a resource to you and/or your family? If so, how?

**B:** Yes, definitely. This place has been so good to me. It's been good to see that this place stayed open. Everyone is very nice and you guys go out of your way to help people. It makes it easier to come to a food bank when the people working there treat you with respect.

## Suicide Prevention Awareness

*The Lighthouse acknowledges that your mental health is just as important as your physical health and deserves just as much consideration, regardless of the month. However, in recognition of September being Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, we have provided the following resources:*

- ◆ Distress Centre of Toronto: 416-408-HELP (4357)
- ◆ Gerstein Centre: 416-929-5200, 24 hrs/7 days
- ◆ Good2Talk (anonymous for post-secondary students): 1-866-925-5454, 24 hrs/7 days
- ◆ Toronto Withdrawal Management System Central Access (detox placement): 1-866-366-9513, 24 hrs/7days

**mental health matters**





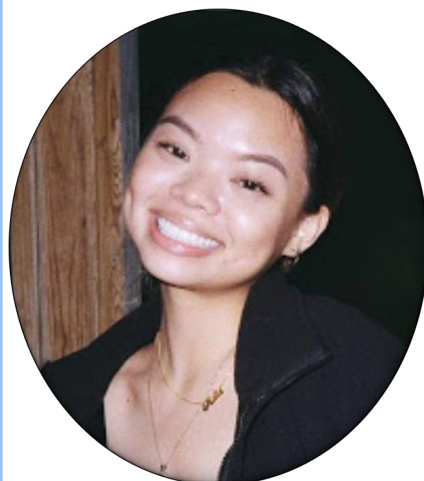
## Summer Students during a Pandemic



Hello, my name is Paulina. At the start of the pandemic, I had just graduated from my program at York University in May 2020. We didn't have a ceremony due to the COVID-19 and my mom especially was looking forward to the event. Currently, I'm trying to figure out what I want to do in terms of further education. I was going to take this year off to just find work and evaluate what I want to do in life, but it's been hard to find a more permanent job at this time. I'm really blessed to be able to work, especially at such a great place. When I was younger, I used to want to be a doctor, partly because my family thought of that as a highly regarded profession, but also because I thought it would be a great way to help people. Now that I'm older, I've learned that there's a lot of different ways to help people. Personally, I know that I do not want to go through four more years of late nights, having to memorize stuff from a book. I long to be more hands-on. I guess that's why I wanted to work at the Lighthouse. I was considering perhaps going to college after the pandemic and enrolling in a Social Services program and I thought

working at the Lighthouse would be a great way to see if this kind of work is my calling. The Lighthouse does many great things for the community and it's such a blessing and an encouragement to see how dedicated all the staff and volunteers are to the community they serve.

Hi, my name is Rachel. I started volunteering at The Lighthouse in early May, as COVID put extra time on my hands, and jobs were not easy to find at the time. I had just finished my second year at university, and with no job to return to, I figured I would help out in my community. Life during COVID, especially as a young university student, has been anxiety-inducing, stressful, and tedious. I am currently studying at the University of Guelph and I am looking forward to graduating this year with my Bachelor of Arts degree. My academic goal is to successfully achieve my degree with good marks, as I've never experienced taking a full course load virtually. I decided to work at The Lighthouse because I've never experienced agency work and I grew a liking to the clients as well as the people that worked there while I was volunteering. The Lighthouse holds a powerful sense of community, acceptance and has a contagious caring nature to it. I am interested in learning more about the clients that use The Lighthouse and hear about their experiences and stories so I can have different perspectives or outlook on life overall.



Hello, my name is Kellei Nguyen and I am a recent high school graduate. I am attending the University of Guelph-Humber for Business Administration in hopes of becoming an entrepreneur in the near future. Due to COVID-19, I was unable to finish my final semester of high school. Although it was very disappointing, the time at home allowed me to learn and care more about myself. I found that isolation was an opportunity for myself and others to reflect on life and figure out how to be the best version of yourself. I am very grateful that The Lighthouse has given me the opportunity to branch out and experience different career areas to find my passion while making an impact in my community. As a result, I now believe social work is one of my passions and will be involving myself more in the field! With this opportunity, I aim to make a positive impact on people's lives and do whatever I can to help and support my community. Whether it's something short-term like having a conversation or long-term like finding resources and creating programs for clients, I'm all for it! Life throws a lot of challenges our way, some that we had anticipated and many that we had not. Therefore it's key to

create environments where community members feel safe, accepted, and able to ask for help, especially in today's society. Empathizing with The Lighthouse's clients and being an open ear to them is an experience that holds value in my life. I believe it's important to give back to the community even if it's something small, a little goes a long way.

## From Rob's Desk

Wow! What a year so far! At the start of the year 2020, we heard about the coronavirus in other parts of the world. Later, we began to hear rumblings that we needed to be prepared here, that it was coming to Canada. Then in March, 2020 we were faced with having to make some tough decisions at The Lighthouse. We had to decide as an organization whether we were going to close or remain open during the pandemic. We decided based on criteria from Canada Health and the provincial government that we were going to stay open and modify our programs to protect all participants. We modified and continued the food bank program, we provided a socially distanced service to do income tax returns for low income individuals and refugees, and we adapted how we facilitated counselling and support groups using zoom.



During the first few months of Covid-19, we saw a 74% increase in the number of clients coming to the food bank program. We have seen an increase in the number of clients we served, in food donations as well as in financial donations. We are grateful to say that we did see the hand of the Lord at work at The Lighthouse during this pandemic. Yes, it was a challenging year for The Lighthouse because of Covid-19, and yet it has also been a rewarding year so far.

To help The Lighthouse during the pandemic we also received two financial grants. One grant was to purchase water for food bank program participants as they waited for their food hampers outside in the hot sun during the summer. The other grant was to purchase food and PPE supplies for the food bank and to hire two staff for six weeks to help with the food bank. These grants helped The Lighthouse to provide support to the many who came to access food.

As Covid-19 continues some of the fundraising events planned for 2020 are on hold or cancelled. This has created some concern for The Lighthouse. Thankfully we received a bequest of almost \$45,000 recently. Once again the Lord provides! Maybe you are wondering how you can make a lasting impact! If you consider gifting a charity such as The Lighthouse in your will, you can make a lasting impact. For more information about "Gifts in your will" contact us at [info@lighthousecentre.ca](mailto:info@lighthousecentre.ca) or 416-535-6262. We look forward to providing this information.

## Board of Directors

Ed Sikkema (Chair)  
Ed Boekee  
Theody Corton  
Wendy Helleman  
Joe Koole  
Juan Rojo  
Annette Taylor  
Alisa Velthuisen

## Staff

Rev. Rob Datema  
*Executive Director*

Tabitha Eastman  
*Neighborhood Program Director  
and Administration*

Tracy Nguyen  
*Vietnamese Assistant*

Madeley Perez  
*Hispanic Assistant*

Samia Saad  
*Psychotherapist and Hispanic  
Program Director*

Thuy Tran  
*Psychotherapist and Vietnamese  
Program Director*

## 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

☐ Visa/MasterCard # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

## 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*