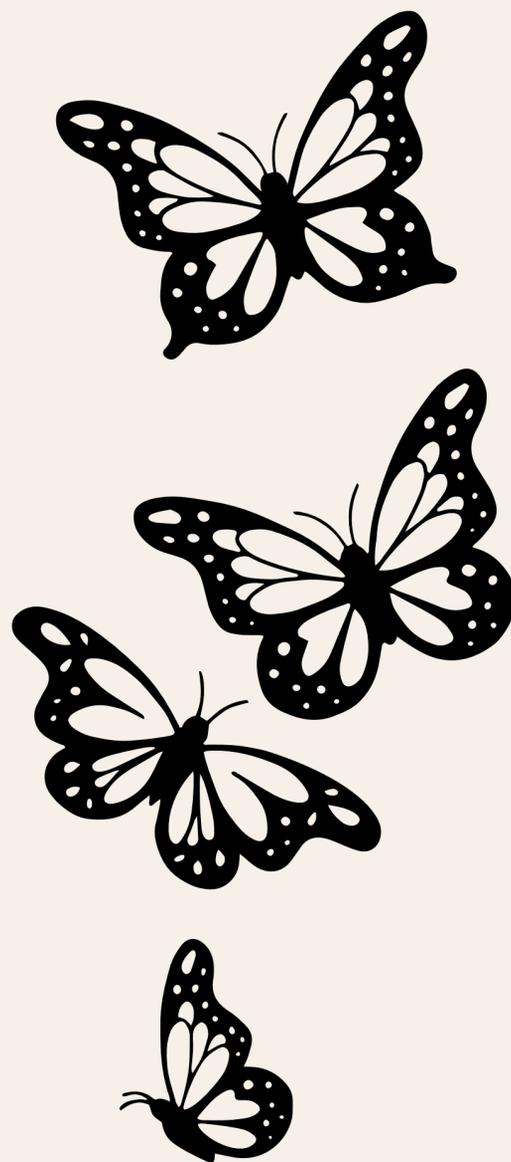




Bereaved Families of Ontario Toronto

2021 Annual Report



Bereaved Families of Ontario Toronto

BFO-Toronto is the founding affiliate of Bereaved Families of Ontario, a provincial charitable organization, established in 1978 to support the grief a person, family, or group experiences from the death of a loved one. Now one of 11 affiliates, BFO-Toronto offers support within the City of Toronto.

Our Vision

Create a community of support in the City of Toronto where no citizen is alone in their grief.

Our Mission

Inspire hope and healing for those in grief through peer-to-peer support.

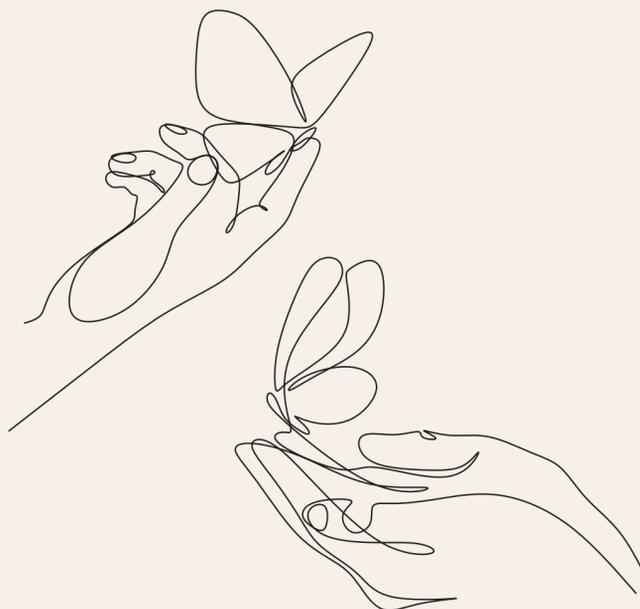


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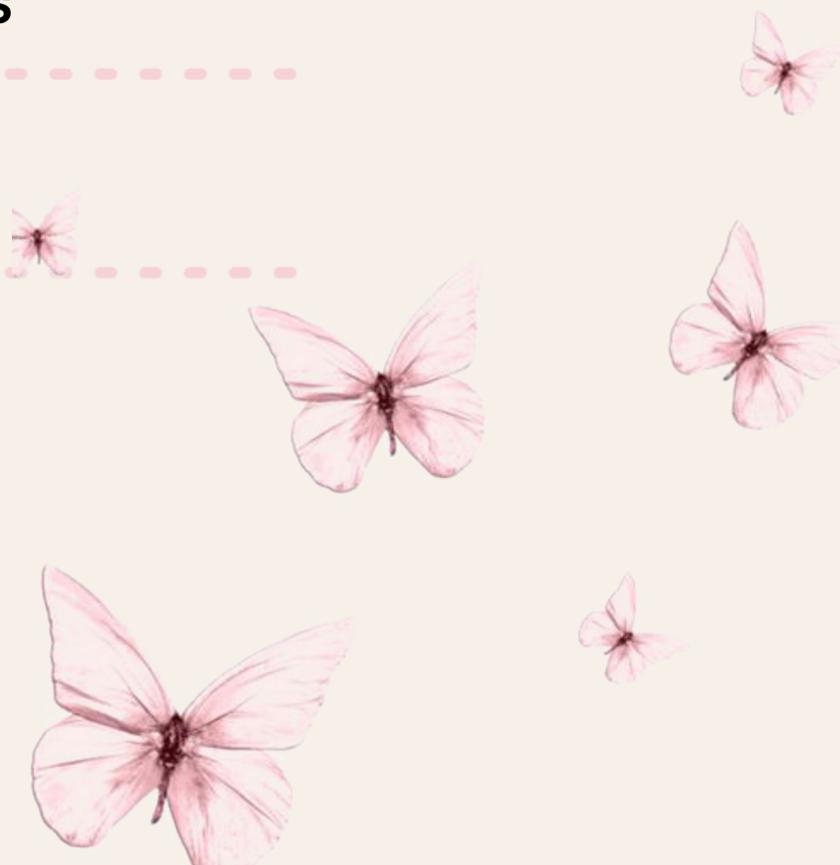
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A Message from our Chair and Executive Director

In 2021, the global pandemic moved into its third, fourth and fifth waves resulting in continued lockdowns driving further isolation and creating significant challenges for the grieving community. In turn, BFO-Toronto became more critical to bereaved Torontonians unable to participate in face-to-face grieving rituals or to access their own support networks. BFO-Toronto rose to the occasion, responding to over 1000 support requests which was an increase of 20% over 2020. We also increased our one-to-one support by 75% and the number of support groups by almost 40%.

The increase in service and support requests placed an enormous demand on our tireless volunteers. To address the increased needs of the community, we pre-emptively grew our active volunteer pool from 85 to 110 committed individuals, some of whom could provide support immersed in a variety of different languages and cultures. With the higher volume of work to be done, we supported our volunteers with offerings such as Engagement Evenings and Lunch 'n Learns. These were well attended and much appreciated.

In 2021, in addition to responding to increasing demand, we also prioritized increasing access to programming and support for *all* Torontonians. We did this through diversifying our volunteer base, piloting new programming in different languages and for specific cultural groups, and undertaking an office move. We moved our offices to a community hub located at Church & Gerrard. Our new home base is more centrally located within the city and offers improved access to complementary resources and services that our clients may need.

For many people who have availed themselves of our services, their connection with BFO-Toronto has led to lifelong friendships and support networks. To provide opportunities to connect, further build community and perhaps most importantly, honour their loved ones, we found creative ways of hosting beloved annual events without leaving home. Our Butterflies of Hope and Trees of Light ceremonies recognized our loved ones online. We also held our second annual 5K Memorial which opened and ended virtually and which raised over \$60,000, a significant increase from 2020.

After two years of required pivots to offer safe programming, we are optimistic that 2022 will allow a return to in-person services, in addition to virtual supports for those who prefer this option. We are confident that we enter this new phase of pandemic recovery as a stronger, more effective organization. We owe our success to our staff, volunteers and our generous donors.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leah Boyd

Chair, Board of Directors

Meredith Cochrane

Executive Director

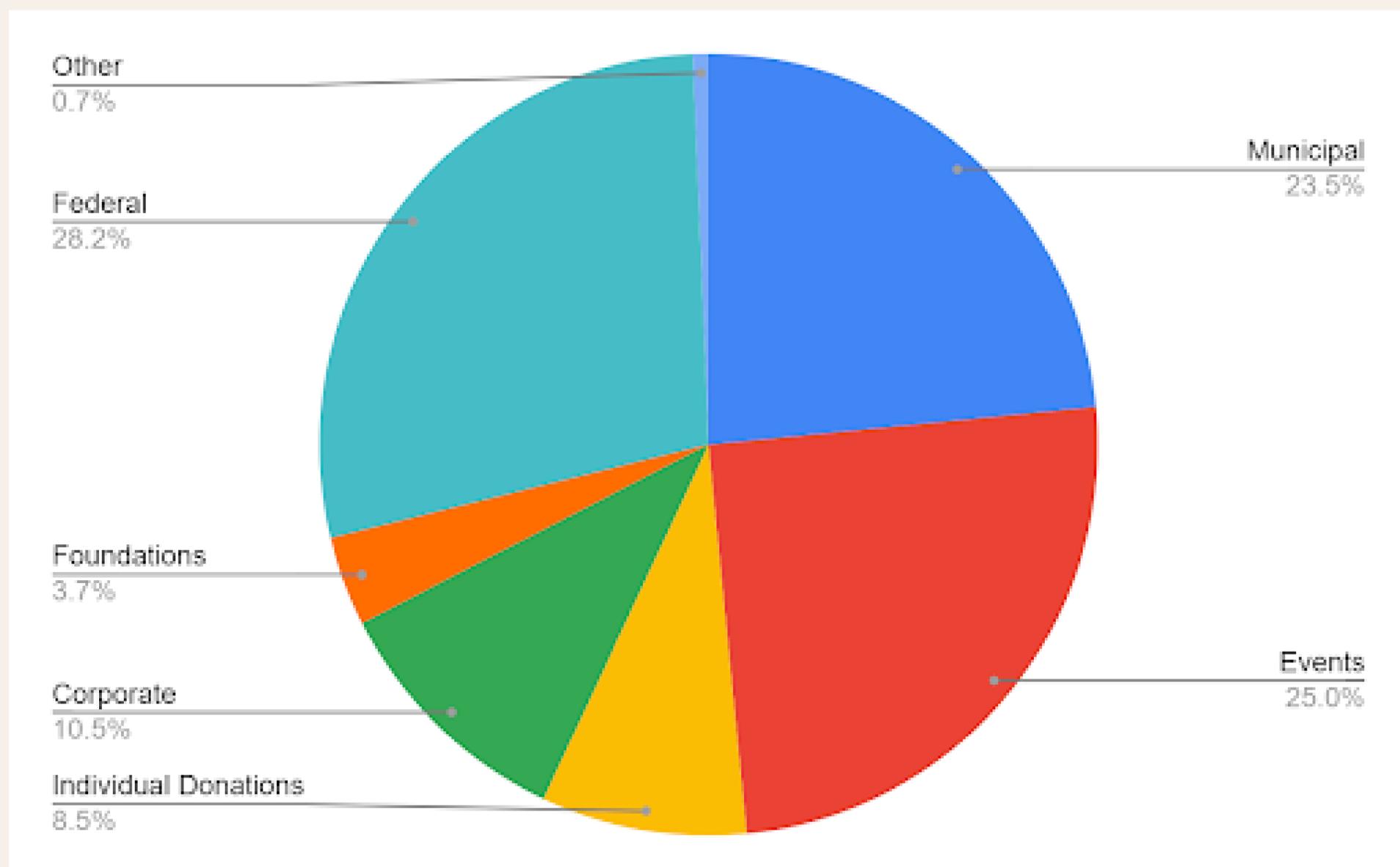


2021 Financials

Revenue

\$348,077

BFO-Toronto increased revenue levels slightly from 2021. We had generous support from both corporate donors and individuals. We also received support through emergency programs administered by the federal government and continued to receive generous municipal support. Despite being virtual, our events were a huge success and contributed to one quarter of our revenue.

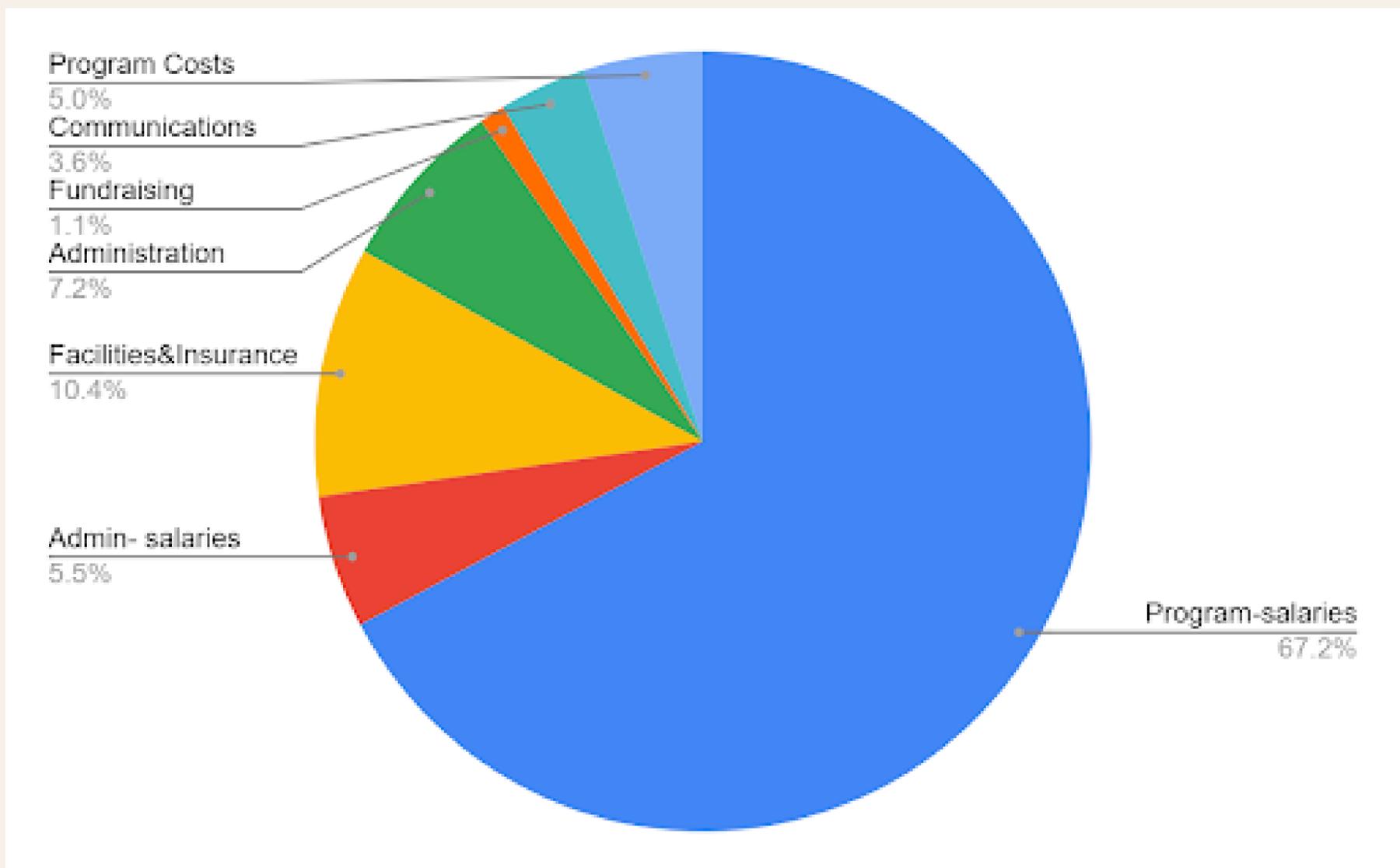


2021 Financials

Expenditures

\$323,629

BFO-Toronto maintained the size of the staff team at four this year which allowed us to meet the increasing demand. Spending on facilities decreased as we moved in July to a smaller office space. This smaller space is possible because we are now a part of a community hub offering shared space for group meetings and training.



2021 Impact

BFO-Toronto's reach has grown significantly over the course of the pandemic. Between the end of 2019 and the end of 2021, support requests had grown by 42% to over 1000. In response, we increased the number of support groups we offered by 29% and more than tripled the hours of individual support we provided.

	2019	2020	2021	% Change from 2019
Number of Enquires for Support	723	847	1024	42%
Hours of Individual Support	142	335	544	283%
Number of Support Groups Held	209	197	270	29%
Hours of group support received by participants	3093	3068	3780	22%
Number of Active Facilitators	65	87	112	72%

2021 Impact

Our vision is to support all Torontonians who are grieving. To do this we must ensure that every resident can access our services and we must offer opportunities to grieve and connect that align with their own language and culture. This vision was central to our program planning throughout 2021.

Access to Service

Virtual support opened a door to support for people in every geographic corner of Toronto as there was no longer a need to travel. With funding from the Federal Government, we purchased laptops and tablets for loan to individuals who did not have access to technology resulting in our online groups becoming accessible to everyone. We moved our office from midtown to Church and Gerrard, a more central location within the city. As we enter a new phase of the pandemic recovery, our intention is to return to offering in-person services, while also continuing our offering of virtual programming. We believe a hybrid approach to our programming is crucial to offering accessibility to all Torontonians.

Support Groups

We successfully expanded our support group and one-to-one offerings in 2021. They included:

Young adult – for anyone between 18 to 29 who has experienced a life changing loss

Spousal/partner loss under 55 – for anyone under 55

Spousal/partner loss over 55 – for anyone over 55

Child loss – for a parent or parents who have lost a child

Friend & family loss – for anyone 30 or older who has experienced any life changing loss

South Asian group – for anyone who identifies as South Asian

Hindi/Urdu Group – for anyone who would like to participate in Hindi or Urdu

Other languages - we began offering one-to-one sessions in other languages and recruited volunteers to support this service

Special Interest Groups

Many of our participants wish to continue exploring their grief after attending an initial support group. In response to this, we ran writing workshops, yoga sessions and a book club.

2021 Events

Butterflies of Hope



In June, we took a new approach to our butterfly event and introduced Butterflies of Hope. We chose to move to a virtual rather than live butterfly release, which allowed people to participate from the safety of their homes. The event included music, poetry, meditation, and the launch of a virtual butterfly page featuring the names of every loved one being honoured. Each of the 100 participants received a package with wildflower seed paper to plant and encourage a healthy habitat for butterflies as well as a poem, tea, and a tag with their loved one's name.

BFO-Toronto 5K Memorial



In October, we held our second 5km Memorial event. Sixty-five participants began the day virtually, then headed off hiking, biking, walking or riding scooters. The day generated awareness of BFO-Toronto with spectacles on the street and updates on social media. At the day's end, we congregated online to celebrate our collective success in raising over \$60,000 for BFO-Toronto's programming.

Trees of Light



2021 marked our 30th Annual Trees of Light. While our return to City Hall would need to wait another year, our online gathering and virtual tree were a huge success. Three hundred loved ones were remembered through a candle ceremony, spoken word, and music in an inclusive event that featured performances by many of our volunteers and community members and honoured a variety of cultures and traditions. The night culminated in the 'lighting' of our virtual tree which displayed our loved ones' names throughout the holiday season.

Thank You to our Financial Supporters

BFO-Toronto's vision is to create a community of support so that no Torontonians are alone in their grief. To move towards this goal, we need to provide a diversity of programs that are free of charge as well as accessible to and inclusive of all residents. This would not be possible without the support we received from foundations, government, corporations and generous individuals. We sincerely thank every one of them.



The Farwell Group
ScotiaMcLeod, a division of Scotia Capital Inc.



LINDEN & ASSOCIATES
BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION



Gouvernement
du Canada

Government
of Canada



PayPal Giving Fund Canada

Our Financial Supporters

Platinum (Over \$20,000)

City of Toronto
The Farwell Group, Scotia Wealth
Management
The Government of Canada

Gold (\$5,000-\$20,000)

Leah Boyd
Catherine Ince
David Jeffrey
The Estate of Jacqueline LeBlanc
Mattamy Homes
The Parrott Family
Alyson Robertson
Jane Smart
Telus Friendly Future Foundation
Thorek/Scott & Partners
Toronto Arts Council

Silver (\$1,000-\$5,000)

Arbor Memorial Inc
The BLG Foundation
Cardinal Funeral Homes
Michael Chiu
Evergreen Crematorium
Barb Gill-Lazroe
Karen Hersey
Linden & Associates
Lotus Funeral & Cremation Centre
Shevaun McGrath
PayPal Charitable Giving Fund
Valerie Pippy
Dorothy Weiss

Bronze (Under \$1,000)

Every dollar donated contributes to the work we do. We are fortunate that there are too many individual donors to be named here.
We thank you all!

Thank you to our 2021 Staff, Students, and Volunteers

Thank you for your tireless work and dedication.

2021 BFO-T Staff

Katrina Buchanan
Laura Campbell
Meredith Cochrane
Hunaina Kamran
Minahil Khalid
Carissa Parsons
Jane Smart
Evan Wong
Sophia Yang

2021 BFO-T Students

Geoff Bennett-Sicilia
Laura Campbell
Peter Connelly
Megan Jenkins
Mena Kamel
Fatima Khan
Tayler Middleton
Rachel Moore
Samita Sarwan



Board of Directors

June-December 2021

Anjali Aggarwal* (Director)
Rena Arshinoff* (Director)
John Bacon (Treasurer)
Leah Boyd (Chair)
Aimee Bruner* (Director)
Allan Cole (Director)

Peggy-Gail DeHal Gunraj* (Director)
Karen Hersey (Vice Chair, PAC)
Catherine Ince (Director)
Alyson Robertson (Secretary)
Asma Tareen* (Director)

**new in 2021*

Volunteers

**Our volunteers form the backbone of BFO-Toronto,
our gratitude knows no bounds.**

Gilda Ackler Sefton

Rachelle Allen

Stefania Baresic

Richard Bonnick

Kelly Broadhurst

Edel Buggy

Katherine Burgoyne

Andrew Cardinal

Alicia Cerda

Michael Chiu

Margherita DeCesare

Grace Duong

Donald Eckler

Melissa Eisen

Mariah Erjavec

Lee Failes

Judy Fantham

Nathalie-Roze Fischer

Laura Foran

Heather Hewitt

Clara Ho

Ryan Holt

Lori Ives-Baines

Charise Jewell

Judy Kane

Poonam Kohli

Larry Konyu

Dana Kousimandis

Ryan Kram

Grace Laroza

Inbar Levona

Mike Loader

Elaine Lonetto

Jock Maclachlan

Sarah Malleau

Amy Manusov

Margot Marcus

Tyler Mather

Judith McCaffery

Heather Medhurst

Mary Muir

Kailin Murfin

Greg New

Lesley Parrott

Miranda Pelletier

Gail Porter

Christine Raissis

Arane Reid

Neeru Sekhon

Peggy Shkuda

Nancy Shortell

Gulshan Singh

Aviva Sirotinsky

Anne Smith

Jason Smith

Hana Snir

Jenn Soutar

Myrna Talbot

Laurie Taniguchi

Wendy Tanner

Barbara Thompson

Heather Thompson

Alina Tsimbaliouk

Sandra Turner

Glennie Whitall

Sanjay Yagnik



What's in Store for 2022

Despite the challenges the global pandemic presented, we are emerging from it as a stronger and wider reaching organization.

The demand for our services has continued to climb into 2022. By the end of the year, we expect to have received 2000 support requests which is an increase of 165% over 2019. We are successfully meeting this increased demand through sustainable growth, an outward looking approach, and continued growth in our volunteer base.

Growing our Team

This year we are on track to have nine social work student placements. They allow us to respond quickly to our client requests while gaining valuable experience for their education. This year we also hired a part-time communications & events coordinator. She keeps our community informed and supports our creation of events which allows our front-line staff to focus on clients and facilitators.

Working in Partnership

At BFO-Toronto we recognize the strength of partnership to create awareness of our services, deliver higher quality programs, and ensure that our clients can access all the services they need. We have over 20 local partners with whom we work to market our programs and ensure that our services are relevant, appropriate, inclusive, and effective for all Torontonians. We will continue to foster these partnerships over the course of the year with the goal of furthering our reach into diverse and underserved communities within Toronto.

Building our Volunteer Capacity

We will continue to focus on increasing the number of volunteers we recruit and train annually. We expect to have 120 active volunteer facilitators by the end of 2022. It is important to us that our volunteer facilitators have an enriching experience with BFO-Toronto. To that end, we are building new opportunities for training and connecting with one another online and soon, in person.

Central to our vision that our growing community must include *all* Torontonians, we are actively seeking partnerships and volunteer facilitators who support this. As of 2022, we offer one to one services in 16 languages with our newest volunteers speaking German and Portuguese. We have just completed the first support group offered to differently abled people in partnership with the Down Syndrome Association.

Volunteer Opportunities

Participants and funders often comment that BFO-Toronto has an incredible impact, particularly for an organization of its size. The secret behind this is our volunteers. BFO-Toronto has a large group of committed volunteers who find satisfaction from the contributions they make, and community in the volunteers they meet. While the role of volunteer facilitator is often the first that comes to mind, it is not our only opportunity! We are always looking for new and enthusiastic volunteers and would love to hear from you. If you are interested in any of these opportunities please contact us at info@bfotoronto.ca.

Board Members

BFO-Toronto has a governing and working board. It is made up of a diverse group of people with a variety of professional skills and personal experiences who roll up their sleeves and help take fundraising, events, and programs forward. The board meets monthly with committees working in the interim. We are often looking for new members so if this interests you, please watch the newsletter for opportunities.

PAC

The Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) is made up of cross-sectoral professionals who provide support and services to bereaved individuals. It meets monthly and its objectives are to advise on programs offered or proposed by BFO-Toronto staff and volunteers, evaluate programs and offer recommendations, and provide the Board with insight regarding issues in bereavement and grief support.

Volunteer Facilitators

Peer volunteer facilitators participate in a 25-hour training program that provides information on grief, mental health and self care, as well as exercises to develop skills in active listening, conflict management, and communication. Our trained facilitators provide one-to-one support and group facilitation. We are particularly interested in hearing from you if you have culturally specific experience or can communicate in another language. This helps us to ensure we can serve all Torontonians.

Event Volunteers

Our three flagship events allow over 500 people to honour their loved ones. This year they are targeted to raise over \$100,000. This is an ambitious number, but one we feel is appropriate as we seek to continue to respond to increasing demand through the delivery of high-quality services. There is always a team of volunteers behind these events to make them a success! Please get in touch to find out more about everything from finding sponsors, to event planning, to helping with mail outs.

Support BFO-Toronto

BFO-Toronto is able to provide its service free of charge in large part due to support that comes from our community.

\$50 will send an individual to a group support session.

\$100 will fund an online community event.

\$350 will pay for a support group session for all attendees.

\$1,000 will train a volunteer facilitator.

One-time donations can be made anytime on our website or by phoning the office. Please consider setting up a monthly donation as this can help us plan for the year ahead. Some workplaces also have matching donation programs where they will match a monthly or one-time donation to your chosen cause. We hope you will consider donating if you are able.

Participate in our 5K Memorial

Participate on your own or start a team in memory of your loved one. Donate yourself or fundraise through friends, family or coworkers. This event is a fun day out in support of BFO-Toronto and is also a great way to spread the word about us!

Introduce Us!

BFO-Toronto is keen to build corporate support. This support may come through donations, sponsorships or partnerships. If you work for, or have a connection with, a company that you think might be interested, please consider making an introduction. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Meredith Cochrane.

Donations In-Kind

BFO-Toronto welcomes donations that we can use either as prizes at events or as a part of our silent auction. This could be a gift card from your favourite local business, a product that you have purchased or can procure through your workplace, or a service that you provide.

“This experience was incredible, beautiful, helpful and inspirational”

Participant, Friends & Family

“[Group] has been the most helpful thing to help me with my grief”

Participant, Friends & Family

“Thank you so much for this experience! You don’t know how much this has changed me for the better and it has given me back my voice!”

Participant, Young Adult Group



Contact Us

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