



# 613 COM HOUSES

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COALITION OF COMMUNITY HOUSES



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## HOUSE FEATURE: BRITANNIA WOODS

OCCH's Carla Thür talks with Britannia Woods' Diana Belghali about the Richie Street community and service delivery in the time of COVID-19.

On August 26, 2021, Britannia Woods Community House hosted back to school haircuts for the children and youth in the community.

Typically, the end of August sees relief from summer temperatures, but this year Ottawa found itself in a stifling heat wave, with temperatures reaching over 32 degrees celcius. Despite the intense heat, community house staff, volunteer barbers and hair stylists set up tents and tables in the courtyard outside of the community house.

It didn't take long for children and youth to filter in for haircuts and hairstyles and very quickly the community began to come to life with chatter and laughter.

On behalf of the OCCH, I was attending to cover the event and capture some photographs; this was also my first time at Britannia Woods. Diana Belghali, the House and Administrative Coordinator, gave me a tour of the community, which included a small playground, splash pad,

a basketball court and community garden.

Divided into three sections, Britannia Woods boasts mature trees in the courtyards and along the pathways that join each section together. I commented that this community was a far cry from what has been illustrated in the news media over the years - it was vibrant and welcoming.

*cont'd on page 2*

Diana agreed and explained that ‘community’ itself promotes a sense of safety and support. This statement is one drawn from lived experience – like many of the community house staff, Diana used to call Britannia Woods home; it is where she raised her three children upon immigrating from her native Lebanon. This isn’t an unusual phenomenon in community houses – I have encountered this heritage characteristic in several across the city. To me, this is a marker of a special place – one where people wish to return to and support even after they have moved on.

We ended the tour in the community house office where we discussed the shift of service delivery during the pandemic and how that might have impacted community engagement. Although in-person services have been reduced, Diana explained that in some ways changes have been made for the better. She gave the example of Food Bank services operating on a pick-up basis, where residents can access their orders by appointment. This model has been well-received by the community as it allows for more flexibility and dignity when accessing the service.

I was curious if this new model reduced awareness and access to wraparound services offered by the community house. Diana advised that in-person contact had been minimized in order to comply with provincial regulations, but that the phone line provided an alternative way to do outreach, and this switch has been quite seamless and strongly utilized by the community.

As mid-afternoon approached, I returned outside to capture the event and was met with some curiosity which soon turned to enthusiasm with respect to having some photographs taken. With a brick wall chosen as the backdrop of an impromptu photo-shoot, I found myself forgetting about how hard it was to breathe with a mask on in the heat and instead wondering why I hadn’t made this trip sooner.



OCCH's Carla Thuir, photo by Britannia Woods youth



Two girls have their hair styled in french braids during the Britannia Woods Back to School Haircuts event, photo by Carla Thuir



Britannia Woods Community House courtyard, photo by Carla Thuir



Confederation Court bursary recipients Claudia Kanziza, Phedina Lamoure, Chantale Tsongo and Kavusa Kahindo, photo by Tayra-Lee Miller

# THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT: CELEBRATING OUR SCHOLARS

**There is no shortage of great accomplishments by youth across our communities. As many new graduates move on to the next stage in their lives, we would like to take this opportunity to honour and recognize them.**

Several of our member agencies at the OCCH have developed scholarship and bursary awards for youth in their communities who are pursuing post-secondary education or apprenticeships in the trades. We would like to thank all applicants who took the time to craft an application, and for sharing such insightful and personal essays.

**Banff Avenue Community House** awarded three bursaries of \$1,000 each to Noor Salim, Stephanie Hadjara and Samira Ibrahim. *(Pictured on page 4)*

**Confederation Court Community House** awarded four bursaries of \$1,000 each to Claudia Kanziza, Phedina Lamoure, Chantale Tsongo and Kavusa Kahindo. *(Pictured above)*

**The Caldwell Family Centre** awarded Madison Paquette the Yolaine Münter Scholarship of \$1,000 and awarded Hannah Kelpin the Caldwell Family Centre Scholarship of \$1,000.

**Debra Dynes Family House** awarded four \$1,000 scholarships through their Bright Futures Scholarship program to Kerry, David, Rusha and Isaiah. Debra Dynes also issued their new three-year Ruth Loomer Scholarship in the amount of \$5,000 to Kenza.

*“As a kid I never really knew what I wanted to be when I grew up, but I knew that all that matters is for me to stay true to myself and that as long as I work hard I will find something I want to do and will be happy doing it.”*

– NOOR SALIM, BANFF AVENUE BURSARY RECIPIENT

**Britannia Woods Community House** will also be offering two scholarship opportunities in the Fall of 2022, each honouring the memory of community members.

“ I want to be someone who helps children become leaders, innovators and helps them feel comfortable in school no matter their background .”

– MADISON PAQUETTE,  
RECIPIENT OF THE YOLAINE  
MÜNTER SCHOLARSHIP

**Ottawa Community Housing Foundation** has also successfully distributed ten \$1,000 'Inspired by Learning' Bursaries - noting that the submission of applications tripled the amount submitted the previous year!

We thank all of our community partners for sharing information on this amazing opportunity.

Recipients for the Inspired by Learning Bursaries spanned across the city, with 6 coming from OCCH neighbourhoods (Britannia Woods, Morrison Gardens, Caldwell and Pinecrest Terrace).



Banff-Ledbury Bursary Recipients, Noor Salim, Samira Ibrahim and Stephanie Hadjara with Banff Avenue's Executive Director, Sylvie Manser, Board Member and Chair, Peter Tobin and President of IODE, Janet Stratton, photo by Banff Community House

Applications will be reopening on April 4, 2022.

OCCH wishes the best of luck to all of the recipients as they start new adventures in the next chapter of their lives.

We can't thank them enough for their contributions to our communities.

\*Check with your local Community House about the available academic supports for local children and youth in a neighbourhood near you.

## LOCAL LOVE: A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO LEARNING LOSS FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

As the pandemic continues, the OCCH is committed to increasing resources to provide needed supports for children and youth living in our neighbourhoods.

With funding from United Way of Eastern Ontario's Local Love in a Global Crisis fund, 10 Community Houses will be increasing their outreach and engagement efforts to address learning loss for children and youth in vulnerable communities across Ottawa.

In the coming months, check our website for stories highlighting this important work!



## A LOOK BACK AT SUMMER: BREAKFAST KITS BY ONFE

The pandemic changed how and where children learn and grow and exacerbated the impacts of poverty across the city. School closures eliminated access to essential nutritional support needed by children and youth in schools.

Fortunately, the Ottawa community stepped up to the plate. Since the pandemic began, ONFE partnered with 50 community distribution sites – local food banks, Coalition of Community Houses, City of Ottawa Family Shelters.

The food in Breakfast Replacement Kits replaced breakfast at school; Kits were distributed in partnership with our ONFE School Breakfast partners: wholesaler, Ontario Student Nutrition Services Inc and local distributor Jack Larabie Distribution Inc.

ONFE is grateful to all of these amazing partners; you helped us adapt our programs to public health guidelines, you gave your time to ensure children and families had access to nutritious food.

Thank you for all that you do to support your community.





School Backpacks at Michele Heights Community House, photo by Carla Thür

# BACK TO SCHOOL: IT TAKES A VILLAGE

"Alone we can do so little; together, we can do so much" - Helen Keller

As children and youth in our communities prepare for their return to school, the staff at the community houses have been busy ensuring access to school supplies will not be a barrier this September.

Backpacks stuffed with all the back-to-school necessities line the walls in community houses, awaiting their new owners. This sight wouldn't be possible without our generous and caring community partners.

OCCH would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to all of those who participated in this initiative. Because of your collective support, we have been able to fill the gaps to ensure that children and youth arrived prepared on their first day of school.

## Special Thanks To:

- Caring and Sharing
- Emmanuel United Church
- Holy Cross Parish
- Khalsa Aid
- United Way Eastern Ontario
- Metropolitan Bible Church
- Ottawa Valley Meats
- Rotary Club of Ottawa South
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church
- Staples Merivale & Sandi Grant
- St. Marks Anglican Congregation



Mother and daughter utilize the back to school shopping model at Baruff Avenue Community House, photo by Baruff Community House

# RESOURCES

A quick guide to programming

## About BRISC: Black Racialized Support Channel

The BRISC (Black Racialized Individuals Support Channel) support line was created by the Britannia Woods Community House as a response to the increased emotional and social needs that we saw in Ottawa West neighbourhoods at the onset of the pandemic, a culturally adapted support line to facilitate the unique emotional and social needs that COVID-19 has exacerbated for racialized communities, especially African, Caribbean & Black communities (ACB).

The Goals of BRISC is to provide a safe haven via telephone / in person for racialized individuals. Community members can reach trained counsellors from the ACB community who speak a variety of languages on Mondays & Wednesdays from 10am-3:00pm at 613-596-3299

**Additional Services**  
**Mental Health and Wellness Initiatives**

- SNAP Program
- BRISC (Black Racialized Individuals Support Channel)
- Family Capacity Advocate (FCA)
- Student Family Advocates (SFA)
- WIN (Womens' Group)

**Child and Youth Programs**

- Homework Clubs
- Sports and Recreational Activities
- Creative Arts
- Drop-ins
- Summer Camps
- Mentorship

**General Supports and Community Engagement:**

- Food Pantry
- Adult Circle
- Community advocacy
- Parents social groups
- Volunteer opportunities and more...

**Languages services are offered in:**  
 English, French, Somali, Arabic, and Lingala.

**Operational Hours:**  
 BRISC services are offered Mondays & Thursdays (10am-3pm)

**Contact:**  
 +1 613-596-3299  
 healthandwellness@britanniawoods.com

**BRISC**  
 Britannia Woods Support Line:  
 Black Racialized Individuals Support Channel (BRISC)

**Family Advocacy & Capacity-Building Engagements**

**BRITANNIA WOODS COMMUNITY HOUSE**  
 Services

- 01 Mental Health and Wellness Initiatives**  
 - SNAP Program  
 - BRISC ( Black Racialized Individuals Support Line)
- 02 Child and Youth Programs**  
 - Homework Clubs  
 - Sports and Recreational Activities  
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 - Summer Camps  
 - Mentorship
- 03 General Supports and Community Engagement:**  
 - Food Pantry  
 - Adult Circle  
 - Community advocacy  
 - Parents social groups  
 - Volunteer opportunities and more...

**CONTACT US**  
 For more information and for referrals  
 3029 Carling Avenue, Ottawa CA  
 613-820-0853  
 Fax: 1-877-500-7950  
 healthandwellness@britanniawoods.com

**Focusing on supporting families in need with a coordinated and equitable approach!**

## About FCA: Family Capacity Advocacy Support

The Family Capacity Advocate position (FCA) sits within Britannia Woods' established community development framework: Family Advocacy & Capacity-building Engagements (FACE). The FACE framework is a responsive community engagement model, that aims to facilitate supports in a comprehensive and informed manner.

The role of the Family Capacity Advocate position is to provide a holistic approach to supporting siblings, parents and caregivers who have loved ones in conflict (involved) with the criminal justice system.

We know navigating the justice system can be challenging for individuals and families. Our dedication is to reduce any barriers and vulnerabilities that may be impacting their lives and to strengthen the family unit as a whole.

Community members can send an email to [healthandwellness@britanniawoods.com](mailto:healthandwellness@britanniawoods.com) to receive more information or self-refer.