



# 613 COM HOUSES

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COALITION OF COMMUNITY HOUSES



## In This Issue

- HOUSE FEATURE: DEBRA DYNES P. 1-3
- NEW LEADERSHIP IN LOWERTOWN P. 4
- BEHIND THE BUZZ WORDS P. 5-6
- PARTNER & SUPPORTS SPOTLIGHT P. 7-8
- COMMUNITY HOUSE CONTACTS P.9

## HOUSE FEATURE: DEBRA DYNES

**FOOD INSECURITY IN PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BARBARA CARROLL DISCUSSES SERVICE, DELIVERY AND THE NEED FOR EQUITY**

Located at 85-955 Debra Avenue, the Debra Dynes Family House is nestled at the end of a section of rowhouses in the Rideau View Community, an Ottawa Community Housing neighbourhood, affectionally known to most residents as Debra Dynes. Even on the coldest days, there is buzzing activity around the house which can be attributed to the large catchment area the Debra Dynes Family House serves, with boundaries running from Norberry/Springland to Baseline/Hunt Club and even as far as

Merivale/Craig Henry, service users are certainly not exclusive to Ottawa Community Housing neighbourhoods.

This month we sat down with long time Executive Director, Barbara Carroll, to discuss one of the most significant challenges facing low-income priority neighbourhoods – food insecurity. Like most community houses, Debra Dynes has observed a steep increase in community members experiencing food insecurity. In 2019 the Debra Dynes

food bank was serving an average of 700-800 individuals per month, and once the pandemic hit there was an immediate spike in users. By 2021 numbers continued to rise to over 3,000 individuals per month, reaching numbers as high as 3,545 in November of 2021.

Debra Dynes responded to the community demand by prioritizing this basic need, rearranging the community house in order to dedicate the main

floor and basement to the food bank service, which runs 5 days a week. Community house staff receive deliveries of food from the food bank and many other community businesses and supporters, prepare orders for pick-up outside of the house, restock and repeat. Food bank orders are placed on a 2x6 table outside of the front door of the community house, where service users can take a moment to ensure that their order is in line with dietary needs and preferences and return any items that they may not need or use.

The sheer size of the catchment area of Debra Dynes means that the routine food bank delivery is rarely sufficient to satisfy the needs of the community, which encompasses several priority neighbourhoods. In order to scrape by, Debra Dynes relies on volunteers and community partners to assist in the pick-up and delivery of additional food from the warehouse in the East end of the city. This additional logistical coordination piece has proven to be challenging. Barbara noted that the community house is never fully stocked for more than 48 hours, with large deliveries from the food bank being picked up by service users at a rate that would make your head spin.



**Caldwell Family Centre assists with a pick-up and delivery for Debra Dynes**

The pandemic has revealed many cracks in the way in which we approach food insecurity, with many food banks reaching a breaking point. It is not a surprise that food banks are struggling, with the loss of longtime elderly volunteers coupled with an unprecedented increase in service users. Food insecurity has been at the forefront of concern for the past two years and has successfully brought together many community agencies through the Human Needs Task Force subgroup, providing opportunities for support, collaboration and information sharing across the city. This has been a step in the right direction; however, we must also examine the way in which we have been approaching hunger in our city from a structural perspective.

Reducing dependency when it comes to food insecurity and food banking has been a common theme community houses have heard over recent years. A reframing of this notion is an appropriate place to start. As service providers, community houses regard food security as a responsibility which rests on our shoulders. It is our responsibility to ensure that we appropriately and sustainably address it. Food is a basic need, and therefore a human right. This is the rationale behind the service on demand approach taken by Barbara Carroll at Debra Dynes.

This approach has attracted some criticism over concerns that it may welcome overuse or ‘double dipping’ into an already under resourced system. Again, we can observe the subtle inequity in this speculation – that if given the opportunity, service users will inevitably cheat the system. Barbara, who has been running the Debra Dynes food bank on demand for 26 years has not observed a glaring abuse of this system, noting that in her experience service users only take what they need. In community development work we put a strong emphasis on the importance of community guided initiatives – regarding our community members and service users as experts of their own lives. However, we find ourselves facing a contradiction when it comes to food insecurity, as our service model restricts and limits access to a vital and intimate resource.

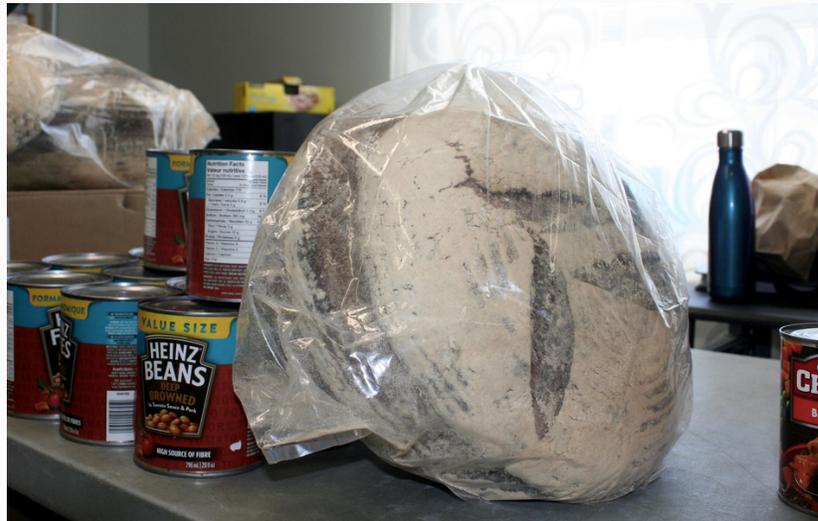


**A Food Bank delivery is unloaded at Debra Dynes**

The systems, rules, and regulations we have set up to service our most vulnerable still bears the stain of a century-old approach to social work, rooted in vice and virtue - the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor. Stepping away from the perspective of service providers, we need to seriously consider the impact that these rules have on our service users and community members. The deep feeling of shame or embarrassment that is expressed by service users in utilizing the food bank is particularly troubling; accessing food must not be accompanied by mental turmoil.

As not-for-profit agencies, community houses are not disillusioned by the fact that funding is at the core of the issue. We may suggest that the disillusion rests within governmental systems, as the seriousness of hunger and food insecurity is not ringing true enough to allocate appropriate support and resources to our community food banks. In recent months there has been more mainstream attention on the issue of rising food prices and shortages, as inflation continues to grow. Community houses with food banks like Debra Dynes will face an uncertain future without a change of tides in funding and support, with equitable solutions and accountability from funders and service providers at the forefront.

There has been the question of whether community houses are the most appropriate fit to continue to run food banks if the demand continues to rise. Simply, the answer is absolutely. Large food hubs may be more esthetically pleasing, but essential service delivery belongs in the heart of priority neighbourhoods - where they have been successfully meeting needs for decades. Place-based food banking not only provides sustenance for community members, but also fosters a strong sense of community, built on trusting relationships. Barbara remains firm on the notion that community houses and food banking belong together, as together they are well positioned to provide emergency assistance through their reach and credibility within communities. Simply put, people will go to the places and people they trust and can rely on.



*Some fresh bread delivered to Debra Dynes by a local bakery*



*Staff at Debra Dynes stock the Food Banking area on the main floor of the community house*



*Carts outside the Wholesale Club hold an order for Debra Dynes ready to be loaded into Caldwell Family Centre's van*



## NEW LEADERSHIP IN LOWERTOWN

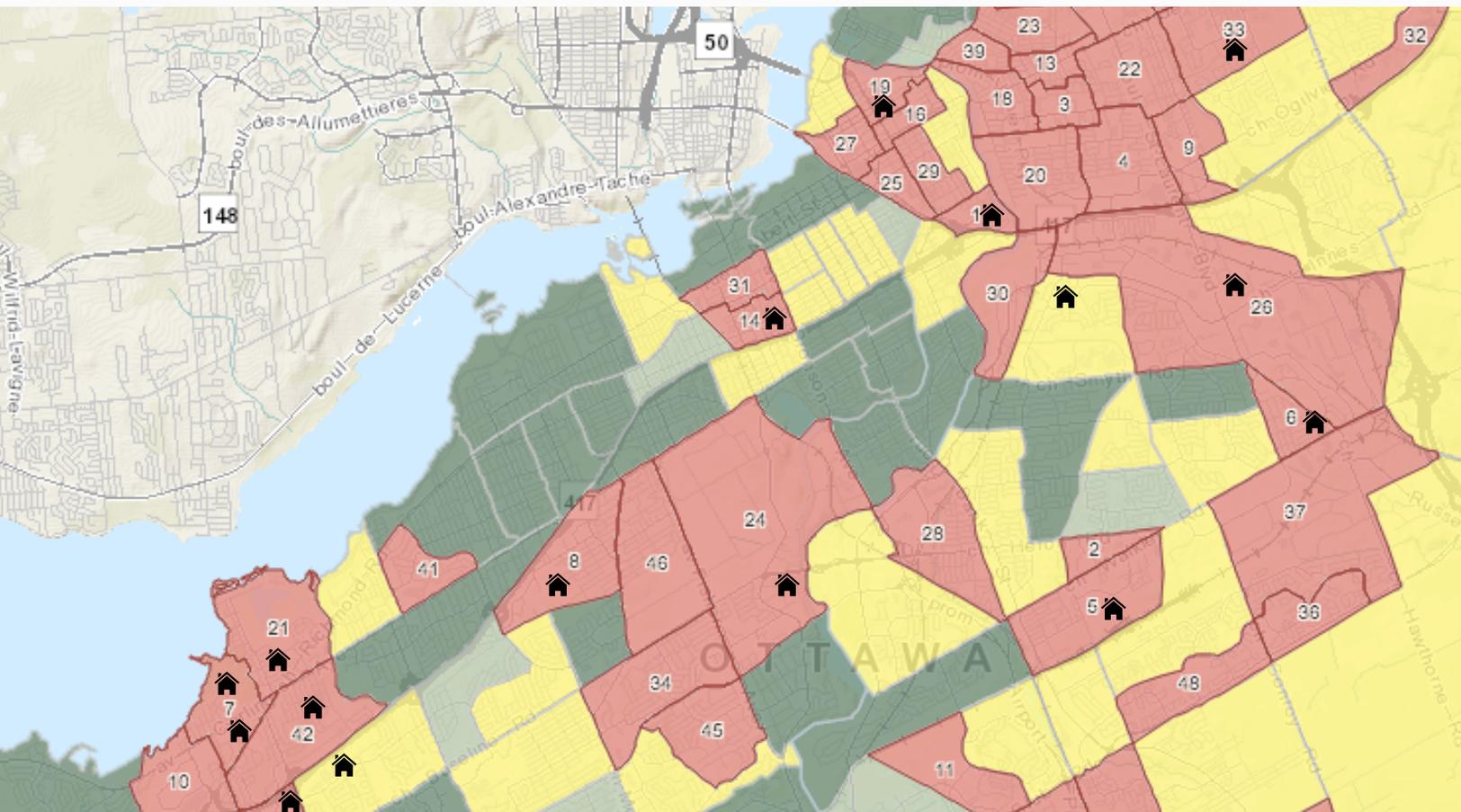
### WELCOMING LOWERTOWN'S NEW HOUSE COORDINATOR, MÉLISSA THIBEAULT-CANAS

As we transition out of winter, and hopefully out of COVID-19 we wanted to take the opportunity to highlight a transition at the Lowertown Good Neighbour's Community House. Anne-Marie Vaz, House Coordinator at Lowertown announced she will be moving on from her position and into semi-retirement. Anne-Marie has been an asset to the OCCH over the past years, bringing creative solutions and critical thinking to the table, encouraging us to push boundaries in the interest of optimizing opportunities for our communities.

With Anne-Marie's departure, we are excited to welcome MéliSSa Thibeault-Canas into the position of House Coordinator at Lowertown and member of the OCCH. MéliSSa brings with her a wealth of diverse community-based experience, social work education and most importantly a passion and enthusiasm for community development.

MéliSSa shared that she is looking forward to learning and working with the community and developing a more intimate understanding of the needs of the residents through daily, casual interactions. Although MéliSSa is a new member of the OCCH, she isn't a new face in the Lowertown community. She has worked in a variety of roles within the community, including roles with the East Resident Committee, Our Home Security Project and COVID-19 outreach.

Please join us in welcoming MéliSSa into her new role while simultaneously wishing Anne-Marie a bittersweet so-long (maybe not goodbye just yet).



# BEHIND THE BUZZ WORDS

## BREAKING DOWN PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

With the arrival of vaccine clinics over the past year, we have been hearing more about ‘priority neighbourhoods’ outside of the community development context. Familiarity with these neighbourhoods through a broader audience could be beneficial, as it may illuminate the prevalence and frequency of low-income pockets throughout the city of Ottawa.

So, how does the city define what a priority neighbourhood is? The Ottawa Neighbourhood Equity Index (NEI) sets out 5 main domains: economic opportunity, social and

human development, physical environment, health and community and belonging. Each domain has components, fleshing out measurable points.

The lower the score on these indicators (scores falling below the benchmark score), the higher the rating as a ‘priority neighbourhood.’

‘Looking at the mapping, there are 49 neighbourhoods falling below the overall NEI benchmark. Ottawa Public Health identified 21 priority neighbourhoods in relation to their vaccination clinics in 2021, however, it is clear from the indicators on the NEI that these 21 neighbourhoods are not exclusive in their status of high priority.

Almost all our community houses are situated within neighbourhoods that fall below the NEI benchmark. Perhaps the more illuminating data is the prevalence of priority neighbourhoods just outside of the immediate community house neighbourhoods. Areas scoring low on the

NEI are not necessarily comprised of Ottawa Community Housing units. Many low-income areas are made up of private rentals and rooming houses; a population which many community houses serve in addition to their immediate Ottawa Community Housing neighbourhood, most notably through food banking services.

So, what does it mean to be a priority neighbourhood? Simply put, it is an area where residents are likely to experience higher rates of inequity. This statement is quite broad, as inequities manifest themselves in countless ways. Inequities can range from lack of affordable housing, access to food, childcare services and transportation. These elements are compounded by humanistic elements as well such as poverty levels, race, and mental health.

In the context of OCCH neighbourhoods, 14 of out 16 scored below the overall NEI benchmark. There were two domains where

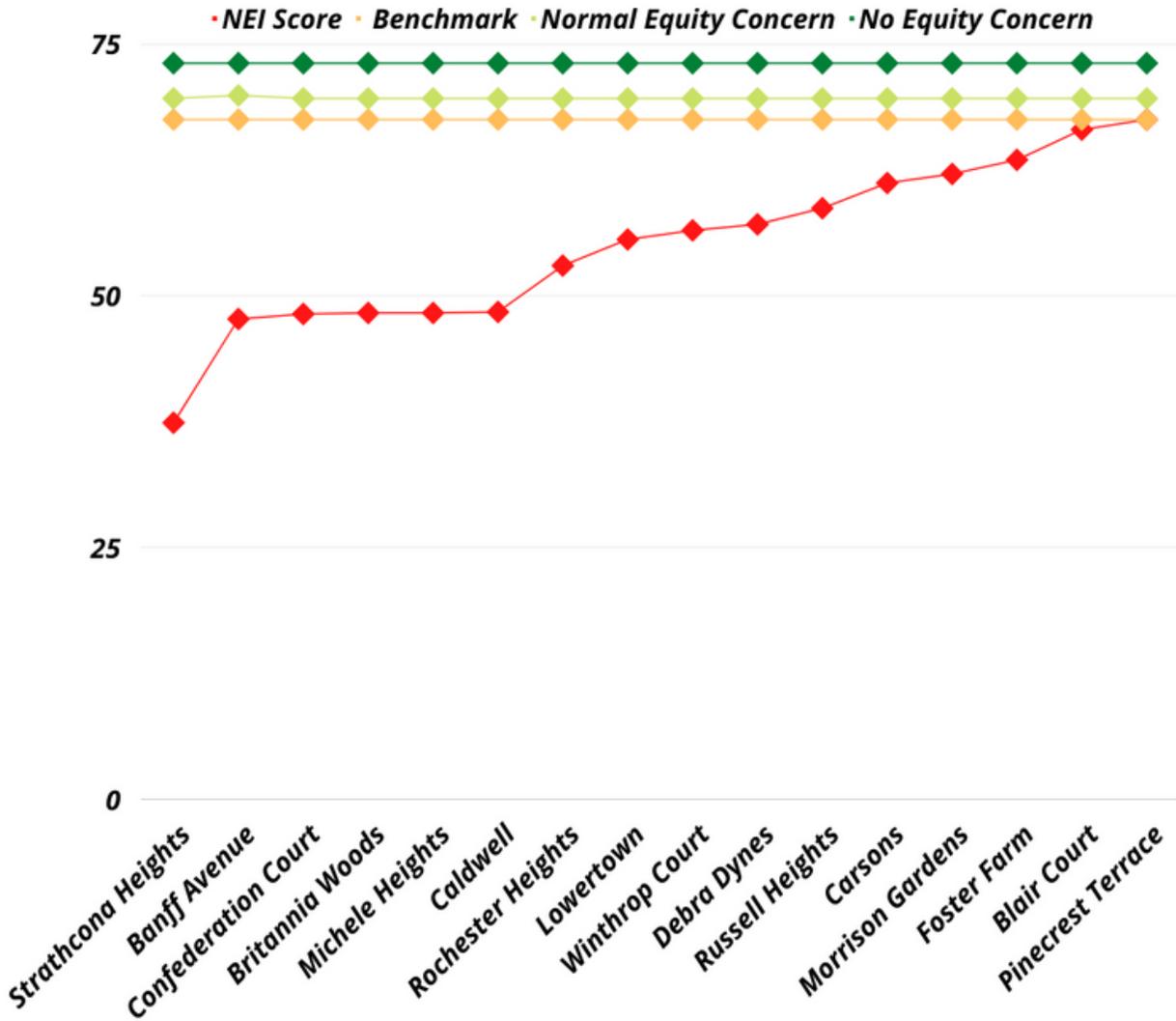
scoring was notably below the domain benchmarks: social and human development and economic opportunity.

The social and human development domain is comprised of 5 areas of measure: proximity to childcare, early childhood development, secondary

education, post-secondary education completion and finally, percentage of those not participating in the labour force.

The economic opportunity domain is used to measure the level of poverty in neighbourhoods, using 9 areas of

measure: low income, working poor, employment income, working part-time, number of local jobs, consumer debt, financial assets, housing affordability for renters and housing affordability for owners.



It is prudent to note that the data used to compile the NEI is nearing 5 years of age or older, so this data may not be the most up-to-date representations of the current state of Ottawa's priority neighborhoods.

Keeping in mind the vast changes that have occurred in the home and rental markets, as well as limitations COVID-19 has put on the ability of many to participate in the labour force, we can reasonably surmise that statistics would not show an improved state.

Nonetheless, the NEI does provide crucial insight into the domain areas most deeply impacting scoring below benchmarks.

To learn more about the NEI, and how your neighbourhood scores visit [neighbourhoodequity.ca](http://neighbourhoodequity.ca).



# PARTNERSHIP & SUPPORTS SPOTLIGHT

## GLOBAL FOOD MARKET BRINGS INDIGENOUS TRADITION TO FOSTER FARM

Foster Farm Family House began to distribute dine in kits that focused on Indigenous foods in the month of February. This initiative was made possible through the global food market which included all the ingredients needed as well as a cookbook to create traditional Indigenous foods.

This month featured recipes for bisson stew, maple salmon, three sister soup, wild rice, banok, corn bread and pine needle tea!

Foster Farm is planning on assembling new kits each month for the next six months, and also are looking forward to adding an additional dine in kit focusing on other cultures such as Caribbean and Arabic dishes.





# LEARN 2 SNOWSHOE

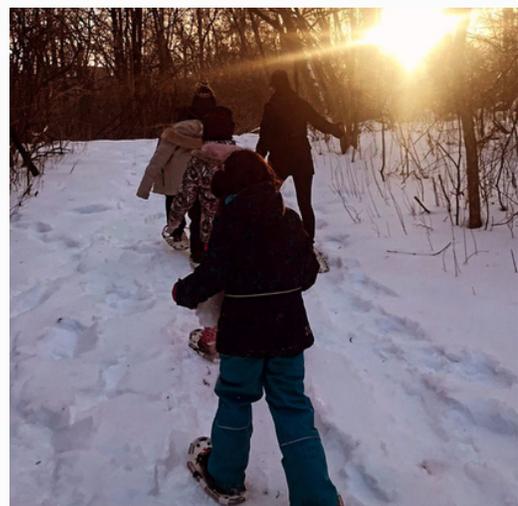


YOUTH IN CARSON'S COMMUNITY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SNOWY WEATHER

The Youth Program at Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre partnered up with Decathlon and the OCH Foundation to bring a series of seasonal sportive events to children and youth in Ward 13. These events are intended to give everyone a chance at exploring new activities to promote the fun in physical activity.

On Wednesday February 23, 2022, we had a snowshoe event at the Carson's Community House with 5 girls from the community who came together to discover the fun in snowshoeing. The team was very excited with the results, as the girls were very engaged and continued asking when we would be going again.

There are now 25 pairs of snowshoes (90lbs. maximum weight limit) available to the children in the Carson's community during the winter season to be borrowed when they would like.





# COMMUNITY HOUSE CONTACTS

WANT TO GET IN TOUCH?

**Banff Avenue Community House**  
 Phone : 613-739-5702  
 Email : sylviem@banffcomhouse.ca  
 Address : 2084A&B Banff Avenue, K1V 7X9  
 Website : banffcommunityhouse.ca

**Blair Court Community House**  
 Phone : 613-736-5058  
 Email : blaircourt@rogers.com  
 Address : 1566 Station Boulevard, K1G 0M1  
 Website : blaircourt.ca

**Lowertown Good Neighbours Community House**  
 Phone : 613-562-2925  
 Email : mthibeault-canas@crccbv.ca  
 Address : 145 Beausoleil Drive, K1N 8W3

**Michele Heights Community House**  
 Phone : 613-829-4353  
 Email : l.selvendren@pqchc.com  
 Address : 102-2950 Penny Drive, K2B 6H6

**Britannia Woods Community House**  
 Phone : 613-820-0853  
 Email : f.yusuf@britanniawoods.com  
 Address : 9-115 Richie Street, K2B 6C7  
 Website : britanniawoods.com

**Caldwell Family Centre**  
 Phone : 613-728-1800  
 Email : director@caldwellcentre.ca  
 Address : 20/22-1100 Medford Street, K1Z 8L5  
 Website : caldwellfamilycentre.ca

**Morrison Gardens Community House**  
 Phone : 613-596-6229  
 Email : m.clark@pqchc.com  
 Address : 985A Morrison Drive, K2H 7L1

**Pinecrest Terrace Community House**  
 Phone : 613-596-6703  
 Email : y.jones@pqchc.com  
 Address : 2483B Iris Street, K2C 1C7

**Carson's Community House**  
 Phone : 613-745-0073 x 105  
 Email : aline.abdulnour@crccr.org  
 Address : 102-710 Carson Road, K1K 2H3

**Confederation Court Community House**  
 Phone : 613-521-6807  
 Email : confederationcourt@hotmail.com  
 Address : 2483A Walkley Road, K1G 3H2  
 Website : confederationcourt.com

**Rochester Heights Community House**  
 Phone : 613-237-6529  
 Email : cflores@swchc.on.ca  
 Address : 299 Rochester Street, K1R 7N3

**Russell Heights Community House**  
 Phone : 613-736-9855  
 Email : housecoordinator@russellheights.ca  
 Address : 1799E7D Russell Road, K1G 0N1  
 Website : russellheights.ca

**Debra Dynes Family House**  
 Phone : 613-224-3824  
 Email : info@debradynes.com  
 Address : 85-955 Debra Avenue, K2C 0J5  
 Website : debradynesfamilyhouse.com

**Foster Farm Family House**  
 Phone : 613-596-4866  
 Email : m.knight@pqchc.com  
 Address : 334-1085 Ramsey Crescent, K2B 7Z9

**Strathcona Heights Family House**  
 Phone : 613-315-4260  
 Email : agisanza@sandyhillchc.on.ca  
 Address : 300 Goulburn Avenue, K1N 1C9

**Winthrop Court Community House**  
 Phone : 613-321-0163  
 Email : d.read@pqchc.com  
 Address : 38 Winthrop Private, K2B 8R5

FOR INQUIRIES & CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT CARLA THÜR AT COALITION@OTTAWACOMMUNITYHOUSES.COM