



2019-2020 Annual Report

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Our Employment Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills Programs are funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario and through the Canada – Ontario Job Fund Agreement.

The Children's Program is funded by the City of Ottawa.

About ALSO

ALSO has been serving the Ottawa community since 1981. We are a safe and caring community learning center providing opportunities for both adults and families. We support the development of the skills needed for employment, future education or training, increased civic engagement and family life. ALSO students want to get a job, keep a job, finish high school, access training and/or participate more fully in their community.

The ALSO staff is a dedicated team of individuals. Their collective and individual contributions to the success of the students and families is greatly valued. We are always impressed by the level of caring and willingness to go the extra mile in order to serve our adults and families well. We said good-bye to one of our long-time Children's Program staff this year. Shalma Reynolds has, over the last 14 years, made a significant contribution to both the Children's Program and ALSO. She will be missed. We welcomed a new member to the ALSO staff team, Mineh Fahim, in the Children's Program. As in previous years, our volunteer Board of Directors gives generously of their time and expertise. This year the Board invested time and funds into working with Lois Graveline from Harmonia to develop a donations strategy. We hope to increase our reach in the community and develop a better relationship with donors. We are fortunate to have the ongoing support of our Board. We thank them for their commitment.

ALSO volunteers contribute significantly to the success of our program. We are very fortunate to receive support from the sign language interpreters at the Sign Language Interpreters Association of Ottawa. In the Children's Program this year we were fortunate to have three placement students from Carleton University. Cheryl Stephen has volunteered with ALSO for over 10 years. We are very grateful that she continues to share her knowledge, creativity and expertise with us. A huge thank you goes out to Shirley Trott, who supports our family literacy library and shares story time with the children. Thank you to all of our donors and supporters including Massine's, Farm Boy and Starbucks for your dedication to ALSO and willingness to contribute time and time again!

Our Board of Directors

Kevin Scully
Board President

Robert Mawako
Treasurer

Lynn Asselin
Member at Large

Hanieh Khoshkhou
Member at Large

Tim Klodt
Member at Large

Kim Oastler
Secretary/Executive Director

A Year in Review

During the 2019-2020 year we were actively engaged with our community through participation with the Local Employment Planning Council, the Rideau Valley Learning Network, the Centre for Innovation in Social Enterprise Development and the Heartwood House Collaboration Project Planning Committee.

We continue to build on our relationship with the Continuing Education Department of the Ottawa District School Board, allowing us to offer PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment Review) and high school credit study on site for students who cannot access the mainstream adult high school classroom. We continue to meet the expectations of our core funder, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD).

We welcomed three placement students from Carleton University to our Children's Program; Kendra Cambell (Psychology), Katie Newman (Social Work), and Durba Deb (Psychology). These students were all excellent additions to our small program. Working with them for 4-8 months allowed them to glean a great deal about the families and children we serve, giving them a great opportunity to hone their skills while being mentored by our Children's Program staff team. We are fortunate to have ongoing funding from the City of Ottawa for our Children's Program. Without the City's support we would not be able to offer our program to the families at Heartwood House.

We received funding from the Community Foundation of Ottawa and the Harry P. Ward Foundation allowing us to continue to support our growing social enterprise, EAT MORE SOUP!. EAT MORE SOUP! provides pre-employment training for highly barriered adults in our community. EAT MORE SOUP! makes delicious, from scratch, vegan and vegetarian soups which sell in 13 local retail stores throughout the city.

Highlights:

- As part of the Deaf Adult Upgrading Program we continued to offer a weekly beginner ASL class for ALSO students, volunteers and community partners. Many thanks to our amazing volunteer ASL teachers.

- Our Souper Wednesday program continued this year. Souper Wednesday teaches ALSO students how to cook vegetarian soup from scratch. We ran Souper Wednesday from September to March. This year we fed between 35-40 Heartwood House participants, volunteers and staff each week for \$1.00 or \$2.00 a serving.
- The Children's Program served 46 children and 36 families.
- In 2019-2020 our Children's Program focused on social skills, speech and language development, gross motor and cognitive skills. Since the majority of our children were preparing for their first year of school we kept a focus on teaching letter recognition and tracing, following patterns and other language skills. For our younger children we worked on mastering gross motor skills by climbing, doing yoga poses, feeling comfortable in their bodies and developing independence. The children especially enjoyed our planting seeds program - Each child got to plant a seed and watch the stages of growth as they learned responsibly and patience.
- ALSO's Adult Upgrading Program served 78 adults.
- ALSO's Deaf Adult Upgrading Program served 25 adults.
- EAT MORE SOUP! worked with 16 participants. Of the 16 participants, 14 successfully transitioned to employment, a volunteer placement or other training.
- The BIG COOK, a partnership with the Ottawa Boys and Girls Club, was put on hold in December due to an increase in soup orders and a new partnership with the Ottawa Food Bank. From September to December our EAT MORE SOUP! chef and interns worked with 120 children and youth, teaching them how to prepare healthy meals with food they would have at home or receive from the food bank, and promoting healthy eating habits.
- EAT MORE SOUP! developed a new partnership with the Ottawa Food Bank and processed over 2000 pounds of squash from their farm into soup for Food Bank clients.

Success Stories

Skyla completed her remaining high school credits at ALSO. She was accepted into Algonquin's pre-health sciences program, and after successfully completing the program has been accepted to the University of Ottawa's Nursing Program (B SC N).

Jen completed her remaining high school English credit and was accepted into Carleton University's Enriched Support Program. She is currently working part-time and attending Carleton through virtual classes.

Cora completed her remaining high school credits and was able to secure a higher paying job with more hours and job security. Unfortunately she was laid off as a result of COVID-19, but she is thankful for all the help that ALSO provided.

Kayt had been with ALSO for a number of years as she worked through the remaining credits required to graduate from HS. As she worked through the courses, she had many highs and lows and struggled at various times. She persevered and graduated in April 2019 when she completed her Grade 12 College Math course. She has since gone on to complete a further post-secondary diploma in Police Science/Security.

Carroll came to ALSO in 2018 needing 4 credits to finish her HS. Although approaching retirement, she is an active figure in her community and has lots of energy and desire. She had always regretted not completing her HS diploma. As she worked through the credits with ALSO, she found another interest at Heartwood House with Eco-Equitable which rekindled an old love of fashion and design. She first started by volunteering with Eco-Equitable and earned a co-op credit which helped her complete her diploma requirements by mid-2019. Since graduating, she has gone on to teach a course with Eco-Equitable and be a supply teacher to cover for others.

Liban moved to Ottawa from Africa and learned ASL and English in a few short years at ALSO. He has a new job working as a packer at Intelcom in Gatineau.

Sarnia graduated from Algonquin College in April 2020. She then found a job in Carleton Place. She is taking ASL teacher training and will become a certified ASL instructor.

Mike has worked at Amazon for one year and half becoming a permanent employee. He continues to upgrade his English language skills at ALSO.

From the Board President

This report covers the 2019-2020 fiscal year, so I have the luxury of writing several months into the following year. From this vantage point it would be fair to say that 2019-2020 was a relatively quiet year in the life of ALSO. That is not to say that the ALSO Board did not achieve much. On the contrary, the year saw the Board work on a number of issues that have long-term benefit for ALSO.

The consulting firm Harmonia was hired to take a look at ALSO's fundraising strategy. Their expert review of our current situation and analysis of available options resulted in a comprehensive report which was presented to the Board. The Board unanimously accepted Harmonia's recommendations for the direction of ALSO's future fundraising efforts, and work to that effect has begun.

Another consulting firm, Karma Dharma strategy + marketing, was hired to look at the ASL RAPP project, which the Board felt was being underused. Interim reports were submitted for consideration, with the final report not due until the following fiscal year. The Board was impressed with the scope and quality of the work being done and looked forward to the final report. We will make a final decision at that time as to the future direction of ASL RAPP.

The Eat More Soup! social enterprise program continued to grow. We expanded the product line in order to meet the differing consumer needs between warmer and colder seasons. We are in the fourth year of the five-year EMS experiment, and are right on schedule in terms of developing the brand and the product offerings. We will make a final decision as to the future viability of EMS once we see what the 5th year brings.

Work continued with regard to Board stability and composition. A perennial need is a Board member from the Deaf community, an acknowledged gap. A couple of new members from the hearing community joined us, however, and the skills matrix proved to be a useful tool in that recruitment.

Staff issues were also up for discussion with emphasis on health benefits and the possibility of implementing a pension plan. The Board feels strongly that providing a respectful, satisfying and stable work environment enables our staff to do their best for the students, to everyone's benefit.

As I wrote above, I write this several months into the 2020-2021 fiscal year. We have seen some of what the next year will bring, and it is proving to be a great challenge to everyone in the non-profit sector. I firmly believe that the work the Board did during 2019-2020 has strengthened ALSO's foundations, and helped ensure ALSO's continued success.

Bravo to the entire ALSO community: Board members, staff, and especially our amazing students!

Kevin Scully,
Board President, ALSO

Financial Report

2019-2020 has been a good year for ALSO both in terms of managing our finances and in our service provision. We maintained good figures, including meeting our Reserve Funds objective. Most encouraging was the progress made by the Eat More Soup! program which saw a 12% increase in revenue from last year and which continued to be a source of training to equip our students for the marketplace.

From a financial perspective, Net Revenue for the year was \$547,980.00. Revenue increased by \$30K mostly due to an additional \$10K from the Province of Ontario and an additional \$15K in Foundation Contributions. Looking at revenue composition, the Province of Ontario’s MLTSD Contract continues to make up most of our revenue at 65% of the total amount, Service Contracts and Daycare Fees (21%) and Foundation Contributions (12%, representing a 4% increase from last year), for a total of 98% from these three sources of funding. We have continued to pursue our drive for a more diversified pool of funding by engaging Harmonia Consulting to assist us in establishing a donation strategy, thereby increasing our donor base.

Total Expenses were \$550,148.00 with the most notable disbursements as usual being from Teaching Salaries & Benefits (58%), Childcare Salaries & Benefits (16%) and Rent & Facility Costs (10%), for a total of 84% from these three expense types. The most significant change was a \$8,000.00 increase in Marketing and Promotion as a result of investments made to the Donor Strategy.

Sound Financial Statements

The year finished off with a planned deficit of just over \$2,000.00. The Board voted to maintain our Reserve Fund at \$85,000.00 and to continue working with Harmonia on our donor strategy. Our financial position continues to be very sound. Our cash position is always an important indicator and we closed the year at our agreed base with a \$85,000.00 balance.

Commitment to our Clients

A significant portion of our funding is contingent on achieving required performance indicators. Meeting all accountabilities is therefore critical and a testament to the contributions of many. ALSO continues to both meet and exceed performance obligations as required in our service contracts and the continuance of both public and private funding.

Robert Mowako
Treasurer, ALSO