

ELUCO ANNUAL REPORT 2019

In Archbishop Oscar Romero's Prayer: A Step Along the Way he says "This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, but there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well."

This prayer encapsulates the work of ELUCO. After 36 years the work is not complete but there have been milestones along the way. Hopefully it will not take that long to right the injustices faced by our brothers and sisters in the Marconi community and elsewhere in London and Canada. As we begin a new decade we can hope that the seeds we have planted within community will grow and prosper. In the last few years the ELUCO Memorial trust fund has provided monetary support to three young people who will be graduating from post-secondary institutions this spring as a Child and Youth Worker, Travel and Tourism Consultant and a Computer Games Designer. They are looking to find employment in their areas of expertise and are looking to give back to their community. ELUCO's programs and camping opportunities help to build the life skills necessary for young people such as these to pursue their dreams. This past summer Nancy (our community worker) sent children to Camp Kee-Mo-Kee, to Stevenson Camp and to Social Skills Camp. One of the Social Skills Junior leaders was from Marconi and one of our young people was a counsellor at Kee-Mo-Kee.

One of the highlights of the year was the acceptance of our three year grant application to the United Church Council of Middlesex Presbytery. This funding will allow Nancy to develop short, targeted, structured workshops to meet the expressed needs of individuals, children and families within the Marconi community. The goal of these workshops is to enable those involved to develop life skills that will encourage them to be independent, self-reliant, productive members of their community. As well we received funding to produce a short educational/promotional ELUCO video that will be used for multiple events. Nancy has been busy implementing literacy training for preschoolers plus their caregivers and for school age children. A new program for teenage girls highlights self-esteem and self-care issues. A phone photography initiative (because cell phones are more readily available than cameras) has been another popular new program with adults. The beauty of this course is that folks can use their newly acquired skills to relieve stress by themselves or in the company of others. Nancy has been taking anger management courses on line so she can soon lead another new program.

The Board held three successful fundraising events this year. The first was held at First-St. Andrews United Church on January 25th where attendees were treated to a Soup and Song Concert. Many thanks to the Mission and Outreach committee and Margo Christadoulou for producing the delicious soups-butternut squash, potato/leek, borscht and hamburger! The evening was rounded out with the beautiful music of Marty Kolls and Jenny Berkel. Thanks to all who made this evening memorable.

Our 6th annual Voices of Broadway fundraiser was held at Siloam United Church in early March. This dynamic group entertained attendees with their outstanding choral selections and their lively choreography. Special thanks to Siloam and its volunteers who were key to the success of this event.

September 29th dawned gray but dry for our annual Walk and Roll for Families in Springbank Park. Thanks to all who walked or rolled and all who supported them. This is by far our most successful fundraiser and we couldn't do it without everyone's continued support.

Food Cupboard

Each Wednesday and Friday from 9:00 am till noon a tireless group of volunteers show up at our Gethsemane Gardens Food Cupboard. They supply food to low income individuals and families who are not able to stretch their food budget any further. Smiles and warm greetings are the order of the day as they provide these folks with the groceries they need to feed themselves or their families. We extend a special thank you to the Sisters of St Joseph who provide funding for this initiative and to the churches that support us with gifts of food or money. We want to thank Sharon Ashton who grocery shops and transports all the food back to the food cupboard for our volunteers to shelve. This year the food cupboard served 507 families - 865 adults and 318 children, down slightly from 2018.

Welcome Wednesday

Last spring the Salvation Army notified us they would no longer be able to host Welcome Wednesday after the end of June. We thank them for their many years of support. We are so thankful that Rowntree United Church agreed to host the program starting in September. Initially the numbers were down but have steadily grown over the last few months. It has been a learning curve for our volunteers but made much easier by the support of members of Rowntree. This program provides a hot meal and an opportunity for social time. We are thankful to Valleyview Mennonite Church, Siloam United Church and ELUCO volunteers for providing and serving the meals each week. The first week of the month the Salvation Army provides donated Kentucky Fried Chicken that our volunteers serve. We average 50 to 60 participants/week with a number of new faces each week. A turkey dinner is served to everyone prior to Christmas and a picnic meal is served at the end of June to close the program.

In December we were saddened to learn that Mary Elliott had passed away. Mary was part of the founding ELUCO Board in 1984. She spent many hours working and advocating on behalf of ELUCO. She was a mentor to both Nancy and myself and we valued her support. If you needed somebody to do something you could always count on Mary. Thank you to her family for sharing her with us.

I would like to thank all our board members for their support and dedication to the ELUCO ministry. Your contributions are multi-faceted and they don't go unnoticed. The Board normally meets the first Wednesday of each month at 1:30 at Gethsemane Gardens.

At the heart of ELUCO is Nancy Howard our community worker. Committed, dedicated, compassionate, loving and loved, Nancy is the thread that joins the community and the Board. She spends countless hours supporting, advocating and listening non-judgementally to members of the Marconi community.