



Insights and Encounters

March 2025

Volume 3 - Issue 1



 **CCAT SCHOLARSHIPS**
Applications are now being accepted!

Cardinal Thomas Collins Palliative Care & Gerontology Studies Scholarship	Indigenous Youth Community Leader Scholarship	Fr. Paul Lennon/ Doreen Cullen Social Work Scholarship
Life-Long Learner Scholarship	Sisters of Service Scholarship	

APPLY NOW! PLEASE SUBMIT ALL APPLICATIONS TO: INFO@CCAT.CA

DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2025

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION: CCAT.CA/SCHOLARSHIPS

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- Silent Voice: Celebrating 50 Years





Community's Success Story

Catholic Community Services of York Region



Eight IMGs Matched into Residency— A Community's Success Story

Not long ago, eight International Medical Graduates (IMGs) were navigating the uncertainty of the residency match process, facing the same challenges as so many others before them. Today, they stand at the threshold of their dreams, having successfully matched into their residency programs through CaRMS. This moment is more than just an individual achievement—it is a testament to the power of community, perseverance, and shared success.

As many of you may know, we have had the privilege of walking alongside these IMGs at Catholic Community Services of York Region (CCSYR), offering guidance, mentorship, and a space where they could prepare—not just for exams, but for the journey ahead.

A Community That Lifts Each Other Up

In the last edition, we highlighted how our IMG networking and study group has always been more than a study space introduced since 2010. The continued success of the IMGs validate that this group led by Shamima Mili brings IMGs together not just to prepare for their licensing exams but to build a network of support that lasts well beyond the study sessions. In 2024, over 1,000 IMGs received guidance through four study sessions per week, led by volunteer facilitators, who are past participants themselves. This cycle of mentorship is a defining characteristic of our program, where former clients return as mentors, passing on the knowledge and encouragement they once received. As we celebrate these matches, we're reminded that success is never just personal—it's collective. The perseverance of the successful IMGs and the support offered by their peers, mentors, and volunteers who made sure no one had to face the challenges of the Canadian medical licensing process by themselves- continue to inspire us. We are fortunate to be part of these journeys.

If you are an IMG beginning your journey in Canada or know someone who could use support, encouragement, or a place to belong, we are here.

[!\[\]\(6a9b39b98eb945faa14c645ec99e4eaa_img.jpg\) Learn more about our impact here](#)



Connect Walk In Counselling Clinic

CFS Peel-Dufferin



Need someone to talk to?
Visit our

CONNECT Walk-In Counselling Clinic

EVERY THURSDAY.

TIME: 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM
ARRIVE BY 6:00 PM FOR
SAME-DAY SERVICE.

LOCATION:

THE HONOURABLE
WILLIAM G. DAVIS CENTRE
FOR FAMILIES

60 WEST DRIVE, SUITE 201
BRAMPTON, ON, L6T 3T6

PHONE: (905) 450-1608

CFSPD.COM

**Need to talk to someone?
Visit our **CONNECT Walk In Counselling Clinic!****

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin's CONNECT Walk-In Counselling Clinic offers free, confidential walk in counselling services every Thursday from 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Honourable William G. Davis Centre for Families (60 West Drive, Suite 201, Brampton). No appointment is needed—just arrive by 6:00 PM to meet with a caring professional who will listen to your concerns, assess your needs, offer supportive counselling and guide you toward the right resources. Whether you're seeking support for stress, relationships, parenting, youth challenges, or other issues, this initial visit is your starting point. Spread the word: this no-cost assessment ensures everyone can access the care they deserve.

Questions?
Call (905) 450-1608 or visit CFSPD.COM.



Bringing Light to Our Senior Citizens

CFS Toronto



At Catholic Family Services of Toronto, we firmly believe that no one should face life's ever changing trials alone. As people age, they encounter new day-to-day challenges as the world around them evolves - relationships shift, communities shrink, and what once seemed manageable may now require additional support. They may also find themselves devastated by unexpected illnesses, the loss of loved ones, limited mobility, and navigating overly complex technological systems.

That's why our counsellors have taken to the road and began offering in-person seniors' programs at GTA based parishes and the LA Centre for Active Seniors, where we're able to produce a welcoming environment for our older adults and their caregivers, so they can find educational and emotional support, companionship, and the care they deserve. In 2024 alone, counsellors Corina Sumaway MEd, MDiv (c), Nathalie Bedros RN, BScN, MaEd, CCP, and Yan Yan Woo BSW, RSW, held dozens of accessible, interactive workshops and programs at all corners of the GTA, promoting mental and emotional wellbeing for our golden-year citizens in their respective neighbourhoods. Our workshops range in subject matter, such as: offering tools on identifying potential scammers, tips on living a wholesome life through diet and physical activity, providing mental health strategies to manage stress, guidance on dealing with grief and loss, and improving self-care. Through these programs, we help seniors navigate their twilight years with confidence by offering them support, resources, and community.



**Covenant
House**
Toronto

10th Annual Guts & Glory Competition

Covenant House



Covenant House is pleased to have hosted its 10th annual Guts & Glory competition on March 6 in support of youth experiencing homelessness and trafficking. This year, 28 teams from the business community competed in a series of challenges that tested their physical and mental strength, with Scotiabank's team emerging as the 2025 event winner. Since its inception, this energetic event has raised \$4.5 million to help ensure 16-24-year-olds benefit from the life-changing programs, services, and care they need and deserve to move forward towards their brighter future ahead. Proceeds from this event will go toward helping to provide youth with 24/7 emergency shelter, access to healthcare, counselling services, life skills training and much more.

Learn more and support here:

<https://covenanhousetorontoevents.ca/ui/gutsglory2025>



March Madness Sensory Playday

Rose of Sharon



Our building is filled with giggles, laughter, and learning. Sensory play is like a secret recipe for a child’s development—mixing fun with learning! It helps little ones explore their world and supports their fine and gross motor skills. At Rose of Sharon, we know that sensory play is the key to encouraging creativity, discovery, and socializing—all while having a blast! When kids dive into sensory activities, they're not just having fun, they're also building skills that will ‘stick’ with them as they grow.

During our March Madness Sensory Playday, families had a blast exploring all kinds of textures, colors, and materials. It was a perfect opportunity for kids, parents, staff, and volunteers to work together, share, and learn from each other, all while enjoying hands-on fun. And the best part? Everything was completely edible, so no worries about messes—just good, safe fun!

What better way to wrap up March break than with laughter, learning, and some tasty sensory play? Everyone bonded over the joy of exploring together, creating memories and skills that will last. Plus, this event was totally free, making it an extra-special way for families to enjoy time together. At Rose of Sharon, we love giving families the chance to grow, laugh, and connect through play!



Compassionate Care for the Vulnerable: Nancy Lefebre on Journey Home Hospice

Saint Elizabeth Healthcare



At Saint Elizabeth Foundation, we have a 115-year history of putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Recently, Nancy Lefebre the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President of our parent company, SE Health, was featured on an episode of TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin. Nancy highlighted the work being done at Journey Home Hospice, a signature program of the Foundation, and how it helps ensure people experiencing homelessness receive specialized, compassionate end-of-life palliative care.

Since opening, one of the most challenging tasks at the hospice has been tackling the social stigmas attached to homelessness and dying. Over the course of the interview, Nancy addresses Journey Home Hospice's holistic model that uses trauma-informed, culturally safe, and harm-reducing approaches to care while also discussing respect for life, equitable access to palliative care, and advocating for our most vulnerable members of society.

Watch the entire interview [here](#) and visit www.journeyhomehospice.ca to learn more.



Celebrating 50 Years of serving in the Deaf community

Silent Voice



In 2025, Silent Voice marks five decades of serving Deaf adults, youth, children, infants, and their families, and for the past 44 years has been a Catholic Charities member agency, accountable to its funders, stakeholders, partners, and the individuals and families we serve. 50 years! What a milestone! In the early 1970s, a Catholic priest and a group of community-minded individuals recognized that disadvantaged Deaf adults and children had a number of significant needs that were not being met within the social service community. In 1975, Silent Voice Canada Inc. became incorporated federally as a community not-for-profit charitable organization. A year before that, it hosted its first Sign Language Summer day camp for Deaf kids and their siblings that continues to this day!

From a single camp program in 1974 to a vast array of programs, resources, and programs today, Silent Voice continues to have its finger on the pulse of the Deaf community—removing barriers, enhancing communication, developing skills, and providing inclusion and belonging to a marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented, equity-deserving population.

Did you know ...

- ... that greater than 90% of Silent Voice staff are Deaf or Hard of Hearing professionals?
- ... that American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of operations?
- ... that ASL is not a universal signed language, and that Silent Voice staff know several other signed languages?
- ... that ASL, Quebec Sign Language, and Indigenous signed languages are used in Canada, and there are several dialects across the country, and hundreds of signed languages worldwide?
- ... that greater than 90% of Deaf children are born to hearing (non-Deaf) parents?
- ... that 70% of Deaf children experience language deprivation?
- ... that 70% of hearing parents with a signing Deaf child do not learn sign language?
- ... that the under- and unemployment rate of Deaf people is four to six times the national average?
- ... that there are Deaf doctors, lawyers, CEOs, engineers, entrepreneurs, ASL professionals, chefs, actors, teachers ...?
- ... that Silent Voice hosted the Canada Deaf Games in 2024?
- ... that the Deaf community is not geographically bound, but is a linguistic, cultural minority group with intersectionalities that reflect the diversity that is the Canadian population?
- ... that Silent Voice serves Deaf community members from birth to death?
- ... that in the past 10 years, Silent Voice has grown by 319%?

Visit www.silentvoice.ca to learn more (new website launching April 1).

Catholic Charities' Scholarships & Community Service Awards



CCAT SCHOLARSHIPS
Applications are now being accepted!

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Indigenous Youth Community Leader Scholarship

Fr. Paul Lennon/Doreen Cullen Social Work Scholarship

Life-Long Learner Scholarship

Sisters of Service Scholarship

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DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2025

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CCAT MICHAEL FULLAN COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS
Applications are now being accepted!

Three Categories:

10 Years in the Human Services sector

Youth up to 29 years of age

Exceptional Difference to an Equity-deserving Community

DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2025

APPLY NOW! PLEASE SUBMIT ALL APPLICATIONS TO: INFO@CCAT.CA

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION: CCAT.CA/SCHOLARSHIPS-AND-AWARDS

The time to apply is now!

Scholarships can have a transformative impact on students' lives. When Catholic Charities established its first scholarship in 2013, we wanted to open doors to educational opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. We wanted to recognize and reward not just academic excellence but perseverance and potential. When we were tasked with creating additional scholarships, we embraced the opportunity to support even more dreams.

Today, we offer five scholarships, in the amount of up to \$5,000 each, for students who live, study, or work within the Archdiocese of Toronto and meet the eligibility criteria of the scholarship.

- Fr. Paul Lennon/Doreen Cullen Social Work Scholarship for Social Work students
- Cardinal Thomas Collins Palliative Care and Gerontology Scholarship for Palliative Care and Gerontology students
- The Indigenous Youth Community Leadership Scholarship for Indigenous Youth Community Leaders
- The Lifelong Learner Scholarship for students transitioning to a new career or seeking to upgrade their skills in their workplace
- The Sisters of Service Scholarship for new immigrants and refugees

We have established the Michael Fullan Community Service Awards in three categories in honour of our former Executive Director's thirty years of service. We wanted to celebrate and acknowledge the local neighbourhood heroes among us—those who selflessly contribute to their communities and embody the spirit of generosity and leadership. Nominations can be submitted through our online form. More details can be found here: Michael Fullan Community Service Awards.

The deadline to apply or nominate is **April 30, 2025**. With a little over a month left in this year's scholarship cycle, don't miss the chance to be part of a legacy of excellence and service—apply today and make a difference in your future and community!



IN OUR OWN WORDS

Felicia Kontopidis
Journey Home Hospice



The Cardinal Thomas Collins Palliative Care & Gerontology Studies Scholarship has been a guiding light for me as I completed my studies. This support arrived at a pivotal moment, allowing me to fully engage in my coursework and immerse myself in learning how to bring comfort, dignity, and compassion to those at the end of life. The scholarship helped with essential resources—from textbooks to study guides and tuition—easing the financial pressure and enabling me to focus entirely on developing the skills and expanding my scope of practice needed to better support our aging and most vulnerable populations.

Now, as I contribute to the important work at Journey Home Hospice, a hospice dedicated to caring for individuals who are vulnerably housed, I am able to expand on these skills in a way that honours the dignity of every person. This scholarship has not only supported me financially but has deepened my commitment to providing empathetic, holistic care to those in their final stages, particularly those who often face added barriers due to their housing status, social isolation, mental illness, and substance use.

I am endlessly grateful for this support, which has turned my aspirations into reality. I look forward to honouring this gift by making a meaningful impact on individuals and families facing profound life transitions, carrying forward Catholic Charities' values of service and compassion.

Catholic Charities' Scholarships Testimonials



Receiving the 2021 Father Paul Lennon /Doreen Cullen Scholarship through Catholic Charities enabled me to successfully complete my MSW, and I graduated in June 2022! The scholarship helped ease the strain of juggling work, family, academics and financial responsibilities, and it was a proud moment when I walked across the stage to receive my degree, with my family cheering me on.

Becoming a registered social worker has allowed me to connect on a deeper level with some of the young families I work with at Rosalie Hall and has enhanced my contributions to our clinical team. I sincerely appreciate the support of Catholic Charities in shaping who I am today!



RESHAWN JEFFERS HUNTER

FR. PAUL LENNON/
DOREEN CULLEN
SOCIAL WORK
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
2021



I cannot thank the team at Catholic Charities enough for the support of the Fr. Paul Lennon-Doreen Cullen Scholarship in 2023. In addition to recognizing my work in Catholic Healthcare, this award connected me with many amazing people who serve Catholic Charities and the member organizations. The award inspired me to facilitate Providence Healthcare's first ever Caregiver Retreat in 2024 and support new palliative care workshops in the community. I look forward to graduating in 2025 and advancing care and social services for our neighbours in need.



RONALD PERINPANAYAGAM

FR. PAUL LENNON/
DOREEN CULLEN
SOCIAL WORK
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
2023



I am honored to have received the Sisters of Service Scholarship. As a former asylum seeker in Canada, I am committed to serve asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants with precarious status. The Sisters of Service Scholarship has allowed me to pursue a Master of Arts in Latin American Studies at Stanford University where I am examining the effect of Canadian immigration policy on Latin American refugee claimants. Afterwards, I hope to become a refugee lawyer to render justice more accessible to asylum seekers in Toronto.



I would like to thank CCAT and the donors for their generosity!

FABIOLA CRUZ LI

SISTERS OF SERVICE
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
2024



As a refugee who arrived in Canada to rebuild my life and pursue my dreams, this scholarship is more than financial support –it's an acknowledgment of my journey and the resilience that has brought me here. With this support, I'm able to focus wholeheartedly on my studies and professional growth, working toward a career where I can contribute meaningfully to my new community

Currently, I'm studying to become a paralegal, where I can apply my background in human rights. This scholarship has not only provided essential financial support but has also reminded me that there are people and organizations that believe in my potential. Thank you once again for this incredible gift. I look forward to making a positive impact in Canada and giving back as a way of honoring the support I've received



ARMITA SASANI

SISTERS OF SERVICE
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
2024



Jubilee Year 2025 "Pilgrims of Hope"



The Catholic Church worldwide is celebrating a special Jubilee Year in 2025.

The theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year is "Pilgrims of Hope," encouraging Catholics to renew their hope in Christ.

The Jubilee Year began on Dec 24, 2024, with the opening of the Holy Door in Rome, and Pope Francis offered this prayer:

"Let us pray that this upcoming Jubilee may strengthen us in our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope."

PAUSE & REFLECT

ARE YOU THE BELOVED?

Dr. Agnes S. Thomas

When life hits hard, it's easy to forget that we are the beloved. Reflecting on what it means to be a 'Pilgrim of Hope,' inspired by Pope Francis' call for the Jubilee year, one thought has risen for me in recent weeks: to embody hope and become a sign of hope for others, we must first own and acknowledge our 'belovedness'—that intrinsic state of being that does not waver with our status or circumstances. How can we recognize our 'belovedness'? We can begin by no longer wavering or stumbling in our search for worth, even in the face of adversity. This unshakable truth anchors us and grounds us in the knowledge that our value is not conditional. This awareness connects us to others and to the world and becomes a source of hope—not just for ourselves, but for everyone we encounter. Our 'belovedness' compels us to love once more, to forgive once more, to extend kindness once more, and to rise after we fall. It reminds us in moments of doubt that we are worthy, precious, and enough. What does it truly mean to be the beloved? How does this identity manifest itself in our daily lives? And what happens when the world tells us otherwise especially when faced with rejection, disappointment, or pain? Who do we choose to believe, ourselves or the external voices?

Being beloved is not a status we earn; it is a gift granted to us as humans. It is a state of grace that all must nurture and protect. Only after doing so do we begin to perceive the world through the lens of someone loved, valued and nourished. For children, this 'belovedness' often comes more easily—provided they are surrounded by safe, stable, and loving environments. Like flowers in a garden, children flourish when they are nourished with affirmation and their inherent preciousness is cared for by those around them. Yet, our world is far from ideal. Many of us did not grow up in environments that affirmed our 'belovedness.' Instead, we were taught—through words, actions, or neglect—that we were burdensome, unlovable, or broken. These wounds linger, and shape how we perceive and interact with the world. They become narratives we carry silently, hidden from the light, distorting our sense of worth.

So, the question becomes: How can we change this narrative? How can we break the cycle and create a world where we reflect one another's 'belovedness,' reminding each other of the sacredness of our worth?

It starts with us. Individually, we must embody this truth and allow it to transform our hearts. Like salt to food or yeast to bread, our transformations can have rippling outward effects that create collective change. We rise together to build and create, but this must begin with a commitment within ourselves. This transformation manifests when our families and communities embrace the spirit of 'belovedness.' They must become spaces characterized by sacrificial love, patience, endurance, and joy. 'Belovedness' should become the standard by which we make decisions, treat our neighbours, operate workplaces, and connect with one another—even across our differences. By practicing this, we cultivate environments where hope and love flourish.

Admittedly, this vision may sound idealistic, even unattainable, in light of the destruction, suffering, and pain surrounding us. But I find hope in the cracks of our brokenness. It is through these cracks that light enters. The rejection and pain inflicted by those we once trusted may leave scars but also create openings for healing and transformation. When we address those wounds and release their hold over our hearts, we begin to return to the state in which we were created: beloved, worthy of love, and capable of sharing love with those around us.

If each of us commits to entering this season of life with the conviction of our 'belovedness,' we can create ripples of transformation. Over time, these ripples grow into waves, building families, neighbourhoods, and communities where people recognize their own preciousness and treat others as precious too. From this conviction springs radical hope—a hope that the world can be transformed, one light at a time, as we hold our light up to one another.

Let us live as the beloved and become pilgrims of hope. In a time and place where hope is scarce, let us fight cynicism and fear by embracing our 'belovedness' and sharing that truth with the world.

ON THE HORIZON

INSIGHTS & ENCOUNTERS
Catholic Charities **THE PODCAST**

THE HOPE SERIES

EP. 01	TERRY SMITH -JUST SOCKS Wednesday, March 26, 2025
EP. 02	BRIAN HARRIS -ST. FELIX CENTRE Wednesday, April 2, 2025

+ **NEW** Episodes Weekly!

SCAN ME! 

CLICK BELOW TO LISTEN!
[SPREAKER.COM/PODCAST/INSIGHTS-AND-ENCOUNTERS](https://speakr.com/podcast/insights-and-encounters)

LISTEN ON SPOTIFY! 

Insights & Encounters Podcast – “Hope In Action”

In times of uncertainty and struggle, hope is the light that guides us forward. Join us on "Hope in Action," a podcast series where we share the stories of resilience, faith, and love that define our community. Listen to heartfelt conversations with various members of our community as they discuss hope through their unique perspectives, and let their journeys inspire you. Each episode is a testament to the power of hope, offering comfort and encouragement when you need it most.

Look for our first episode debuting on Wednesday, March 26, 2025!

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto provides leadership, supports social services, and facilitates advocacy for its member agencies and the people they serve. At its core is Catholic Social Teaching that focuses on the poor and marginalized, urging us all to build a just society and safeguard the dignity of every person.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto

How you can contact member agencies of Catholic Charities

MEMBER AGENCIES

COMMUNITY/FAMILY SERVICES

Catholic Community Services of York Region
1-800-263-2075
www.ccsyr.org

Catholic Crosscultural Services
416-757-7010
www.cathcrosscultural.org

Catholic Family Services of Durham
1-877-282-8932
www.cfsdurham.com

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin
905-450-1608
www.cfspd.com

Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
1-800-726-2503
www.cfssc.ca

Catholic Family Services of Toronto
416-921-1163
www.cfstoronto.com

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mary Centre
416-630-5533
www.marycentre.com

Saint Elizabeth Health Care
905-940-9655
www.sehc.com

St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre
416-654-9810
www.stbernadettesfrc.org

St. Michael's Homes
Our Place Community of Hope
416-926-8267
www.stmichaelshomes.org

Silent Voice Canada
416-463-1104 TTY
416-463-3928
www.silentvoice.ca

SENIORS

Centres d'Accueil Héritage (CAH)
416-365-3350
www.caheritage.org

LA Centre for Active Seniors
416-452-4875
www.lacentreforseniors.ca

Houses of Providence
(Unity Health Toronto)
416-285-3666
www.providence.on.ca

Society of Sharing
416-413-0380
www.societyofsharing.org

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto
416-395-1500
www.torontoccas.ca

Covenant House of Toronto
1-800-435-7308
www.covenanthouseoftoronto.com

YOUNG PARENTS

Rosalie Hall
416-438-6880
www.rosaliehall.com

Rose of Durham
(Young Parents Division of CFS Durham)
905-432-3622
www.roseofdurham.com

Rose of Sharon
905-853-5514
www.roseofsharon.com

Vita Centre
905-502-7933
www.vitacentre.org

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Camp Ozanam
(Society of St. Vincent de Paul)
416-364-5577
info@ssvptoronto.ca

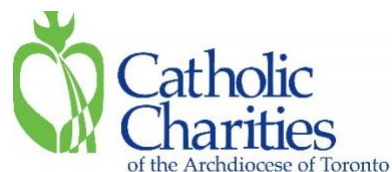
Good Shepherd Ministries
416-869-3619
www.goodshepherd.ca

Birthright International
1-800-550-4900
www.birthright.org

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys
FertilityCare Toronto
416-465-2868
www.fertilitycare.ca

Natural Family Planning Association
437-600-9333
www.toronto.naturalfamilyplanning.ca

To learn more about
Catholic Charities go to:
www.ccat.ca



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