Welcome to Summer 2016!

The past months have been busy ones at Tobias House. A few highlights:
- We held our 6th Abuse Prevention Training Event, “No Excuse for Any Abuse.” 14 Independent Living Assistants (ILAs) took part.
- Back Care training was provided for 71 ILAs
- Musculoskeletal training was provided for 37 ILAs
- In addition to our annual year-end audit, this spring our good luck brought us also a Canada Revenue Agency audit. We passed all with high marks!
- Mid-summer, we’ll be welcoming a new consumer to our Coxwell location.

Happy 90th Birthday, Pat Walsh!

“The day I was born, the doctor said I wouldn’t last the day. Now here I am, 90 years later!” Not only did Coxwell consumer Pat Walsh beat the odds and flourish, it’s unlikely Tobias House would have existed without her. In the early 1980s, Pat was one of the driving forces, together with the Franciscan Congregation, behind the creation of the place she has called home for the last 24 years.

What’s her secret to a long happy life? “I have great faith in God, and a purpose in life. And I have great friends.” To commemorate the occasion, friends arranged for her to receive special birthday greetings from the Mayor of Toronto, the Premier of Ontario, the Governor General of Canada, the Prime Minister of Canada, and even the Pope.

“I want to express my gratitude to the staff at Tobias House. They’re very dedicated. I don’t have a family. They’re my family. My hope is that Tobias House continues to grow and spread. There are so many people who need a place like this.”
The Tobias House Resource Centre

The Tobias House Resource Centre provides programs and services that support people’s independence and complement the attendant care support they receive. We work with individuals throughout the City of Toronto so they can find solutions that lessen the barriers they face in their daily lives.

**Services** include support with self-advocacy and resource counseling. **Programs** we currently offer:

- **The Barrier Free Access to Swimming Program** provides attendant care support (Tobias House staff) to people with physical disabilities at four City of Toronto public pools. Support in the water is provided by Parks, Forestry and Recreation, the Birchmount Bluffs Neighborhood Centre, and the Scadding Court Community Centre. The program is offered in the fall, winter, and spring.

- **The Tobias House Fitness Program** provides one hour fitness classes weekly to consumers during selected periods throughout the year.

- **The Tobias House Consumer Grant Fund** enables consumers to cover costs associated with accessing a wider range of extra-curricular activities, equipment and other quality of life expenses. Our **Volunteer Program** matches consumers with volunteers on a one on one basis. Currently, we have five consumer-volunteer matches.

We also host workshops and information sessions. Our most recent sessions have focused on diabetes prevention, wellness, strengthening independence and accessible travel. If you have any suggestions for other workshops, please let us know.

*For more information on Resource Centre programs, activities and services contact us at 416-690-8804. or email at constantine.iliopoulous@tobiashouse.ca*

The Tobias House Resource Centre is supported by funding from the City of Toronto Community Service Partnerships.

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**Tobias News**

**Keep On Swimming 2016**

The 2016 Keep On Swimming fundraising campaign is now under way. KOS raises funds for the Barrier Free Access to Swimming Program, which provides attendant care staff and equipment for accessible swimming at four City of Toronto swimming pools.

In addition to the swim program, KOS also raises funds for the Tobias Fitness Program, and the Tobias House Grant Program for Consumers, two programs that contribute to the quality of life of people with physical disabilities.

When you receive this year’s Keep On Swimming package, please give. If you already have, thank you! The Tobias House Resource Centre is also supported by funding from the City of Toronto Community Service Partnerships.

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**We’re looking for volunteers!**

*Tobias House* is looking for volunteers. If you enjoy working with individuals on a one on one basis, or if you have a great telephone manner, we need you. Please call Constantine at 416-690-8804.
Quality Improvement Committee

Tobias House is pleased to announce the formation in March 2016 of the ad hoc Quality Improvement Committee of the board of directors with two overarching goals: to strengthen communication between management, staff and consumers; to foster a safe and mutually respectful work and service environment, built on a foundation of trust. The QIC is part of a board initiative to increase quality of services at Tobias House that has included a Consumer Survey and a meeting with consumers to obtain further consumer feedback. We will keep you posted on further developments.

In memory of
Jody Buckingham
May 4, 1973 - February 9, 2016

A Biker’s Prayer
May the sun rise in front of me
May the rain fall behind me
And the wind follow me
May the angels guard my travels
For they know the road ahead of me…
Lord, thank you for letting me be a biker.

In memory of
David Condie
April 17, 1971 - February 28, 2016

CONDIE, David Christopher William - Died at home as he wished, on February 28, 2016 at age 44. David's life was immensely enriched by his large family of intervenors - both past and present - who meant so much to him and who enabled him to live his life to the fullest as a scholar, writer, world traveller and friend.

(Published in the Toronto Star, March 2, 2016)

The 5th Annual
SEAN ROSS MEMORIAL SUMMER CLASSIC
August 20th 2016

For more information, to sponsor, or to play, please contact Neil Mercer at: 416-925-9817 or tikibaba@sympatico.ca or kneel67.wix.com/srmsc or https://www.facebook.com/events/1097085530343357/

Former Tobias House consumer Sean Ross was born with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, yet his passion for hockey led him to play his favourite sport for over 25 years. He epitomized the values of amateur sports: playing with perseverance, respecting others, and succeeding with true class and humility. He passed away in 2011, age 37, and his achievements are now celebrated in this annual event at Greenwood Park (Greenwood Ave. & Gerrard St. E.)
"I don’t like to be just working. I also like to study. In the future I might do my masters.” People who know Gerald Ruiz as a fun-loving, easy-going, always-smiling, perpetually-moving, extremely outgoing staff member at the Carlton and Jarvis locations may be surprised by that statement. But what they may not be aware of is that Gerald is quite a studious fellow.

Gerald came to Canada, alone, on a student visa ten years ago to study English as a Second Language. He liked it here so much, he decided to stay. So he got his work permit and a job waiting tables and bartending, and enrolled in a PSW program. In his native Costa Rica, he had graduated from university with a BA in journalism. International politics, especially its scandals and controversies, is something he loves to discuss. After university, he did the weather on a news show on Costa Rican TV. “It was fun, although working in front of a green screen was weird. I had a good life in Costa Rica, but doing the weather wasn’t for me.” So he decided to look elsewhere. “Canada is a lot like Costa Rica. It’s very peaceful, harmonious, no army in the streets, like some places in Central America. But the cold! I don’t hate it, but I don’t love it,” he laughs.

Not long after earning his PSW certificate, he got a job at Tobias House. That was eight years ago. It wasn’t his plan to become an ILA, but again, he liked it, so he went with it. Pretty soon, though, he was back in school part-time, this time studying for his RPN at Seneca College. “Tobias House was a good step toward nursing. Doing shift work gave me the opportunity to study. I decided on nursing because of Tobias. I never would have done it otherwise.”

Gerald recently finished his RPN program, and is working at a Toronto hospital in addition to Tobias House. But he already has his sights set on more schooling. In September, he will be attending Ryerson part-time to upgrade his qualifications to Registered Nurse, which will take a few more years. Long-term, he is interested in doing a masters program in public health as it relates to nursing. “If I’m not studying, I feel like I have too much spare time.”

Not that Gerald is at a loss as to what to do with his spare time. When he’s not working, he’s at the gym (“I like boxing, just hitting the bag, not fighting.”) or running, going to bars and dance clubs, meeting new people (“I find it very easy to meet people. I always have a smile on my face!”) travelling, or cooking. He’s been working on a project with a producer friend of his for his own Youtube channel. He’s done a few 8-minute long Spanish language videos on how to cook nutritious meals, and tips on healthy living, such as how to alkalise your body using lemon juice and water, how to use everyday products like baking soda and coconut oil for health, et cetera. Healthy living is a passion of his.

Another unexpected passion of Gerald’s is writing poetry. He’s been writing poems, in Spanish, for ten years. “Basically, I write about life, love… I like to write when I’m sad. When I’m happy, I’m too busy.” He has fifty-five completed poems, which he originally thought he would get published, but he got distracted with school and work and life. But, as the saying goes, life is what happens to you when you’re busy making other plans.
According to 2012 statistics, there are 8100 bars, caterers, and restaurants in the City of Toronto. They generate $5.8 billion in revenue, and represent 6.5% of all businesses. Torontonians dine out 3.1 times per week, putting them in line with the bigger North American foodie cities of New York and Los Angeles. And then there are the food festivals and events, big and small, which seem to multiply every year. There is no definitive information on how many of these restaurants and events are accessible, but it’s a pretty safe bet that they are but a fraction of the total number. And even if we knew how many there are, which ones are any good?

Carlton consumer Marlene Benedicto started a blog (www.tastingtorontoonwheels.me) four years ago to answer some of these questions. In it she reviews local restaurants and food festivals on their food and accessibility. She launched it as an opportunity to combine her love of food with her skills as a journalist. (She has a BA in journalism from Humber College. You can also follow her on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.) She’s done some really cool restaurants, like Guu, Mildred’s Temple Kitchen, and Momofuku, and events like the Toronto Food and Drink Festival. Her blog got a profile on the influential website BlogTO. It’s gotten lots of positive feedback from restaurant owners, too, although some were not thrilled to be placed on her list of “Restaurants That Should Be Accessible”.

A more surprising revelation came from other people with disabilities. Getting them on board with her mission to seek out and enjoy accessible restaurants was not so easy. “Lots of disabled people prefer to stay in their comfort zone. It drives me crazy, because the resources are out there.” She knows people who will only eat in chain restaurants because they’re usually accessible. “But there are so many great independent restaurants they can get into.”

When eating out, Marlene’s favourite cuisine is Japanese, especially sushi. She really loves to cook at home, and that’s something she hopes to do more of on her blog, complete with videos. “I just wish I had more counter space, and fewer appliances,” she laughs, glancing at her well-equipped but work-surface challenged kitchen. She also enjoys watching cooking shows, which she’s done since she was three. “That’s how I learned to cook!”

Marlene also works for her sister’s company, a distributor of eco-friendly products. The youngest of four, she grew up in Brampton, but has lived at Tobias House since 2009. She loves being close to everything she needs downtown. (“The Maple Leaf Gardens Loblaws is great, especially the bakery. We’re there almost every day.”) It helps her to live fairly independently not to have to rely on Wheel Trans and transit. She has embraced the lively Church Street neighbourhood, where she takes her dog, a Boston terrier, for walks. And together with her boyfriend of twelve years, she loves to get out and explore the city, experiencing different places by way of great local restaurants. But she’s quick to add, “It’s not just about the food.”
Still In The Swim: The Barrier-Free Access to Swimming Program

A.J. Johnson is floating on his back, a blue pool noodle propped behind him to keep him afloat, and he is all smiles. “I love being in the water!” he enthuses. When he first came to take part in the Barrier-Free Access to Swimming Program at the Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, in the east end of Toronto, a few years ago, he could barely move. Now, supported by the water and in-pool staff, he’s not only swimming, he’s able to walk. His story is not uncommon.

Siobhan Mulrooney was a trained social worker until MS overtook her life and career. She’s been a BFATSP participant for five years. “I can’t always trust my body. I get frustrated that I can’t swim as well as I used to. But at least here I’m getting exercise.”

Ryan Khemraj and Tyler Austin have been coming for four years and two years respectively. The two young men have been friends since they were little. They come to Birchmount Bluffs every Tuesday. No only do they like that they can get in a good workout, improving their strength and circulation, but they also get a chance just to hang out.

Chris Colbert is new to the program this spring. Like all the other participants, he likes to swim because it helps with his mobility, which was impaired as a result of a stroke. Now he can move his arm and leg in the water, and even walk, with help from staff. He also really likes that the swim program gets him out of the house.

Everyone who comes to the Barrier-Free Access to Swimming program at one of the four locations throughout Toronto has a similar story. Being able to get into the water, with help from Tobias House and in-pool staff, has made a marked difference in their quality of life. It’s also a lot of fun.

David Meyers likes hearing these stories of people becoming more independent, pushing the boundaries of what they can do, and realizing therapeutic benefits as a result of the program. He is the Community Development Manager at the Birchmount Bluffs Neighborhood Centre. He joined the team of organizations that was working to put the program together in 2003, after talks had already begun, but before the program itself launched later that year at Birchmount. That team consisted of Tobias House; The Gage; City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Adapted and Integrated Services; Anne Johnston Health Station, March of Dimes, Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, and Bellwoods Centres, and from the outset it was a collaborative effort. They were charged with looking at funding sources, locations, safety, accessibility, supports, and ad-
aptations for the program. The first location was Douglas Snow Recreation Centre followed by Birchmount. If the pilot worked, PFR could provide more locations. Two more locations, Scadding Court Community Centre and Wallace Emerson Centre, were added later on.

The program offers both in-pool staff, providing one-on-one assistance to participants, maintaining safety supports, as well as change room assistance, provided by Tobias House staff members. “I like the fact that they’re with you from start to finish,” says Siobhan. Chris concurs: “It would be hard to do this without staff helping you get changed.”

David Meyers is proud of the fact that it’s the only program of its kind in the city. While each site’s approach may differ, depending on what’s available at that site, the minimum standard for all locations of the program is access to activity in the water, for those who might not otherwise have that access. There are usually two participants in the pool at a time, with one-on-one in-pool staff support. The program runs in two sessions: fall and spring, for nine weeks each session, and sometimes in the winter (Scadding Court).

Not surprisingly, participants want to keep coming back every year. The challenge is getting access for new people. As usual, it’s an issue of funding. The job of handling intake and managing wait lists belongs to Constantine Iliopoulos at the Tobias House Resource Centre. He has also been with the program nearly since it’s inception. On average, Constantine receives about 10 to 15 new applicants every year, for a program that serves around 50 active participants annually. For lack of space and other reasons, one third of the people who would like to take part in the program cannot.

Over the years, partner organizations have come and gone, but according to David Meyers, if it weren’t for the City of Toronto Parks and Rec, and the Tobias House Resource Centre as co-ordinator, the program would not even be happening. “Tobias House has been a great partner over the years, pushing to keep it going. They’ve been the constant when things have gotten rough.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Barrier-Free Access to Swimming Program and the Tobias House Resource Centre needs your support. A donation of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• $225 will support one individual for 3 weeks of swimming (1 session)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• $240 will support six individuals for 4 weeks of fitness classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• $350 will cover the cost of 3 refurbished laptops or 3 gym memberships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• $500 will pay for computer components, personal support to go on vacation, or tuition for continuing education courses</td>
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Or call Constantine at 416-690-8804
Thank you in advance for supporting access to a healthier life and greater opportunities for our program participants.
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Tobias House II (84 Carlton Street)  
Tobias House III (460 Jarvis Street)  
Tobias House Resource Centre (695 Coxwell Avenue)  

Tobias House is filled with opportunities for everyone:

For Volunteering opportunities, Membership, Donations or Special Events please contact
Constantine @ (416) 690-8804

For Job opportunities, contact Andrew Jardine @ (416) 690-3185 x 221

Visit our website at www.tobiashouse.ca

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