



## Larry Lichty: Chair of the Board of Directors

Tremendous change has happened this year for TorchLight. We have expanded our TeleCheck-Dufferin program, joined with Distress and Crisis Ontario to pilot the on-line texting and chatting project ONTX, redefined volunteer/staff responsibilities, updated the Mission, Vision, and Values, and relocated the Guelph office.

This year we also say goodbye and best wishes to John Jones. We appreciate the contributions John has provided over his 4.5 years as Executive Director. During this transitional period, our people, both volunteers and staff, have been resourceful and demonstrated initiative, teamwork, and commitment. This includes the temporary appointment of Colleen McCann as interim Managing Director as we move toward restructuring to maintain fiscal responsibility and envision our new identity. TorchLight will streamline and change to continue to effectively support vulnerable people to have a greater quality of life.

We thank the Board Members whose term has ended. The Board is committed to the work of this agency and its compassionate support for people who find themselves in situations of distress.

Finally, I wish to thank all the staff, the Board, those who assisted us in our move and the volunteers on the lines- the "Lifeline" of the agency - for infusing hope for the future!

## Colleen McCann: Managing Director

*"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." - Socrates*

Writing this is bittersweet, as this opportunity has come to me when John Jones left the organization. I have been with TorchLight since 2012 - first in direct service on the lines and for the last year as a member of the Board of Directors. On the Board, I joined the Finance and Governance committees to gain a broader understanding. I am firmly committed to the mission of TorchLight and am proud to highlight successes:

- TeleCheck-Dufferin volunteers received the DCO "2015 Spirit of Volunteerism Team Award". This was the first time a team of volunteers has been recognized.
- CONNECT programs received "2015 Service and Recognition Award"
- TorchLight completed the first year of its two-year ONTX pilot project, in collaboration with three other agencies. ONTX volunteers reached out to 10,000 contacts - mainly youth - through text and online chat services
- TeleCheck-Dufferin expansion launched the afternoon and early evening calls
- United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin continued to support the Distress Line
- CMHA Waterloo Wellington Dufferin supported the Youth Support Line
- Service Canada awarded TorchLight five student projects (total of 1200 hours)
- TorchLight's Leadership Committee met to review our Mission, Vision, and Values, and to develop our new Volunteer Culture Statement

We would like to thank our other funders: Rotary Club of Guelph South, Trillium, Hammond Power Solutions Inc., plus corporate and individual donations. Also, special thanks to community partners who generously provide training space: Alzheimer's Society of Dufferin, Hospice Dufferin, Edelbrock Centre, and Kerry's Place Guelph. TorchLight continues to face its challenges head on with unwavering commitment. We are adopting new ways to keep our commitment to excellent service to our callers and their communities. Out of challenges grow opportunities.



TorchLight  
Make Contact. Build Strength



# TorchLight Annual Report 2015-2016

## Our Mission:

To build meaningful connections and to provide emotional support by listening to the needs of each individual.



TeleCheck-Dufferin volunteers receiving the 2015 DCO Service and Recognition Award for the CONNECT program

## Thank you to our valued funders



United Way  
Guelph Wellington  
Dufferin



Ontario  
Central West Local Health  
Integration Network



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

Rotary  
Guelph



Service  
Canada



Ontario  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES  
SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES



## What Volunteers Give Us

TorchLight volunteers are diverse – they include students, adults and many active retirees, all looking for a way to give back to their community. Each one develops their skills in active listening and gains valuable experience in engaging conversation that creates change. To support our volunteers, TorchLight provided over 1000 classroom hours and on-shift training to new volunteers, including shadow and trainee shifts with mentors.



TorchLight volunteers are the backbone of this agency. Last year (April 2015 – March 2016), they provided 6542 hours of their time to CONNECT and the Distress Line (including Youth Support and Emergency Shelter Resource Line), with a total of 15,593 calls made to support the Guelph and area community. TeleCheck-Dufferin volunteers gave 5,104 hours and made 51,000 calls to support older adults.

Our volunteers have taken on leadership opportunities both within TorchLight and in the community. They attended volunteer fairs and presented for organizations such as The Mood Disorders Group of Guelph. Additionally, an enthusiastic Volunteer Leadership Committee has been meeting to review our Mission, Vision, and Values.

Our volunteers inspire and energize all who come in their path. We celebrate the value they bring to our community, helping vulnerable people to remember their strengths and move forward with hope. Thank you to our volunteers; you are changing lives and making your community a better place!

## Our Services: Who We Are and What We Do

### Call-In Services

All three lines: (519) 821-3760  
Toll-free: 1-888-821-3760

#### Distress Line

A listening service delivered for people who are experiencing distress, feeling isolated, confused or suicidal

#### Emergency Shelter Resource Line

A referral service that connects individuals with local emergency shelter resources

#### Youth Support Line

A listening service for young people to talk about everything from everyday problems to a major crisis

### CONNECT Services (Call-Out)

#### TeleConnect

A daily check-in that supports people in exploring and identifying personal goals and in taking action; a means to offer social connection and gentle reminders

(519) 821-3761 X 218

#### TeleCheck-Dufferin (Seniors Support)

TeleCheck is a daily check-in call with support for adults 55+ who wish to live independently in their homes.

(519) 415-3764

#### ONTX: Ontario Online Text & Crisis Support Service

A two year pilot project in collaboration with Distress & Crisis Ontario, ONTX is an online chat and text service for those experiencing distress or crisis – it is for everyone, regardless of age or situation

Text **741741** on your mobile phone from 2 AM to 2 PM daily, or visit <http://torchlightcanada.org/faqs/ontx/>

## Katherine Johnson: Manager of TeleCheck-Dufferin

In April 2015, Central West LHIN Ministry of Health provided expansion funding to TeleCheck-Dufferin to launch an afternoon/early evening call. It is recognized in the community that, for 11+ years, TeleCheck has provided a valuable and cost-effective service to seniors. Volunteers have delivered morning calls 7 days a week. While this service provided reassurance and security, we learned that some seniors require ongoing monitoring and medication reminders through the day to ensure their safety and keep them living in their homes.

The afternoon/early evening calls are designed to be longer, and to support individuals who may feel isolated. The continued flow of service (from morning to early evening) provides increased social connection and emotional support, allowing TeleCheck to monitor and respond to changes in people's health and needs. In the past year, the morning service has grown to support 35,656 calls, serving 170 seniors; in its first year, the expansion provided 15,000 afternoon calls serving 84 members and is continuing to grow. TeleCheck's expanded service required more staff and volunteers. We presently operate with a team of 3-4 volunteers and 1 staff per shift. Students and people changing careers gain valuable training, coaching, and work references from TeleCheck - our training and work experience opportunities have appealed to community educators such as Employment Access, and Georgian and Humber College programs. Volunteers become skilled in active listening, understanding the strengths and challenges of older adults, elder abuse and prevention, grief and bereavement, mental health, emergency response (suicide and crisis intervention), and referral to community resources.

As noted by Tom Reid, Chief of Dufferin County Paramedic Service: "TeleCheck supports the most vulnerable members of our community and quickly and efficiently identifies any potential issues they may experience. The team notifies other community partners to assist/collaborate when needed. The comfort and support TeleCheck supplies to our community cannot be overstated. It is also important to note that it is not just the TeleCheck clients that benefit from their service but also the family and friends of clients who can rest assured that their loved ones are supported by the community".

Through daily TeleCheck calls, seniors manage their own social and health needs and maintain control over their lives; they build connections and share both good news and concerns, enriching the lives of volunteers, staff and the community.

## Kathleen Herbinson: Coordinator of Volunteer Services

Our volunteers do amazing work on our lines every day. Their volunteerism on the Distress Line, CONNECT, and ONTX, has a real, life-changing impact in our community and for people all across Canada. **In 2015-2016:**

- Distress Line volunteers responded to 8226 calls, supporting our Distress Line, Emergency Shelter Resource Line, and Youth Line calls.
- For our call-out program, TeleConnect, volunteers completed 7367 calls to members (out of the Guelph office), supporting people with solution-focused conversations.
- Starting June 29, 2015, TorchLight, in collaboration with DCO members Durham, Spectra and Toronto, launched the **Ontario Online Text and Crisis Support Service (ONTX)**.
  - ONTX has provided a new technological outlet for people, attracting mostly youth (75% of texts and chats are from youth under 24 years of age)
  - ONTX opens communications with the deaf and hard of hearing community
  - In the previous fiscal year TorchLight completed 1,419 web and text message conversations, covering 1588 hours of service, logging 2061 call reports, which is 22% of the total 9554 for all four organizations in the collaborative.
  - This program currently provides 12 hours of service per day and has been supporting people Canada-wide
  - At the end of each conversation, we ask every Visitor, "If not ONTX, who else might you have reached out to for support today?" and astoundingly more than half of people respond, "No one."