

## MEETING PLACE DROP-IN

# Former members share experience and hope

**I**'m basically a motivational role model" says Karl Fleming. Karl works as a Peer Support Worker in the Meeting Place at West Neighbourhood House. Starting out as a self-proclaimed "squeegee kid", he has moved into a mentorship role on the staff team.

Sandy Sicilia also started as a member in the Meeting Place. He became a volunteer and recently moved into his new role as a Peer Support Worker.

Karl and Sandy are part of the staff team working with street-involved adults who are facing the stresses of long-term unemployment, poverty, and precarious housing. Members know that Karl and Sandy can relate to these personal experiences and they can see how positive change is possible.

Sandy says "I try to talk to people about volunteering. It keeps you out of trouble." "It brings me back to where I started ... I tell them it was a good thing for me and I'm sure it could be a good thing for yourself too."

**"You get more cases of people almost overdosing — there is a big problem with fentanyl [and] crystal meth. You get behaviour changes."**

Now, more than ever, it is important for the Meeting Place staff to be able to connect with members and engage them in meaningful activities. Things on the streets are changing. While alcohol and street drugs have often been used to cope with the stresses of poverty and

trauma, Karl and Sandy are seeing a shift. Much more dangerous drug use is on the rise. "You get more cases of people almost overdosing," says Sandy. "There is a big problem with fentanyl [and] crystal meth. You get behaviour changes."

Despite the new challenges that drop-in members are facing, Sandy and Karl know that the work they do and the relationships they build with people really do pay off. "I knew a member who used to come around. He was lost, trying to search for answers," says Sandy. "So he would sit and talk with me and I would just give him encouragement to keep trying. Today actually he met someone and he's working."

Karl adds "[It takes a] lot of love, a lot of love".



Karl Fleming and Sandy Sicilia are Peer Support Workers at the Meeting Place Drop-In

## CONTINUING WHAT JANE ADDAMS STARTED

The **Jane Addams** model for community work is something we have followed since 1912 when we opened our doors as St. Christopher House.

The model is rooted in authentic relationships, empowerment, community assets, collaboration, innovation, and social justice. At West NH, this model is sprinkled with laughter, good and sometimes hard conversations, challenging situations, strengths, courage, creativity, and dreams. (For more on Jane Addams, read: [nyti.ms/2pw2zPt](https://nyti.ms/2pw2zPt))

Here are some of the ideas we are exploring in the spirit of Jane Addams:

- With *InWithForward* and others, we are part of Canada's first Social Research and Development Collaborative to apply recent social science learnings to help people reach their goals. Visit [inwithforward.com/approach](https://inwithforward.com/approach) for more.
- *Insight for Community Impact* is a collaboration between Bureau Kensington, Inc, Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre, University of Toronto Student Life, and us. We're building new approaches to today's challenges by offering workshops and events on group behaviour, leadership development, and community building from a psychoanalytic perspective. See: [bureaukensington.com/projects-3](https://bureaukensington.com/projects-3)
- The Synergia Institute has been inspiring us about local, regional, and international solutions in community energy, local food, social care, land tenure and cooperative finance that address current concerns for environmental and social well-being. To dig deeper into these ideas, visit: [bit.ly/2iyWw7M](https://bit.ly/2iyWw7M)



## It was a winning year for our marathon team

**W**hat a year! Thank you to our fundraisers who brought in over \$21,000 for West NH at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon!

Not only did a fabulous team of runners, walkers and wheelers take part in the race for West NH, we had a crew of top notch cheerers at our Neighbourhood Challenge Stage whose cheering was so fabulous, we

won third prize for best stage!

Thank you to each and every one of you who made a donation. These funds will go towards supporting West Neighbourhood House programs that need it most.





## PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS AT WEST NH

# Our PSWs provide home care throughout the community

**A**fter a severe illness or surgery, things don't always get easier the moment you leave the hospital — that's often when the real road to recovery begins.

Spiros Savvanis has been in and out of hospitals and rehabilitation for the past several years. He has undergone major surgeries for his heart that have affected the left side of his body and his overall mobility. Although he is healthy enough to live at home with his wife, Anna, there are certain things that he just can't do on his own anymore.

That is why, in 2013, Spiros and Anna decided to start using the services of a Personal Support Worker (PSW) through West Neighbourhood House (West NH). West NH has a team of over 80 PSWs that are out in community every day, working with over 370 seniors and people with disabilities to keep them safe and healthy in their homes.

Although Anna is able to help out with many things around the house, her back isn't what it used to be and she isn't able to help with larger tasks such as helping Spiros bathe. Spiros says having a PSW has "... helped me a lot. I can take a bath twice a week."

As a result of offering Home Support Services that are delivered by our crew of dedicated PSWs, we support people to stay in their communities longer, reduce isolation and help people live with dignity. PSWs do everything from assisting with bathing, light cleaning, meal preparation, and medication monitoring. Our PSWs speak many languages in order to serve our diverse

community best — these languages include Portuguese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Spanish, Italian, Tagalog, Amharic, Tibetan, Hindu, Nepali and English.

Feliciana Lapitan is the PSW that visits Spiros in his home twice a week. Having worked as a PSW since 2000, Feliciana knows that visiting a client in their home is much more than providing services, it's also about developing relationships. PSWs tend to work with the same participants over long periods of time, so they get to know the people they help. This provides a sense of well-being and stability that is essential to helping people stay connected to their community.

At West NH, we want to make sure that we are truly embedded within our neighbourhood so we are able to

provide services to all the folks in the community who need our support. Our seniors programs strive to reach out to isolated folks and with the help of our PSWs, many people are able to stay in their homes longer.



**Feliciana (left) assists Spiros with daily activities like bathing, which enables him live at home with dignity.**



RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED  
PORT DE RETOUR GARANTI



# Please donate to our Annual Appeal

**To continue improving** lives in downtown west Toronto, we need your help. With your support, we will work with the 15,000-plus community members that benefit from our programs and services.

From settlement services for newcomers to adult learning and employment programs, from our Music School to our community organizing

initiatives, we simply cannot serve the community in the same way without your generous support.

**Please consider contributing to our Annual Appeal campaign and give West NH the resources it needs to change lives. When we work together, our community is stronger.**

To donate to our Annual Appeal, visit [westnh.org/donate](http://westnh.org/donate) or call 416-532-4828.