

Newsletter - February 2024

*LIFE*SPIN is working with low income people to create real solutions to poverty – simple basic things that we all need to feel stable, so we can be involved in the community, go to work, follow our dreams, and raise our families.*

Upcoming Workshops and Events

Labour of Love Baby Fair

February 21st from 1:00-3:00 PM

Our annual baby fair is back! This event is for our families who are expecting a baby in the coming months or just had a new born since November 2023. We will have door prizes, gift bags, special guests, and free copies of our updated baby manual.

You are welcome to volunteer, submit recipes for homemade baby food, or reach out to those that can donate new and unused baby items. Our Advocate, Nicole, can help you fill out forms for Discretionary Assistance.

Registration for this event is full, but you can still book an appointment with our Community Advocate, if you need help applying for Discretionary Assistance to access items for your infant. Our Free Store also has clothes for babies and children.

Seniors' Fair

March 26th from 1:00-3:00 PM

We're hosting our first Seniors Fair at our office (866 Dundas Street). This will be an enjoyable outing for seniors to come by and participate in draws for a door prize, enjoy special guests, and meet LIFE*SPIN Advocate, Nicole, to learn about accessing many supports and resources within the city.

Register for the Seniors Fair at: <https://form.jotform.com/233135008401239>

Employment Support Zoom Workshop

March 5th at 11:00 AM

On January 1, 2024, the government made some important changes to several provincial job support services and programs. Join us over Zoom to learn more about which programs received updates, among other resources for finding employment.

Register to join us at: <https://www.jotform.com/form/233135306952251>

Senior Pensions and Finances Workshop

April 16th at 11:00 AM

If you're a Senior or soon-to-be Senior, join us at LIFE*SPIN for this information-filled workshop about your pension and finances.

Register to join at: <https://form.jotform.com/240286523723253>

Children with Disabilities Workshop

May 14th at 11:00 AM

Join us at our office (866 Dundas Street) to learn about support for families caring for a disabled child. **Register to join at: <https://form.jotform.com/240285756448264>**

Tenant Support Fair

March 22nd from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM at City Hall (300 Dufferin Avenue, 2nd Floor)

If your rental housing unit or apartment needs repairs or replacements, come to the Tenant Support Fair! Advocates from several agencies and organizations will be on-site to assist you in requesting a Property Standards inspection. Repairs and issues include: missing screens, plumbing issues, electrical problems, repairs to roof or porches, flooring issues, smoke alarms, and other parts of your rental that need to be inspected.

The fair will also have a play area for children, refreshments and an opportunity to meet a Property Standards staff member.

Ask volunteers questions about this event at tenantfair@gmail.com

Check our website regularly for more workshops, events, and more you can attend for free at:

<https://www.lifespın.org/news>

LIFE*SPIN Program Updates

Just 4 US

A fun mentorship group for female-identified youth (ages 13-17) that meets for activities together in the community! We gather on the 3rd Thursday of each month to eat together, share fun and friendship! This season, they will be going to an escape room, trampoline park and a climbing wall! February's meetup is full, but sign up today to join us for future meetups. Bus tickets and dinner are provided.

Register: <https://www.jotform.com/build/232265512887260>

Read more about Just 4 Us on our website: <https://www.lifespın.org/just-4-us>

Christmas Program Results

Over 3,700 children from over 1,400 families received gifts from sponsors & donors through our Christmas Program in 2023. If your children received gifts, we're happy to pass along thank you notes to the sponsors.

Our sponsors are the reason why we're able to serve so many families every year. Hearing from you and/or your children means a lot to them.

You can drop off thank you cards at our office, or send us an email at life@execulink.com and your message will be passed along!

Pocket Sized Farms: Day Camp for Kids ages 7-12

The LIFE*SPIN summer program for children has two components. During the week, we meet with campers on-line to read stories, do crafts and learning activities, and talk about the gardens we are growing. We provide the materials. On Fridays, we meet up at parks & natural areas with your whole family for fun activities.

Children enrolled and participating in the camp, will receive a home-based start-up food garden kit, and can pick up craft/learning kits for the following week at the weekly family outings. Each garden kit includes a garden shovel (unless you already received yours) or a trowel for container gardening if you live in an apartment building, sheep manure/compost, topsoil, vegetable seeds, plants and instructions on how to get started growing food at home.

Once registration closes, staff will contact you to confirm your name on our private Facebook group. We will book our first gathering for **Tuesday, July 2nd**, where you get to meet the leaders, pick up your craft kits and seed packages. Once you receive these, we will coordinate volunteers to drop-off plants and gardening materials to your home.

We have identified wonderful natural areas to explore in the city and will invite all members of your family to join us once each week. When you RSVP for each week, let us know how many people are coming from your family, so we can bring snacks for all and prepare your weekly craft kits for you to pick up at the following weekly outing.

This is an opportunity for us to increase residential food gardens and come together as a community. If you have children (aged 7-12) who are interested in participating in our summer program, **complete the registration form at <https://form.jotform.com/240353778092259>** and we will be in touch!

Read about Pocket Sized Farms on our website: <https://www.lifespın.org/pocket-size-farm>

Ken Palmer Memorial High School Music Bursary

Apply before May 17, 2024

Each year, a \$1,000 bursary is awarded to two outstanding graduating high school students pursuing music programs at an Ontario College or University.

Applications are available online at: <https://fclma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Ken-Palmer-Music-Bursary.pdf>

For more information, contact:

Linda Wharton

Co-chair, Ken Palmer Music Bursary

lindawharton76@rogers.com

Learn more about the Ken Palmer Music Bursary here: <https://www.lifespın.org/ken-palmer-music-bursary>

Community Food Box

Since 2020, On The Move Organics has worked in partnership with LIFE*SPIN to help aid local Londoners facing food insecurity.

Last year, 19,464 meals worth of fresh, local & organic food were delivered to families and individuals in need. We even dedicated several deliveries to seniors, since finding and shopping for fresh and affordable produce can be especially hard in the winter.

This year, we're planning an extension of the program, not only to serve more households, but also to utilize the program for community development in neighbourhoods that need it most.

Our partnership was recognized by the Middlesex London Food Policy Council! **Read the article here:** <https://mlfpc.ca/2023/08/29/nourishing-change-empowering-lives-meet-our-food-system-champion-lifespın/>

A heartfelt thank you to all of the regular customers who have contributed to the program this past year. This is another program that would not exist without generous, kind people in London. The Community Food Box program is funded entirely on donations made by those who can. This means that there is no funding provided by the government, and that boxes are limited.

Registration for the March food box is full, but **you can sign up for April's box on March 11th here:** <https://form.jotform.com/221305917411245>. The registration form will close when all of the boxes are gone!

Visit our website for more food inquiries and community resources:

<https://www.lifespın.org/food>

Free Store

Our Free Store was created by low-income moms who had no local family members that could share hand-me-down items for their children. Today we provide clothes, bedding, toiletries, and small houseware items for adults and children of all ages. We only accept donations in excellent condition so shoppers can look & have the best we can offer. We aim to offer shoppers dignity, a meeting place and tangible support that improves their well-being.

Shopping Hours

Tuesdays: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Wednesdays: 3:00 - 7:00 PM

Customers must register online once every calendar year whether you're a new or returning customer.

We continue to operate under Covid-19 guidelines. Customers can shop at the Free Store once a week, and we ask that only one person per household comes inside. Staff are tested weekly, and the store will close if we have positive cases. We'll provide you with a mask and hand sanitizer before entering. Don't forget to **bring your identification** when you shop!

Register to shop at: <https://form.jotform.com/233134242194247>

Income Taxes

In 2023, we completed 374 returns, resulting in \$1,400,000 in direct benefits for those that applied.

If you need help filing your taxes, register for our Income Tax program! Assistance with filing previous tax returns up to 2013 is available now, and filing for 2023 will be available at the end of February.

Income taxes are done over the phone by appointment only. Appointment length depends on the number of taxes you need to file.

We are not able to assist with taxes for those who are self-employed, or for deceased individuals.

When you receive your T-slips for 2023, **register for our Tax Program at:**

<https://www.jotform.com/build/233135005503239>

Advocacy

LIFE*SPIN's greatest contribution to London is the creation of a safe place for low-income citizens – families, our disabled, seniors, children and individuals – to find the help they need with a sense of dignity. For over 30 years, LIFE*SPIN has been the only organization in the London area that provides specialized assistance to ALL individuals in obtaining government benefits that they may be entitled to, such as provincial support and benefits. The critical needs in our community define the programs and services we offer.

In 2023, 9,724 families reached out for our help. The direct financial benefits to our clients resulting from our services during this year exceeds \$5,000,000.

If you need help filling out these types of applications, **register for an appointment at:**

<https://www.jotform.com/build/233134583969265>

Wrapping Up

Part of what keeps LIFE*SPIN unique and innovative is the foundation of personal experience, peer support and sense of caring for each individual who is courageous enough to reach out when they need a hand up.

Some things we noticed this year...

- Many more families are living together under the same roof to afford housing/heating costs.
- More seniors are struggling to keep their housing, especially when their spouse passes away.
- Parents trying to support children who have disabilities have a lot of difficulty accessing the support they need.
- Property standards by-laws are inadequately enforced in London. This leaves families in unsafe units that are not fit to live in just because the rents may be lower, even though the City has the power to fix them.

- The “homeless industry” in London has all but eliminated families with children as a priority, meaning longer waits for subsidized housing and programs to meet the increased housing needs.

If you have questions, contact us at:

866 A Dundas Street

Office Hours: Monday - Wednesday 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM **by appointment only**

Phone: (519)438-8676

Email: life@execulink.com

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and Youtube for more frequent updates!

