



Looking Forward...Giving Back!

447 Hunter Street  
Woodstock, Ontario N4S 4G7  
226.667.6404

[oxfordcommunityfoundation.org](http://oxfordcommunityfoundation.org)

## PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(long version with valuable quotes from charities)

### Oxford Community Foundation awards \$201,870 through the Emergency Community Support Fund

**WOODSTOCK, ONT. – July 30, 2020:** Oxford Community Foundation (OCF) has awarded \$201,870 in grants to four local charities serving vulnerable populations in Oxford County impacted by COVID-19. The grants are part of the Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF), funded by the Government of Canada.

The ECSF is a \$350 million fund that is being implemented with Community Foundations of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross, and United Way Centraide Canada, in partnership with local foundations across the country. Its goal is to provide support to charities and non-profit organizations serving vulnerable Canadians.

OCF announced the allocation of four grants, \$74,686 to The Refuge, \$50,000 to Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO), \$40,000 to Wellkin and \$37,184 to Indwell.

The Refuge, a day shelter helping the homelessness, those experiencing active addiction, and mental health struggles was granted \$74,686 to help fund kitchen renovations and the hire staff. Before the pandemic, the Refuge provided meals, day shelter, clean laundry, clothes, toiletries, sleeping bags etc. one and half days per week. Services were expanded to five days per week when other facilities closed because of the pandemic and the Refuge saw a marked increase in drug usage and need for shelter and food.

“Our primary purpose is to reach the hearts of those we serve with love and dignity. And, this project will benefit the community by reducing the visible face of homelessness on our streets, lessening the burden on police services responding to loitering and disturbance calls, and add to the overall sense of safety in our communities and our downtown businesses,” said Rene McIntyre, Senior Pastor and Founder of TOTCM.

The Domestic Abuse Shelter Oxford (DASO) was awarded \$50,000 so it could better support those needing the protection and services of the shelter. Many women, adolescents, and children are at greater risk of domestic abuse due to social isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Two accessible bathrooms in existing bedroom will be built, amenities such as small fridges, tablets, comfy chairs and loveseats, lamps and side tables will be provided for residents in their bedrooms as they will not be able to use the communal living and recreation spaces, and renovation of 24/7 residential support office will be made allowing staff to safely meet shelter residents.

“When everyone first started hearing daily news reports about COVID-19, at DASO we were ready. We had pandemic and emergency plans which we immediately implemented. We had ample supplies including PPE. We had a dedicated, capable staff team ready to take on new challenges. We were prepared to continue to offer our essential services 24/7... But the expected length of this pandemic was not on our radar,” said Rhonda Hendel, Executive Director at DASO. “We had not planned for many, many months, maybe years of COVID-19. Our operating plans and financial forecasting did not include a drastic loss of fund-raised revenue.”



@oxfordcf



[info@oxfordcommunityfoundation.org](mailto:info@oxfordcommunityfoundation.org)

OCF Volunteer Board of Directors: Bill Mackesy (Chair), Keith Stevens (Vice-chair), Neil Dolson (Treasurer), Rosemary George, Don Hilborn, Mary Holmes, Michael Kukhta, John MacDonald, Kim Parker, Steve Robb, Karen Sample, Kelly Gilson (ex-officio United Way)

Wellkin was awarded \$40,000 to help support the alarming need for families and caregivers requiring mental health supports, including families who may never have required services previously but are suffering due to the complex challenges of COVID. The grant will support the launch of an online hub allowing family and caregivers to connect to mental health supports, whether through formal treatment, education or through a peer support model.

“This pandemic has impacted our nation and our communities in unprecedented ways. Physical distancing measures and government restrictions on the economy, although much needed, are taking an incredible toll on the mental wellness of families in ways no one predicted. At Wellkin, we are already experiencing what people are calling the ‘fourth wave of COVID’ which is an increase in the need and demand for mental health services.” said Wellkin Executive Director, Mamta Chail. “We are thrilled that our community will have access to such an amazing resource locally.”

Indwell was granted \$37,184 to support those living in its affordable housing communities who are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to close living quarters, reliance on public transit, and lack of access to technology.

“Cell phones and pre-paid calling cards are a luxury that a number of Indwell tenants cannot afford on their fixed incomes, and connecting with family, friends and community professionals is increasingly important during the pandemic. As more medical services are conducted exclusively by phone, those without this technology are more likely to fall through the cracks,” said Justin DeWaard, Regional Manager at Indwell.

The grant will provide support for Indwell tenants through enhanced cleaning sanitation to prevent the transmission of COVID19, provide tenants with food security, provides technology to enable tenants to access external support networks, and provide training for staff supporting tenants who are struggling with mental health and addictions.

“OCF is proud to be delivering this funding in Oxford County to make sure no one is left behind during these challenging times,” said Louise Wardrop, Executive Director at Oxford Community Foundation. “We would like to thank the Government of Canada and Community Foundations of Canada for recognizing the urgent need and the critical role that the 191 community foundations in Canada play in reaching both small and large communities across Canada.”

For a full list of grants awarded through Community Foundations of Canada’s network, visit the CFC [website](#).

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**For more information please contact:**

Louise Wardrop, [lwardrop@oxfordcommunityfoundation.org](mailto:lwardrop@oxfordcommunityfoundation.org), 226-232-6222 (cell)