

The Self-Manager

CILT • Centre for Independent Living in Toronto • A publication for Direct Funding Program participants

Spring 2024

30 Years of Direct Funding



Mapping his own path

Matthew Fleet, a Self-Manager in Georgetown, is an artist and accessibility consultant.

Inheriting his father's artistic and technical skills, Matthew's creative journey began at a very young age. After a spinal cord injury at the age of 16, Matthew had to adjust to life in a wheelchair and relearn how to draw with only limited use of his hands.

He studied visual arts and geography at York University, and architectural technology at Sheridan College. Today, his artwork shares time with a career as an accessibility consultant where he applies his lived experience as a person with a disability to create environments that are accessible to all individuals.

Matthew's background in geography is evident in his unique hand-drawn


maps of popular cottage destinations done in the romantic style of 17th-century maps. Working in graphite with traditional drafting tools and techniques, Matthew accurately captures the profiles of cottage lakes, embellishing them with intricate borders and mythical monsters typical of antique maps.

For more **MAPPING**, please see p. 8



Media Spotlight

<https://www.ophira.ca/>



Ophira Calof, a Toronto Self-Manager, is a multi-award-winning writer and performer who works to “crip the script,” learning from and centring disability knowledge and experience. They recently wrote and acted on the show *One More Time*, currently airing on CBC. Some of their other credits include *Rubble and Crew* (Treehouse TV), where they play the character Park Ranger Rose, *PUSH* (CBC), *Shelved* (CTV), *Dino Dex* (Amazon Prime), *Welcome Series* (Titan1Studios), *TallBoyz* (CBC) and their solo show *Literally Titanium*, a comedic, cabaret-style performance. Ophira has also taught workshops and provided mentorship internationally on storytelling, writing, sketch comedy, accessibility and disability narratives and has created a number of disability arts projects including the series *Making Space: Stories of Disabled and Present and Dis/Play*, a public arts project that projected the stories of more than 50 deaf and disabled creatives onto exterior building walls across Toronto. ■



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Direct Funding welcomes new staff



Desirée Walsh
Community Facilitator
Centre for Independent Living in Toronto
(CILT)

Before joining the CILT team as its newest member, I was an accessibility analyst at a bank for seven and a half years and have a master's degree in inclusive design from OCAD University. I also had close ties at CILT and Direct Funding because my twin sister, Samantha, used to be the Intake and Resource Facilitator at the Toronto office.

When I'm not working, I am a standup comic. What started with taking a comedy writing course at Second City in 2016 has led to the release of my comedy album called *Everybody Panic*, which was on NPR's list of Top Comedy Albums of 2023, and an episode of *Comedy Invasion*, a series on Roku, Tubi, and Amazon. Most recently, I have done a few TV gigs on AMI including *Breaking Character* and *The Squeaky Wheel Canada* and also do a monthly comedy show.

I am happy to join the Direct Funding team and assist with making the disabled experience better.



Gitanjali Aggarwal
Executive Director
Independent Living
Centre London & Area (ILCLA)

My name is Gitanjali, pronounced [Git-tan-ja-lee]. You may call me Gigi. I am the new Executive Director of the Independent Living Centre London & Area and the Direct Funding Resource staff person.

I am a mom of two boys. I bring experience from different opportunities like owning my own business, finance, food/restaurant, and retail. I have also worked with not-for-profits and helped develop small businesses in Ontario.

I am a strong believer in the power of community and how it can change and better lives. I have always been passionate about helping others, which I believe led to where I am today! ■



Desirée Walsh's favourite comedians:

John Mulaney, Iliza Shlesinger, David Page, Courtney Gilmour, Danielle Perez and Ophira Calof. ■



30 Years of Direct Funding

Readers will have noticed the “30 Years of Direct Funding” banner throughout the newsletter. It’s difficult to believe, but Direct Funding, which started as a pilot program for 102 people, is now 30 years old! We will be marking this special anniversary in the coming issues of *The Self-Manager* newsletter this year. We are inviting you, the Self-Managers who have made Direct Funding such a success and a tribute to the principles of Independent Living, to celebrate this milestone with us. Please watch your inboxes for your opportunity to contribute to future issues!



A time for connection

Joella Connaught
Consumer Experience Advisor, Centre for Independent Living in Toronto

Direct Funding hosted a series of Zoom calls last fall to connect Self-Managers across the province. The discussions focused on managing the relationships between Self-Managers and attendants, providing an opportunity for sharing ideas and peer support. For those who missed the calls, here are some brief highlights:

- The discussion included information sharing on practical tools to help Self-Managers practise and maintain professional boundaries with attendants, such as employment contracts, quarterly employee reviews, and having a written document outlining a code of conduct and house rules.
- In addition, there were discussions on how to have flexible and mutually respectful working relationships between Self-Managers and attendants, as well as among staff. Some suggestions included having a group chat (e.g., via text or WhatsApp) among attendants to discuss shifts and

coverage, as well as having daily task lists located in common areas such as the kitchen for everyone to review.

- Participants also discussed competitive attendant wages and expectations around work tasks, as well as how to approach those conversations with attendants. For example, some practical tips included having weekly and quarterly check-in meetings with attendants and implementing probationary review discussions.

Program staff extend a big thank you to participants for their contributions to the discussions. We heard your voices and are excited to host another Zoom call series in late spring 2024. ■

If you have comments, ideas, or thoughts for the next Self-Manager Zoom calls, please contact

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Consumer Experience Advisor
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CRA and WSIB

A reminder to all Self-Managers that it is permitted to make CRA and WSIB payments electronically from your DF bank account, not just by mail.

All other payments from your DF bank account must be made by cheque. If you have any questions about making electronic payments, please contact your DF report reviewer.



Generations of attendants

Richard Provost
Self-Manager, Niagara Falls

Meet Alexis (above, left) and Amanda (right), two generations serving as personal care attendants. When I got out of the hospital eight years ago, I was told of the amazing people out there ready to help. What I did not know was that the dedication of helping others can go beyond one individual and be passed to the next generation.

Amanda, the mother, was unbelievable as a caregiver. She helped me make the transition from the hospital to home with all the trials and errors that comes with it. Her daughter, Alexis, tagged along on certain

occasions when Amanda didn't have someone to watch her.

When Alexis finished high school, she obtained her personal support worker certificate and returned to work for me; she is currently on parental leave. Will her baby, Amelia, follow in the steps of her mother and grandmother?! Who knows! Amanda retired three years ago.

Amanda and Alexis were not the only mother/daughter duo who have worked for me: I also had Adora (right, top photo) and Janine (right, bottom photo), who worked for me before the pandemic. ■



30 Years of Direct Funding



Two Self-Managers joined Direct Funding (DF) Program staff for a presentation to marketing students at George Brown College in Toronto. The students learned about the DF program and the Independent Living philosophy and had the opportunity to ask the Self-Managers – Ayesha Zubair (far right, wearing a blue mask) and Shariff Bacchus – about their participation on the program. The students worked on digital marketing plans for the program, which DF staff can adopt to promote the program. From left, Danny Smith, marketing professor at George Brown College; and Direct Funding Program staff, Joella Connaught, Leisa DeBono, and Leanne Larmondin.

Going Paper-Free

If you would like to go paper-free and receive all your Direct Funding documents by email only, please contact a member of CILT's Direct Funding team to update your file.

(Please see staff directory, page 2)

What has DF helped you do?

Most of the photos you see in this newsletter are of or taken by Self-Managers – please send us your photos and stories so we can include you, too!

Contact Sara at
sara.stonehouse@cilt.ca or
416-599-2458 ext. 232.



Donald Kerr, an Ottawa-area Self-Manager, and his wife, Edna, recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary by taking a trip to Spain, then a transatlantic cruise, during which they renewed their wedding vows. Donald also brought his Direct Funding attendant on the trip.

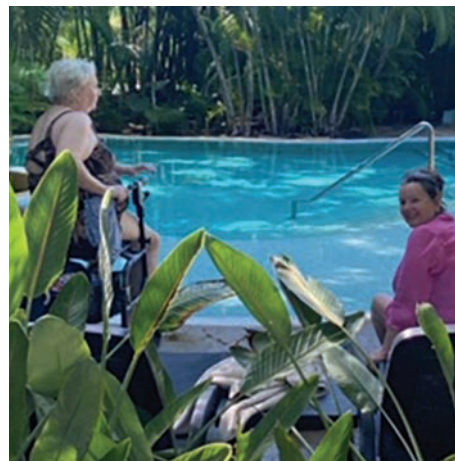
TESTIMONIAL

Forever grateful to Direct Funding

Mary Margaret Griffiths
Former Self-Manager

I have had the good fortune to be receiving Direct Funding (DF) for nine years. I have been living with Multiple Sclerosis since 2000 and worked 20 hours a week in a job I loved. It was getting increasingly challenging to both work and do the tasks that needed doing to continue to live independently. My local MS chapter suggested I apply for funding for personal care through the Direct Funding Program. With the help of Anne Marie Covello-Baxter, Community Facilitator for the DF program at the Niagara Centre for Independent Living, I was interviewed by a panel and met the criteria for the program.

Now I had to find the support worker(s) to work with me in my home. Fortunately, my daughter knew a lovely woman named Stella (not a personal support worker, or PSW, by the way) who was interested in part-time work, and after an interview we both agreed



Mary Margaret Griffiths (left) worked with her main attendant, Stella, for nine years while participating on Direct Funding.

to give it a try. Stella was my main attendant, although occasionally other workers came in. My relationship with DF and Stella continued to grow. About

five years into the program, I was asked to be an interviewer on the panel as a consumer panelist. I found this very interesting, and I liked the idea of providing support to applicants, fellow participants, and the program itself.

After I retired from work in 2023, my family and I decided it would be a good idea for me to move to Calgary to be close to my son and daughter-in-law. There was an Independent Living residence with many supports near my son; and so, the next chapter of life began recently!

I will be forever grateful to Anne Marie and Direct Funding for the personal support and the funding to allow me to live those nine years with the joy of being able to continue working. My greatest joy, however, is the friendship that Stella and I forged during that time. It is a friendship that will last for the remainder of our lifetimes. ■



Mapping

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Matthew's work can be seen at www.serpentandcompass.com

About his experience on the Direct Funding program, Matthew says, "It has been life changing. With a prior agency, I never knew who, when or even if a PSW was going to show up. Now, with DF, I have peace of mind and can focus on my life instead of my services." ■

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Want to Connect with Other Self-Managers?

If you are not yet a member of the Ontario-Wide Self-Managers' Network but would like to connect with other program participants from across the province, then the Network might be for you. Through the Self-Managers' Network you can share tips and ideas, learn about attendants seeking employment, ask questions of experienced Self-Managers in your area, and much more. For more information, please contact Sara Stonehouse at sara.stonehouse@cilt.ca or 416-599-2458 ext. 232.



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