



MEDIA RELEASE

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OTF Helps The Journey Serve Brampton Digitally

Brampton, ON – Like many community outreach centres, The Journey Neighbourhood Centre was severely impacted by COVID-19. The pandemic hit Brampton particularly hard, which meant The Journey had to suspend almost all onsite programming just when its services were needed most. To help adapt its outreach for online delivery, The Journey received a \$28,000 Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) in 2021. This grant supported the three most important components of The Journey's online work: hiring a part-time media specialist, purchasing production equipment and opening online media channels.

"Non-profit organizations like The Journey Neighbourhood Centre are a vital part of our community, especially here in Brampton," said Prabmeet Sarkaria, President of the Treasury Board of Ontario and Member of Provincial Parliament for Brampton South. "During the pandemic they have continued to provide valuable services to the community. The Journey Neighbourhood Centre is committed to bringing hope and transformation to their community, walking beside the children, youth and families as they take positive steps in their lives."

The Journey's outreach focuses on the issues facing its neighbours: precarious employment, housing, food security, children's education, safety and mental health. Moving programming online was a significant challenge, since the organization's only online presence was via Facebook and rarely-used Twitter, YouTube and Instagram accounts. The newly-hired media specialist set up a small video studio at The Journey, signed up for streaming and media creation accounts, updated inactive social media pages and – most importantly – started generating online content.

Through this initiative, The Journey has reached its neighbours and addressed community challenges with original videos, podcasts, online townhalls, and frequently-updated social media accounts. The organization's Instagram page has been particularly successful; over the past year, the account increased its follower base by over 60 per cent and reached over 800 unique users.

"Closing our doors to onsite programming had a significant impact on The Journey's ability to address the needs in our community," said Kevin Birmingham, manager of The Journey. "The grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation gave us the ability to provide vital information to our community in a timely manner and at a quality level we could not have achieved on our own."

Going forward, The Journey will continue to serve the community through social media – even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The part-time media specialist will be retained through a future grant, and new projects for 2022 are already underway.

The Journey is committed to bringing hope and transformation to the Ardglen/Orenda communities, walking alongside children, youth and families as they take positive steps in their lives. We do this through offering a wide variety of programming including: children's after school programs, women's programs, hosting other organizations' programs, conducting relevant seminars and running community events. During the pandemic, as well as pivoting to provide online programs and resources, we distributed food and grocery cards to families in our neighbourhood.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario's economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit [otf.ca](https://www.otf.ca) to learn more.

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