

The Faces of FaithWorks

Amanda dropped out of high school when her son Connor was born. With no means of supporting herself and lacking the education she needed to make a good life for herself and her young son, Amanda faced an uncertain future. But then she learned about the young moms program at The Dam in Mississauga. In a weekly gathering with other young moms and the positive reinforcement offered by the staff and volunteers, Amanda gained the confidence to go back to school. Her mother babysat while Amanda finished her last three credits and after graduation, Amanda was accepted to Seneca College's King City campus. But the 2-1/2 hour commute on public transit nearly ended her dreams. Amanda and her mother discussed several options and agreed that the best plan would be for Amanda to live in residence, leaving Connor in his grandmother's loving care. Today, Amanda is studying to become a 9-1-1 Emergency Communications specialist. She goes home every other weekend for a visit and while she desperately misses Connor, Amanda knows that her sacrifice is helping to ensure a brighter future for herself and her son and that one day soon she will be in a position to help others - most of whom she may never meet and never come to know. Amanda credits The Dam with giving her the support and encouragement she needed to believe in herself and take positive steps toward her future.

Nafisa is an elderly Muslim woman from Afghanistan. She came to Canada as a refugee in 2007 after her house was bombed, killing her husband and children. Nafisa herself was seriously injured in the attack. Grateful that she was now safe from the kind of terror she had known, Nafisa faced new challenges as she struggled to learn to live in a culture she knew nothing about. She settled in Flemingdon Park, one of Toronto's most impoverished and diverse neighbourhoods. She had little money and could only afford a room in a house, which she had to share with male roommates. Someone suggested that she might find help at Flemingdon Park Ministry. Nafisa heard that this was a Christian Ministry that was open to all,

regardless of their faith. Nafisa decided to see for herself. After providing some basic necessities, a program manager worked with Nafisa to set goals for herself. Ministry staff helped her to apply for disability and find an apartment of her own. Nafisa became a volunteer at the Ministry in order to develop language and job skills. Today, Nafisa regularly participates in the Flemington Park Ministry's women's programme and the Ministry has become her family.

When Rick was 16 years old he suffered a traumatic head injury as a result of a bicycle accident. He lost his vision and, out of anger and frustration, he burned many bridges. After a time Rick wound up on the streets where he survived by panhandling and dumpster diving. His family and friends felt powerless to help and to them, Rick was as good as dead. He was alone, angry and had no hope for the future. But one day, Rick wandered into the David Busby Street Centre in Barrie. For those of us in the GTA, it may come as a bit of a surprise but homelessness is not just a big city problem. In fact, the David Busby Centre serves as many as 200 people every day, offering refuge from the streets, shelters, and inadequate housing. At the Busby Centre, Rick found acceptance and support. The counselors helped him access social services and apply for subsidized housing. Rick's life began to turn around and, recognizing that this would not have been possible without the hand **UP** he received from the David Busby Centre, Rick decided he wanted to give something back. Today, Rick is a regular volunteer at the Centre and speaks to youth groups and schools throughout his community about the importance of bicycle helmet safety.

Bob is a Canadian citizen but 20 years ago he and his family had escaped the horrors of his war-torn country only to experience new forms of terror in an African refugee camp. Food and water were severely rationed and the family's few small possessions were stolen. They were frequently the victims of violence – Bob's mother and sisters endured sexual molestation. Bob says that the leaders of the camp tried to make things better but still the family's faith was challenged on a daily basis. They prayed for mercy but had little hope. Until, with the help of the Anglican

United Refugee Alliance (AURA), Bob and his family were sponsored to come to Canada. The warm welcome and network of support provided by their parish sponsors gave Bob and his family the strength they needed to adapt to life in their new country. While Bob's father worked two jobs to support his family, Bob and his sisters were able to attend school without fear of persecution. Bob was an excellent student and today he is an educator, who teaches Canadian history to newly arrived immigrants. He knows that it was the grace of God through the support of his parish sponsors and the help they received through the AURA that made this wonderful new life in Canada possible for Bob and his family.

Richard lost everything when his gambling got out of control. He was homeless and living on the streets. Life seemed hopeless and he had nothing to look forward to. That is, until he was invited to go on a wilderness hike with Street to Trail Association. At first Richard was nervous but the hike gave him the chance to experience nature and leave all his problems behind, if only for a day. After being part of Street to Trail for four years now, Richard's life is turning around. He is in control of his addiction, he has made new friends, and he has a job and stable place to live. Street to Trail gave Richard a chance to believe in himself and the strength to get his life back on track.

Clara grew up in a small town in rural Ontario. After high school, Clara moved to Toronto excited about the possibilities of a new life in the big city. Things didn't work out for her so well. Casual partying quickly got out of control and Clara became addicted to crack. Before long she was selling her body to pay for drugs. Even though she had lost all my self-respect, her family never gave up on Clara. Finally, they convinced her to move back home. A counsellor referred Clara to North House where she received a rent subsidy and wrap-around support while she worked on getting her act together. Today, Clara has a full-time job and she has been drug- and alcohol-free from more than a year.