

I am sitting here on my porch at my cottage writing my last board address to
And still, here we are three months later and here we wait. Waiting for this unsettling dream to
be over with and to see how this new normal unfolds.

It has been hard to write this address as this current situation seems to colour all the other
things that we have in our lives at the moment however, Covid aside let's look back at what a
tremendous year we had.

While 2018 was a year where we were able to grow and develop our overall programmes
thanks to research and focus groups, 2019 and was our year to work on overall team growth
and organizational structure.

Staff took advantage of the many leadership training and personal development courses being
offered through such local organizations as Eagles Flight and Charity Village and the board took
an on-line course through Charity Village on clearly defining roles and responsibilities of a board
member.

Joanne Grodzinski led us through a board development day last October where we had round
table discussions on organizational structure and strategies and corporate fundraising plans
putting us in good shape going forward.

Everyone on the team brought their "A" game this past year. We added numbers both in staff
and on the board this year bringing broad and diverse experiences and I am continually amazed
by the talent, dedication and passion that everyone brings to Community of Hearts on a daily
basis.

I feel we established ourselves as a true team this year working seamlessly to build a trusting
and transparent relationship between board, staff and volunteers. I cannot impress upon how
important it is to continue to trust and respect one another's abilities and experiences and to
keep lines of communication open. This will continue to be vitally important as we grow. It
will keep us strong and united as an organization and with the strength of this team, there is no
obstacle that we can't overcome.

Committees continued to develop and grow this past year with the most notable being Social
Enterprise. New community connections were made year which increased opportunities for
our participants both in learning new skills and potential work outside the centre. We have
seen such confidence in this group of individuals and I look forward to seeing this growth
continue to unfold when we get back up and running and when we can continue to develop our
creation station and community partners such as Sweet Temptations and J.O.E. Coffee.

I would be remiss if I did not reflect on our current year.

The middle of March set us all back on our heels wondering if we would be closing our doors
for good and what our chance of survival would be.

With that said, I just simply don't have the words to express how I feel about this team.

Without any pre-existing on-line programming, each every day since the staff have brought forth new and innovative ideas and an energy level and enthusiasm that I am not sure how you have been able to maintain given these times. You prove time and time again how you hold our population dear in your hearts and continue to put their wellness first. Behind the scenes staff have been equally committed and right there alongside keeping things humming along and staying up to date on new information and how it relates to our organization. This board has also been right there, lending expertise and knowledge and making difficult decisions on how we move forward and stay on track for a re-opening.

Personally, I try hard not to be disappointed in leaving this organization during these trying times. I would have loved to see our grow grant submitted, our dinner dance take place, our Memorial fund get announced and our video get produced. However, I know I leave it in good and very capable hands. I look around the table and I see incredible passion and talent in the staff, board members and volunteers, and I know that we will be just fine. We will be more than just fine actually and I look forward with baited breath to see the new heights that Community of Hearts soars to.

As you move forward without me, I would like to leave you with a bit of history and in that would be remiss if I did not express my gratitude for my co-founders, Andrea Kretz and Jason Dudgeon. Our common goal when we joined forces in 2011 was to start a post-secondary learning centre. At that time none existed in our community and we wanted to fill a need and provide an opportunity for learning for a population deserving of so much more than what was being offered. Here we are in 2020, a few short years later and while we have taken very different paths, not only did we achieve our goal, but there are now many options for post-secondary learning and we have inspired our other community partners to raise their bar in programming and opportunities. Going forward I look forward to seeing Community of Hearts continuing to foster community partnerships and strengthen relationships that can only improve the services being offered to the special needs community.

While we don't know when our world will return to some sort of normal or what our world will look like post Covid, we need to remember that while we have used patience in the past to weather some storms so must be patient again. It is hard not to have expectations of results to be immediate but in the words of Joh Kabat-Zinn "Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time so trust in that unfolding.

So, we will wait, and we will plan and when the time is right, we will choose growth and then look out world. Because here we come!

