



**merrymount**

*family support and crisis centre*

**2020-2021  
Annual Report  
Resiliency**

# Resilience

## Board President & Executive Director Message

William Berg & Paul Howarth

Resilience has been defined as the trait that gives people the psychological strength to cope with stress and hardship. Psychologists believe that resilient individuals are better able to handle adversity and rebuild their lives after a struggle. To do so, people need a safe and nurturing space to weather the storm and the skills and knowledge to recover when the storm has passed.

**Merrymount builds resilient families.** We support families to be strong, to overcome their challenges and to stay together. Everything we do is specifically designed to provide children and their families with the skills and knowledge required to face their individual crises, to overcome their difficult circumstances, and to lead healthier and happier lives.

The global pandemic has brought new challenges to all our lives. Many of us have the skills, support systems, and resources to overcome these challenges and move forward. But for families who were already struggling – with mental health, trauma, poverty, and so much more – these challenges can become or are overwhelming.

That is precisely why, when the pandemic occurred, Merrymount immediately pivoted to virtual methods to stay connected to the families across London in need of support. Within days we had contacted and supported every family who relies on our Crisis Residential/Respite Program. Within weeks we had contacted over 8,000 families who were struggling to cope with the immediate impact of the pandemic. We developed information packages for our website that have been accessed by tens of thousands additional families across Ontario. As soon as safety guidelines allowed, our overnight and day programs reopened for in-person care allowing over 2,500 children to receive care through our overnight program and thousands more in our day programs. Merrymount continues to provide all our services, without interruption, to help families build resiliency.

While our service delivery was altered by the pandemic, our impact and reach were not. Feedback from families indicates Merrymount was often their only remaining lifeline during the early stages of the pandemic, they felt supported and better able to keep their families strong and resilient.

To the children who use our programs, Merrymount is an extension of their family, someone they can rely upon, trust, and learn from. To allow these children to continue to learn essential life skills without interruption throughout the pandemic was critical for their development and ability to thrive, not only during the pandemic but throughout their development and life.

**When we lift up one child or one family, together, we start to lift up our whole community.**

Resilient children and families are better able to utilize their skills and strengths to cope and recover from problems and challenges. With the support of Merrymount, through provision of programs, supports and tools to increase reliance, our families reported an increased ability to overcome adversity, and avoid negative emotions throughout this challenging time.

We are so proud of how Merrymount stepped up this year to ensure continuity of service to the families who rely upon us. It is a testament to our staff's dedication that we developed and implemented new methodologies to support our families **when they needed us the most**. It is a testament to all Merrymount donors, friends and partners that our community support allowed us to face these challenges and continue to fulfill our mission **without interruption**.

Together we can ensure no child or family has to face their challenges alone. Together we can build up families. Together we can strengthen their resolve and their resiliency. Together we can make our community stronger – **for everyone**.

# Program Highlights

## Intake Department

The Intake Department continues to have some members of the team working remotely since March 2020. Throughout the closure of the main building, the team continued to connect with clients to provide support and information regarding community services. Since the re-opening of Merrymount Programs, the Intake Team has supported our families virtually - completing intakes, updates, and coordinating services in our programs over the phone and computer. We have now transitioned our forms and assessments so that they can be completed virtually.

While many parts of what we do can be remote, we are in the building when necessary to maintain paperwork and files so that programs run smoothly and files are up-to-date. This has been an adjustment for the team and our families—while it has streamlined some of our processes—we look forward to the time when we can see our Merrymount families in-person again.

## Crisis Residential/Respite Program

The Crisis Residential/Respite Program (CR/RP) closed in March 2020 for three months due to the pandemic. During this closure, staff continued to support the children and families by communicating with them frequently via phone calls and emails, offering family activity challenges on social media and by providing children's mental health wellness kits full of supplies, activities, resources, coping strategies, and more. Since reopening in June 2020, the program has been operating at a limited capacity with nine beds open. There are nine bedrooms in the residential area, allowing each child to have their own room. If there are siblings that can share a room, the capacity can increase to twelve beds. We are focused on providing scheduled respite in order to maintain cohorts by keeping the same children together in order to minimize exposure during each stay, and carefully scheduling admit and discharge times to avoid crowding and allow time for screening.

Our priority is providing care for children who have a children's mental health diagnosis or are identified as at risk for developing children's mental health challenges. At this time, we can provide service to toddlers, preschoolers and school age children. Staff continue to be diligent in following the guidelines of the Ministry of Child, Community and Social Services and the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Staff continue to provide the same high quality program the children and families count on and expect. This program continues to offer a positive experience for the children, focusing on building their resiliency, coping strategies, capacity and skills.

## Family Resource Program

Mutual Aid Parenting Program, Community Action Program for Children, and Merrymount Parent and Child Groups continued to run throughout the year, although we had some brief pauses to modify group activities and materials. Family Resource Program staff were extremely resourceful and creative in moving programs to an online format. They developed many new skills and resources that will continue to benefit Merrymount families and children in the future as we support them in new and different ways.

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### Mission

Merrymount is a caring organization committed to providing around the clock support and crisis care for children and families. We deliver responsive and innovative services and programs to strengthen children and their families in times of transition

### Vision

Merrymount will be a recognized and respected leader in the field of crisis support and transition services for children and families.

### Values

- Compassion
- Keeping children and families together
- Safe environment
- Unique, customized solutions
- Consultative
- Proactive partnerships
- Professional

# Program Highlights Continued...

## Family & Child Support Program

The Family and Child Support Program (FCSP) was closed from March 2020 until September 2020 due to the pandemic. Since reopening, the program is operating with a limited capacity. At this time, we can offer service to ten infants, fifteen toddlers and fifteen preschool children each week in order to maintain cohorts. Staff continue to be creative in program planning to implement a meaningful child centered program in this unprecedented time.

In February of 2021 we renovated our infant room, and moved it to the main floor. All of the rooms in the licensed childcare program are now in one area of the building. This move provides direct access to outdoor space for the infants, improves access to the other rooms for staff if support is required, improves flow for drop off and pick up for families, and eliminates the need for families to travel to the second floor when accessing the Family and Child Support Program.

## All Kids Belong

All Kids Belong continues to provide inclusion support services to licensed child care, before and after school, and authorized recreational programs through a combination of virtual and in-person services. Staff are looking forward to the day when they can physically be in the Centres more often, but are following the guidelines of the Middlesex-London Health Unit and the Ministry of Education. Staff have learned a lot about Zoom and other technologies this year, and were able to offer supports and services to families and programs throughout the year despite the pandemic.

## Families and Infants Together

The Families and Infants Together (FIT) team continues to provide enhanced service coordination to families with infants who need additional support. This year, they provided services by phone and by virtual meetings, with in-person visits occurring when necessary. The pandemic has added a layer of complexity to our program, and it has been a challenging year for the families and the FIT team as many community resources have been difficult to access.

## EarlyON

Following the directions from our local Health Department, the City of London and Ministry of Education, the Family Centre staff continue to work from home in 2021.

Staff were limited to offering virtual programming for families. Using the skills that the Family Centre staff gained during the 2020 lockdown, they were able to create, film and edit a variety of events and programs for families. During the first four months of 2021, Family Centre staff provided 176 sessions on Facebook and Zoom. A total of 2,068 participants tuned in to view and participant in “In the Kitchen”, “Fun Fridays”, “Infant Massage” and “Mindful Moments” to name a few programs.

## Supervised Access Program

Thank you to the Staff, Board and Volunteers of Merrymount Family Support & Crisis Centre on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General for the important work you do for vulnerable children and their families in the Supervised Access Programs in Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford Counties. The past fiscal year has been challenging for all with the Covid-19 pandemic & related restrictions and Merrymount provided safe, neutral, child-focused and accessible services that enabled children to maintain contact with their non-custodial parents and other important adults in their lives throughout the pandemic. The West Regional Office of the Ministry of the Attorney General looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with SAP agencies within the new regional structure established in September 2020.

Lori McDonald, Regional Program Consultant, West Region, Ministry of the Attorney General

## Western's Mary J. Wright Centre for Research and Education

This year, Western's Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre celebrated its 5th year at Merrymount. The late Dr. Wright had the goals of bridging community and academia, scientific findings and workable knowledge and student classroom experience with student real-world experience and they have been realized by Merrymount and Western's partnership. Dr. Wright believed support and early intervention have the greatest potential to make positive a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families. Here are some highlights of how we have contributed to her goals in the past 5 years through our partnership with Merrymount:

- 227 vulnerable children and parents have received psychological services (assessment/intervention)
- 200+ Merrymount families have participated in research studies at the Mary J. Wright Centre
- 95 Merrymount families have benefited from attending two evidence-based groups created by the Mary J. Wright Centre: Making Mindfulness Matter © and Positive Parenting Training
- 34 knowledge sharing talks/training- related to child and family resiliency, trauma-informed interventions, parenting mindfully, and teaching self-regulation have increased the knowledge of teachers, ECEs, and parents.
- 50 student trainees have launched their clinical psychology training through Western's Mary J. Wright Centre.
- 5 community organizations, stakeholders of Merrymount, have engaged in important research projects related to creating resiliency within a diversity of families in our community.

Community-based research and education is such an important part of furthering a healthy community, I am so thankful, as part of Western, to have shared in this goal with Merrymount.

*Karen Bax, Ph.D. C. Psych.*

*Director, Western's Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre at Merrymount.*

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## Thames Valley Alternative Secondary School (TVASS)

In years past, Merrymount has provided weekly parenting classes and daily childcare spaces for the students, which allows them to be supported as moms while working towards their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Students have also had access to various workshops and clinics run by Merrymount, as well as supports from the Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre. The program had been growing and improving every year, due to the wonderful Merrymount staff and dedicated students.

**2020-2021  
OSSD Grads**

Kindred Roy  
Mackenzie McCarty

Then came the pandemic. Facing a very different set of challenges, and in spite of many programs becoming remote, Merrymount generously opened its doors and offered daycare and lunches to our students in September with precautions in place, including enhanced cleaning and creating a second classroom to afford safe spacing for staff and students. I was excited to welcome Sally Pieprzak, a TVDSB Educational Assistant, into the fold who was another meaningful contact and support for the students. By October, the daycare spaces were filled and there were only a few classroom spaces available.

After the December lockdown, most students became remote and I only had 4 resume in-person learning before the latest lockdown. Sally and I have been in touch with all our students and they seem to be doing well, though their primary focus has been more on day-to-day life rather than academics. The struggles of working from home affected the majority of our students. Nonetheless, we had one student graduate in December and have another on track to graduate by June.

Our December graduate, Kindred Roy, won the Thames Valley Foundation Award (potential, citizenship, positive contribution to school and community). Both graduates are exploring post secondary opportunities. I look forward to returning to Merrymount and to my students for the 2021-2022 school year!

*Tina Lirette, Thames Valley Alternative Secondary School Teacher*

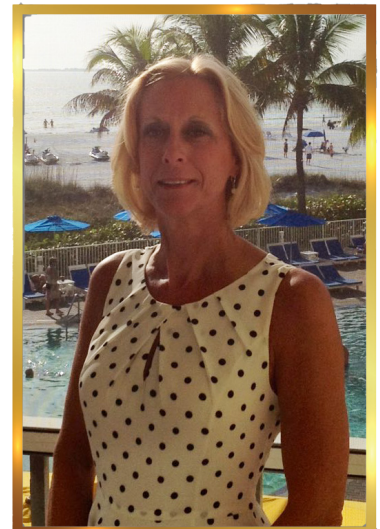
## Retirements

**Denise Riopelle** has been an integral part of Merrymount for over 28 years. A dedicated and passionate member of our team, Denise's first position was at the licensed child care – known as the Young Parents in School program at Sir George Ross Secondary school. She later worked at two other off-site child care locations, the Clarke Road – Young Parents in School program and 2nd Stage Housing Child Care. She spent 12 years as a Family and Community Support Worker at the Ontario Early Years Centre and the last 5 at the renamed Family Centre Argyle. While we are sad to see Denise go, we are confident she will find the same success and happiness in retirement she experienced at Merrymount.



Another valued Merrymount colleague retired last summer. **Dianne Loft** worked with All Kids Belong for more than 10 years. We continue to miss Dianne's calm and positive presence, along with her dedication to the early childhood community and children with special needs.

This summer we will say farewell to **Kym Loos** as she retires from her position as Executive Assistant after 27 years. Merrymount has seen a lot of changes over the years and Kym has been involved with all of them. She has assisted three Executive Directors, given unwavering support to many Board of Directors and always went the extra mile to lend a helping hand. We will miss seeing Kym's smiling face but we know she will enjoy spending time with her grandchildren, partner Randy and their dog, Casey.



Merrymount wishes **Deb Gillis** all the best as she heads into retirement. Deb has worked at Merrymount for almost 34 years in a variety of positions. She has been the Supervisor of the Day Program, Intake Department, and Supervisor of the Community Licensed Programs for Young Parents at Clark Road Secondary School, Ross Secondary School, Glen Cairn Parent Co-op, and 2nd Stage Preschool Programs. Most recently Deb has been the Manager for the Ontario Early Years Program now known as Family Centre Argyle. Merrymount is indebted to Deb for her wonderful spirit, energy, and unflinching dedication to the families we serve. Deb, you will be greatly missed.

## Annual Community Champion

**Awarded to a community member for their outstanding contribution to Merrymount.**



**Sister Nancy Wales** is a champion for local causes. Previously living in the Northwest Territories as an educator, she was also an executive on the NWT Council of Persons with Disabilities, the Yellowknife Regional Teacher's Association, and the Central Teacher's Association. Sister Nancy serves the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph as a member of the local coordinating team at their London residence, a member of the Ecology committee, and the Donation Committee Chair. As the Donation Committee Chair, Sister Nancy is acquainted with a variety of local organizations - learning about what others have to offer the City of London, and encouraging organizations to work together.

Sister Nancy has served on the Merrymount Board of Directors since 2013, becoming President of the Board in 2017. She is always available to talk, eager to attend our events, and there to lend a helpful hand.

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph have been supporting the Crisis Residential/ Respite Program since 2004. Their support has helped over 8,000 children in this community who have needed Merrymount's services.

We value Sister Nancy's dedication to the City of London and Merrymount.

## Ailene Wittstein Legacy Award

**Awarded to a Merrymount volunteer for their outstanding contribution to Merrymount.**



**Andrew Young** was introduced to Merrymount in 2012 by friend and mentor Bob Kayser. Andrew is a philanthropist at heart, always wanting to support those in need. Professionally, Andrew is a Mortgage Broker at the Modern Mortgage Unlimited Company. He also founded the Community Mortgage Movement, where proceeds from each deal he funds goes back to local charities and community organizations.

Andrew joined the Merrymount Board of Directors and became a committee member and later Chair of our annual Gala committee. Andrew has also given his time and support to the Boston Pizza Charity Golf Tournament and Hockey Helps the Homeless both of which have supported Merrymount's Crisis Residential/Respite Program. We have been honoured to have Andrew support our initiatives, he is always eager to assist in Merrymount campaigns, and even agrees to dress up - whether that be in a Mardi Gras themed mask or as Captain Obvious.

Andrew - you have been a superb cheerleader for Merrymount and we appreciate all you have done to support our organization.

## Terrielyn Kluge Children's Award - Payton

**In honour of the memory of Terri through the generous donations of her family & friends. Terrielyn believed every child should be able to freely laugh out loud.**

Payton attends Merrymount for respite in our licensed residential program. She is consistently positive, enthusiastic and engaged with her peers and staff while at Merrymount. Payton is an excellent role model for the younger children offering assistance to both the children and staff. She is kind, caring and considerate in her interactions with others. When Payton isn't helping others she spends her time doing crafts, singing and dancing! Payton has expressed to staff that she is looking forward to working with children herself one day and aspires to work at Merrymount! Payton will be receiving a gift basket full of fun activities to do over the summer!

## Upcoming Fundraisers



Annual Merrymount  
Golf Classic

# REGISTER NOW!

September 14, 2021  
FireRock Golf Club

For more information on how to register or sponsor this event:  
[www.merrymount.on.ca](http://www.merrymount.on.ca)  
[abrooks@merrymount.on.ca](mailto:abrooks@merrymount.on.ca)  
519-434-6848 ext.229

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# HOW DO YOU "STAY HOME" WITHOUT A HOME?



**TEE-OFF AGAINST  
HOMELESSNESS  
WITH GOLF IN  
YOUR BUBBLE.**

No hockey, no problem. HHTH is bringing a fun golf experience this summer, presented by our National Founding Sponsor, Canada Life.

By fundraising through 'Golf in Your Bubble,' enjoy a safe & exciting experience with a kit that will be delivered directly to your doorstep. Each kit includes a complimentary round of golf for two at a high-caliber, local course alongside other exciting items for the complete well-being experience. All net proceeds stay local, so this is a great opportunity to improve your health and wellness while teeing-off against homelessness.

**IN SUPPORT OF MERRYMOUNT FAMILY SUPPORT & CRISIS CENTRE,  
UNITY PROJECT, AND MISSION SERVICES OF LONDON.**



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**LEARN MORE AT [FORETHECAUSE.CA](http://FORETHECAUSE.CA).**



# SAVE THE DATE

## Merrymount's Annual Gala

February 17, 2022



## Merrymount Centre Board of Directors

William Berg (President)  
Paul Romanson  
(Vice-President)  
Sister Nancy Wales  
(Past President)  
Syed Waqas Balkhi  
(Treasurer)  
David Brown  
(Secretary)  
Louise Koza  
Tori Laird  
Michael Leff  
Phillip Mock  
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Melissa Scott  
Morgan Williston

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Gerry Marcus (President)  
William Berg  
Louise Koza  
Ruth Ann McConkey  
Rob Ritchie  
Paul Romanson  
Syed Waqas Balkhi

## Executive Director

Paul Howarth

## Executive Assistant

Kym Loos

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Director of Finance

Sherin Hussien  
Program Director

Carla A. Rogers  
Director of Philanthropy

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Deborah Gillis  
Kim Lamport  
Lisa Sortun

## Coordinators

Anne Brooks  
Amanda Bruyns  
Angie Ceneviva  
Amanda Colborne  
Lisa Jackson-Lumley  
Wendy Tapp-Moore

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Katie Ashton  
Melissa Ashton  
Angela Balcom  
Angelica Baldinelli  
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Kimiko Boon-Owens  
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Kelly Clark  
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Tarra Cook  
Jennifer Craigan  
Dora Dawkins  
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Lori Dean  
Maria Del Vasto  
Geri Dibsedale  
Todd Dickey  
Lynn Donaldson  
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Michelle Enns  
Kathleen Firth  
Katie Foote  
Lisa Foxcroft  
Dara Francois  
Laura French  
Jennifer Garcia  
Jennifer Graham  
Dakota Grass  
Linda Grass  
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Kristen Hunt  
Yasika Jarquin  
Heather Jacobs  
Alice Kolendowski  
Nancy Liabotis  
Carolyn Little  
Teresa Liwosz  
Dianne Loft  
Mario Lucci  
Afika Malik  
Lori Masterson  
Patricia Mazariegos  
Sandi McAlpine-McCullough  
Teri McCullagh  
Heather McDowall  
Brooke McGuire  
Justin McGuire  
Doug Moore

Eliana Morales  
Bob Mullins  
Tina Neeb  
Teresa Nicholson  
Kathleen Nutt  
Beth O'Hagan  
Melissa Oliver  
Rosemary Osborne  
Marisela Palacios  
Maria Park  
Violet Pilarski  
Nurdevlet Rasheed  
Kim Richards  
Adela Rivera  
Tanya Ross  
Angela Rozell  
Paulina Rybka  
Rebecca Salton  
Felicity Santiago  
Karen Scott  
Jennifer Smale  
Karen Smith  
Jerry Smithers  
Heather Soares  
Lisa St. Marie  
Sandra Stewart  
Barb Szczukowski  
Beatriz Tamayo  
Kevin Thompson  
Rosemary Van Wieren  
Brenda Veilleux  
Madison Veltman  
Kayla Vetere  
Maria Warren  
Michaela Wattel  
Sarah Wells  
Brittany Wijnker  
Becky Wilfong  
Jennifer Williams  
Patricia Wistow  
Lesley Wright  
Taylor Yake

## Staff Recognition Awards

### 10 years:

Becky Wilfong

### 20 years:

Sherri Daley  
Marisela Palacios

### 25 years:

Rebecca Salton  
Jerry Smithers

### 30 years:

Maria Park

# Thank you to our Event Sponsors

The Merrymount Golf Classic raised over \$16,000 and Merry Gras raised over \$93,000 for the Crisis Residential/Respite Program.

**merrymount**  
family support and crisis centre

Thank you to our 2020 sponsors!

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A special thank you to our cash donors:  
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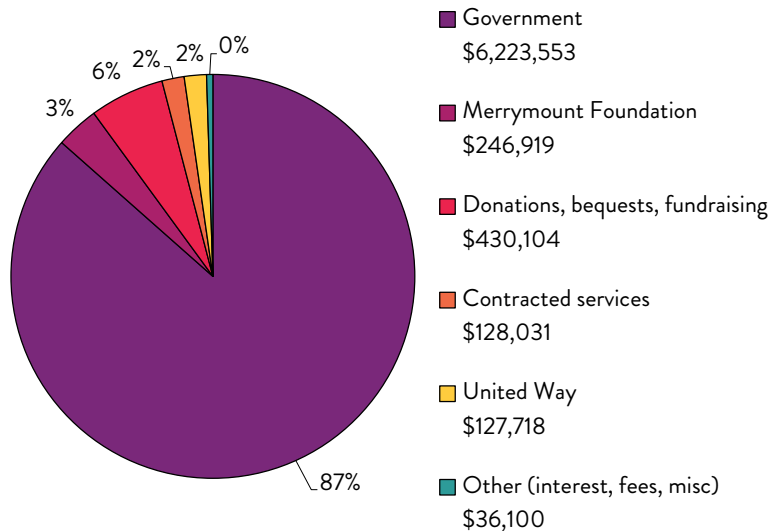
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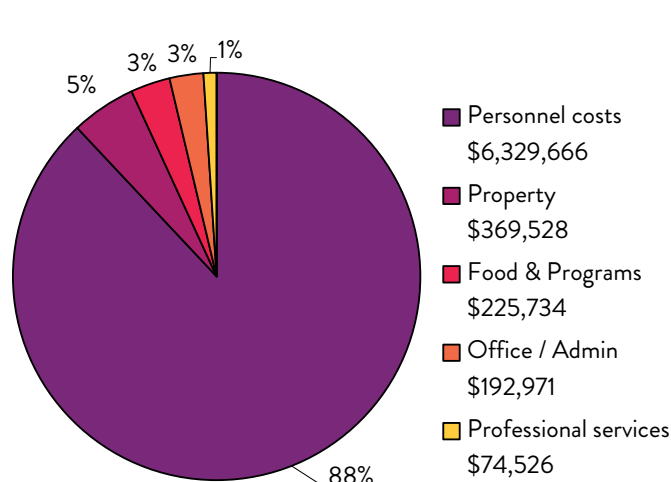
Auburn Homes   Affiniti Wealth Management   Ford Keast

## Merrymount Family Support & Crisis Centre Financials

Merrymount Family Support & Crisis Centre  
Consolidated Revenue - \$7,192,425  
For the year ended March 31, 2021



Merrymount Family Support & Crisis Centre  
Consolidated Expenditures - \$7,192,425  
For the year ended March 31, 2021



# Thank you to our donors who so generously supported Merrymount between April 1, 2020 & March 31, 2021

## \$50,000+

Domino's Pizza of Canada Ltd.  
The Estate of Valdemar Oliveira

## \$25,000 - \$49,999

Hockey Helps the Homeless  
Mr. Shawn and Mrs. Bev McConville

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Dr. Lucia Ambrochi  
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While every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, we apologize for any errors or omissions. Please let us know of any changes.



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