

2022 
women
of options
GAMECHANGERS



**Enriching the community.
One youth at a time.**

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OUR MISSION

We inspire hope and belonging for all.

OUR VISION

A healthy, caring community, where everyone thrives.

With Thanks to Our Incredibly Supportive Board of Directors

KAMALJIT LEHAL

LOUELLA MATHIAS

DOUG NEALE

DEVINDER SEKHON

AMANDA BRATCH

ANOOP KHOSLA

CRAIG EAST

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MICHAEL KENDLER

SHERYL PRINGLE

TIM BEACHY



Options Community Services is a registered charity with over 500 staff providing a multitude of essential social services in Surrey, South Surrey, White Rock, Delta and Langley. Our organization collaborates with individuals, businesses, community organizations, groups and all levels of government to create effective, focused and responsive resources.

We provide services to Surrey and surrounding areas that run the gamut, including early childhood development, crisis support, employment opportunities and community integration for new immigrants and refugees, transition housing for women fleeing violence, support for the homeless, and affordable housing.

Options Community Services is governed by a volunteer board of directors and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation.

Habitat Housing Society is a sister society to Options Community Services and currently manages Options' affordable housing initiatives.

Help On A Cold November Afternoon

Safety and hope for a new mom

It was a cold Friday afternoon in November when Nichole received a call from a public health nurse. A new mom, Sharon, was in need of support. Could Options help?

“Of course!” came the answer.

Nichole reached out to Sharon, arranged for her to receive a Christmas hamper, and set up an appointment for the following Monday morning.

During their appointment, Sharon told Nichole that she had been looking for a basement suite or an apartment, but had been turned down everywhere she looked. Finally, desperate to find shelter for her baby and herself, Sharon spent her last \$1,800 to rent a motel unit in a sketchy part of town.

The \$1,800 bought her 30 days of shelter for her and her baby. After that, she would be homeless. Nichole knew that the motel was an unsafe environment for a young mother and her baby. In addition to the usual dangers, the motel was being used to house people with COVID.

Sharon also confided that she had been subject to intimate partner violence. As a result, Nichole started the referral process to have Sharon and her baby admitted to the safety of one of the Options' transition houses. Options staff was able to support Sharon with \$1,800 through the use of its discretionary funds to give her a much needed hand up.

With the security of the transition house available to her and the help of \$1,800 for a deposit and moving expenses, Sharon was able to take the time she needed to find appropriate, sustainable housing for herself and her daughter.

Today, Sharon and her baby have their own place in subsidized housing offered by Options. She is currently a full time student studying for a career in early childhood education.

Based on research outlined in a 2016 report commissioned by the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition*, most British Columbian parents



expect to support their children up to age 28 (financially or otherwise), with the majority believing that 19 year olds do not have the necessary skills and resources to live independently, and will need the support of their families through their twenties.

Options Community Services has a life skills program, employment program, a parenting program, and youth transition workers available for youth after they turn 19.

For many young people like Sharon, Options becomes a lifeline, helping to remove what seems to be an insurmountable barrier, giving them a way out of crisis, and providing hope for their

immediate future. With that in hand, and knowing that help is there, they can begin to cultivate the dreams they didn't think were possible.

** 2016 McCreary Centre Society report "Surrey Youth Aging Out of Care"*



"Of course!"

NICHOLE OSBORNE
OCS PROGRAM MANAGER, GROWING TOGETHER

Investing In Our Future

A message from Christine Mohr, CEO of
Options Community Services



Options Community Services works with young people within a wide range of circumstances. These include youth who are aging out of government care, newcomers to Canada, unemployed, street entrenched, pregnant and parenting, affiliated with gangs, seeking their high school diploma and more.

At Options Community Services, our 80 plus programs serve a broad base of individuals and families in the South Fraser area. These

programs are primarily funded by various levels of government, and at present, we are often constrained in how we can use funds to support young people in our communities due to limitations outlined in our funding contracts.

Our staff are as ethnically diverse as our clientele. They speak many of the languages spoken by the youth of our communities and they understand cultural nuances. Our dedicated team of over 600 gifted and experienced OCS staff and volunteers make selfless and

collaborative contributions every day, as they passionately strive to better the lives of the young people and families they serve.

Our team has the experience and the dedication to offer young people the support they need as they navigate the stressful and often confusing journey to adulthood. Unfortunately, they

Frequently, a youth's struggles are caused by well-meaning systems that are not set up to address their unique situations...

CHRISTINE MOHR
CEO, OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES

often don't have the accompanying resources to address the individual needs at hand.

Frequently, a youth's struggles are caused by well-meaning systems that are not set up to address their unique situations, as they don't fall neatly into pre-established categories. Often, young people may need something little, but what they need will make a huge difference to their lives.

Take Priya, for instance. She was in the final year of her program that would see her become a dental hygienist. After completing the program, Priya would be in line for making \$54 per hour. In addition to her studies, Priya was managing two jobs and caring for her child.

Despite working two jobs and being eligible for subsidized day care, Priya was still \$300 per month short of covering her day care expenses. It seemed she might have to drop out of the program because no existing resource was able to help her.

Fortunately, staff from Options were able to find \$3,600 to cover her day care expenses and now Priya will graduate and take a position that will provide for her and her child for years to come.

I am grateful and humbled once again, as our Women of Options (both returning and new) have stepped up to the plate and generously volunteered to be a "voice" for our Gamechangers campaign. It will take many of us, however, to see us to our goal.

Please consider donating to this life-changing fund by supporting one of our Women of Options 2022: Gamechangers. Let's invest in our future by supporting today's youth when and how they need it most.

Thriving together,

Christine A. Mohr

Christine Mohr, CEO



Changing The Game

Last year we embarked on our first-ever capital campaign for an affordable housing build in honor of Options Community Service's 50th anniversary. Thanks to our first 50 Women of Options, and partnerships like yours, the campaign was a success and the 100-unit complex at 81st Avenue and King George Boulevard is in development!

This year some of these remarkable women are back, along with new faces in the group. They have a passion to join Options in making **life-altering differences in the lives of youth in our community**. We call them and their supporters, Gamechangers! This year we are raising \$1.5 million to develop a discretionary fund to assist youth who need the kind of support that cannot otherwise be provided in a timely manner, if at all, by other agencies or the government. This includes financial support as well as enhanced support services and mentorship when requested.

"I am grateful and humbled once again, as our Women of Options (both returning and new) have stepped up to the plate and generously volunteered to be a "voice" for our Gamechangers campaign."

CHRISTINE MOHR
CEO, OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES

How it Works

Each "Woman of Options" has committed to help raise \$25,000 towards a long term discretionary fund for Options Community Services to be able to administer in unique and timely ways in support of youth in need in our community. Your support and encouragement will help them reach their goal.





Detective Anisha Myette

CO-FOUNDER, HER TIME

Detective Anisha Myette is in her tenth year with her police department and currently working within the Organized Crime Section Gang Crime Unit. Anisha is the co-founder of “Her Time,” an anti-gang initiative for females and has presented “Her Time” in a number of venues, including at the National Gang Crime Research Center’s annual conference in Chicago, IL.

“We have a responsibility and a duty to invest the time and resources into our Youth. With the right tools these kids will have all the opportunities to succeed and shape their future.”



Joy Dockrey

TEAM LEADER-VICTIM SUPPORT AND ABORIGINAL LIAISON, SURREY WOMEN’S CENTRE

Joy Dockrey has been adopted twice, first when she was five years old and then by the Haida Nation. When she found out about this Options campaign, Joy was excited as she believes this will alleviate some of the troubling statistics that are showing up.

“This was a door that opened, and I have been waiting for it to open for a long time.”



Tammy Dyer

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES

As a long-term employee of Options Community Services, Tammy Dyer has served in many capacities, including ECE in the young parent program, senior manager for the Early Years program, and now deputy executive director at Options.

“I lost my mom to cancer during my first six months working at Options. I was 23 years old and trying to figure out how I was going to navigate life without my mom. As I spent time working with young people who had never had consistent parental support, I realized how grateful I was to have 23 years with an amazing mom, and how important it is for everyone to have reliable support as they navigate their way through life.”

The contributions of these Women of Options, along with your partnership, will directly impact the lives of youth in our community for years to come. Please find a complete list of our project champions and how you can support them at the end of this booklet.

Enriching the Community. One Youth at a Time.

Customized support when needed most

“ I realized ... how important it is for everyone to have reliable support as they navigate their way through life.”

TAMMY DYER
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES

Carrie's Story

For several weeks, Carrie had been pursuing her dream to become a writer. Step one was to enroll in the creative writing program at Douglas College – something Carrie thought was a pipe dream just a short time before that.

But when she came to the Options office to give the team an update, she flashed the brightest, most beautiful smile!

Such a simple thing, really ... a smile. We take it for granted, for the most part. But not Carrie. You see, before this, Carrie never smiled. Literally. She never smiled. She was too self-conscious, too embarrassed.

When Carrie was younger, she experienced some intense trauma. The trauma initiated an endless cycle of depression, shame, self-blame, guilt and loss of self-confidence. The pattern was so severe that Carrie stopped taking care of herself and particularly, her teeth and she stopped smiling. It got so bad that it became painful for Carrie to eat.

By the time Options staff became involved, Carrie's difficulties required the intervention of an endodontist, a specialist dentist. The estimate was \$7,000 – a sum she certainly didn't have, and unfortunately, Carrie wasn't eligible for government funding. Her plight appeared

hopeless.

But that's when the Options staff got to work. They began by using their personal contacts to look for an endodontist who was willing to donate his time to complete the surgery. They found one. He was willing to donate \$4,000. That left an outstanding balance of \$3,000.

Options was able to cover that amount from a

discretionary fund. Just as importantly, the staff helped her address the trauma she experienced earlier in her life and register at Douglas College.

When Carrie came in that day, it was clear she was no longer depressed. She's dealing with the trauma she experienced, she's feeling more self-confident and she is well on the way to realizing her dream of becoming a writer.

Jermaine's Story

Finally, Jermaine could breathe a sigh of relief. He and his extended family were well out of town – out of the clutches of the gang that had controlled his life for the past two years.

Just two nights ago, 16 year old Jermaine was sleeping in his father's bed, afraid for his life. The rest of the family had moved to another home. It was too dangerous to stay in their own house. The gang had made it clear that there was no way out for Jermaine. And to make matters worse, they had begun to intimidate one of his siblings, inferring that they were also in danger.

The situation looked bleak for Jermaine and his family until a social worker contacted Options to refer Jermaine to the agency's High Risk Youth Justice program. Options took Jermaine's referral to the Children and Youth At Risk Table (CHART). CHART is an inter-agency group of 11 agencies in the community, consisting of police, probation, social workers, school district representatives, and several community nonprofit organizations. The Table determined

that the only solution for Jermaine and his family was to relocate them to a community outside of BC.

With the goal in place, CHART developed a plan for Jermaine and his family to move. The probation officer and social worker arranged for the family to receive services in their new community, school records would be transferred, and the police were prepared to escort the family out of town.

But there was one more hurdle.

The family had no money to get them from Surrey to their new home. Options was able to address this need by supplying the financial resources that Jermaine and his family needed to successfully relocate into their new community.

Today, Jermaine and his family are safe and thriving. They've gotten their lives back. All because a community cared enough to provide them with a helping hand when they needed it most.

Empowering Youth to Dream

Options Community Services is passionate about being there for our youth who need a hand up

The Facts

Approximately 700 youth in BC leave government care on their 19th birthday each year, and around 5,000 young BC adults (aged 19-24) have previously been in government care. Surrey has the largest youth population in BC, and out of those annual 700 youth, 50 to 70 of them call Surrey their home.

When they turn 19, youth in the care system lose access to the majority of professionals who have been available to support them. There is also an abrupt ending to relationships that have been developed over time, such as potential high school relationships that they have developed

with staff, friends and their families. Lack of support, along with isolation and missing a sense of belonging are major contributors to overall health and well-being, so it is not surprising that youth who age out of care are more likely than their peers to become homeless, have poor educational, employment and health outcomes, and claim income assistance benefits. In 2016, the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition identified youth who had “aged out” of the government care system as a key demographic to support, noting the increased risk of poverty.

While increasing numbers of young people in



BC are living with their parents until well into their twenties, young people coming out of the care system are forced into independence at 19; before they may be ready.

Youth who have been in care are less likely than others to attend post-secondary education. Even with the increases in government financial assistance for post-secondary education, practical difficulties remain, ranging from navigating an unfamiliar system and paperwork, to being unable to afford to volunteer or take on unpaid internships during their studies.

The need for more support to access job training, work experience, employment and education opportunities are frequently cited by youth from care and service providers. Ultimately, there is a consistent message that many youth just don't know where to start, or who to turn to with questions about education and employment.

Based on Compass Connections and Plenty of Threads: A Report on the Prototype Programs, Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2022

Our Youth and the Gap

Options Community Services has a myriad of programs to support young people, but **where there is a gap, is when it comes to timely and unique situations that cannot be met within a program's or designated funding's parameters and there is nowhere else for a youth to turn.**

This is where OCS program staff can use a discretionary fund. This fund will allow vulnerable youth to receive the customized support they need without having to fit neatly into a predetermined category of funding. One that allows OCS staff to pay for items that can make a huge and timely difference in a young person's life. Things that can make ALL the difference. Things that are game changers in these young people's lives.

They aren't always complicated or large things, rather, things that most of us take for granted that these youth just don't have access to. There are so many ways our staff could support the youth of the community. The possibilities are only limited by the young person's needs.

Youth who:

- » Are emerging from the child welfare system
- » Are struggling with mental health and/or suicidal thoughts
- » Have experienced the direct or indirect impact of trauma due to domestic violence, addiction, poverty, etc
- » Lack positive, safe and reliable places and people
- » Are under supported in key areas of their lives

Examples:

- » Help pay for clothing so that they can attend a graduation ceremony or a job interview with their head held high
- » Cover day care or tuition costs for a young mother so that she can complete an educational program that allows her to provide a better life for her young family
- » Pay first and last month's rent when no other funds are available
- » Help a young person further their independence by paying for driving lessons or getting their driver's license which is often needed for employment
- » Help with the cost of sports or recreation fees so that children can join their peers in activities that build skills, friendships and self-esteem
- » Get endangered youth to a safe place
- » Provide needed mental health support
- » Provide guidance and mentoring
- » Help youth escape gang involvement

By having this fund available, OCS staff will be able to help offset the stress suffered by many at-risk youth by helping them surmount barriers that can lead to a remarkable improvement in their lives.

This discretionary fund can also be accessed by our partner agencies through a referral to Options staff. In this way the entire community benefits in the most effective and timely ways possible.

The Gamechangers Fund

So why \$1.5 million and why now?

The youth and their needs are here now and changing the game for them today will impact both their tomorrows and our communities at large. Currently, our team does it's best to support each youth as best they can with what is available.

As many of you may know, Options Community Services provides over 80 programs covering a multitude



of essential community social services in Surrey, South Surrey, White Rock, Delta and Langley. We collaborate with individuals, businesses, community organizations, groups, and all levels of government, to create effective, focused and responsive resources. Programs and resources that cover areas such as early childhood development, crisis support, employment opportunities, community integration for new immigrants and refugees, transition housing for women fleeing violence, support for the homeless, and affordable housing.

That's a lot! And we know that over the next 8-10 years we will need to be focusing on raising awareness and funds for some of those needs - in particular affordable housing options which touch many of the groups listed above.

But 8-10 years is too long and too late for today and tomorrow's youth in need. So we want to set up a fund that can be used over this time to ensure that young people who need our help get it when and how they need it.

In addition to unique and timely individual needs, there are many youth-centered programs that are meeting the needs of many of the young people who come to us for help. It would be greatly beneficial for the Options leadership to be able to discern specific program priorities and needs each year in regard to additional support from this fund.



Examples of current Options programs under our Youth Services Department:

- » Young Family Program: Growing Together Outreach
- » Youth and Young Families Housing Program (Ages 16 – 25)
- » Options for Youth TV Program
- » STARR after-school program and camps
- » Fraser Health Crisis Line
- » Family Counseling Services
- » Suicide Prevention Education and Counselling (SPEAC)
- » Sexual Abuse Counselling
- » South Asian Family Strengthening Team
- » High Risk Youth Justice Program
- » Youth Justice Services
- » 1-1 Youth Transitioning to Adult Support
- » Life Skills and Employment Programs
- » BC Youth In Care Surrey Local Chapter
- » Youth Semi Independent Living (Y-Sil)

Great Responsibility With Great Accountability

We take donation stewardship seriously because we know that your donations mean the world to our youth and their futures.

The Gamechangers fund will be administered by The Youth Table (consisting of five senior Options managers or program managers) who are appointed by and accountable to the Options Community Services Executive Team.

Funds will fall into two categories – Immediate Needs and Supporting Funds. Immediate Needs are defined as those needed to address a young person's urgent needs in the coming 24 hours, while Supporting Funds are defined as those that a young person requires over time. Examples of Supporting Funds would include: moving costs, course tuition, or special clothing and equipment for a job opportunity. The amount of each category will be set annually.

To be eligible for funding, the request must be for individuals 12-27 years of age. In addition, the request must not be able to be covered through available program costs of an Options

or partner organization program. The request must also fall within any limits set for the year the funds are being sought. Whenever possible, staff will connect with former recipients of the fund and interview them on the impact of the funds they received from Options.

On a quarterly basis, the Youth Table will review all requests for funds from the Options Youth Game Changers fund. Data will include recipient demographic information, the number of requests for funding, the number granted, the number of clients requiring immediate needs, the amounts of those needs, and any other information deemed appropriate.

The Youth Table will also review all follow-up interviews/reports with fund recipients and note any trends that they see coming from the quarterly reports in order to make any recommendations for changes to the Executive Team.

Yes, Someone Like You Makes All The Difference

We hope you will join our team with your financial support and become a Gamechanger in the lives of many youth for over the next decade. Visit womenofoptions2022.ca and donate under one of our campaign champions today! We, and our adults of tomorrow, thank you!

Strength in Numbers

We may have the best of intentions, plans, and expertise ready to go, but the truth is, without admirable and generous folks like you standing with us, it's just a dream. Will you help make this hope tangible for others like Sharon and Carrie?

You too can inspire hope and belonging for all as you work with us to create a healthy, caring community, where everyone thrives.

To participate in this life-giving project, please visit **womenofoptions2022.ca** and give by clicking the donate button under one of our Women of Options.

Or call Ginny Hasselfield at **(604) 584-5811 Ext. 11312**.

Cheques can be made out to **Options Community Services**, with **WOO 2022** and **the name of the Woman of Options you're supporting** (if applicable) in the memo. Please mail your cheque to **Options Community Services, 9815 140th Street, Surrey B.C. V3T 4M4**.

Please give what you can. One-time donations and monthly pledges are welcome.

All gifts will be recognized unless made anonymously. Individual donors will receive a tax receipt upon donation.

Thank you for joining us in this crucial endeavour!



THANK YOU TO OUR

Women of Options



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To donate, please visit womenofoptions2022.ca and give by clicking the donate button under one of our Women of Options.

Both one-time donations and monthly pledges are welcome.

Give Online

womenofoptions2022.ca

By Phone

Call Ginny Hasselfield at
(604) 584-5811 Ext 11312

By Mail

To donate by mail, please make your cheque out to **Options Community Services**, with **WOO 2022** and the name of the **Woman of Options** you're supporting (if applicable) in the memo. Mail your cheque to:

Options Community Services
9815 140th Street, Surrey B.C. V3T 4M4

