



BELLWOODS COMMUNITY NEWS

WINTER 2025

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THE HEADLINES

Tell US Like It IS Client Survey

On Feb. 3, we launched our client experience survey! This short survey asks you about your opinions, ideas and experiences.

Haven't filled it out yet? The survey only takes 5-10 minutes. Your answers will help us make informed decisions so we can serve you better. Plus, when you finish the survey, you're entered to win a prize!



**Scan here to fill
out the survey!**

Updated Hygiene Policy

We recently updated our policy on hygiene guidelines for PSWs and other frontline staff. The policy now includes important details in the nails and jewellery section, ensuring the safety and health of both staff and clients.

The policy now states that any staff person providing direct client care must maintain short, clean nails without any polish or extensions. Frontline staff are also prohibited from wearing jewellery on their hands and arms (other than a plain smooth ring with no stones).

Staff will have until March 31, 2025 to adapt to these updates, at which point they will be enforced.

Recording Policy Reminder

Bellwoods recognizes that clients and visitors may wish to make photo, audio or video recordings during service delivery or on Bellwoods' property for personal use.

As a reminder, Bellwoods has a Client and Visitor Recording Policy. The policy outlines that you can only record at Bellwoods after getting the express consent of the person being recorded, whether that is a staff member, other clients or a visitor. If a person, such as a PSW, does not give you permission to record, you cannot record. Staff may leave if you do not follow the policy.

Please contact Constantine Simpson at csimpson@bcclsp.org if you have questions.

CLIENT VOICES

Advocacy in Action

The Bellwoods Community Advisory Council represents the voices of all clients. Together, they advocate for people with physical disabilities both in Toronto and beyond.

Jenn Acton, a Walton Place client and devoted member of BCAC, recently volunteered her time and expertise to champion a project that will bring more affordable, accessible housing to the GTA.



BCAC member Jenn Acton advocated for more accessible, affordable housing in Scarborough alongside Bellwoods partner, St. Clare's.

Jenn spoke at the Scarborough Committee of Adjustment meeting, supporting St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society's appeal to construct a new building with 45 accessible units. A Bellwoods partner, St. Clare's plans to provide Bellwoods with access to 25 of those units.

"I spoke on behalf of individuals facing poverty who really need this to improve their quality of life," said Jenn.

The committee approved the project with a vote of four to one. St. Clare's CEO, who also attended the meeting, later shared that Jenn's involvement was vital to this positive result. The project architect even described Jenn's speech as a "mic drop moment."

This is just one example of the meaningful advocacy work our clients are spearheading as part of BCAC. "For me it felt like a good motivator — a reminder that the efforts we put in can actually make a difference," said Jenn. "We can make a difference; even one person."

Support the Canada Disability Benefit

Your Bellwoods Community Advisory Council is asking for your help to make sure the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) moves forward.

Last year, the Government of Canada passed a new law to create the CDB — a program that plans to give up to \$200 per month to eligible working-age Canadians with disabilities.

However, the government has not finished the regulations for CDB. Disability communities across Canada are asking the government to finalize the benefit before a federal election is called. Add your voice to this cause. **Scan the QR code to sign the petition!**



The petition asks the Canadian government to pass the CDB regulations and make sure the first payments go out on July 1, 2025 as promised.

STAFFING NEWS

New Team Members

Meet the admin staff who joined Bellwoods over the last few months.



Tosha Jones, Supervisor, Service Coordination

Tosha oversees the Service Coordination and After Hours Team. She brings over 20 years of experience in the medical and client care fields.



Tracy Odion, Supervisor, Support Services

Tracy oversees Deauville and Walton Place. She brings experience in healthcare administration, case management and staff leadership.



Brendan McClement, Director, IT

Brendan recently moved from a consultant role to our full-time IT Director. With over 10 years in the field, Brendan is a proven expert in cutting-edge IT strategies.



Anna Schmidt, Communications and Development Specialist

With 10 years of experience in communications and storytelling, Anna will be sharing messages that matter with you.



Erica Mothersole, Community Integration Worker

As a CIW, Erica helps clients access resources, support services and social opportunities, enhancing independence.



Soo Jung Lee, Supervisor, Support Services

Soo joined Bellwoods in December to oversee Dundas. A registered practical nurse, Soo brings extensive experience across multiple health-care settings.

Staff Announcements

Susan Andrew, VP Corporate Services and Support, will be departing Bellwoods at the end of March. Susan has been an integral part of our organization for 30 years, serving as both VP, Client Services and in her current role. She has also stepped in several times to lead the organization as interim Chief Executive Officer. It is difficult to capture just how much Susan has contributed to Bellwoods and how deeply she will be missed.

Moving forward, we have decided to transform Susan's position into a new role titled Vice President, People, Culture and Operations. We have engaged BIPOC Executive Search to support us in searching for a new leader to join our team. We hope to have someone in place by May 2025 and will keep you up to date.

Eva Chang, Occupational Therapist and Independent Living Facilitator, left the organization for new opportunities on Feb. 7. Her dedication to working closely with clients, their families and our multidisciplinary team has been invaluable. She will certainly be missed by her colleagues and the many clients she has supported.

Jorge Ortega, a contract tenancy assistant at Dundas, left Bellwoods in December. Jorge supported clients in signing new tenancy agreements.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Celebrating Black History Month: Eva's Story

For Eva Lumley, the month of February will forever evoke the sites and smells of her grandmother's kitchen in the coastal town of Savanna la Mar, Jamaica.

Every year, her grandmother would scour the house, visit the butchers and start cooking—serving dish after dish piled high with local ingredients, from tropical fruit to fresh-caught fish.

"She would do this for a whole week. And the whole community would know when she was doing it," says Eva, a personal support worker in Bellwoods' Attendant Outreach program. "You could come in and eat anything you wanted. And people who couldn't come, she would send food for them."

For Eva's grandmother, celebrating Black history was about caring for her community. In fact, sharing food and resources was built into the culture of Eva's entire family. She, along with her mother, father and nine siblings, lived on one large property with dozens of extended family members. Every evening, they would gather under the shade of a towering tamarind tree to share dinner at a banquet table handcrafted by her grandfather.

Growing up in this communal environment, Eva felt drawn to work in a profession where she could connect with and take care of people.

Now, as a personal support worker with Bellwoods' Attendant Outreach program, Eva supports individuals with disabilities to remain independent. She visits clients' homes to help with physical care and light housework, enabling them to continue living in their communities. Next year, Eva will celebrate 20 years at Bellwoods.

Nearly two decades in, Eva says her favourite part of the job is still the relational aspect. "I like working with people."

Outside of work, Eva travels regularly to her family property in Savanna la Mar, where she visits with loved ones, swims in the ocean and shares traditional meals with family.

Back in Toronto, Eva finds small ways to stay connected to home. At the grocery store, she stocks up on avocados, oranges and tangerines. She hosts relatives who have also immigrated to Canada. And, while miles away from her grandmother's kitchen, she recreates the aromas of her childhood by cooking ackee and saltfish, Jamaica's national dish.

Ultimately, for Eva, celebrating Black history means remembering her personal history and using her energy to care for others. "It is very important to know my roots."

SHARE YOUR STORY

Bellwoods is looking for more opportunities to tell our community stories — whether that's client experiences or staff contributions! If you have a story to share, contact Anna Schmidt, Communications and Development Specialist, at aschmidt@bccfsp.org or 416-949-1768.

EVENTS

February is Black History Month

Every year, people across the country recognize the contributions of Black Canadians and their communities as part of Black History Month. The theme for this year is: “Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and Uplifting Future Generations.”

Check out what’s happening around Toronto:

- **Sojourn**, Feb 1-26, Cedar Ridge Creative Centre (FREE): *Experience the joy in The Flying Bushman’s (Boloebi Okah) paintings, where his Nigerian heritage comes alive*
- **KUUMBA30**, Feb. 1-28, Harbourfront Centre: *A month-long celebration featuring dance, music, workshops, film screenings and more*
- **Canadian Cyphers: Elements of Toronto Hip-Hop Exhibition**, Feb. 3-28, City of Toronto Archives (FREE): *Glimpse the many music greats who have built the Toronto hip-hop scene by exploring album covers, photographs, turntables and more*

Feb. 23 - Laughs Without Limits

Laughs Without Limits is a regular stand-up event featuring comedians with disabilities! On Feb. 23, 2025, the show returns to Comedy Bar Danforth, featuring Bellwoods’ very own community member, Blair.



Scan the QR code to learn more and get your ticket. Missed this event? Keep an eye on the Comedy Bar website for more shows.

March is Nutrition Month

The theme for this year’s Nutrition Month is Nourish to Flourish. This theme highlights the important connection between food and overall well-being. Nutrition plays a role in mental health, emotional resilience and fostering social connections.

As you prepare for March, think about ways you can nourish your body with healthy, balanced food.

Bellwoods Head Office

3 Concorde Gate, Suite 200
Toronto, ON. M3C 3N7
T: 416-696-9663
F: 416-696-9481
E: news@bcclsp.org
Charity Registration #:
10807 0665RR 0001

Since our inception over 65 years ago, Bellwoods has supported adults with disabilities to continue living in and contributing to their diverse communities in and around Toronto. We provide affordable, accessible housing, personal support and reintegration services for clients transitioning from hospital and those at risk of homelessness. We are a charitable not-for-profit.

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