



NEW DIRECTIONS
FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, ADULTS & FAMILIES

EMPOWERING GROWTH: INSIGHTS FROM NEW DIRECTIONS' SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

This article was produced primarily by Wei Luo, a student from the University of Manitoba's Applied Business Management Certificate program. Wei was a summer student with New Directions and contributed to Communications and Fund Development initiatives.

Summer internships are invaluable opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience, develop essential skills, and explore their passions. At New Directions, an organization committed to promoting inclusivity and empowerment, the summer internship program serves as a platform for young individuals to flourish and make a meaningful impact.

MEET CHRISTABEL: A PASSIONATE STUDENT WITH A DRIVE FOR INCLUSION

Christabel, an ambitious student majoring in Human Resources Management at the esteemed

University of Manitoba, embarked on her journey at New Directions as a training assistant in the Organizational Development & Learning team. In this crucial role, she wholeheartedly dedicated herself to supporting employees through their training journeys. Though not without challenges, Christabel's tenacity and problem-solving abilities allowed her to navigate through obstacles, leading to personal growth and professional success.

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Christabel Agyei-Gyamfi, a UM student who contributed to the New Directions' Organizational Development & Learning team.

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NO BIRTHSTAR

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NEW DIRECTIONS

WINTER 2024

COORDINATION AT NEW DIRECTIONS: GUIDING GROWTH AND INNOVATION

At the helm of the summer internship program at New Directions, Dr. Carolyn Peters, RSW, the organization’s Director of Organizational Development & Learning, plays a pivotal role in nurturing the development of young talents. Collaborating with Carolyn is Trevor Doner, a seasoned Training Coordinator at New Directions and Christabel’s mentor during her internship. Together, they orchestrate the program, offering students a rich tapestry of opportunities for professional growth and experiential learning. By identifying organizational gaps, the program empowers students to make significant contributions to various projects, further enriching their experiences.

Tailored to the interests and skills of each intern, the summer program encompasses diverse areas, including communications, fund development, human resources, accounting, and business resources. In the face of challenges, New Directions displayed resilience and adaptability by seamlessly transitioning to virtual placements, ensuring students continued to receive valuable experiences and comprehensive training.

Dedicated supervisors at New

Directions extend unwavering guidance and support to interns throughout the program. Regular feedback sessions and consultations facilitate both personal and professional growth, providing a nurturing environment for students to thrive. Additionally, the organization initiates training sessions during the first week, acquainting students with departmental goals and activities.

New Directions’ student placement and internship programs thrive on core success factors, including flexibility, creativity, and curiosity. By encouraging innovation and fostering an environment that champions independent work, the organization cultivates a culture of continuous learning and personal development. Interns at New Directions witness the tangible impact of their contributions, underscoring the significance of their roles and enhancing their career trajectories.

Carolyn, Christabel, and Trevor emphasize the value of the internship program. For students considering similar opportunities, they encourage wholehearted engagement and a willingness to learn. Embracing challenges and being open to unexpected learning experiences can pave the way for a transformative and rewarding internship journey.

The student placement and internship programs serves as a beacon of empowerment, offering students the

chance to flourish in a supportive and inclusive environment. Through real-world experiences, skill development, and personal growth, young talents like Christabel gain the tools they need to carve a successful career path. As New Directions continues to nurture future leaders, their dedication to fostering an equitable and diverse workplace stands as an inspiration for organizations.

STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM HONOURED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Last November, the team at New Directions was honoured to receive the Extended Education Industry Placement Host Award from the University of Manitoba for our long-lasting industry partnership.

Every year, New Directions provides many UM students with hands-on work experience that helps bridge the gap between education and workforce.

Dr. Carolyn Peters received the award on behalf of New Directions and was accompanied to the event by colleagues.



Dr. Carolyn Peters with colleagues Johanna Haines, Barb Greenham and Elizabeth Schwersensky.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO HEALTH

In recent years, the social services sector in Manitoba has seen a sharp increase in the number of people requesting support to meet their basic needs. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted our entire world, including Manitoba. The financial crisis we are currently facing due to its aftermath has caused many Manitobans to experience homelessness, food insecurity, addiction, and other problems that create barriers to a healthy life.

The demand for services has increased in general and individuals in our community often face significantly greater challenges accessing services due to systemic barriers. These barriers include financial constraints, scarcity

of resources, and even language.

This is where the Multi-disciplinary Assessment and Consultation Centre (MACC) at New Directions comes in.

Through a multidisciplinary approach, the team brings together specialists in psychology, occupational therapy, social work, trauma, culture, and deaf resources to assess and address the multifaceted needs of the individual.

“Sometimes people are looking for help, but they are not sure what type of support they need. We help with that by matching each individual to the service and professional that will best fit the need”, said Dr. Lindsay Woods, C.Psych., the Director for MACC and Clinical Services at New Directions.

The program also offers training to

internal teams and external organizations in areas such as trauma and attachment, person centered work, child development, case management and neurodiversity.

“We work with special requests from organizations and figure out who might be the best person in our team to develop and deliver the training”, said Lindsay.

Moreover, the MACC team also administers health programs that support staff and individuals from New Directions’ many programs. One of them is the annual New Directions Vaccine Clinic, that offers Flu vaccines and more recently COVID-19 boosters.

“We are grateful to be able to offer that service and help protect our staff and the individuals we support”, says Lindsay.

“Sometimes people are looking for help, but they are not sure what type of support they need. We help with that by matching each individual to the service and professional that will best fit the need,” said Dr. Lindsay Woods, Director for MACC and Clinical Services at New Directions.



“SKILLS FOR TOMORROW” GROUP THERAPY

In addition to a more individualized approach, MACC also offers group therapy programs.

Group therapy offers structured sessions that are evidence-based and aim to process experiences and practice new skills. This can range from building emotion regulation skills to developing skills to manage the activities of daily life. Attending group therapy can also reduce isolation by showing individuals they are not alone and assisting them to make new social connections. Group therapy teaches healthier relationships by facilitating bonds between people and fostering hope by successfully practicing skills together.

The “Skills for Tomorrow” group is one of them. Created in 2020, the

group follows a 6-week curriculum that was developed by two Occupational Therapy students. The curriculum was designed to be facilitated by Occupational Therapists as it requires ongoing modification and grading, depending on the group’s current level of skills.

It teaches youth and young adults to prepare for greater independence by teaching life skills such as time management, cooking, job interview skills, taxes, budgeting, and other life tasks.

“It’s very rewarding to see their development. Some people start off saying they cannot cook and be on time. After a few sessions, they find themselves doing exactly those things, which makes them feel proud and empowered”, says Jochebed Giesbrecht, one of the MACC’s Occupational

Therapists.

Individuals come from a variety of New Directions’ programs, and each will have a different set or level of skills, so very often they end up teaching one another and that allows them to build friendships and practice their own leadership skills.

“Performing in a group teaches them about teamwork and gently exposes them to what being in a group feels like. We try to provide them with just the right level of challenge for them to flourish”, said Jochebed.

The program is offered up to two times in a calendar year to the Child Home Services Program, and has seen growth and success over the years, having recently achieved its highest number of graduates since its beginning.

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NEW PROGRAM BEING DEVELOPED AT NEW DIRECTIONS

Since its beginnings in 1885, New Directions has successfully developed and implemented a great number of services that support Manitobans facing barriers in their lives.

While services have greatly expanded in variety from back when the organization was called Children’s Home of Winnipeg, there are always challenges in ensuring that each individual receives the most appropriate type of support they may need.

In an agency as diverse as New Directions, individuals will often move from one program to another as they navigate different stages in their lives. While current programs address the majority of needs, each individual is unique and may need a level of support that falls in-between services.

“We noticed that some individuals within our programs could lead better lives with a different level of support. Some of them were either being over supported or under supported”, says Leanne Kennedy, New Directions’ Director of Strategic Initiatives & Individualized Supports.

To address this need, the team started to develop a new program that could act as a midpoint between current services that could provide a better fit for certain individuals. The new program, currently being referred to as “Cluster Lite”, hopes to bridge a gap between our Shift Staffed Homes and Supported

Independent Living programs.

The program will be offered to individuals with an intellectual disability who have the ability and desire to live independently and are without risk factors. They will still be supported in a way as they learn to be more independent.

They could be youth that have been raised in care that are looking to transition into adulthood and a certain level of independence. In the new program, they would have their own place but also have access to staff 24/7 should they need it.

“Some individuals flourish when they have someone to check on them from time to time. They might not need assistance at that time, but it is reassuring and empowering to know they have someone there to support them”, said Leanne.

Individuals in the program would also be taught with life skills that lead to more independence such as how to build healthy relationships, have a better handle on finances and even shop for groceries.

“Through a person-led lens and approach, we want to provide people with the support they need”, said Leanne.

The program is currently under development by the team and the hope is that it will be operational in the next few years.

“Through a person-led lens and approach, we want to provide people with the support they need”, says Leanne Kennedy, New Directions’ Director of Strategic Initiatives & Individualized Supports.



SKILLS TO BUILD AND REBUILD LIVES

New Directions is proud to operate several social enterprises that provide individuals from our community with training and employment opportunities.

New Directions Property Services (NDPS) is one of them. A lawn care and property maintenance business that provides individuals who experience barriers to enter or maintain themselves in the workforce with meaningful employment. It supports them in gaining work experience to earn a livable wage.

“Everyone in the program has different personal goals and come from different backgrounds; some want to gain experience, and some are transitioning from incarceration into different kinds of housing. Some of the individuals are looking for reconciliation with their families, wanting to step up and be better parents. Lots of them have difficult pasts, and they are doing very well. They are showing up five days a week to work, just doing excellent. It’s awesome to see their journey through our program”, says Dean Desrochers, the program’s Life Skills Facilitator.

Making a difference in these individuals’ lives is a team effort, and there are lots of different ingredients that go into making the program a success. The program offers lunch to their workers, which is made possible through food donations from organizations like Peak of the Market, Agape Table, Tall Grass Prairie Bread Company and Oh Doughnuts. These donations also allow the program to be able to send people home with loaves of bread and eggs.

“Sometimes we’ll hear from someone in our program that the meal we offer is the only one they can fully count on during that day. It really moves our team in doing the very best we can in supporting these individuals along their path towards earning a livable wage” says Dean.

Some of the individuals who started out with the program are now managing teams and many are developing professionally. Lots of members of the program go on to live independently, obtain driver’s licenses, and build flourishing careers for themselves.

“I was able to grow here and had the flexibility to make some errors during the transition to getting sober, getting into a positive mind frame, having positive role models around daily really motivated me to get out of bed and make a go of it.” – An individual in the program.

The New Directions Property Service program is a great place for people to grow and gain meaningful experience in the workforce and watching them set and accomplish goals while becoming dedicated members of the workforce is inspiring, and those ripples positively impact the entire community.

“One of our participants says he’s learned to be patient, be considerate of others and has grown as a person. He says working with others who have disabilities has really reshaped his outlook on people and he feels he’s become more patient and considerate.”



An individual from New Directions Property Services at work.

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY

In April of 2023, the team at NDPS organized and held a fundraising concert to help raise funds for the program’s food operations.

“Over the last little while, we noticed that serving meals for the individuals greatly improves their attendance, performance and overall quality of life, which leads to a greater chance of personal success” says Alex Guidry, NDPS’ Coordinator.

With that in mind, the program threw a rock concert at the Times Change(d) High and Lonesome Club with the band Mulvey Street Maniacs and a few other performers.

The response was tremendous, with tickets being sold out in less than a week of announcement of the event just within the team’s inner circles.

“We told our family and friends about the concert, and they started to spread the word. We sold over 150 tickets in a very short amount of time without doing a lot of promotion. We were blown away by the support from our community. Everyone just wanted to help our program”, said Alex.

The concert raised \$3600, which has been used to provide breakfast and lunch to people in the program.



Friends and supporters of the New Directions Property Services program enjoy a concert at the Times Change(d) High and Lonesome Club.

FUNDING RECEIVED FROM THE MANITOBA GOVERNMENT

Last August, along with seven other non-profit organizations, New Directions was honoured to receive funding from the Manitoba Government’s Community Supports Program. The initiative, which was launched as a component of the Employment and Income Assistance Transformation strategy, seeks to provide crucial employment programming and personalized wraparound supports to individuals on bail with connections to the justice system or who are currently receiving Employment and Income Assistance.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR IDEAS & COMMENTS

You can contact us at info@newdirections.mb.ca

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TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITY

New Directions offers many programs and services that supports thousands of Manitobans each year. This includes assisted living for children, youth and adults, to counseling, job training and Indigenous cultural teachings.

Many of the people we support experience daily struggles including financial insecurity. And with the rising cost of basic necessities like food and housing, stress intensifies.

THE BASIC NEEDS AND NEW DIRECTIONS ENDOWMENT FUNDS

The Basic Needs Fund was created last year. Like the New Directions Endowment Fund, it offers funding for activities and supports that are most often out of reach for the people we serve. For example, nourishing food, a bus trip home during the holidays, hockey or Indigenous teachings camps, dental work, mobility aids, beds, and/or household items. The endowment fund is also used to offer bursaries for youth and students.

It is through the generosity of our donors that we can offer financial assistance to the people we support when they need it most.

Each year we receive interest income from our endowment fund. As the cost of living rises, financial assistance requests increase. And for the first-time last June, most of this yearly income was accounted for. This resulted in financial requests being placed on temporary hold.

MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors during our December 2023 Matching Gift Campaign, \$33,839.28 was raised for the Basic Needs Fund.

Our matching gift donors, Priority Restoration, Clear Concepts and Durango Construction Inc. doubled the donations, up to \$30,000, for a grand total of \$63,839.28.

Your donations offered immediate assistance and holiday joy to some of the people we support.

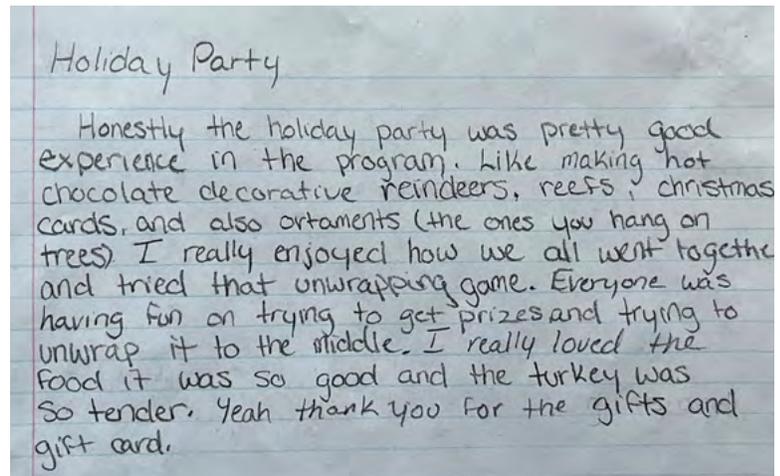


Staff and individuals from TOFY enjoy a Holiday Party.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH HOLIDAY PARTY

On December 15, the Training Opportunities for Youth (TOFY) program held a party. They enjoyed good food, playing fun games, singing carols, and making crafts. Many of the youth in this program have experienced significant trauma, and/or addictions, struggle with mental health, housing and food insecurity and gang affiliation.

A note of thanks from a youth we support:



Another youth stated that this was his “first holiday celebration ever and I’m having a great time!” While another youth said “today made me feel like I was just here, no where else, just here, it was amazing.”

Our TOFY Manager, Cyndi Schotchenko, commented that she had not seen them smile, laugh, and enthusiastically engage with one another as much as they did at the party. It appeared that the party triggered memories of happier times in their childhood—before their lives changed. She added “THANK YOU for giving the youth in TOFY the opportunity to be children.”

If you would like to support the Basic Needs or Endowment Funds, please visit us at our website: www.newdirections.mb.ca/donate.