



How our organization supported the needs of members impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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North Shore Community Support Services, Inc./Club 90

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Working in mental health, you are prepared for the usual support that is given within this organization. When the Covid-19 Pandemic hit in March 2020, we were forced to halt our face-to-face interactions and close our doors to the public. It was not until this moment, we came to understand what additional tools are needed to support, and even contact, members in a lockdown situation.

What support is needed?

Our *first challenge* was identifying what sort of supports are individually needed by our members. To do this, we contacted everyone via 'snail-mail' asking by what means they wish to be supported - phone, email, chat, text, video meeting - and how frequent they would like us to initiate contact. We learned, that some members would prefer to call us, whereas others asked that we call twice a week or even more frequently to check-in. This was also a great opportunity to receive updates of members contact information and to identify existing gaps needing to be filled.

Cell phone distribution:

Challenge two: How do we contact members via phone or virtual means if they do not have the technology to do so?

The organization reached out to *Telus* and was successful in getting 13 Google Pixel 3XL phones donated to us to distribute to those who did not have a phone. These phones came with 3GB of data per month and unlimited calling and texting Canada Wide for three months.



“Thank you, Telus. For helping me and other club members in this pandemic. Having a phone and internet has been a God send to those of us who can’t afford these things. Thank you for helping us and making this time of isolation more manageable. Demographically, we are marginalized peoples, and truly appreciate your continued support.”

Caroline R

Once the phones were received on our end, they were set up for each person and then delivered by staff to members homes. The members were very excited about these and were able to not only communicate with us at NSCSS, but with friends and family.

Once the initial three-month plan was up, Telus extended the contracts for all phones. To date, the plans remain in effect until June 30th, 2021. THANK YOU TELUS!

Gift Cards:

One of Club 90's programs is the *Café Unit*, where members prepare twice/week free lunches and Monday to Friday suppers for \$2.50/meal. People learn and share skills to master nutritious meal preparation.

"I want to thank you so much for the monthly grocery cards. It was so much help. I appreciate the support."

Michael P.

With our face-to-face being halted, this meant our members did not have access to healthy and affordable meals when needed.



Through financial supports of the *Algoma District Services Administration Board* and top up by NSCSS a total of 630 grocery gift cards, at \$15.00 each, were sent to members over a nine months period. This greatly lessend some of the increased financial burdens members experienced during this time.

Safe face-to-face contacts:



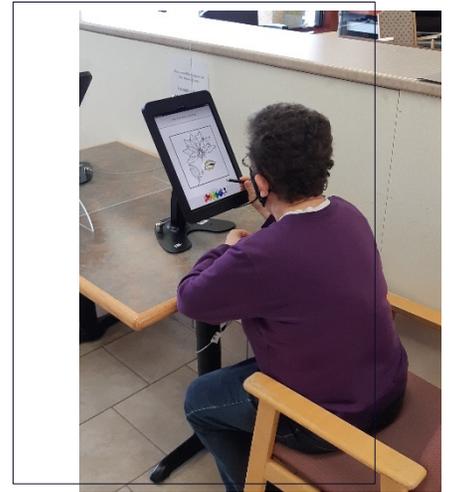
When pandemic restrictions started to ease, we were able to safely meet one-on-one and later in small groups with members. To reduce possible spread of the virus sneeze guard barriers were installed and members were provided with face masks upon entry. This allowed us

to support those who needed support in person, as well as created an environment of visual contact with everyone that can not be done over the phone.

When restrictions allowed to congregate with more members at the clubhouse, we were able to accomodate small groups and offer arts and crafts activities. This was a success, every activity maxed the number of people allowed at any given time - every time.

iPads:

When indoor activities received the green light Club 90 was able to resume its role as a drop-in center again. Re-tooling of our Club 90 program environment became our number one agenda - maintaining social distancing and reduction of possible spread of the virus through surfaces.



A re-tooling proposal to purchase iPads was approved by the *Algoma Community Foundation*. This project opened up a variety of opportunities for our members to interact with each other, connect with family and friends, engage in games, do virtual tours, learn how to navigate and communicate with the world and pursue educational opportunities. It also allowed for connections to other service providers via Bluejeans (similar to Zoom), learn new skills through YouTube tutorials and much more.

iChef:



We were not expecting to have to close our doors again when December 26th came along.... And unlike the last shutdown, there was no extra monies given to low-income people through government incentives. Luckily, we were able to continue giving out gift cards in January, but after that funding had dried up. So we were back in the “what now” situation.

In mid-February we piloted a new program through the Club 90 Café Unit we named *iChef*. Members receive all ingredients inclusive a step by step picture recipe card and instructions to prepare a meal for one at home. Staff delivered during this pilot to some 40 members a brown paper bag to their homes. The feedback so far 'priceless' !!

This new program will allow Club 90 to:

- Provide food in a safe manner
- Enable members to develop new skills
- Increase confidence, self esteem and self reliance
- Breaking out of old eating habits and trying something new

“It was very good and I loved having (the ingredients) there. It was easy.”

Chester B.

Mental Health Week:

Normally, for Mental Health Week (an annual, nation wide event for the first full week of May), we spend days participating in a variety of activities and community outreach. However, the pandemic screeched this celebration to a halt. So instead, staff put together care packages to deliver to every member. Each bag consisted of a face mask (which were made by volunteers), a homemade stress ball, a journal, pencil, bookmark, some motivational colouring pages and sheets on coping skills.

Social Media:



In the age of technology, what better way to reach out to members than through social media! During our first shut down (March to August 2020) we were incredibly active on Facebook. A mental health worker did live broadcasts on coping skills and check-in. We did “How to” videos on assembling objects, and we had a small indoor garden that we tracked and watched grow. Constantly we posted links to virtual tours, concerts, plays, etc. and resources on coping skills and mental health.

Mailouts:

Another way we kept in touch with our members was by doing monthly mailouts of our clubhouse newsletter “Stepping Stones” These continued to provide clubhouse updates and resources to our members.

At times, a mental health worker would put together “homework” which was paperwork specifically sent out to a person to work on topics such as self-compassion, self-care, self-esteem, depression, grief, coping, grounding skills etc.

A breakdown of our stats

<i>Month</i>	<i>Phone/Mail</i>	<i>Social media post</i>	<i>Social media interaction</i>	<i>Email/Messenger</i>	<i>Face to face</i>	<i>Total monthly contact</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	276	127	231	22	140	796
<i>April 2020</i>	560	172	490	49	11	1,282
<i>May 2020</i>	620	118	323	16	31	1,108
<i>June 2020</i>	542	161	395	31	51	1,180
<i>July 2020</i>	506	90	189	11	128	924
<i>August 2020</i>	478	75	132	6	201	892
<i>September 2020</i>	521	79	74	1	264	939
<i>October 2020</i>	498	68	61	3	281	901
<i>November 2020</i>	410	66	69	7	186	738
<i>December 2020</i>	484	64	119	8	169	844
<i>January 2021</i>	466	57	108	5	37	673
<i>February 2021</i>	462	74	150	27	45	758

**The yellow rows indicate months the clubhouse was closed to the public*

The outcome of the past year:

NSCSS implemented new changes, was incredibly supported by organizations that provided donations and funding to continue to support those in need. But at the end of the day, did we meet the need to support our members? Below are some comments, one year after the pandemic hit.

“Club 90 supported me by phoning me and making sure that I’m doing well. I was also able to come down for one-on-one appointments. Club 90 gave me a volunteer job that I’m very happy with. It gets me out of the house and socializing.” Tracy R.

“The team, especially my friend Jessie, kept in touch. They have been there when in need. Love them ALL. Couldn’t ask for better.” – Bev C.

“Continued socialization, people to talk with and helps keep food cost down. Mental health Workers able to help with issues that arise as a result of the pandemic. They keep a decently running newsfeed on their Facebook page. Keep it up you guys” – Stephanie S.

“Good support, help with worker. Some people don’t go down. Missed in face.” – Laurent D.

“Club 90 supported me during the pandemic in so many ways. I was so thankful they made calls to me, they sent out homework to me. They were all there when I needed an ear or to be heard. They gave me good suggestions and good opinions. Anything I needed, they were there for. I am so grateful for Club 90 during the pandemic.” Donna S.

“I like to thank all for fun and friendship. It’s been a tough year, but things are looking up. I’ll see you all in the days to come and look forward to fun times together.” – Pim D.