

"I could honestly write a book about how friendly, helpful & welcoming everyone at KEYS has been to me."

"Congrats on the incredible accomplishment of 40 years of helping people in our community."
Mark Gerretsen, MP

"I also wanted to say how impressed I have been in recent weeks with the services offered by KEYS. The scope of assistance plus the professional skills offered is truly remarkable. I just wanted to let you know how valuable KEYS help is to our newcomers."

St George's Cathedral
Refugee Support Committee

40 Years of Changing Lives KEYS

"We are happy to say that our First Opportunities Fund client that we hired last year has been a very big success."

"This program has helped me transform my business. The guidance and encouragement I have received as a member of Harbour Community Kitchen has led me towards financial freedom."
Lisa, Program Participant

"I have some very exciting news to share with you. I've got an offer of employment from Scotiabank. Thank you so much for you."

"It was a splendid experience to be at the job fair today and connect with a variety of employers. I have submitted my resume to many of them & some of them have asked me to apply online on their websites."

KEYS' 40th edition
Annual Report 2023 – 24

About us

KEYS is the largest provider of comprehensive employment services in Kingston, Gananoque and its surrounding region. While our initial goal was to help those seeking employment, **KEYS is also now the largest provider of services to Newcomers in the region.**

Founded in 1983, KEYS is a not-for-profit organization with a strong focus on service to others. **We are a registered charity whose programs are free of charge** to those registered at KEYS.

We are committed to supporting members of our community through compassionate action and mutual respect. In order to achieve our vision statement and goals it is vital to network and partner with others. **We are proud of our strategic alliances with those in our community** (local and global) who help us meet the needs of all we serve.

KEYS provides Kingston, Gananoque and communities in Eastern Ontario with a variety of dynamic employment programs and services as well as working with newcomers to Canada requiring English training and settlement help.

Our expertise in helping individuals to attain their employment goals extends to a diverse population. **Those we serve fall into three main categories: Job Seekers – of all ages and abilities; Employers; and Newcomers to Canada.**

Our Statements

VISION

Every individual realizing their full potential within an economically and socially vibrant community.

ENDS

Connected People, Decent Work, Inclusive Communities.

BRAND

We help change lives. KEYS helps job seekers of all ages and abilities, employers of all sizes, and newcomers from all walks of life. With very few exceptions, our programs have no cost. **KEYS is a registered charity.** We welcome the valuable contributions of our community through volunteer opportunities across many program areas.

President's Remarks

Little did Michael Harris

know, that when he rode his bike to a job interview for a position funded by a government employment program, that his life, and this community, would be forever changed. That contract position grew to the extent that the program Michael was leading exceeded the scope of the John Howard Society, and thus Kingston Employment and Youth Services incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. Now, 40 years later, under Michael's outstanding leadership, KEYS' impact is immeasurable. Countless people have secured meaningful work, many newcomers have now called Kingston home, staff have launched careers and created beautiful families, new leaders have flourished, lifelong friendships have been formed, and the bar has been raised for all community-based organizations.

This year is particularly auspicious as it marks not only the 40th anniversary, but also Michael's retirement after an extraordinary 40-year tenure as the founder and leader of the organization. And now, there is the opportunity to pass the baton to a new Executive Director. Celebrating these milestones is a joyful occasion that very few organizations ever experience. Still, what resonates for me more than anything, as both a former KEYS team member, and now as Chair of the Board of Directors, is how the truly unprecedented commitment to the KEYS' core values has continued to thrive during this time of transition.

Michael's personal values are embedded in those of the organization. Passion, grace, dignity, acceptance, kindness, and innovation are at the heart of all that KEYS does. Remaining steadfast in these values will lead us through the exciting times ahead.

It is an honour to be a part of this beautiful organization. Congratulations, Michael, and all of the KEYS staff, past and present, on reaching this wonderful achievement!

Wendy Vuyk

President of the KEYS Board of Directors

"Congrats to everyone at KEYS on 40 years of incredible community impact. Here's to another 40 years!"
Bryan Paterson, Mayor, City of Kingston

We help change lives.

Looking Forward

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I step into the role of Executive Director, I am filled with gratitude and excitement for the future of KEYS. 16 years ago, I was drawn to join this genuine, engaged organization offering non-judgemental services, grounded in excellence and respect for each person's fundamental dignity. KEYS' values and spirited openness to innovation have kept me here for all these years and propel me forward today.

The 2023-2024 year has been a special year for KEYS, marking 40 years serving our community. This year, among many accomplishments, we have resettled more government assisted refugees than ever before, in a more expensive housing market. We have also successfully transitioned both our Gananoque and Kingston Employment Services teams to the new Integrated Employment Services model with strong early results. We have demonstrated our ongoing commitment to learning and development, including organization-wide certification in trauma-informed care. We have also successfully piloted and grown innovative programming such as Pre-apprenticeship training, the Sheltered Waters initiative, the Workplace Inclusion Charter, Canada Digital Adoption Program, Innovation for Better Integration, Work Ready for vulnerable newcomers, In Motion & In Momentum, LGBTQI+ Settlement Services, Workplace Language training and so much more. The successes of KEYS are a testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers, partners, and those individuals from all walks of life who access our programs and services.

The 2023-2024 year was also particularly special as it marked 40 years of service by our founding Executive Director, Michael Harris, who stepped down to move into retirement. Michael grew KEYS from the ground up, establishing an innovative, responsive organization, built on compassion and respect. His vision, kindness, collaborative spirit, and calm wisdom will continue to resonate within KEYS for many years to come.

Looking ahead, I am excited to build on our successes. My vision for KEYS includes collaborative relationships with stakeholders and funders, responsive and innovative services for job seekers, newcomers, and employers, and a people-centered, progressive workplace where our diverse workforce can grow and thrive. At the core of our efforts is a resolute commitment to our Ends Statement: Connected People, Decent Work, Inclusive Communities, and to the values that have defined KEYS for 40 years!

As we look to the future, I invite all of you—our supporters, partners, and community members—to join us in our journey. Your involvement and contributions are vital to our success. Thank you for your dedication to KEYS and to those we serve. Here's to 40 more years of service, generative relationships, and community impact!

Sincerely,
Madeleine Nerenberg
Incoming Executive Director, KEYS

Did you know

Ten Facts from This Year

- 1.) **KEYS recruited 172 volunteers** who supported our clients in the community.
- 2.) **KEYS invested \$1,142,167** into the community for **employee training, certifications** and **supports** for **jobseekers** and **new employees**.
- 3.) **KEYS staff** offered services in **29 languages**.
- 4.) **KEYS delivered 2600 hours** of skills training to youth.
- 5.) **KEYS served 274 Government Assisted Refugees, 59 Refugee Claimants** and **85 Newcomers from Ukraine**.
- 6.) **KEYS supported 400 International students** and **45 International Graduates**.
- 7.) **KEYS served 657 Persons with Disabilities** in employment programs.
- 8.) **KEYS recruited 68 Employers, Municipalities,** and **Economic Development Corporations** to participate in **Equity, Diversity** and **Inclusion training activities**.
- 9.) **KEYS delivered 1366 hours** of **English Language Instruction** to **Newcomer students** in our community.
- 10.) **KEYS** has **100** knowledgeable and dedicated **part time and full time staff**.

"The KEYS community is such a warm, welcoming place. I love being part of this positive environment!"

**We help
change lives.**

A tribute to

In recognition of Michael...

In September 2023, Michael Harris announced his retirement after 40 years as the Executive Director of KEYS. Over the past months, we have been reflecting on the impact he has had directly or indirectly through his work within the employment sector.

Michael spent most of his adult life dedicated to social justice and the principles of decent work, ensuring that those facing unemployment have access to responsive services. In 1983, Michael became the founding Director of Kingston Employment and Youth Services (KEYS) and from that point forward, he became a leader in the youth employment sector. He guided KEYS from a small grass roots youth employment service to a large vibrant employment and newcomer service that employs 100 staff and provides a wide range of employment programs and settlement services to a diverse client group.

Michael's heart-based commitment to compassionate action is fundamental to his quiet, focused, and dynamic leadership. Early on in his career, Michael recognized that the community-based sector was capable of the creative, nimble, and client-centric response that was needed to address a myriad of social issues. His commitment to supporting the positive evolution of the community-based sector expanded beyond KEYS and led Michael to help found the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC), which quickly grew to a network of 72 youth employment counselling centres across the province.

The first meeting of the Ontario Association of Youth Employment Centres (OAYEC) was held at Kingston Employment & Youth Services (KEYS) and Michael served as the First President. He and several other key members in the sector were recognized for their leadership by government decision-makers and were able to create a unified voice to influence policy and program design. This was the closest we came to having a cohesive provincial youth employment strategy.

Michael Harris,
KEYS Executive Director
from 1983 – 2024



Michael Harris

Simultaneously, Michael's

work to develop sound governance and policy frameworks to lend more credibility and long-term sustainability to the nascent community-based sector, made him sought after by other community-based organizations for his vision and expertise. Since those early days, Michael has served as President of Kingston Community Health Centres; as President of the Kingston and Area Social Planning Council; as President of the Industry Education Council Algonquin & Limestone; and President of the Ontario Network of Employment Skill Training Programs (ONESTEP).

Consistently embracing a forward-thinking approach to supporting the future of our communities has set Michael apart as a committed leader in the Employment Sector. He was also a member of the Steering Committee for the Ontario Centre for Workplace Innovation, a member of the Council for Experiential Learning for MOE, a member of Ontario's Youth Employment Reference Group, and a member of Kingston's Workforce In-migration Strategy Working Group. He was also the President of the Ontario Business Education Partnership (OBEP) and serves as Chair of Kingston Immigration Partnership.

Under Michael's leadership in the past 41 years, KEYS has supported over 120,000 individuals to find employment or return to school. Collectively in those four decades, the member organizations within First Work (OAYEC) – an organization, Michael helped to found – have supported at least 3,000,000 individuals across the province to find employment or access further training. An amazing impact for one life to have.

His personal relationships with staff, community stakeholders and partners across the province were an important part of the fabric of this organization; and we have no doubt that Michael will continue to build relationships and engage and inspire others.

"Michael will truly be missed, but his vision and commitment to social justice, equality and decent work will live on as his legacy – in this organization and in its current and future staff."
Gillian Watters
Director, Employment Services

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change lives.**



40 Years

An Anniversary Celebration



On September 7th, 2023, we celebrated KEYS' 40th anniversary at the Holiday Inn, in Kingston, Ontario. Former and current clients, staff, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters including our mayor and MP, who were on-hand to share stories and congratulations to a one-of-a-kind organization and its executive director, Michael Harris, who was at the helm since the very beginning.



Through the Years

40 Years



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40 Years

Timeline 1983 to 2023

1983

In response to a youth unemployment rate of 23%, Kingston Youth Employment Services opened its doors on April 1, 1983, with three staff.



2007

KEYS & KCHC created Immigrant Services Kingston & Area (ISKA).
KEYS began delivering more federally funded youth programs, with expansion until 2024 with specialized, federally-funded programming for newcomer youth, youth with high needs and recent graduates.



Youth in Community Development Education Program: saw youth from Kingston traveled to Jamaica and India and Jamaican youth also came to Kingston to live and work.

KEYS began delivering Job Search Workshop for Newcomers in partnership with KDIS (Kingston District Immigrant Services).

Employment Resource Centre established in Gananoque.

KEYS introduces the Opportunities Fund for people with disabilities, developing our expertise in supporting persons with disabilities to transition into employment.

KEYS established the Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program to respond to the Syrian crisis. Over 1200 refugees resettled from 2015 to 2024. RAP now supports individuals and families displaced from all over the world.

Provincial-funded employment programs undergo radical redesign. KEYS in both Kingston and Gananoque are recognized as key service providers.

1990

1991

1990-99

1998

1999

2000

2002

2005



KEYS incorporated and moved from Wellington to Sydenham Street.

Canada welcomed 5000 refugees from Kosovo and 1100 were housed at CFB Kingston. KEYS staff offered workshops and welcoming activities to support their integration into the Kingston community.



KEYS, with local partners, welcome 20 youth from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to work and study in Kingston.

KEYS merged with the Industry Education Council and began offering LINC (Language Instruction for newcomers to Canada); and career exploration programs within the high schools.

2009

2010

2011

2015

2017-22

2019

2021

2023

KEYS Gananoque expansion, moved to a larger office space and added services in Elgin.



Federal government funded KEYS to deliver the JSW for Newcomers, Immigrant Employment Specialist and the Professional Mentoring Partnership for newcomers.

KEYS Newcomer Services expands to meet needs, adding services for children and youth, employer outreach, digital literacy, LGBTQI+ settlement and support for Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion.

KEYS opened Harbour Community Kitchen with support from City of Kingston (2022).



Diversity Works 2017

Newcomer Services hub opens on Bagot St. Rebranded to KEYS Employment and Newcomer Services.



Launch of the Workplace Inclusion Charter in collaboration with the City of Kingston.

We help change lives.

Success

Program: Refugee Assistance

Fadi,

When Fadi arrived in Kingston as a refugee with his mother and younger siblings, he was overwhelmed and unsure where to begin. With foundation level English and a sense of responsibility to help his family, he did not take much time for himself. The KEYS RAP team supported him and his family, encouraging him to register for English classes, employment programs, and over time began to see gains in his language skills and overall quality of life. Today, he is actively participating in English classes, has made friends in the community, has secured employment related to his prior experience, and is taking time to pursue his hobbies, including going to the gym and playing a musical instrument. Fadi appears more confident, connected to the community, goal-oriented, and motivated to continue his resettlement journey.

Kamila,

Kamila is a single mother with three children. When she first arrived to Kingston as a refugee, she was overwhelmed, spoke very little English, and was anxious about sending her children to school. Shortly after arriving to Kingston, she was hospitalized. The KEYS RAP team supported her through this challenging time by accompanying her to medical appointments, following up with her doctors, connecting her to others in her community who were able to provide friendship and support with childcare, and attending to her emerging needs. Time spent building rapport and encouraging Kamila has fostered a strong relationship between her and KEYS. Today, she is attending English classes, her children are thriving at their new school, attending after school programming with their peers, and she is enthusiastically participating in the search for employment and ways to integrate into the community.

“Every time I went to KEYS for assistance, I found valuable solutions that helped me to achieve my goals even faster.”

“Thankful of KEYS for helping newcomers – highly appreciating the KEYS supports for refugees. I am thankful.”

Stories

Harbour Community Kitchen

Lisa,

Lisa Robitaille has been self-employed for years. A single parent to a daughter with complex disabilities, she has gotten back up many times in pursuit of her goals. She did not give up.

In 2018, she started to bake with her daughter. Breads, pizza dough, sourdough bread, scones – something to do together which produced beautiful baked goods for friends and family. People kept telling her that she should be selling her goodies, and Bread by Elise was born. In late 2020, she joined YourWay, a KEYS program designed to support marginalized women in launching or growing a small business during the pandemic.

Bakery life is tough. Lots of early mornings, low margins, and occasional big messes. She carried on and built a brand that became recognized in the Kingston area. She joined the Harbour Community Kitchen (HCK), a program built at KEYS, designed to provide low to no cost kitchen access for women looking to build or grow a food-based business in Kingston. The HCK coordinator suggested she consider teaching workshops to people interested in baking her own bread. She could use the kitchen and event space at HCK to run her classes, and potentially benefit from a much higher profit margin with a lot less flour in the air at home. Since launch, Lisa has increased her profits by 246%, was able to resign from a part time administrative job, has developed new products, and is in the process of licensing her dried sourdough starter for international sales.

Program: JobStart Program

Lindsay,

Lindsay enrolled in the JobStart program to explore career options. She had worked a few jobs in customer service, restaurant, health and fitness, all of which were part time and/or casual opportunities. Through some career exploration she quickly realized she enjoyed the construction industry and its possibilities. We connected her with an excavating company who trained her as a health and safety inspector. Lindsay has gained confidence in her new job and is excited about her future. She is being trained as a Regional Inspector and is valued by her employer. She has shared her story with many of our new JobStart program participants and offers mentoring and guidance through her own path.

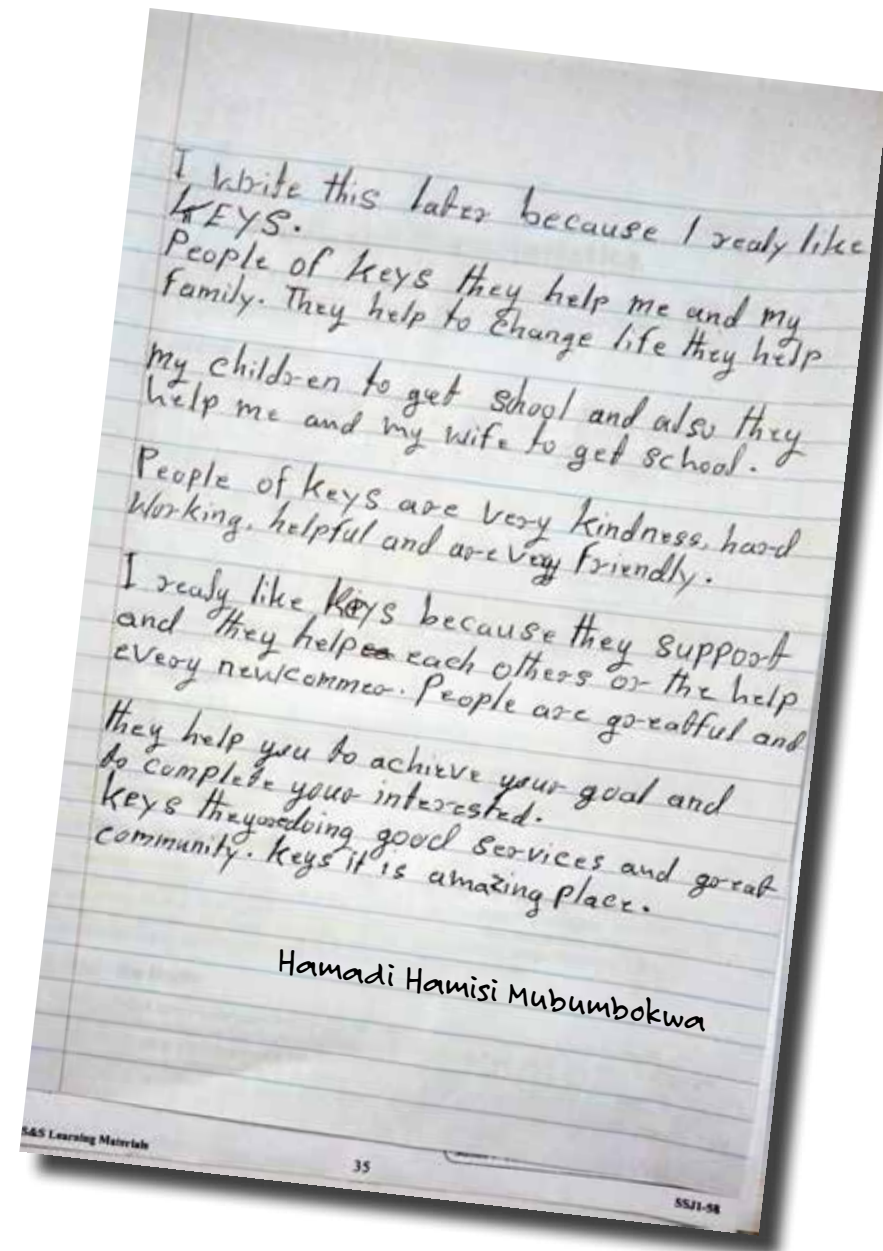


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Program: ODSP Program

Tammy,

Tammy came to us after completing the Environmental Aide Program in July 2021. She had not worked since her last job in 1993 delivering newspapers. I met with Tammy and the employer of a cleaning company in the Tim Hortons parking lot in Prescott in September 2021, it was Covid times and we had a truck-side interview. Tammy was determined to prove how she could do the job. After asking Tammy to tell him about herself, she emphatically stated, "I can do this job" and the employer said, "I like you". She was immediately hired to clean and sanitize a government building on weekends. She also secured a second location and is working four shifts per week. Tammy, who is 100 percent deaf, wears hearing aids to alert to sounds, has no access to public transportation, limited lip reading and used ASL, was grateful for KEYS help to find the right employment fit for her!



Integrated Employment Services

Faqir,

Faqir and his family arrived in Kingston as Government-assisted refugees in September 2022. After participating in ESL classes for some months, Faqir was anxious to work. At that point, the family's only income source was the federal support offered through the Refugee Assistance Program, which would end very soon.

In May 31, 2023, Faqir's English level was still low (CLB 2) and he had been unemployed for an extended period. Faqir also required interpretation for job interviews and onboarding, however, Faqir had been a welder in Afghanistan, and this was a skill in very high demand with a few local employers. KEYS IES program was able to cover the costs of interpretation and we connected with Metalcraft Marine who were interested in offering Faqir an opportunity if his welding skills were accurate.

Although his spoken English was limited, Faqir could understand instructions and he was able to demonstrate the quality of his welding. KEYS then set up a placement agreement with Metalcraft with intensive monitoring to ensure that more interpretation for training could be offered if required.

We received weekly progress reports on Faqir and within a month he had progressed to more independent and challenging work. The employer is pleased with Faqir's strong attention to detail and work habits. Faqir is now a permanent employee and an accepted member of the Metalcraft welding team. His English has greatly improved, and he continues to participate in evening ESL at KEYS.

At the monthly Kingston Manufacturers Meeting hosted by Kingston Economic Development, the General Manager of Metalcraft used this story to highlight the talent available through KEYS.

"I'm grateful for such an opportunity to participate in this event. It was an excellent possibility to meet new people and start to build my network."

Our Report

Statement of Revenue & Expenditures

REVENUES

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development	\$2,860,551	2023	\$2,329,817	2024
Employment and Social Development Canada	\$1,456,886	2023	\$1,333,974	2024
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	\$3,173,414	2023	\$3,770,569	2024
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	\$507,519	2023	\$266,705	2024
SERCO Canada	\$ —	2023	\$1,048,671	2024
West Coast Group	\$ —	2023	\$765,316	2024
Women & Gender Equality Canada	\$ —	2023	\$322,791	2024
Other	\$1,606,133	2023	\$548,618	2024
TOTAL	\$9,604,503	2023	\$10,386,461	2024

EXPENSES

Salaries and Benefits (program delivery)	\$5,220,367	2023	\$5,889,547	2024
Operating	\$2,356,044	2023	\$2,835,229	2024
Participant Supports	\$518,561	2023	\$351,806	2024
Employer Subsidies	\$847,453	2023	\$752,177	2024
Participant Wages	\$391,410	2023	\$341,014	2024
TOTAL	\$9,333,835	2023	\$10,169,773	2024

Our Support

Our Funders:

KEYS is a multi-funded, registered charity and we are grateful for the support we receive from:

Canada



Ontario



An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Our Volunteers:

We are proud of the work we do in our community.

Much of the thanks goes out to our volunteers who help make everything possible.

KEYS offers a variety of opportunities for volunteers, local businesses and professionals to help other members of our community.

If you are not able to give your time, we graciously accept financial donations to help us continue the work we do.

Whether you can give your time to help improve someone's life or donate financially to help us continue our work or support us through sponsorship, advertising or in other ways, we are grateful.

“I volunteered for this program to give back, but I ended up receiving way more, by seeing success stories and by gaining more professional relationships and friendship.
Thank you, KEYS for this wonderful opportunity!”

We help
change lives.

Our Staff

2023–24 Staff List

Abdulmasih Shaao	Elena Soleimanzadeh	Leanna Thomas	Oksana Kachurivska
Aicha Aharchaoui	Emily Cummins-Woods	Lisa Macdonald	Omneya Asfoor
Alejandra Zamora Flores	Emily Gordon-Aubert	Louise Slobodian	Patricia O'Connor
Alexa Elder	Emma Montero	Madeleine Nerenberg	Paul Pennel
Alexis Campbell	Erin McFetrick	Makenzie Steacy	Rafael Palacios
Amal Sourani	Fahim Mehry	Manal Salem	Rogney Piedra Arencibia
Amr Elsharkawy	Fereshteh Shaer Zadeh	Manal Shalabi	Ron Hunter
Anilkumar Odedra	Gabriel Reyes	Manuel Correa Morfi	Rosaline Wassef
Ann Chen	Gillian Watters	Mark King	Rose Rezaie
Asmaa Najibi	Holly Mabee	Mark Garrah	Rula Abuhajeer
Bansari Shrivastava	Houda Feddach	Matthew Horseman	Ryan Charbonneau
Blair Cameron	Ian McNichol	Meilan Fan	Sally Elliott
Brenda Burns	Jane Phair	Michael Harris	Sara Ashnaei Afnan
Carissa Cosgrove	Jeff Kennedy	Michael Hipson	Sara Miller
Carla Brennan	Johnson Adebayo	Michael Myshchyshyn	Sayed Hussaini
Carol Roberts	Kamryn Marsh	Miriam Ghilai Ghebreamlak	Seconde Nyanzobe
Carol-Ann Preston	Karen McDonald Hurley	Modupe Oluwadare	Sharon Halladay
Casey Lappan	Kasuni Jayathilake	Monica Gonzalez	Sharon Way-Brackenbury
Celeste Burtch	Kelly MacGregor	Nancy McGarvie	Sheila Simin
Chris Lambert	Kenadja Da Silva	Nasra Mohamed	Sherrie Gaylord
Christie Scales	Khaled El Jassem	Natalia Martinelli-Luengo	Sonia Verjovsky
Dana Betournay	Kingsley Oguine	Nathalie Melzer	Stacey Raymond
Danielle Deptuck	Kyllie Jansen	Niyati Chaudhary	Tarek Elmaghraby
Devin Reynolds	Lea Westlake	Nouman Jalal	Tobyn Leyland
			Todd Scott
			Trish McNamara
			Varley Taylor
			Vidya Rao
			Wessam Ayad
			Zainab Mnyetto
			Zoha Khalid
			Zohra Bahri

Board of Directors:

Wendy Vuyk – President	Jon Oosterman – Director
Tarek Hussein – Vice President	Matt LeMay – Director
Les Morley – Past President	Sandra Gauthier – Director
Pennie Carr-Harris – Secretary	Gord Dalton – Director
Christine Bellamy – Treasurer	

Contact Us

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 @KEYSCanHelp

 @KEYSCanHelp

 @keys_changes_lives

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Elgin:

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Email: elgin@keys.ca

I got a conditional offer from Empire Life. This is a big step forward for me. All your time and effort are well appreciated.

Your coaching inspires me and encourages me. You are a great, nice and professional coach. You are doing a great job and your job is well appreciated.

I will recommend KEYS to everyone I know.

“A door needs to open before we have the confidence to move forward. KEYS counsellors and the YJC program IS that door!”

**We help
change lives.**

"KEYS helped change my life!"

"KEYS has helped me in applying for citizenship. You have no idea how much it helps people like me. I found my passion. After I finish my English course, I will enroll in a computer science course."

"The Opportunities Fund was very helpful, and the additional support was greatly appreciated. I found the staff at KEYS kind and professional. They supported me in finding employment. I feel super grateful."

Desiree, Program Participant

"One of the unique and most valuable aspects of participating in the KEYS Workplace Inclusion Charter is the access to other individuals in the community, other partnerships, tapping into that expertise in order to be able to learn and grow and being able to gain access to new people's brains and their insights and their experiences that can shape how KCHC does business and apply more of a best practice lens."

Kingston Community Health Centre,
Management

"It was just really amazing to be surrounded by such awesome, smart people who were just here to help."

"I have been learning so much, so fast. Career Connect has been a way to get the experience needed to make me a valuable employee."

"Thank you so much for all your help. It's been great being a part of the JobStart program. It was so nice to have KEYS in my back corner."

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change lives.

KEYS' 40th edition Annual Report 2023 – 24



Jobseeker
Employer
Newcomer

Connected People
Decent Work
Inclusive Communities