

# ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA

*Abilities, families and communities are our passions.*



THE MANY FACES OF PEOPLE THAT ABILITY FIRST  
OTTAWA HELPED DURING THE COVID-19  
PANDEMIC BY PROVIDING SUPPLIES LIKE MEDICAL  
AND FABRIC MASKS.

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA  
70 BONGARD AVENUE  
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FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER

*Ability First Ottawa (AFO) is a charity organization that provides comprehensive services and support to individuals with development and non-developmental disabilities (ages 10 to 70) and their families. AFO's mission is to assist persons with disabilities, and their families, reach their social, educational and employment goals, by offering resource infrastructure and skills development in coordination with our supporting community.*

CHARITABLE #826197394RR0001

### VISION STATEMENT

To encourage hope and inspire persons with disabilities, and their families, reach for their dreams and achieve their full potential.

### MISSION STATEMENT

To assist persons with disabilities, and their families, reach their social, educational and employment goals, by offering resource infrastructure and skills development in coordination with our supporting community.

### VALUE STATEMENT

AFO serves its clients' needs in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Ability First Ottawa will always consider these core values:

- ✓ Hopeful
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Passionate
- ✓ Safety First
- ✓ Optimistic
- ✓ Caring
- ✓ Well-Being
- ✓ Inclusivity
- ✓ Individual Development
- ✓ Supportive Environment

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Last year in this same report, I talked about the many successes of Ability First Ottawa's 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation. It was a busy year for AFO in 2019 as we were very much client/participant focussed. We were looking forward to continuing with that focus in 2020 as the feedback from our participants and their families was positive. The Board of Directors had discussed ways of keeping the status quo but expanding the services. All of that came to a screeching halt when Covid-19 became a household word. Then in March 2020 when Ottawa was forced to go into its first lockdown, it appeared that we were in it for the long haul. It became apparent that AFO would not be able to continue its programming from the previous year. All of our participants are immune compromised and it wouldn't be safe to run program with them.

After being around the disabled community for most of my life, I knew that the majority, if not all, would be struggling to get the essentials while Ottawa was on lockdown. With the Board's approval, we started making small emergency kits for distribution. The original kits contained a mask, hand sanitizer, a granola bar and information on the Coronavirus. These items were delivered to those in need. As the year went on and the virus didn't appear to be going away, we altered the packages, improved them, continuously tweaked the way they were packaged and delivered. It was a team effort and there are many people to thank. And, it isn't over yet! Some vaccines have arrived in Ottawa but it will take a while for everyone to be vaccinated, especially since the vaccine requires two doses. So, AFO will continue to perform outreach in the disabled community until the virus is eradicated. As you will see, this report has a lot of information on Covid-19 and how the sheer numbers of people affected - 99,544,378 cases reported Worldwide and 2,134,526 deaths - became a Pandemic worthy of everyone's attention.

Ability First Ottawa extends our heartfelt thanks for another successful year to our donors, funders, Board of Directors and volunteers, for without them, the programs and fundraising would not get done. We are proud that together we are able to improve the lives of the disabled community. AFO will continue to work hard to help those in need and to get our message of inclusion out across the City.

Sincerely,

*Christina Ranieri*

Christina Ranieri, BA.Soc., SSW, DSW  
President & Executive Director  
Ability First Ottawa

## COMMENTS ON COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA

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On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January one year ago, the first case of the novel coronavirus was reported by Health Canada in Toronto. Little did we know how much that was going to change our lives. There was so much we didn't know about the Coronavirus, which is now more commonly called by the specific strain of Covid-19. By March of 2020, we were heading in to our first lockdown in Ottawa. A lot of small businesses had to shut down for the duration of the lockdown and many of them did not recover.

As Spring and Summer approached, everything seemed to be brighter and more relaxed. Everyone was being warned to remain vigilant, to wear masks, keep social distancing and washing hands frequently. Even with those measures, life seemed much easier. Experts were warning that the virus was still contagious and that when the weather turned colder and we headed into Winter, that the number of those contracting the virus would soar.

And, were they ever correct! At the time of writing (January 25, 2021), the Holiday season is in the not-too-distant past. Ottawans were encouraged to enjoy the season with whomever was already residing with them. Making this a very lonely Holiday season for many. However, there are always those that don't listen or don't care about their health or the health of others. Ottawa and cities around North America are now seeing the effects of the large group get-togethers over the holidays. Now the people that were infected then, are showing symptoms now and the hospitals are over-crowded with Covid-19 patients. There are now vaccines for use against Covid-19, approved by Health Canada starting to arrive in Ottawa. It is just a waiting game until everyone is vaccinated and then, hopefully, we can look at this pandemic in the rear-view mirror.

Like a lot of the small businesses in the City, Ability First Ottawa had to change the way we do things for now. In our case, that meant suspending our programming until it is safe to re-open. We felt like we were abandoning our participants but we had no choice, our clientele all have weakened immune systems and we certainly didn't want to put them in a life-threatening situation.

That's when the AFO Executive Director, Christina Ranieri, not wanting to idly stand by, decided to make it our new temporary mandate to remain a support system to the community we serve. With donations from supporting community partners and individuals, AFO has been putting together health and food kits to deliver to persons with physical and developmental disabilities living in isolation during the pandemic.

AFO volunteers took the necessary precautions in the preparation of the kits, as well as the delivery of them by following the guidelines set by the Canadian Government's established [protocols](#).

In June 2020, AFO was very happy to receive a Grant from the Ottawa Community Foundation's Emergency Community Support Fund. That grant, as well as various donations helped us reach up to 475 people with our Health Kits, that include Masks, Hand Sanitizer, Food and other items necessary in an emergency. We can only hope that in a year from now, we will be able to look back on this pandemic as a devastatingly sad memory but one that was finally in the past.

To put things in perspective, please see the chart below that lists the Covid-19 Statistics for the World, Canada, Ontario and Ottawa.

## COVID-19 STATISTICS WORLDWIDE Vs. CANADA Vs. ONTARIO (AS AT JANUARY 24, 2021)

DATA	WORLDWIDE <sup>1</sup>	CANADA <sup>2</sup>	ONTARIO <sup>2</sup>	OTTAWA <sup>3</sup>
Confirmed cases to date*	99,544,378	742,531	252,585	12,853
Deaths	2,134,526	18,974	5,753	419
Recovered	71,543,916	658,984	222,287	11,446
Active Cases	28,864,706	64,573	24,545	988

NOTES: \*AS AT JANUARY 25, 2021

1. WORLDWIDE STATS: [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info)
2. CANADA AND ONTARIO STATS: COVID-19 APP;
3. OTTAWA STATS: CITY OF OTTAWA WEBSITE

## STATISTICS FROM CITY OF OTTAWA SURVEY

The City of Ottawa conducted an online survey in June 2020 (performed by EKOS Research). Findings of the report focus on Ottawa residents' employment and income during the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey was completed by 566 Ottawa residents and therefore represents a sample of Ottawa's population. The overall response rate was 30% but survey weights have been applied to the population by age, gender, education and region, to be aligned with the distribution of the 2016 Census.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM JUNE 2020 SURVEY

- The closure of non-essential business, schools and daycares, and stay-at-home measures in mid-March has led to unemployment, a decrease in job seeking and income loss for some Ottawans. Many individuals and businesses applied for emergency response benefits (CERB), subsidies, and payment deferrals.
- One in ten (11%) Ottawans are not currently working because of the COVID-19 pandemic and 28% report a decrease in income since mid-March. It is too early to know how many Ottawans will lose their job permanently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent financial impact.
- One-fifth (19%) of Ottawa residents said they had difficulty paying for either housing, food or utilities. This was more common among residents with a disability, those with lower household income and those who had a decrease in income since mid-March.
- Groups that appear to be most impacted by income loss and the ability to pay for basic living costs (housing, food, utilities) include visible minorities and those living with a disability.

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

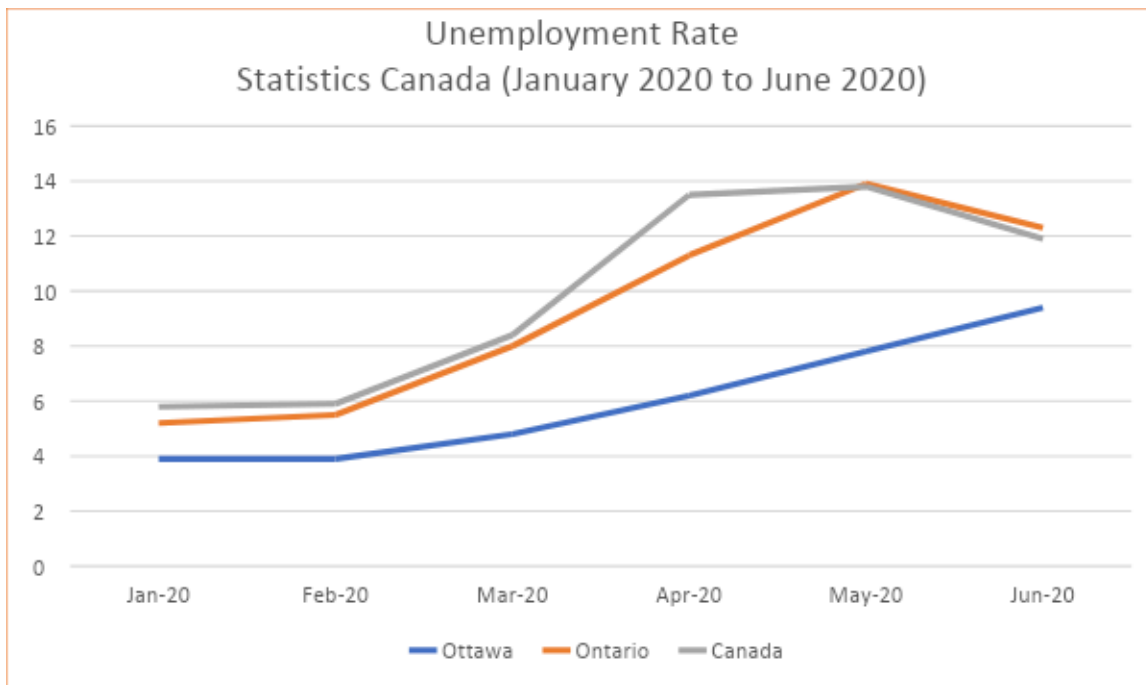
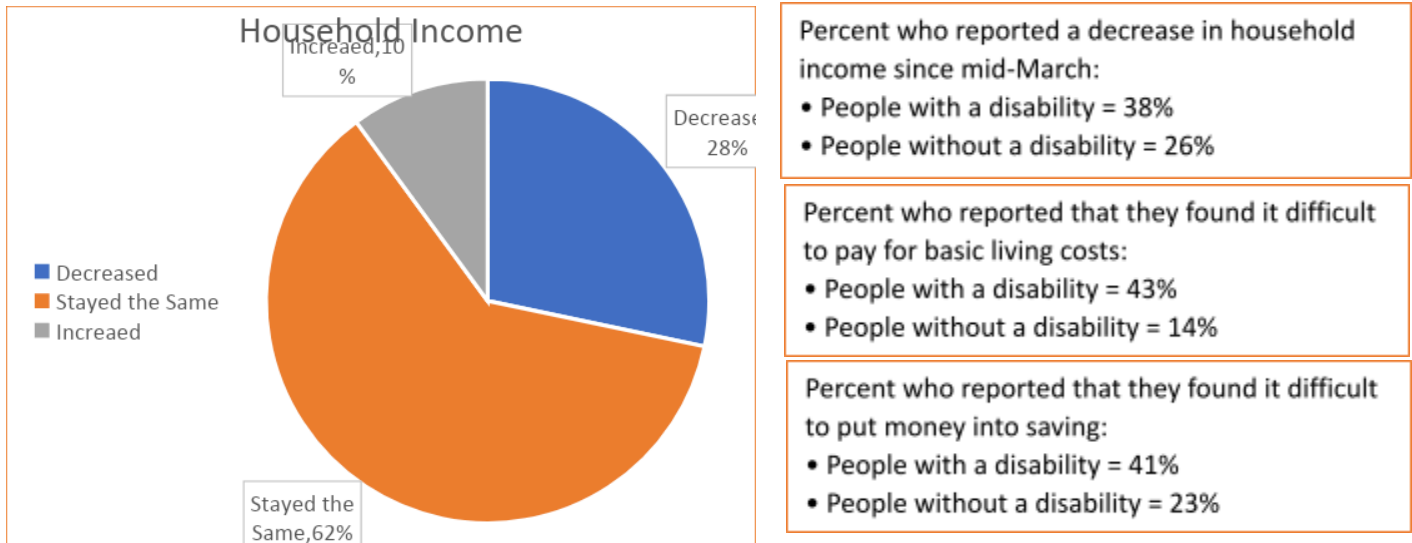
GROUPS	NUMBER	PERCENT
A person with a disability	79	13.9%
A member of a visible minority	83	14.7%
Indigenous	7	1.2%
None of the above	378	66.8%
Don't know/no response	19	13.4%

## THE COST OF LIVING – PAYING FOR BASIC LIVING COSTS

The survey found that residents with an annual income of less than \$60,000 (39%) and those with a disability (43%) had more difficulty paying for housing, food or utilities. Likewise, for the ability to save money, with 41% of those with a disability indicating that they don't have enough money to put any into saving.

The pandemic affected so many people and companies financially that the Federal Government stepped in and created a monthly payment called CERB. Any Canadian Citizen that wasn't able to collect Unemployment Insurance or other monthly funding could collect the CERB. It was determined that \$2,000 per month should be the minimum monthly amount because anything less than that would be well below the poverty line and almost impossible to live on. Ironically, anyone who collects the Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP) gets a significant amount less than that. Similar to CPP Disability payments, Ontario Works and any other monthly benefit. That statement alone admits that people living with a disability are, in fact, living below the poverty line. While many with a disability are highly educated with Masters Degrees and such, too many business will not accommodate them and therefore, they end up on ODSP living in poverty. This needs to change and hopefully, this pandemic will shed some light on the situation.

FUNDING SOURCE	ESTIMATED AMOUNT PER MONTH (SINGLE PERSON)
ODSP	\$900 to &1200
Ontario Works	\$700
CPP Disability	\$1500
CERB (during Covid)	\$2000



Persons with disabilities are reflected in all ethnicities, all socio-economic scenarios and all age groups. Disabilities don't discriminate! Ability First Ottawa has strived to support these individuals and their families throughout these difficult times. This was a change for the charity and caused an increase in administrative costs to ensure that everyone was safe, fed and had support from their multi-disciplinary teams. Before Covid, these barriers were already high but now they are a public health crisis.

## OTTAWA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUNDING – ESSENTIAL CARE KITS PROJECT

As noted earlier, with the help of Vectors' Group, Ability First Ottawa was given a grant from the Ottawa Community Foundation for our Essential Care Kits Project. The Federal Government had provided the Ottawa Community Foundation, the Canadian Red Cross and the United Way with funding for an Emergency Community Support Fund. AFO also received a smaller grant from the Canadian Red Cross to run a training session on how to use the PPE correctly. We are still sorting out the logistics of this training.

### THE KITS

All of our kits are sourced from local business or small business to meet the needs of those we serve. As a charity, we have always accepted all ages of participants. In fact, it is even stated in our Mission Statement that we support those with disabilities between 10 to 70. With the Covid-19 Kits, our goal is to keep everyone healthy, safe and warm regardless of their age.

Our kits always include items that were on sale or are donated from local business, such as items that would help our clients' save time, energy and funds. Of course, we want to ensure that everyone that we help is kept warm. Therefore, we have included items such as emergency blankets, heating pads, mittens, gloves, hats, socks and clothes.

Fabric masks, nurses' caps and headbands have been continuously made by local sewers. These masks and reusable PPE are made by local sewers. They reduce pressure sores, provide less sensory overload. We also were able to purchase some masks for the hard of hearing or deaf from MyAccess.

All kits have a travel size hand sanitizer provided by local distilleries. The spray bottles are all filled with the disinfectant rub and the bottles are all labelled with safety information before they are given out. Disinfectant Hand Soap and packages of dry food like pasta, chicken noodle soup or instant ramen. Reusable cleaning supplies were also included (ie. J-clothes and micro-fibre clothes).

Once a month, the Ottawa Humane Society donates pet food to AFO for distribution to clients who have furry pets that are looking for food. This service will continue for as long as they receive the donation of food.

For the safety of those we help, we print out information that the public needs to know but does not have available due to lack of a phone or internet. Such as, how to protect yourself from Covid, other resources available to the community, who to connect with in emergency situations and how to wash your useable PPE.

Food: AFO is a zero-waste charity. This means we have a goal of creating a system that supports persons with a disability but causes less food waste. For example, our food is mostly delivered in jars. Food such as soup broth that meets the individuals' food intolerances, allergies and dietary needs. We have also done diabetic friendly snacks, such as, apple sauce, which is also great for those who have swallowing issues.

Recently, we partnered with Cobrie Restaurant with a coupon/gift certificate campaign over the holidays. This has grown into a regular partnership. The restaurant is cooking soup and stock for AFO to deliver through its outreach program. When in season we do a lot of pickled food as it has a longer shelf life and then when people are unable to cook, they have emergency food available. Also, those we serve help us get access to jars and doing this has helped them keep volunteers while receiving our services.

Another item in the kits is an emergency whistle as people with a disability are facing issues with personal safety. Theft and abuse is at an all time high and with the history of people with a disability having issues with authority figures they tend to not report for that reason or lack the assistance to report or insurance to cover their costs of loss of property.

We also give information and access to emergency supplies in case they are not able to get help. For example power bank so that they can charge their adaptive living aids, medical devices and cell phones. Power outages happen often in the areas in which those with disabilities live so, this is a common issue and access to landlords or property managers is difficult in these times. We also give each person or family members flashlights with batteries.

**Emergency/Medical Kits:** We customize the kits as much as possible and encourage people to take them to medical appointments and hospital visits. They are made so that when in a rush, the bag can just be put into a carry-all and taken to medical appointments. We use pre-labeled bags and all of the items in the bag will last at least three days should someone have to stay in the hospital.

**Garden Kits:** These are items from the community or seasonal community initiative. Such as seeds to soil. The project has helped many in mental health and helps fill in the gaps for food security. Participants and members have reported higher self-esteem and accomplishment by having a plant to take care of and it has created an outlet. We give them plastic netting, twine that is biological, plant instructions, herb seeds, plants that can protect against bugs and animals. These items are either from the Dollarama or are given to us from local free cycle groups, local hobby gardeners and community gardens as well. These are the ones we gave out this year all having several uses.

**Activity Kits:** Our activity kits are put together with the hope that they will promote mental health for all ages. Our partner, A.R.T. in Action has provided their Ottawa Colouring Book as well as colouring pencils, sharpeners and erasers. We have also received large donations of puzzles, board games and other craft supplies that we can distribute to help with stress levels while also promoting cognitive and motor skills.



Essential Care Kits Distributed to the Disabled Community

## ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Photo Credit  
Hingman Leung

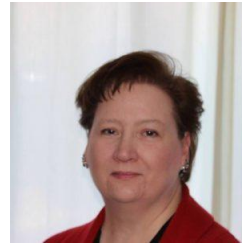
**Christina Ranieri,**  
B.A.Soc, SSW, DSW  
**President &  
Executive Director**



**Tanys Coughlan, CHRP**  
**Vice President**



**Leonard Leeks,**  
FCPA, FCMA, CPA, CMA,  
FICB, AMCT  
**Treasurer**



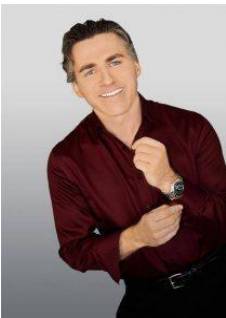
**Cathy Aldrich**  
**Secretary**



**Teresa Scrivens**  
**Board Member**



**Emma Scotchmer**  
**Board Member**



**Dylan Black**  
**Honorary Board Member**

## PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

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AFO provides resources and information to parents that help them to create better lives for themselves and their loved one. This includes a comprehensive intake session that will guide parents through the various funding and support systems available to them and their children. The goal is to one day have a structured Parent Support Program however, at this point in time, Christina continues to help and counsel parents of participants in the program.

In general, mid to high-functioning citizens with developmental disabilities face some of the highest risk of depression, disheartenment, homelessness and negative behaviours because few programs support their needs. They receive less funding than those who are more “obviously disabled”. Yet, due to the judgement and social stigma associated with people with disabilities, they find it equally difficult to secure any form of employment. As a result, participants are extremely susceptible to poverty, depression and homelessness. The weekly program helps participants learn social skills as well as entrepreneurial and employable skills for those that are high-functioning.

~Christina Ranieri

## NETWORKING EVENTS

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Due to the Covid-19 and the lockdowns that have happened on and off throughout the year, many of the regular networking events moved to on-line events over Zoom or other online platforms. These included networking events such as eSAX, HUB Ottawa and WOW Women.

*No matter how great your business idea may be, its success depends on one very important factor: other people. You can get all the other building blocks in place – a solid CRM, a brick-and-mortar storefront, inventory out the ears, and an advertising strategy. But devoid of a strong network you'll reach the ceiling very quickly.* – Jarrod Goldsmith, Founder eSAX

## AWARDS

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## Community Builder Award – Covid-19 Heroes Edition

In partnership with Apt613, the United Way East Ontario presented a new award in 2020 called the Community Builder Award - Covid-19 Heroes Edition.

The spirit of the award was to thank volunteers who had gone the extra mile in this global crisis and offered their time and efforts to serve those who need help now more than ever. Each winner of the award was presented with a plaque with the wording “Thank you for helping to build a stronger, healthier and safer community for all of us.” The nominees were to embody the following characteristics:

- Volunteer work has gone above and beyond amidst the covid-19 pandemic to support neighbours in need, vulnerable groups or the community-at-large.
- Volunteer work is a model for others and has had a measurable impact in our community.
- Volunteer work is beyond the normal scope of their professional duties and is not a paid position.
- Prior volunteerism is an asset.
- Nominees’ volunteer efforts in the community should closely align to the United Way’s work - whether it is supporting people with mental health struggles, helping vulnerable seniors, assisting newcomers or refugees’ transition to life in a new country, giving kids a chance to succeed and more.

The award was presented to Christina during a Zoom Call Board Meeting by Dylan Black of Boom 97.7 Radio, and our Honorary Board Member. Unbeknownst to Christina, there were many more well wishers on the Zoom call that came forward once the award was presented. Since Christina didn’t know that she was nominated, it was a nice surprise and well-deserved award.



## 2020 FACES AWARDS

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The 2020 Faces Awards were held prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ability First Ottawa and Christina were both nominated for awards, however, this was not their year.



### CHRISTINA RANIERI

WINNER of the Faces Magazine Favorite Social Services Worker  
Award in 2016 and 2019

Nominated in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 – Faces  
Magazine

Celebration of People Award for Advocacy Finalist (2014)

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### ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA

WINNER of the Faces Magazine New Humanitarian Initiative  
(2021)

Nominated in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021  
 Best Community Support Non-Profit (Ability First Ottawa)  
 West Ottawa Board of Trade Business Excellence Award Finalist  
 (2016 & 2017)

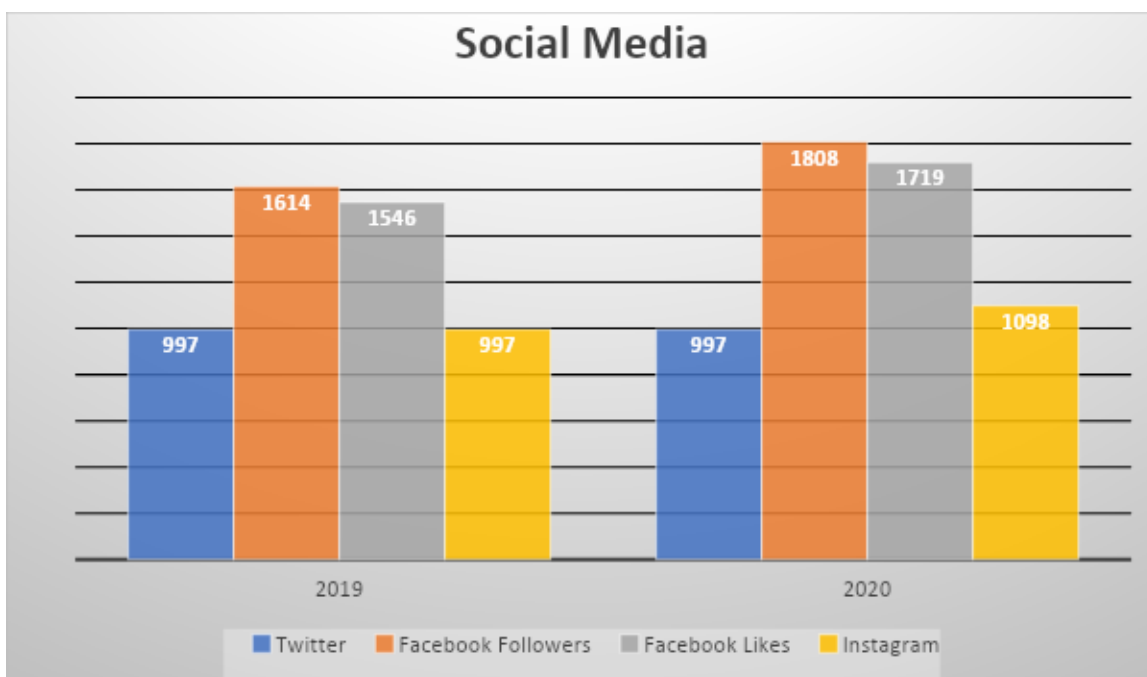
**WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Website**

[www.abilityfirstottawa.org](http://www.abilityfirstottawa.org): Ability First Ottawa’s Website has been revamped and is easier to navigate for everyone. The Website is also accessible for many disabilities including blindness. In the near future, the website will need to be reviewed and material updated.

**Social Media**

Ability First Ottawa does its best to have an effective social media presence. We currently have two Board Members taking care of our Social Media (Christina Ranieri and Emma Scotchmer) and our numbers have gone up over last year.



## ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA INC.

Charity #826197394 RT0001

### BALANCE SHEET AS AT NOVEMBER 30, 2020

	2020	2019
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash	\$ 25,095	\$ 4,800
Accounts Receivable	\$ 700	\$ 1,394
Taxes Receivable	\$ 1554	\$ 816
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 27,349</b>	<b>\$ 7,009</b>
Fixed (Long-Term) Assets		
Long-term Investments	\$ 0	\$ 0
Property, plant and equipment (Less accumulated depreciation)	\$ 0	\$ 0
Intangible assets	\$ 0	\$ 0
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 27,349</b>	<b>\$ 7,009</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$ 0	\$ 1,000
Community Foundation Grant Advance	\$ 1,381	\$ 0
Due to Founder/Employee	\$ 4,948	\$ 5,084
Credit Card Payable	\$ 2	\$ 669
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>\$ 6,752</b>
Long-Term Liabilities		
Long-Term Debt	\$ 0	\$ 0
Deferred Income Tax	\$ 0	\$ 0
Other	\$ 0	\$ 0
<b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 257	\$ 71
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	\$ 20,751	\$ 185

Total Net Assets	\$ 21,017	\$ 257
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 27,349</b>	<b>\$ 7,009</b>

## ABILITY FIRST OTTAWA INC.

Charity #826197394 RT0001

### INCOME STATEMENT

	12 Months Ending 30-Nov 2020	12 Months Ending 30-Nov 2019
<b>Revenue</b>		
Donations		
Tax-Receipted Gifts	\$ 2,823	\$ 0
Donations received through Canada Helps <sup>1</sup>	\$ 11,499	\$ 1,180
Gifts received from other charities/foundations	\$ 4,998	\$ 90
Other gifts – not receipted	\$ 12,395	\$ 461
Gifts in Kind		\$ 0
Program Fees	\$ 600	\$ 8,995
Grants	\$ 24,619	\$ 0
Fundraising Events – Revenues	\$ 0	\$ 639
Other Revenues	\$ 353	\$ 782
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 57,288</b>	<b>\$ 12,147</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program Outings & Meals <sup>2</sup>	\$ 848	\$ 7,098
Covid Initiative	\$ 29,630	\$ 0
Professional Fees & Honorariums	\$ 120	\$ 908
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 0	\$ 0
Fundraising Events – Expenses	\$ 0	\$ 0
Rent	\$ 0	\$ 0
Insurance	\$ 1,443	\$ 1,116
Bank Fees & Interest	\$ 468	\$ 297
Advertising and Promotion	\$ 0	\$ 0
Gifts in Kind	\$ 0	\$ 0
Equipment & Leasehold Improvements	\$ 0	\$ 0
Travel	\$ 0	\$ 0
Other General and Administrative Expenses <sup>3</sup>	\$ 4,020	\$ 2,544
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 36,527</b>	<b>\$ 11,962</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$ 20,761</b>	<b>\$ 185</b>

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS,  
PARTNERS AND FUNDERS FOR YOUR HELP...  
WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!

**NOTES:**

1. Last year donations through Canada Helps had dropped significantly, however, this year they have increased significant, probably due to the Covid Initiative.
2. Program Fees were significantly less since program didn't run in 2020.
3. Administrative Costs reflect items that relate to the Covid Initiative.

**FUNDING PROVIDED BY:**

*The Emergency Community Support Fund*

*Funded by*

Canada<sup>ca</sup>



**Canadian  
Red Cross**



## DONATIONS/SUPPLIES FOR THE COVID INITIATIVE PROVIDED BY

A.R.T. in Action	Kings Own Barbershop
AboutFace Masks	Magdalena Morataya
Ausome for Charity	Michael Lifshitz – IllumAbilities
Blanket Brigade Kanata	NRO -Community Resource Centre
Bootleg Buttons	Operation Ramzieh
Canada Sews (Masks)	Ottawa Buzz TV
CapitalTek	Ottawa Humane Society
City of Ottawa - Human Needs Taskforce	Print a Bunch
CoBrie Resaurant and Catering	Rainbow Foods
Collab Space	Rideau-Rockcliffe CRC
Dairy Distillery	Ruckify – Ability First Ottawa
Design Your Plate Solutions	Safeline Group
eSAX – The Entrepreneur Social Advantage Experience	Shadows Ottawa
eSAX eSox	Steph Wise
Fillerup.ca	Stopgap Ottawa
Foodsharing Ottawa	Top Shelf Distillers
HandSan	Vectors Group
Iskra Rekrut	WOW World of Women Network
Janet Seto-Slatter	Zoe's Corner

Thank you for your support!