



Garth Homer Society

19/20 Annual Review



Garth Homer
SOCIETY

A life, a home, and a place in the world

Message from the Board Chair

Fiscal year 2020 was perhaps one of the most astonishing and difficult in the history of the Garth Homer Society.

Above all, it was a year of financial drama. We began the year with a massive \$737,281 deficit inherited from the year before and ended it with a substantial surplus and the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. In between there were many ups and downs. However, I am convinced we ended the year stronger and more resilient than ever.

As we explained in last year's Annual Review, the deficit was incurred because of extraordinary costs associated with the termination of our residential services contract by CLBC, and probably could not have been avoided given the circumstances. Nonetheless, this was a very deep hole to find ourselves in, one from which it was difficult at the time to see a clear path of return.

In response to the deficit, management drafted a comprehensive recovery plan. I am proud to say that the plan did not involve any layoffs and that we were able to keep our remarkable and incredibly professional staff intact throughout our worst moments of difficulty.

The beginning of the year was uncertain, as we continued to accumulate monthly deficits through April, May, and June. By July it looked

as if we might be headed for another huge annual loss. However, things started to improve over the summer. Our cost deferrals and increases to our credit facilities helped, but the big difference was made by fundraising and program growth. Fiscal 2020 was our most successful year ever in fundraising for operations and I would like to extend my gratitude to all the donors and grant makers whose generous contributions made such a difference. In particular I would like to express my special thanks to the long-time supporter of GHS whose large, anonymous gift provided the final push that was needed to right the ship. Thank you so very much.

However, the year would not have been successful if it had been dependent solely on one-time fundraising revenue. As important and fundraising was to us in 2020, it was growth in our programs, and in particular those for individuals with higher support needs, that ensured that the gains made in the year provided stability and financial strength for the future. For the past several years, among other things, GHS has focused strategically on developing and expanding services for higher needs individuals, particularly those with complex disabilities and health problems, and those needing a high level of behavioural support. We have worked hard to innovate and develop new programs to meet these growing areas of need. We have been successful at this, and 2020 was the year in which

- just in time! - our investment in program development really began to show results in program expansion and growth in the related revenue.

The result was that we ended 2020 with a surplus of \$236,962 representing a turnaround of nearly \$1m over the course of 12 months. It is especially satisfying that in the end we were able to do well primarily by doing good, as the saying goes. However, at just about the same time that we were able to start feeling confident that we were through the worst and would end the year with a surplus, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. Nobody saw this coming. However, our staff handled it with aplomb. I am sure that the discipline and resilience they showed throughout this most difficult of years left us much better able to deal with the challenges of COVID when they arrived.

Nor should we forget that though the big story of 2020 was financial, our wonderful staff continued throughout to deliver and develop a broad range of innovative programming. More on this in the report from our CEO.

The success of fiscal 2020 was a genuine team effort - from the families who put their trust in us, to the frontline staff who came to work every day in difficult times prepared to give their very best for the individuals they support, to the management team who showed great leadership and buckled down to do more with less, and to the Board, whose wise counsel and ongoing confidence made the Chair's job so much easier.

To all of you I say thank you for a remarkable year.

- Lynn Pollock, Board Chair

Message from the CEO

Fiscal 2020 was a year of high contrasts and large swings financially, but for administration and services, it was mainly 'steady as she goes,' with small but meaningful improvements against our key strategic objectives. Until the arrival of COVID-19, that is, when like organizations across Canada and indeed around the world, we had to reinvent our services almost overnight in order to keep clients, staff, and families as safe as possible in the face of the pandemic.

A number of key themes have been at the core of our strategy for service development over last few years, and they continued to play a central role through fiscal 2020. These included increasing our efforts to develop appropriate supports for individuals with higher needs, especially behavioural needs; establishing discovery-based, highly individualized learning as the foundation of all our services; and increasing growth and engagement opportunities for clients by breaking down the silos between our programs.

Like points of light in a year that was often dim with uncertainty, these strategic priorities were reflected in the development of programs and individuals across the organization.

A great example among our Community Inclusion (CI) programs is the growth of Mozart. The first client started in MOZART in June 2019 and since then the team has grown to four individuals. The program addresses the requirement for a number of individuals receiving 1:1 behavioural supports to have their own dedicated, daily space in order to increase their chances of success. The working assumption is that individuals who come into GHS through MOZART will have the opportunity, once they have established routines, to participate in and eventually "graduate" to other programs. In its first year, MOZART has been perhaps even more successful than we anticipated it would be. We expect that it will continue to grow and develop quickly given the need for such a service

Elsewhere in CI, we had an increasing number of clients transitioning between programs in order to engage in activities and opportunities more suited to their changing support needs and more suited to their own personal growth and ambitions. These moves have been quite successful for all and reflect the value that a large program can offer in creating new opportunities for individuals and a highly individualized path to their personal goals.

Where individuals were challenged in their progress due to insufficient funding, our staff worked hard this year, collaborating with families to objectively document support needs in order to advocate for increases. As a result of this hard work, staff were able to help families increase service levels for several individuals whose needs might otherwise have been neglected. It has been a standing objective at GHS to strengthen the relationship between the organization and the families we serve. In 2020 we made further progress against that objective with the implementation of the Family Support Group and in our first annual Family Support Picnic and our first Family Wine and Cheese Night, both great events that were a lot of fun for everyone who came out.

There were similar gains over in our Learning and Employment (LE) programs. One great example was the LifeStreams Drama Project. This was the creation of an original production of The Jungle Book involving participants from programs throughout all of GHS. Participants worked with professional artists from the community to write, design, and perform a unique work that was part dramatic performance and part puppetry. ArtWorks turned into a puppetry workshop in order to support the production, and the play was performed both for an internal audience of GHS clients, and then remounted for a public production at the holiday market. Both performances had audiences at full capacity.

Also this past year, the OPTIONS program transitioned from their program space at the Darwin location to their new location on Tennyson Ave. This provided both the participants and the staff a greater sense of independence to further explore and develop the culture of their program. The new program space has been engineered to support the individualized learning needs of OPTIONS participants. Additionally, with the support of LifeStreams, an OPTIONS participant succeeded in achieving paid employment in an area of great interest to him, despite being previously identified as someone for whom employment was out of reach.

OPTIONS clients also participated over in Heron House, our fee-based residential service for older adults with more serious impairments, by working with staff at the house on their food service training. Heron House residents in turn were able to participate in CI programs such as Pathways, our day service for older adults. We were able to increase the opportunities for community and program engagement for Heron House residents with the purchase of two new, state-of-the-art wheelchair vans. Many thanks and great appreciation to Community Gaming, the Garth Homer Foundation, and the GVSCU Legacy Fund for providing the funding that enabled us to purchase the vans, which are also used to support physically disabled individuals in our Dreams team.

In Heron House, as was the case throughout the organization over the year, we made steady

gains on our objectives of increasing mobility among our programs and expanding choices and opportunities for those we support.

On the staffing and administrative side of things, GHS said hello three new program supervisors in the year, in Artworks, Supported Employment, and MOZART, all of whom brought great energy and skill to their roles. And in December, we also welcomed Tami Zaranski, our new Director of Finance and Administration. Tami comes with a with a wide breadth of accounting and administrative experience, with previous roles in both non-profit and for-profit organizations. She has been a great addition to the senior management team.

That was the year that was until the arrival of COVID-19 in February. When the pandemic first appeared, our greatest concern was that day services of all kinds would be required to shut down, and for several weeks we lived with great uncertainty about what this would mean for our clients and their families, our staff, and indeed the future of the organization. Eventually, however, the province declared that social services were essential, and would need to stay open and adapt delivery in response to the pandemic. Despite the challenge involved, this came as great relief to us, and I am very happy to say that in the following months, mostly after the end of the fiscal, the staff and management rose to meet the challenge with unwavering competence and great fortitude.

COVID aside, on balance it was a very good year despite difficult times, and I'd like to thank all staff and the management team for maintaining their focus on client outcomes when it would have been so easy to be diverted by other issues.

- Mitchell Temkin, CEO

Treasurer's Report

As noted in the Chair's report, fiscal 2020 was a year of high drama and great contrast financially.

We began the year coming off a loss of \$737,281 in 2019. In response to the very difficult position in which this left us, management implemented a recovery plan with the four elements already noted: deferral of costs, expansion of credit, growth in service revenue, and an increase in fundraising. For the most part, these were a continuation of initiatives we began in 2019.

I am happy to be able to report the plan has been effective. As of March 31, 2020, GHS reported a net surplus of \$236,962, a remarkable turnaround of \$974,243, just shy of a million-dollar change from the prior year. This reflects substantial recovery of the organization's stable financial position and provides relief from the peril of the previous year.

The elements of the recovery plan are clearly reflected in our year-end results. Our Provincial contract revenue increased from \$5,660,790 to \$5,738,202, while fee for service revenue increased from \$82,718 to \$442,867. Fundraising increased from \$152,257 to \$336,121, while grant revenue grew from \$87,884 to \$202,129. Overall, gross revenue increased to \$7,365,680 from \$6,820,474. On the cost side, expenses declined to \$7,083,994 from \$7,315,373, and discretionary legal fees were reduced to \$57,164 from the \$237,650 spent in 2019.

Throughout the year, due to the depletion of our cash reserves in 2019, management relied on expanded lines of credit to manage cash flow, creating the breathing room and flexibility that allowed for our recovery. By year-end we had not yet been able to rebuild our cash reserves, but given the positive financial momentum created through the year, which will carry into the new fiscal period, we can expect our cash balances to continually grow, completing our recovery plan.

I would like to thank both the Board and Management for their fortitude, calm, and patience in sticking with the plan, even through the early months of the year in which it looked as if 2020 might be a repeat of 2019. That we have been able to manage our way out of a difficult financial predicament gives me great hope for the future of GHS and all we are trying to achieve.

- Paul van Koll, Treasurer

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