



# BELLWOODS COMMUNITY NEWS

WINTER EDITION 2024



## Happy 2024 everyone!

As we begin the year, we want to extend our appreciation to our incredible community.

**To our Clients:** Your stories and experiences drive us to work harder to expand and improve our programs, overcome barriers and build new collaborations to better meet your needs.

**To our Dedicated Staff:** Your dedication and teamwork continue to be the driving force behind our success.

**To our Board Members:** Your strategic guidance and ongoing commitment pave the path for our achievements.

**To our Donors & Partners:** Thank you for your support in helping us achieve our mission of fostering independent living through excellence and innovation.

The latest news,  
updates and  
announcements

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# ORGANIZATIONAL NEWS

## 877 Yonge Street Updates

Bellwoods has filled eight of the thirteen new accessible units at our new site at 877 Yonge Street. We have onboarded a new Supervisor, Support Service for Attendant Outreach (AO) Central including our new 877 Yonge Street. This new opportunity was made possible by our long-term partnership with St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society ("St. Clare's"). If you have any questions regarding this site or Attendant Outreach (AO) Central, please reach out to us at 416-696-9663.

## Transforming Lives Through Partnerships

In December 2023, Mayor Olivia Chow announced the opening of 220 new mixed affordable and supportive rental homes at Birchmount Green at 1236 Birchmount Road (intersection of Birchmount Road and Lawrence Avenue East). Bellwoods is pleased to be part of this new integrated community and is operating three (3) accessible one-bedroom units for clients with physical disabilities who require housing with supports.

For more details, visit: <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-announces-the-opening-of-220-new-mixed-affordable-and-supportive-rental-homes-in-scarborough/>



Photo credit:  
<https://www.mahoganymanagement.com/birchmountgreen>

# Staff Updates

Here are some updates on staff changes and activities:

- **Najmah Abdalla**, Independent Living Facilitator, joined us at the beginning of February. She brings vast experience in assessing individual service needs and identifying opportunities for service improvement.
- **Susan (Suzette) Hamilton**, Supervisor, Support Service for Attendant Outreach (AO) Central including our new 877 Yonge Street site joined us at the end of November 2023.
- **Harriet Jamieson**, is backfilling Ajit Prabhu, Director, Transitions & Community Partnerships during his vacation.
- **Gretzen Martelino**, Human Resources Coordinator, joined us earlier this month. She brings experience in day-to-day HR responsibilities including recruitment, payroll, and handling HR inquiries.
- **Daina Mitchell**, Supervisor, Support Services for Mimico and Sudbury Supportive Housing sites left Bellwoods in December.
- **Joana Nunes** returned from maternity leave and resumed her role as Manager, Service Excellence for the West Region. Welcome back Joana!
- **Sol Martinez** is continuing to support the Service Excellence and Innovation Team working on special projects.
- **Dolma Tsering**, Supervisor, Support Services, for Mimico and Sudbury Supportive Housing sites joined us at the beginning of February.
- **Denin Varikkassery**, is a postgraduate student in the George Brown College's Digital Media program and is completing a work practicum at Bellwoods. Denin will work with the Communications Team for four months as a Communications/Social Media Assistant.

WELCOME  
TO THE  
TEAM

## Board Members Announcement

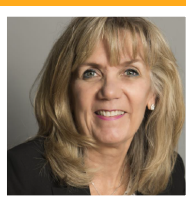
We want to extend a warm welcome to six new members who have joined the Bellwoods Board of Directors: **Angela Bonfanti**, **Stanley Makuch**, **Debbie McDonald**, **Nancy Polsinelli**, **Louise Stratford** and **Melissa Ying**. Visit our website to learn more about these individuals and the impressive set of skills and experience they bring to our Board.



Angela  
Bonfanti



Stanley  
Makuch



Debbie  
McDonald



Nancy  
Polsinelli



Louise  
Stratford



Melissa  
Ying

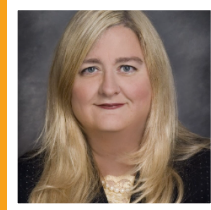


A formal orientation session was held for all Board members in January which included a tour of our Shaw and Dundas supportive housing sites. Members also had a chance to meet with Site Supervisors, the Manager of Procurement, Facilities & Special Projects, as well as some of the PSWs and clients from both locations. The clients shared their experiences living at Bellwoods and the impact our programs have on their lives. Staff shared their insights on their roles and the work of front-line staff.

We also want to thank Board Members who recently left the Board: **Tracy Brennan**, **Sandra Waechter**, and **Kate Wilkinson**. Each of these members played instrumental roles in helping to govern our organization during a difficult time.



Left to right:  
*Tracy Brennan,*  
*Sandra Waechter,* and  
*Kate Wilkinson*



## NEWS FOR CLIENTS

### Bellwoods' Client Town Halls

A reminder that Client Town Halls are pre-scheduled meetings that are convened and facilitated by clients for clients at the site level. These forums take place on an ad hoc basis and provide an opportunity for clients to raise site or community-specific issues and share ideas for change. Issues arising at these sessions can be shared with the Community Councils that report to Bellwoods' Community Advisory Council (BCAC). When meetings are held at your site, please consider attending. Your views and ideas are welcome and needed to help build a sense of community and support.

For more information on the Client Town Halls, you can reach out to the BCAC Co-Chair, Jenn Acton at [jennacton1981@gmail.com](mailto:jennacton1981@gmail.com)

#### Client Leads:

Each site has a client lead who has volunteered to arrange meetings, as required.

- Deauville - Teresa C.
- Walton - Jenn A.
- Dundas - Blair W. & Tara G.
- Shaw - Mike I.
- Elm - Evelyn G.
- Madison - Margaret C.
- Attendant Outreach - Martin A. & Kevin H.



**We're still looking  
for client leads at  
Mimico & Sudbury!  
If you are interested,  
please contact your  
Supervisor.**

# Update on the Bridging the Gap Fund (BTGF)

Support is still available through the Bridging the Gap Fund (BTGF) for Bellwoods' clients who need one-time support during periods of greater financial hardship and/or help with emergency expenses that cannot be funded through any other process. Over the last few months, a staff working group have reviewed previous requests for support from BTGF and have revised the application form and approval process in response to our learnings. More information on the fund is available on the website: <https://bellwoodscentres.org/support/bridging-the-gap/>

## Utilizing text blasts and QR codes in Communications

Bellwoods will be integrating new modes of communication to better support digital inclusivity. Based on the positive results of a small pilot program conducted at Shaw and Dundas that tested the use of text blasts, moving forward we will use text blasts as an additional communication channel when sharing information with clients. Clients will only receive texts related to events, organizational updates and other reminders. We respect your preferences, and clients have the option to "opt-out" of receiving text blasts via text from Bellwoods by replying to the text with STOP. Alternatively, you can contact Head Office at any time to opt out.

In addition to text blasts, we will be utilizing Quick Response (QR) codes in our communication materials. QR codes are two-dimensional barcodes that can be scanned with smart phones and other digital devices. QR codes enhance digital accessibility by making information more accessible to many individuals. It bridges the gap between the physical and digital worlds, making it easier for people with disabilities to access online resources. Please stay tuned for QR codes in our materials.

Example of QR Code



1

On your smartphone/device, open the built-in camera app.

2

Point the camera at the QR code.

3

Tap the link that appears on your device and it will take you to the resource.

You will need internet connection if the QR Code contains a URL (web address).

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### February is Black History & Heart and Stroke Month

February 10 – Lunar New Year  
February 12-16 – Non-profit Sector Appreciation Week  
February 14 – Valentine's Day  
February 12-17 – Random Acts of Kindness Week  
February 19 – Family Day – Public Holiday / Head Office Closure

#### March is Fraud Prevention, National Nutritional and National Social Work Month

March 4-8 – Social Work Week  
March 8 – International Women's Day  
March 12 – Daylight Saving Time  
March 17 – St. Patrick's Day  
March 10-April 9 – Ramadan  
March 29 – Good Friday  
March 31 – Easter

# Bellwoods Client Celebrated 100th Birthday



**Glenmore Henery**, a Bellwoods Client at Walton Supportive Housing Site, celebrated his 100th birthday on November 20, 2023 with his family and other residents at the site.

Glenmore passed away on December 28<sup>th</sup>. He joined the Bellwoods community in 2020 and will be fondly remembered by those who knew him for his soft-spoken nature and the sincere appreciation he expressed to everyone who supported him.

*Photo: (left to right) Marie Josee P., Jan M., Avis P., Glenmore H., Larry I., Abiola A., and Sacha H.*

## Self Defense Series

Vibrant Healthcare Alliance will be hosting P.O.W.E.R. "Play" - Personal Options with Empowering Results in-person workshop. It is a self defense strategy for six (6) weeks for people with or without disabilities.

**When:** Wednesday, March 13 – April 17, 2024

**Time:** 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Where:** Vibrant Healthcare Alliance at 2398 Yonge Street (Yonge and Eglinton)

Participants **MUST** commit to all sessions and complete a pre and post evaluation. Peer support groups/events operate under the Independent Living Environment and is committed to providing safe and inclusive spaces.

To register and book a pre-evaluation, contact Lucy at 416-486-8666 Ext. 226 or via email [lucyn@vibranthealthcare.ca](mailto:lucyn@vibranthealthcare.ca) Limited space.



**BELLWOODS**  
INNOVATING INDEPENDENCE

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Charity Registration #:

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This newsletter is produced by Bellwoods a charitable, not-for-profit organization headquartered in Toronto. Bellwoods provides housing, personal support and reintegration services to individuals with a broad range of disabilities and also provides transition programs and supports for clients transitioning from hospital and/or those at-risk of homelessness.

Electronic copies of this newsletter are available on our website <https://bellwoodscentres.org/about-us/publications/>  
See Publications > Newsletters.

For a printed copy and/or suggestion on content for future topics contact Anna Yip, Communications & Development Associate at 416-447-1168 or at [ayip@bcclsp.org](mailto:ayip@bcclsp.org)