

In This Issue

- **Pandemic Changes: A Staff Perspective**
- **Pandemic Changes: A Member Perspective**
- **Rising Youth 2020: Successful Grant Application**
- **Program Feature: Mens Sana Day Program**
- **Mother's Day Celebration**
- **Support for Seniors & M.H. group**
- **Testimonials**
- **Important Notice**

A word from our Director

Hello everyone,

A lot has changed since the last issue of the Mens Sana Bulletin. However, what has not changed in the 'new normal' is our commitment to providing safety, practicing respect and promoting community.

While mandated to provide excellence in service we had to ensure everyone's safety and help minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our community. This was a mammoth task and each person belonging to the Mens Sana family played a key role in achieving it.

This would not have been possible without the efforts of our staff, who have been working tirelessly to support our members. At the same time, we want to acknowledge and thank our members, and all Mens Sana families who have been a pillar of support in these difficult times. Everyone understood the gravity of the situation and were forthcoming to help us make the necessary changes in these unprecedented times.

We have been working with and following the guidelines of Public Health and Government authorities. And, as the province opens, we will initiate curb side visits for families.

Please address your requests and concerns to the staff, or to Lori Hamilton, Program Supervisor at lhamilton@vitacls.org. Please feel free to follow the complaints procedure that was provided to you in the package when you became our member in case you feel that your requests have not been addressed. You can connect with me at dmonaghan@vitacls.org or call me on 416-749-6234 ext. 243.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your continued support. Please share your feedback or let us know what you would like to read in the next issue of the Mens Sana Bulletin at myvita@vitacls.org.

Happy Reading!



Dunja Monaghan Stöger
Director of Transitional, Mental Health & Support Services
Vita Mens Sana



Pandemic Changes: A Staff Perspective by Tracy

The Covid-19 Pandemic has changed the lives of everyone across the globe. Adjusting and accepting the new normal has been difficult and challenging for everyone. However, with the support of front-line staff, family members and all the members at Mens Sana, we have been able to adjust and work through these unprecedented times.

As a front-line staff adjusting to the changes were challenging at first, but when working as a team the transition into our new routine work smoothly. The members have stayed positive and adjusted to things quite well.

Some of the changes we have experienced are going out into the community for essential trips and in smaller groups. Staff wear PPE, while working in the homes to ensure the safety of members daily. Families have not been able to visit but they have dropped things off for their loved ones and this was one of the biggest changes we all had to go through.

Some of our members had a really difficult time with staying at home. It took a lot of effort to help them practice safety in these times.

Covid-19 has had a negative impact on many lives but on the bright side during this time many people have turned to the spirit of giving back to support the community, family, and friends.

A stranger saw me and donated money to Indian Road for the members to order lunch, this put a smile on everyone's face. Staying positive during this time is the best we can do and with the support of all Vita Mens Sana we will pull through this!

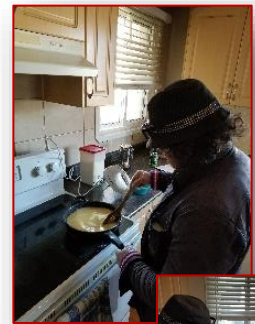


Pandemic Changes: A Member Perspective by Rocco

My name is Rocco and before COVID-19 I went out a lot. Mondays to Fridays I worked several hours each day delivering flyers, doing sales and promotion. I travelled around Toronto independently to visit family and sometimes I just went out for fun. Things are very different now as we cannot go out like we used to at Alamosa.

As I cannot visit my family, I talk to them on the phone. I keep busy by listening to music, watching documentaries on Netflix, reading books, and helping clean around the house. I am starting to cook and bake more at Alamosa and I am really enjoying it. I am not a gourmet cook, but I am getting better. Instead of taking TTC I am going out in our van to shop and to get my Tim Horton's coffee.

Keeping busy helps me forget things that bother me. I am looking forward to Toronto going back to normal so I can start doing the things I enjoy, like going out for cappuccino at Nino's on Sunday afternoons. You do not realize how good you have it until it is taken away from you.



Rising Youth 2020: Successful Grant Application

My name is Marlene Solano and I was selected as a Rising Youth 2020 grant recipient. Rising Youth is a program led by TakingITGlobal to help youth build Canada and develop life skills by giving back to their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into light the vulnerability of people with mental illness and physical disabilities, and the fragility of the Developmental Services sector.

Realizing the need to protect and support the community, I decided to use the grant to create care packages that will assist the community in staying safe and collected during their time in self-isolation. Some of the items included in these care packages were snacks, art supplies, activity books, games, and hygiene products such as toilet paper, tissues, soap, sponges, toothpaste, and a toothbrush all packed in a reusable shopping bag.

The care-packages were distributed to Vita Mens Sana members, as a gesture of hope, love, and care for the most vulnerable in the community.

With this care package, I hope to spread love and lift spirits during these difficult times. It is in times like these that the power of community is needed most. A very special thank you to Lorie Hamilton, the Program Supervisor at Mens Sana, and my mother Jaqueline Solano for providing their guidance and support in this project.



Program Feature: Mens Sana Day Program

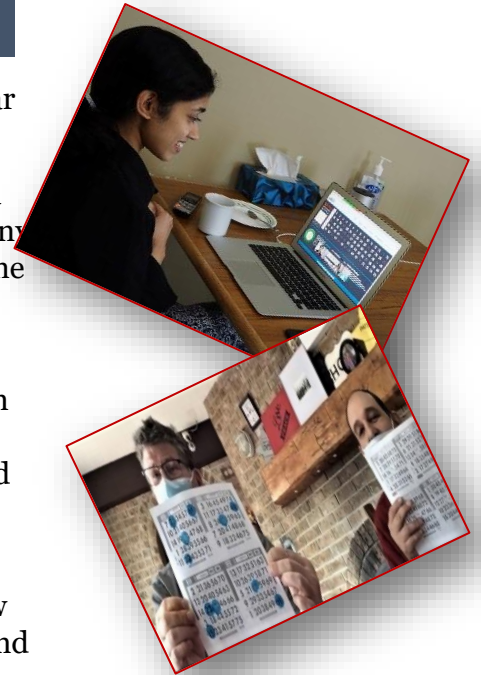
Although Mens Sana remains closed, we have taken some of our regular program activities online.

Every, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday the members of Mens Sana get together on Zoom for Bingo, mindfulness, and creative writing. Many of the members also call Mens Sana whenever they want to chat with the program staff, provide updates about how they are doing while staying home or when they have questions.

The program staff is available for them Tuesday to Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm over the phone or during Zoom group for support. Mens Sana also emails them resources and activities to keep our members engaged whenever they get bored.

“Despite difficult times, I am pleased to say Mens Sana members are doing well by staying safe and healthy. Many of them have told me how they are taking care of themselves by going for walks, eating healthy, and engaging in activities that they find calming like colouring, doing word searches, baking, gardening and watching movies at home. They all missed coming to the day program and socializing with the staff and other members,” said, Nirmani Warnasuriya, Mens Sana Staff.

However, they understand the need for physical distance and the program to be closed to protect members, staff, and others from COVID-19, she added.



Mother's Day Celebration

COVID-19 has changed our routine here at Alamosa. The residents are very close to families, visiting regularly with them at Alamosa or their family homes. Not seeing loved ones regularly has had some impact on our mental health over the past couple months. With the help of staff and the families support we were able to do something special for our moms.

The group wanted to arrange safe drop in visits. We wore all our protective equipment, we made sure to wear our masks properly and practice social distancing while waving to our mothers from a safe distance, and staying outside.

From our home to yours HAPPY MOTHERS DAY and STAY SAFE.



Support for Seniors & Family group

Mens Sana has started an initiative to help support Seniors. Currently, we are helping via ZOOM meetings those who have been associated with CMHA. The reason for this initiative is to address the issue of isolation among our seniors. Seniors who are not able to talk to their friends and families. Through this initiative, we are building and sharing resources to help them understand the current global crisis. Resources are also being provided for their mental well-being, battling depression and hospitalization.

These sessions are being organized 'virtually' every Tuesday from 3-4 pm for those who want to chat, discuss, and engage, or discuss any concerns.

On the other hand, the Mens Sana family support group continues to meet virtually every Wednesday and share their experiences and chat on relevant topics and subjects. From the latest on COVID-19 to how to cook a very simple meal - sharing recipes and supporting those who are having a hard time being isolated and not being able to visit their loved ones.



Testimonials

“Dear Bruna, I wanted to send an email to let you know how much I appreciate your leadership and setting up our weekly Zoom meetings. During these challenging times of isolation, it brings comfort to get together through Zoom. I look forward to connecting, sharing, and learning but most importantly supporting each other. Stay well and see you Wednesday.” - Maria

“This time of COVID-19 an uncertainty causes a great deal of stress to many of us, and more so, to our developmentally challenged loved ones who seem to have gone from being on an emotional roller coaster in their regular life to several more due to being inside. Therefore, I would like to just say, that firstly, thank you - thank you -for arranging and having zoom meetings for our Wednesday night parent meetings.

“Mafalda Stancanello

Ciao Bruna. Allora, questo meeting aiuta a superre un period di depressione, specialmente adesso con questa corona virus. Non si puo uscire di casa allora unendoci tutti insieme su Zoom fa dimenticare tutti I problemi e paure in quelle poche ore. si scambia argomento e quelle ore passano subito.

Hello Bruna, this meeting helps to overcome a period of depression, especially now with this corona virus. We cannot go out, therefore getting together on Zoom we forget our problems and fears. We dialog and those hours go by fast.” - M.S.

Important Notice

We are Open for Short Curb Side Visits at Our Homes

While still ensuring we follow all the directions by Public Health, we presently allow for short pre-scheduled curb side visits.

Few simple rules to organize them are:

- Connect with staff 48 hrs prior to and inform when you would like to “visit”. Staff will confirm with you the time as we need to avoid multiple visits happening at the same time.
- Be prepared to wear your face cover.
- Your “visit” will be happening on our driveway/sidewalk.
- The visit should not be longer than 30 minutes.
- Respect the distance staff requests you to use while on our premises.

Help us HELP our Members to have goals and to achieve them. Let us know what you would like to read in the next issue of the Mens Sana Bulletin. Please do not forget to send us your feedback at myvita@vitacls.org.

****The Italian version of this newsletter will be available on request as of Monday, July 6, 2020.***