

FEBRUARY 2024

Black History Month

February 2 - Groundhog Day

February 3 - Setsubun-sai
(Shinto)

February 10 - Chinese New
Year (Confucian, Daoist,
Buddhist), Lunar New Year

February 13 - Shrove Tuesday
(Christian)

February 14 - Valentine's Day

February 19 - Family Day

February 20 - World Day of
Social Justice (UN)

February 21 - International
Mother Language Day (UN)

February 22 - Ash Wednesday
(Lent Begins) (Christian)

February 24 - Magha Puja
Day (Buddhism)

February 29 - Leap Year Day

HSH CELEBRATES 20



Home Suite Hope is celebrating its **20th anniversary** in 2024. On January 15, HSH reached the milestone and is asking the community and its supporters to join in celebrating with \$20 for 20. *Find out more inside...*

CALLING ON LANDLORDS

Home Suite Hope is looking to partner with **local landlords** – buildings or garden suites - to be the lessee on a long-term rental agreement to house single parent families in its four-year housing/ educational/employment Homeward Bound Halton program.

To explore this further, please contact **HSH Executive Director Sara Cumming** at sarac@homesuitehope.org.

ATTENTION!

Are you a landlord with any available unit/s at affordable rates?

PARTICIPANT UPDATE

THE IMPACT OF HOUSING

Hello, my name is Daliah and this little ball of energy beside me is my amazing two-year-old son, fondly nicknamed Ocean. As a single parent, I've taken on the role of caregiver, provider, and nurturer for my son. Our journey has had its challenges, but it's also been incredibly rewarding as we navigate life together.



The stigma surrounding single parents can be quite pervasive. Society often holds misconceptions and preconceived notions about our circumstances. It's essential to recognize that single parents come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The stigma can lead to feelings of isolation, judgment, and inadequacy, making it harder for us to access the support we need.

One common misconception about single parents, especially single moms, is that they might be less capable of providing a stable and nurturing environment for their children. This couldn't be further from the truth. Single parents are resilient, resourceful, and deeply committed to their children's well-being.

Affordable housing holds significant importance for single parent families like ours. It's more than just a place to live; it's a foundation for stability. Having access to safe, affordable housing means we can focus on other aspects of our lives, such as education, career growth, and personal development, without the constant financial stress of housing costs.

An affordable housing unit would open up avenues for us to create a more stable future. It would provide a secure home base from which I could pursue my career, further my education, and save for our future. This stability would allow me to allocate resources toward my son's education, extracurricular activities, and experiences that contribute to his holistic development.

Unfortunately, finding affordable housing as a single parent can be incredibly challenging. Many factors contribute to this difficulty, including limited availability of affordable units, high demand, and the financial strain of being a sole provider. In addition to rent, there are numerous other significant expenses single parents must cover alone, such as childcare, healthcare, education, and daily living costs. This financial strain can make it hard to make ends meet, leading to a cycle of financial stress.

A PARTICIPANT'S PERSPECTIVE

DALIAH'S MESSAGE:

Access to safe, affordable housing indeed enables us to focus on other areas of development. When we have a stable place to call home, it relieves the burden of constantly worrying about our living situation.

This stability allows us to allocate our energy towards personal growth, building skills, pursuing education, and seeking career opportunities that can break the cycle of poverty. The community support of the Affordable Housing Campaign is invaluable. It signifies that our society acknowledges the challenges single parents face and is willing to provide a helping hand.

The campaign's efforts can lead to real change in our lives by not only offering affordable housing options but also fostering a sense of community and empowerment. Knowing that we have support from the community enables us to build legacies of empowered prosperity for ourselves and our children. It paves the way for us to break down barriers, achieve our dreams, and show the world that single parents are capable of remarkable achievements when given the opportunity and support they deserve. Thank you for your support of Home Suite Hope and families like mine.

Daliah, Home Suite Hope participant

CALL TO ACTION

HSH's single parent families need your help. HSH is putting out a **Call to Action** for **grocery and gas gift card** donations. HSH provides wrap-around support that includes the provision of grocery and gas gift cards, which are much needed especially with inflation. Please consider donating through [CanadaHelps](#). HSH uses the funds to purchase gift cards, those for Metro and Walmart being the most used. **Thank you!**



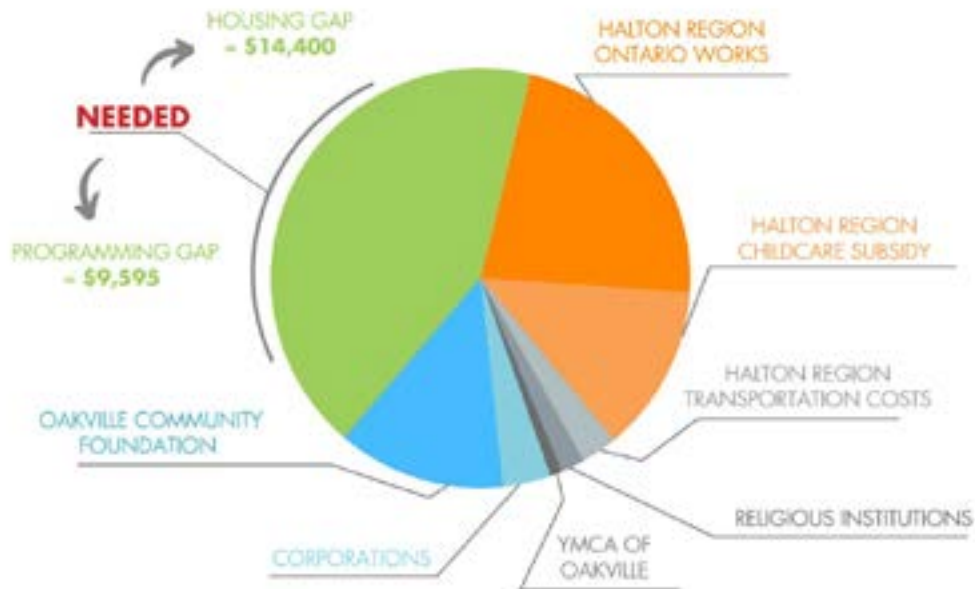
SMLS ANSWERS

St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School's Grads Giving Back is excited to run an initiative, with the 'Self-love' theme. The group is working in conjunction with SMLS' Jack.org Club to run a drive to collect women's hygiene and make-up items to donate to Home Suite Hope. The initiative runs the week of Valentine's Day. Thank you!



ST. MILDRED'S-LIGHTBOURN SCHOOL
INSPIRED GIRLS. EMPOWERED WOMEN.

THE PARTNERS IN CHANGE CAMPAIGN



WHAT WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH TODAY

\$9,595 PER FAMILY PER YEAR TO SPONSOR PROGRAMMING FOR A HOME SUITE HOPE FAMILY

\$14,400 PER FAMILY PER YEAR TO SPONSOR HOUSING FOR A HOME SUITE HOPE FAMILY

PARTNERS IN CHANGE FOR HOUSING

Launched at the Home for Good Gala, HSH's new **Partners in Change for Housing** campaign provides community members the opportunity to sponsor one of our families by supporting the gap that exists in their rental costs for a year.

WHAT WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH:

\$14,400 PER FAMILY PER YEAR TO SPONSOR A HOME SUITE HOPE FAMILY

To sponsor the rental gap for a family or for more information, please contact Sara at SaraC@HomeSuiteHope.org or 289.213.5787 (direct line)



CELEBRATE HSH'S 20TH WITH \$20

Home Suite Hope is proud to celebrate 20 years of helping change the trajectory of poverty and homelessness. Thank you for your support and trust in our services for the many single parent families who have walked through our doors.

The community has played a pivotal role in making sure our organization has the means to allow our services to grow. This milestone would not be possible without your support. We send a heartfelt thank you to all those who have supported us throughout the years and we look forward to continuing to serve the community for many years to come.

To celebrate this milestone, we are asking our supporters to make a donation of \$20 (\$1 for each year HSH has been operating).
\$20 for our 20th anniversary

Today, HSH continues to help single parents on their journey from poverty to stability: empowering single parents, one family at a time.

Join us at Home Suite Hope

[**DONATE**](#)

HSH ED CONTEMPLATES 2024

A LETTER FROM SARA

Home Suite Hope works to change the trajectory of people's lives by disrupting generational poverty at its roots. We do this by offering a helping hand up to homeless single parent led families; wrapping all necessary and individualized services around each family to ensure that they obtain the tools necessary to become self-sufficient.

Our programming works from a Housing First principle, that is an understanding that individuals need a safe and secure roof over their heads before they can start working through the myriad of barriers that may be preventing self-sufficiency.

All participants are granted a housing subsidy, take part in a full year of life skills training and are connected to supports ranging from foodbanks, counselling and childcare to referrals to other services.

Participants who have the aptitude and attitude are provided with full scholarships to attend two-year diploma programs at Sheridan College. They are provided with transportation and book costs as well as one-to-one mentorship by female leaders at Sheridan.

During this time the participants take part in professional development workshops and work with our Industry Council to become job ready. Once the participants obtain employment, we begin to scale back services until they are fully self-sufficient.

It is to no surprise that learning to live in a pandemic and dealing with the aftermath of it has been a huge curveball throwing new stressors at our participants and causing brutal and unrelenting inflation on basic needs and rental prices.

Despite these challenges, our participants persevere and continue to show strength and resilience! Through our programs, we have been able to house 100% of participants upon entering the program from a state of homelessness or precarious housing situations. Seventy-six percent of graduates are working full-time in their field of study just after completing their postsecondary education at Sheridan College with an average income of \$45,694 per year.

Upon exiting, 90 percent of participants remained housed and are able to handle market rate rent. This is what stopping generational reliance on social assistance looks like!

None of this would be possible without the community wrapping their arms around our organization.



FROM THE DESK OF THE ED

A LETTER FROM SARA

The impact of our organization is dependent upon not only our amazing community partners (**Halton Region, Sheridan College, Oakville Community Foundation, YMCA of Oakville, Food For Life**) but also heavily dependent upon all of our corporate and individual donors. As a not-for-profit, all of our programming is dependent on a combination of government grants, service clubs, foundations, faith-based grants, fundraising events, corporate and individual donations.

As we strategically plan and budget to allocate funds to our programs and families, we are keenly aware of the difficulties that high rates of inflation will bring to our organization. We are hoping that the champions that have invested into building a better community will continue to support us as we help all our families end their cycle of poverty. We also understand that not everyone is in the position to give financially, but still want to get involved in other ways. **The Ways of Giving to HSH** newsletter has been written to showcase all the ways that you can support the work that we do at Home Suite Hope.

From weekly, to monthly or annual automated donations, to corporate sponsorships, or becoming a partner in change and sponsoring one family through their journey. Or perhaps you have experience with event planning, employment and support connections, or expertise in the field, which are needed on committees like the Industry Council or Board of Director committees, or willing to simply connect us to other resources and networks. Every connection and contribution, whether big or small, helps us reach our annual goals and continue to help single parents permanently change their lives for the better.

On behalf of Home Suite Hope, I thank you for all the support and kindness you share with us. In deepest gratitude,

Sara Cumming, PhD
HSH Executive Director



WAYS OF GIVING 2024

Home Suite Hope helps move single parents and their families from homelessness and poverty to stability through education and employment.

Please find out more about HSH and how you can get involved through

[**Ways of Giving 2024**](#)

HSH BOARD UPDATES

INDUSTRY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE NEW TO THE HSH BOARD



Valerie Del Hierro, who was on Home Suite Hope's Industry Council, joined the HSH Board of Directors in January.

Val is currently the Vice President of Sales Strategy & Planning for Irving Consumer Products (with brands that include Royale Tissue and Tiger Towels). She has been with Irving since 2021, when she joined as the Sr. Director of Sales leading their business with Loblaws.

Prior to Irving, Val spent 17 years with PepsiCo where she worked across all key businesses (Frito Lay, Quaker, Pepsi, Tropicana and Gatorade).

Val has held roles in Sales, Category Management, Shopper Marketing and Corporate Strategy. Her favourite roles have been when she gets to chart new paths as companies enter new businesses or find new ways of doing things.

Val is passionate about ongoing development for herself and others. She believes in building companies that empower women & men to be their professional and personal best. She was a founding member of PepsiCo Women's Inclusion Network and a Council Member from 2009-2017. At Irving, she is excited to be the Co-Founder of WIND (Women Inspiring a Network of Development) which launched in 2023. She was also a Lead for the Catalyst Mentoring program at PepsiCo where she guided groups of Peer Mentors.

Val's house is a busy one, with her husband, three children and two dogs. They love to travel together, or just curl up for a family movie night. When she needs some time to herself, Val enjoys running, is trying to get stronger with weights and she simply devours books.

JOIN THE HSH BOARD

HSH Board members are volunteers who share their expertise on the Board to guide HSH as it supports single parents on their journey from poverty to stability.

If you'd like to join the HSH Board, please visit www.HomeSuiteHope.org for the application form or reach out to info@homesuitehope.org.

HSH STAFF NEWS:

CONGRATULATIONS SARA!

The release of Sara's third book, ***Sociology Unlocked***, reminds us all how lucky we are to have her at the helm of **Home Suite Hope**.

We often showcase Sara's work in the community, making it easy for many to forget that her first love is academia and that she also has a full and rewarding career at **Sheridan College**, where she gives the same passion and soul she does to our participants to her students.



An engaging new introduction presents sociological concepts in easy-to-understand, relatable, and practical terms - with just the right amount of depth.

Sara received her PhD in Sociology and Legal Studies from the **University of Waterloo** and has been teaching post-secondary for 18 years, the last 10 as a **Professor of Sociology** at Sheridan College.

COMING SOON!



Sociology Unlocked

Professor Sara Cumming is often referred to as the 'ism' prof as she teaches all kinds of courses on intersecting inequalities (sexism, racism, heterosexism, ablism, Islamophobia and classism) and is course lead for Introduction to Sociology and for her brand-new class Working with No Pants: Navigating Workspaces and Places post-2020.

It was her love of introducing students to the discipline of sociology that led her to writing (now two) introductory textbooks. She states that she knows how important sociology is to our world, and that it can offer students tools to understand their own advantages/disadvantages and to be

able to critically dissect their own attitudes and behaviours.

However, most textbooks are dry and theoretical. They do not hold the students' attention enough to get them to engage with the actual material. In an effort to do better, Sara engaged with students across the post-secondary sector to better understand what would work for them.

In the end, ***Sociology Unlocked*** has become a sought-after textbook used across the sector in both colleges and universities across Canada due to its "authentic, real world application", "concrete examples and hands-on activities" and "its relatability to students' life experience and current public issues" (Reviewer feedback).

HSH STAFF NEWS:

SARA HAS A PASSION TO HELP OTHERS

In addition to writing textbooks, Sara has over 30 publications in academic journals. Sara has also held over \$2 million dollars in research funding to complete community-based research.

Sara is currently finishing two of these projects this summer; **The Community Ideas Factory: The Life Skills Project** is a three-year research project with 16 not-for-profits across Halton and neighbouring communities co-creating a shared, client-centric, EDI-informed, virtual life skills curriculum.

Youth at Works-Kenya: TVET 14: Thematic Partnership on Gender Equality Policies and Training is also a three-year project in collaboration with Niagara College and 26 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers across Kenya. This project aimed to support Kenya in their gender mainstreaming goals of having more women graduate from post-secondary institutions. Although Sara is looking forward to wrapping up these projects, she is collaborating on another funded project that is just launching focused on food security amongst older adults with partners from Sheridan and across the not-for-profit sector.

And, if this isn't enough, Sara also serves as an internal governor on **Sheridan College's Board of Governors** and sits on the **Research Ethics Board**.

When anyone asks Sara how or why she does all of these things in addition to her role at Home Suite Hope she always answers the same—her goal is to help as many people as she can in this world in any way that she has the capacity to do so. This requires her to stay relevant and to understand the myriad of ways that our lives are impacted by social forces.

Join us in congratulating Sara on yet another accomplishment in this journey.



WAY TO GO JOVELLE

Jovelle Reid, who joined HSH as **Program Coordinator** in late 2023, recently received her registration as a Social Service Worker from the **Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW)**. Congratulations, Jovelle!



HSH STAFF NEWS

CATHERINE IN THE SPOTLIGHT



HSH Director of Operations **Catherine Villasenor** was featured in Halton Region's January edition of its *Housing and Homelessness Bulletin*.

The feature story speaks to Catherine's personal history, educational background, her commitment to and pride in HSH.



WELCOME CASSANDRA!



HSH welcomed Sheridan College Social Service Worker (SSW) intern Cassandra Charles to the team in January and staff and participants look forward to working with Cassandra during her internship, which is to continue through August.

I am super excited to be a part of the Home Suite Hope family as a new practicum student from the Social Service Worker program at **Sheridan College**. I am an outgoing but shy individual, who comes from a mostly Indigenous background with a little European in there. I have also played soccer my whole life, as it is one of my biggest passions.

I am all about hearing people's stories and keeping an open mind to life's journey and providing the best-case management support to HSH families. I absolutely can't wait to bring my experiences, compassion and dedication to this wonderful community, working with the amazing staff and clients and making an impact. I look forward to meeting and connecting with you all!

HSH: FUNDING WRAP

WATCH FOR US AROUND TOWN

HSH purchased a vehicle at the end of 2023 thanks to an **Ontario Trillium Foundation** grant.

The \$58,500 capital grant addresses a community need as it helped HSH purchase a truck to offer enhanced program and service capacity and delivery to the single parent families we serve.

Early in 2024 the truck was 'wrapped' in HSH's logo and contact information thanks to the talents of **Alex Kolisnyk and Wrapt Graphics**. Watch for us around the region!



Whether it be donations or our annual campaigns, HSH was challenged when it came to donations and deliveries - depending on staff or community volunteers. This vehicle is now to be used to accept donated furniture and housewares, move equipment and materials to and from community and/or fundraising events, transport fresh produce from the community garden to HSH families - and more. This OTF Capital grant will allow HSH to divert furniture, food and gently-used items from landfill, allowing HSH to better engage with donors and help create homes our families can be proud of and deserve to raise their children in.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. OTF invests in community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector.



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Together, we can transform patterns of poverty into legacies of empowered prosperity.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

HSH AT WORK IN HALTON



TAX CLINIC WORKSHOP

HOME SUITE HOPE

Join us for our first Life Skills Workshop of the 2024 year! With tax season upon us, Home Suite Hope will be hosting a tax filing workshop in partnership with Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre (OPNC) led by Sue Vernon-Smith. Attendees will learn the benefits of filing taxes, tax return deadlines, how to access their CRA account and the process to file their taxes through OPNC's free tax clinic!

PLEASE REGISTER BY FEB 1ST

THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 8TH, 2024
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Home Suite Hope Office
484 Kerr St,
Oakville, ON

Light refreshments will be provided

To attend, please register at
joveller@homesuitehope.org.

Visit our Social Media for more information:
@homesuitehope | @homesuitehope
Home Suite Hope
Home Suite Hope Shared Living Corp.

COMMUNITY TAX CLINIC

Join Home Suite Hope's first Life Skills workshop of 2024! HSH is hosting its annual Tax Clinic workshop in partnership with **Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre (OPNC)** led by **Sue Vernon-Smith** on Thursday, Feb. 8, 2024, from 1-2:30 pm at the Home Suite Hope office in Oakville.

This workshop will cover the benefits of filing taxes, tax return deadlines, different ways to file your return, how to access your CRA account and the process to file your taxes with OPNC's free Tax Clinic.

Hurry to register **today**. Please email joveller@homesuitehope.org to register.

APPLICATIONS WELCOME

Home Suite Hope is welcoming new applicants. Are you, or do you know someone, who could benefit from our programming?

HSH is a long-time Halton charity that helps single parents who are low income earners, in precarious housing or facing homelessness stabilize in housing, obtain a post-secondary education and gain employment to become self-sufficient in providing for their children. If you are a community agency worker please think about potential clients for referral. We accept applications year-round.

Visit HomeSuiteHope.org for the Stabilizing First Application and Consent Form. All completed forms must be submitted by email to: HousingStabilityFund@Halton.ca Please include the subject line: "Attention: Home Suite Hope Application"



HSH IN THE COMMUNITY

SARA SPEAKS TO ROTARY

Home Suite Hope Executive Director Sara Cumming recently represented HSH in a speaking engagement at the Rotary Club of Oakville Trafalgar.

Sara was invited to address club members at Mo's Family Restaurant Jan. 25 where she spoke about the importance of programs like those offered by Home Suite Hope and access to affordable housing.



Sara joined club members celebrating Robbie Burns Day with bagpipe music, a reading of Burns' poetry and a presentation of the traditional Haggis for lunch.

HSH IN THE MEDIA

Home Suite Hope was in the media spotlight as **Best Side Magazine** - Jan/Feb 2024 Edition published on Dec. 28, 2023 by Preferred Publishing focused on a feature about HSH's **Home For Good Gala** held Nov. 10, 2023 at **The Pearle Hotel & Spa** in Burlington.

[Check out the article](#)

[Home For Good Photo Album](#)



HSH IN THE COMMUNITY

PARTNERS IN CHANGE SUCCEED

Home Suite Hope Executive Director Sara Cumming and HSH graduate Melissa Filice (pictured together at the Sheridan College graduation ceremony last June) were at St. Jude's Anglican Church on Sunday, January 25 to share with the congregation gratitude for being the very first Partner in Change to follow a participant all the way through the four years of the Homeward Bound Halton program. Melissa personally shared her progress and thanks. Partners in Change contribute the annual shortfall in funding needed to support a participant annually. That annual shortfall now sits at \$9,595.



Later in the week, Sara was joined by HSH Program Manager Nikkian Hanson-Daley and Caseworker Haley Weber at a community partnership lunch where St. Jude's representatives discussed the importance of lending a helping hand

to those struggling in the community and showcased community partnership where not-for-profits like HSH and St. Jude's work together to make a difference.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING MATTERS

Home Suite Hope was among other local non-profit housing organizations invited January 23 to attend an announcement by Milton Mayor Gord Krantz, federal Housing Minister Sean Fraser and Milton MP Adam van Koeverden announcing Accelerator Funding for Milton. HSH Executive Director Sara Cumming said HSH is "thrilled there will be growth in affordable housing."



A federal, town government partnership in Milton will build 800 homes in the next three years, with a focus on affordable housing and increasing rental housing as the Town of Milton fast-tracks the building of the homes thanks to \$22 million from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Housing Accelerator Fund.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

DONORS & SUPPORTERS

100 WOMEN WHO CARE BURLINGTON

Sara Cumming, HSH's Executive Director, was honoured to attend the **100 Women Who Care Burlington 10th anniversary** January 17.



Sara was among many special guests helping to celebrate the milestone at a gathering that included the many organizations, including Home Suite Hope, that have been supported by 100 Women Who Care Burlington - and which featured Burlington's Town Crier. HSH is working to help single parents change the trajectory of poverty and homelessness through stable housing, education and employment.

THANK YOU

Catherine Villasenor, HSH's Director of Operations, recently represented HSH as **Oxygen Yoga and Fitness Oakville** and **Little Yogis/Busy Minds Halton** held a Women's Circle event in support of HSH. Attendees gathered to connect, breathe, move and share.

HSH is grateful to the organizers for choosing to support HSH through their initiative.



Sheridan



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CHANGING THE PATTERNS OF POVERTY TO A LEGACY OF PROSPERITY