

VOLUME 03 ISSUE 12 DECEMBER 2023

PCHS

# HEALTH

## MAGAZINE

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**PROJECT KHUSHI**

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**SPREAD JOY THROUGH GIVING  
CNC HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE**

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**Amandeep Kaur CEO, PCHS**  
**Message from CEO**

## **Season's Greetings and Heartfelt Thanks for Your Participation in the Friends of PCHS Event**

As the holiday season surrounds us in its warmth and joy, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude and immense pleasure. I want to extend my sincerest season's greetings to each and every one of you.

I'd like to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to all the participants who contributed to the success of the 2023 Friends of PCHS 10th Annual event. Your presence and active involvement were instrumental in making this year's Community Engagement Session a truly memorable and impactful occasion. This half day event was led by the Board of Directors and the Executive Team of PCHS, guided by the 2023 – 2027 Strategic Priorities.

The Friends of PCHS showcased the vibrant spirit of our community while shedding light on the challenges faced by the South Asian Community, especially in the areas like addictions, mental health, senior care and support for marginalized populations. Your commitment to being a part of this event reflects the shared values that bind us together, and for that, I am truly thankful.

Community events like Friends of PCHS go beyond mere participation and signify a shared commitment to the well-being of our community and the individuals we aim to support. Your enthusiasm and dedication were evident, and I am inspired by the positive energy each of you

brought to the event.

As we navigate through the holiday season and approach the emergence of 2024, let us carry forward the spirit of unity and goodwill that defines our community. Together, we can continue to create positive change and foster a sense of belonging for all.

The final report of the 10th Annual Friends of PCHS event will be available in February 2024. Building upon its key recommendations and guided by the Strategic Prioritize for 2023-2027, PCHS will develop a work plan to address the issues identified by the community members. Once again, thank you for your invaluable contribution to the Friends of PCHS – a community engagement event. Your support is a testament to the strength of our community, and I am excited about the possibilities that await us as we continue this journey together.

With the holiday season upon us, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. May your days be filled with an abundance of love, laughter, and shared moments of happiness.

# PROJECT KHUSHI

By Navdeep Kaur, Community Health Ambassador

The HPCS team at PCHS launched Project Khushi, an initiative that celebrated its second consecutive year. The events took place on December 12th at Malton Community Center and on December 14th at the Brampton office.

The essence of this drive and its mission trace back to Project Khushi, where “Khushi” translates to joy in multiple South Asian languages. The fundamental goal is to bring joy and happiness to our community members, forming the core of this initiative. Acknowledging the challenges faced by some individuals and families during the holiday season, the HPCS team aimed to establish a platform for collective giving. This annual event has transformed into a symbol of positivity, community engagement, and impactful social contributions.

The event demonstrated a thoughtful approach by incorporating stations that catered to various needs. Essential hygiene items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, and soap were provided, alongside the distribution of winter jackets, hats, socks, and gloves, addressing both immediate and long-term well-being. The attention to diverse needs was clear in addressing female hygiene through the distribution of sanitary pads. Additionally, the event went beyond material support by including a children’s table that distributed toys, recognizing the significance of joy for the younger members of the community.

We are delighted to share that we have successfully aided more than 127 clients, doubling the number served last year. Reflecting on the accomplishments of Project Khushi, we not only celebrate the necessary aid delivered but also the spirit of togetherness and unity cultivated within our community.

In conclusion, the generosity exhibited by our placement students, the commitment of the HPCS team, and the tremendous support from all participants have collectively turned Project Khushi into a huge success!



## SPREADING JOY THROUGH GIVING

### CnC Holiday Toy Drive

On December 9, the Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program and the settlement team hosted their second annual holiday toy drive. We welcomed both newcomer parents and children to attend and participate in holiday-themed activities and enjoy refreshments.



### Creating Holiday Magic

by Harmandeep Bath

Children wrote letters to Santa, decorated Christmas trees and snowmen, and designed their own gingerbread cookies! Brightly lit faces and beaming smiles could be seen all around.

As they were leaving, each child in attendance was handed a gift which comprised of an educational and developmentally appropriate toy. Both parents and children expressed their joy and gratitude for these gifts as they departed.

For some, these toys may be minor, but for many newcomer families, these toys will bring the warmth to this holiday season. For many parents, the toy drive has also helped eliminate the stress and worry of creating a magical holiday season for their children. Ultimately, we were able to serve and provide gifts to 31 families and 52 children in total.

The CNC program and the settlement team were honored to be able to provide these gifts and look forward to making the holiday season brighter again next year!



# ALCOHOL AND ADDICTION: OVERVIEW OF HOW A VERY COMMON SOCIAL SUBSTANCE CAN DESTROY LIVES

Anum Tahir, Addiction Case Manager



Addiction is a neuropsychological disorder characterized by a persistent and intense urge to use a drug or engage in a behavior that produces a natural reward, despite substantial harm and other negative consequences. Addictive behavior, is defined by behavior based on the pathological desire for substance or activity. This can include abusing legal substances like nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol on a daily basis as well as illicit substances like cocaine, opioids, and inhalants. Addiction, physical health, and mental health are all defined on a spectrum, meaning a wide range of psychological, physiological, and behavioral outcomes for the clients as well as their support system.

Addiction destroys the lives of clients and their caregivers. The question is, then, why continue a behavior that does not produce any positive responses or outcomes?

Alcoholism is a prevalent addiction among our PCHS clients. Many of our clients who seek our services, whether mandated by court, self-referred, or through family referrals, struggle with alcohol and managing their everyday lives. Alcohol, even though legal in majority of the world and readily available in our Canadian grocery stores and local gas stations, is the key contributor to divorce, loss of jobs, family instability, and eventually lack of sense. Clients experiencing alcohol withdrawal may experience whole-body shakes, which may result in seizures. Prolonged alcohol consumption with clients is often seen with prolonged depression, anger issues and an inability to maintain long-lasting relationships. Not being able to be there for important key events in children and loved ones lives.

However, since it is a legal substance, it is advertised as a social or party substance. It is embedded in a

lot of people's cultures. This is especially seen in the South Asian community. It is often encouraged at social gatherings, and clients have stated that it was a way to initially connect socially with others until it became unmanageable because they would use it to cope with daily life stressors, as it causes a numbing effect on one's body, central nervous system, and brain.

Long-term usage of alcohol negatively affects emotional and behavioral patterns from the inception of the family, resulting in poor outcomes for the parents of the clients who are in the cycle of addiction.

Children who have parents who are in a cycle of addiction are not able to form healthy relationships with their parents. They are more prone to developing toxic relationships with other people around them. They cannot establish secure bonds and friendships with peers. An insecure attachment to parents decreases a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Children who experience insecure relationships with their parents do not learn essential skills and values that will pave the way for their success in the future. This pattern is very commonly seen with our clients and families struggling with alcohol. Alcoholism has a genetic component that is very heavily affected by the environment, stress, and supports, or the lack of supports in one's life. The Sahara Addictions Program at PCHS strives to empower clients and their families

through a guided journey to recovery from substance use behaviours and related concerns by using a holistic treatment approach and keeping cultural competence in mind.

Community Withdrawal Management Services (CWMS) provide a supportive environment for clients with voluntary alcohol or other substance withdrawals. This includes structured daytime and telephone withdrawal management services. Withdrawal symptoms are monitored; support, reassurance, coping methods, motivational counseling, and appropriate referrals are provided.

**To get more information about our addictions program please call us at 905-677-0889 or visit our website at [www.pchs4u.com](http://www.pchs4u.com)**

# DBNC HEALTH FAIR

By Fariha Muqueet, Community Health Ambassador

On December 1st, the Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Community (DBNC) organized its annual Health Fair, extending invitations to partner agencies from across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Collaborating with DBNC, PCHS, and other agencies proved pivotal in nurturing community well-being and promoting essential services. The primary aim of the health fair was to distribute information about the comprehensive range of services offered by the participating agencies. The focus extended beyond mere service availability, placing emphasis on ensuring accessibility in a culturally competent manner and offering services in multiple languages to better serve the community.

The Community Health Ambassadors (CHAs) from the HPCS team actively participated in the event, connecting with individuals from various backgrounds. They shared valuable insights about the three primary pillars they focus on: Diabetes, Mental Health & Addictions, and Covid-19. Additionally, the CHAs specifically highlighted the wraparound services, including rental and housing support, income assistance, as well as newcomer and settlement services. Their approach catered to the unique needs of the South Asian community, ensuring a holistic well-being strategy.

A notable achievement for PCHS was our successful training of 25 community members in the administration of Naloxone, a life-saving drug for reversing opioid overdoses. The community members showed a very proactive approach to learn about opioid overdosing and recognize the signs and symptoms. Naloxone training plays a very crucial role in addressing opioid overdoses and saving lives in the community by providing an immediate solution to reverse opioid overdose effects. It empowers the community members to take an active role in opioid related emergencies. Our main insight from conducting the training is that, given the escalating prevalence of recreational drug use and abuse in the community, equipping individuals with the necessary skills ensures a safer

environment. This enables community members to identify signs of drug-related issues and offer immediate assistance.

The PCHS team also promoted our upcoming donation drive “Project Khushi” by distributing flyers for donations and event registration. The team shared PCHS promotional items and support line information with all the individuals we interacted with. This added a proactive and community-engaging element to our participation in the health fair.

As the event ended, DBNC took the time to formally acknowledge and thank all participating agencies, including PCHS. Their recognition of our collaborative efforts in contributing to the success of the health fair was sincerely appreciated. This gesture not only reflects their commitment to fostering a sense of partnership but also underscores the importance of collective action in addressing community health and well-being. A particularly memorable moment was the collective photo taken with representatives from all participating agencies. This captured image symbolizes the unity and collaboration that transpired throughout the event.



# FORGETFUL ELF

By Tashona Tyndale, Youth Worker

The Newcomer Youth Program, in collaboration with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), was excited to host a special Christmas event on December 2nd, 2023, from 1pm – 3pm, The Forgetful Elf Experience. This event highlighted a range of Christmas activities, providing newcomer youth (13 – 19 yrs.) with the opportunity to embrace Canadian culture and connect with the community. By participating in these festive traditions, attendees gained a deeper understanding of Canadian customs and created lasting memories. This integration fostered a sense of belonging and acceptance, enriching the newcomer youth with new experiences and strengthening bonds within the community.

Upon arrival at Albion Hills Park Conservation, youth participants had the opportunity to board the Christmas wagon or take a nature-inspired hike along the Christmas Trail to the Festive Forest, setting the stage for an enchanting adventure.

Participants were treated to a variety of interactive, outdoor stations designed to engage and entertain. They had the chance to interact with Letha the Forgetful Elf on a magical tour of the North Pole, adding a touch of whimsy to the festivities. Additionally, the event featured activities such as dropping off letters to Santa at the North Pole Postal Service, where the joy and wonder of the season came to life. The festivities included campfires, a warming station, and complimentary hot apple cider and snacks, creating a cozy and inviting atmospheres for all. These elements contributed to an authentic Canadian winter experience, allowing newcomer youth to experience the seasonal traditions.



# GOING BEYOND OUR SWEET TOOTH

By Sonam Mahajan, Peer Support Worker, Mental Health

Our body breaks down most of the food we eat into sugar (glucose) and releases it into our bloodstream. This release of glucose increases our blood sugar levels signaling our pancreas to release insulin. Insulin allows glucose from our blood sugar into the cells of our body for use as energy - like a doorway. With diabetes, the body does not make enough insulin or can't use it as well as it should. When there is not enough insulin or when cells stop responding to insulin, too much blood sugar stays in our bloodstream. High blood sugar is damaging to the body and can cause other serious health problems.

Now to look at managing diabetes and how a lifestyle change can decipher how in control one is of their condition. For instance, with Type 2 Diabetes, lifestyle changes can be made to keep one's blood glucose in control. Lifestyle changes such as eating more nutritiously, exercising, maintaining stress levels, and limiting sugar intake. This is where the addiction portion comes into play because reducing the intake of a substance such as sugar can be as difficult as reduction of any other addictive substance. The dramatic effects of sugar on your brain may explain why people have difficulty with the consumption of sugary foods when continuously exposed to them.

Not only can sugar and sweets substitute for drugs like cocaine, but they can be even more rewarding in terms of how our brain reacts to these substances. The nucleus accumbens - a region in your forebrain, the brain's pleasure center - is in the process of addiction when it is stimulated long-term. When sugar is consumed, the nucleus accumbens receives a dopamine signal, from which pleasure is experienced. This pleasure drives

further consumption of sweet and sugary foods. With prolonged exposure the signal gets weak, and tolerance builds as more consumption is needed for the same pleasurable effect to be produced. In contrast, if one restricts the consumption of the substance, withdrawal occurs. Tolerance and withdrawal compose addiction.

Much like recovering from any addiction, holistic intervention and therapy is needed. One cannot simply be expected to choose to eat healthier or simply stop feeding their addiction. All the key factors need to be assessed. What kind of food climate surrounds them? Is sugar more socially and economically accessible? What stressors trigger the sugar cravings? What are some distractions or coping skills one can put in place to overcome sugar withdrawals? Do they have someone to talk to when the cravings or withdrawals become overwhelming? Are they accepted and encouraged even through relapse? Do they have a choice in their sugar obsession? Are they in control? These are some key questions to ask someone who is facing overconsumption of sugar but trying to make changes. It isn't as easy to let go of sugar as one may think, but it is possible through proper intervention and treatment, much like any other substance.

*References available.*

# ARAO

## PERIOD POVERTY

By Arashdeep Chahal, Communications Officer

One in six Canadians who menstruate has personally experienced period poverty states the **March 2023 Women and Gender Equality Canada Report**.

Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, education, and sanitation facilities, often due to financial constraints. The main stressor in Canada is financial constraints, and it can have significant social, economic, and health implications. While Canada is a developed country with comparatively better living standards, period poverty persists and affects various populations, including those facing economic hardships and marginalized communities.

Key aspects of this issue are:

**Economic barriers**, many struggle to afford basic menstrual hygiene products, which can lead to negative impact of health.

**Stigma and shame** surrounding menstruation can make individuals feel embarrassment, making it difficult to seek help openly

**Impact on education and work**, lack of access to menstrual products can lead to missed school or work which can result in educational and economic setbacks.

**Health Implications** can arise from using inadequate or unsanitary materials during menstruation.

Period Poverty is a form of oppression; individuals who menstruate may face discrimination and hardship due to the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, education, and sanitation facilities. This form of oppression is particularly gendered, as it disproportionately affects people who menstruate, who are primarily women and girls. Currently there are community initiatives, and community-based organizations that help distribute products to those in need. To address the root cause of the issue we need policy reform to ensure menstrual products are widely accessible and affordable for all.

Currently community based organizations and charities play a large role in distributing free menstrual products to support those facing period poverty. However, systemic change is needed to ensure menstrual products are widely accessible and affordable.

*References available.*

# ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM (OAP)

By Hansraj Tank, Family Worker - Ontario Autism Program Project

OAP staff at PCHS organized a session on December 14, 2023 called “When and how to Redirect Stimming”. This session was catered to educate parents with children who are on the spectrum about different kinds of activities that may be used to engage or redirect children to avoid stimming. Some of these activities include, using sensory toys, painting, playing, meditation, and yoga. Engaging children in these activities not only help them to avoid excessive and harmful stimming, but also help them to learn different activities. This session was a success and the parents went away with valuable information about the program.



## Kick Start (Ontario Autism Program) in association with PCHS

**PCHS and Kick Start Therapy Inc. have collaborated to provide culturally appropriate services to children in need of Ontario Autism Program Core Clinical Services.**

About this program: Parents and caregivers learn therapeutic strategies and specific techniques from professionals based on the child's needs. In 2022, we successfully piloted a culturally adapted model of OAP clinical services to support clients from the South Asian community. Kick Start Therapy Inc. provides OAP core clinical services which support children and youth. This collaboration was created to address the additional support needed by caregivers supplied to them in their language with an understanding of their culture. We want to address the core question of: “How can caregivers support their children if they can't get help for themselves?” This program aims to help prevent burnout for caregivers.

### Caregiver Support and Wellness Sessions

This program provides:

- One on one supportive counselling
- Support group – parents coming together
- Connection to additional resources and support
- Stress management techniques for caregivers
- Coping strategies
- Referral to clinical services provided by Kick Start Therapy Inc.
- Referral to additional wrap around supports for children, youth and caregivers

**For more information:**

**Hansraj**  
 **(416) 725-2103**

**Prabhdeep**  
 **(416) 580-6901**





# 22<sup>ND</sup> Annual International Women's Day Gala

*Save the Date*  
**March 22, 2024**

**SPERANZA BANQUET HALL**  
510 Deerhurst Dr, Brampton, ON L6T 5H9  
DOORS OPEN AT 6 PM

Invitation to follow



## WELCOME NEW STAFF!



**Riddhi Mehta-**  
Peer Support Worker-MH  
(Short term Contract)



**Harleen Sandhu-**  
Bookkeeper-Part Time



**Brahmjot Kaur Dhillon,**  
Case manager  
Mental Health- FTC

## 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY GALA

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# Teen Book Review

## Finding Cinderella

**Author:** Colleen Hoover

**Reviewed by:** Giva Goel, Brampton Library Youth Volunteer

Pages: 324 pages

“Finding Cinderella” is part of the Hopeless series. It was almost a modern fairytale (hence its name) and incorporated a lot of navigation of relationships. I would recommend it to teenagers interested in romance, especially fairytales.

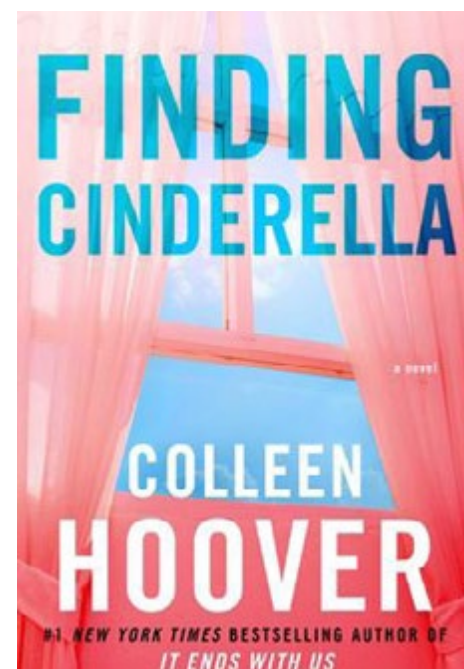
Daniel is a teenager when an unexpected encounter with a girl leads him to experience deep love, but it only lasts an hour. A year later, this story continues, after a toxic relationship Daniel and Six are followed as they fall in love. But a secret from the past can change everything.

The novella is a beautifully written and heart-wrenching story that explores themes of love, loss, grief, and hope. Hoover’s writing style is captivating and she expertly weaves the story’s various ele-

ments together. The characters are well-developed and relatable, and their chemistry is beautiful, making the reader root for them from the very beginning.

One of the novella’s standout features is the author’s ability to infuse humor into a serious story. It adds a lighthearted touch to the story, making it easier to read through the emotional parts.

Overall, “Finding Cinderella” is a touching and heartwarming story that explores complex themes in a relatable and engaging way, however some may find it short.



## CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Over the past two months, IST program has been diligently working alongside a client facing significant challenges. The client, whose husband is in long-term care, had been residing with her daughter in a basement and lacked any form of income. This situation compelled us to step in and assist. Case Manager through consistent weekly visits, tirelessly navigated different applications and engaged in numerous calls to Revenue Canada on the client's behalf. Despite the back-and-forth process over eight weeks, I'm thrilled to announce that our collective efforts have been successful—our client has been approved to receive a monthly pension.

Witnessing the relief and joy on our client's face upon receiving this news this morning was incredibly gratifying. Their happiness and gratitude, expressed by blessing our case manager, reflect the positive impact our program has on the lives of those we serve.

This success not only showcases the dedication of our team but also highlights the genuine difference we make in the lives of individuals facing challenging circumstances.

Thank you for your ongoing support and guidance, which enables us to continue making meaningful impacts in the lives of our clients.

-Client Testimonial

*The book is also available at Brampton Library*

[Click here to read](#)



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