



**Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa  
Region**

**2023 Annual Report**



# Bereaved Families of Ontario Ottawa Region

## **2023 Annual Report**

**Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region** is a provincial charitable organization established in 1978 to support the grief individuals experience from the death of a loved one.

### **Our Vision**

Create a community of support in the Ottawa area where no citizen is alone to grieve the death of someone significant.

### **Our Mission**

We Inspire hope and healing for people who are grieving.

## CONTENTS

A message from our Chair	4
2023 Impact	5
Access to Service	6
Changing Roles	7
BFO Organization at the end of 2023	8
Support Groups	9
Types of Losses	10
2023 Events	11
2023 Financial Report	13
Thank you to our Financial Supporters	17
Thank you to our Dedicated Volunteers	18
What's in store for 2024	19
Volunteering Opportunities	20
Support BFO Ottawa	22
Sharing Our Impact	23

## A message from our Chair

Over the course of 2023, we settled back into pre-Covid operations and continued and shifted to our “new normal.” However, ongoing isolation and prolonged grief continued for Ontarians. The need for BFO-Ottawa to offer a variety of support was crucial to the grieving process for the over 1697 group participants served this past year. Our staff and volunteers continued to demonstrate their remarkable dedication as we successfully responded to a 27% increase in demand. Our volunteers and staff worked to run over 300 program sessions this year and offered over 2,500 hours of support through programming, events and opportunities to connect with one another.

This past year our volunteer community continued to grow through the delivery of 2 volunteer facilitator training sessions. Volunteers continued to meet the needs of our community members with empathy, patience, grace, kindness and dedication offering our core programming as well as specialized events and groups. They gave their hearts and time to ensure that those grieving found community and understanding when they needed it most. For this and so much more, we are continually impressed with our volunteer community and are proud to work alongside them. What they continue to achieve is awe-inspiring under continued uncertainty and stressful times. Their contributions are essential to our charity's success and development.

We continue to reach out to our Ottawa community to raise BFO's profile and educate those who are unaware of who we are and what we do. BFO joined the OACFP - Ontario Association of Cemetery and Funeral Professions and OFSA - Ontario Funeral Service Association, in an effort to work closer with the Funeral industry.

We launched our Butterfly puzzles fundraising activity to help in raising the BFO profile and was introduced at various outreach activities and events. The puzzle has 1000 pieces and there are 33 global species of butterflies that represent Hope and Transformation.

We know that for some, their connection with BFO Ottawa leads to friendships and support networks. We continue to build community by coming together and honouring our loved ones virtually and in person. In 2023, we continued with our Memorial Butterfly Release Event as well as our Memorial Candlelight Event.

We are optimistic that in adjusting to our “new normal” in 2023 we are well-positioned to move ahead with some important planning and growth. Along with continued and growing in-person support and events, we anticipate an increased focus on grief and mental health, partnerships and community outreach to raise our profile. We owe this to our Board, staff, volunteers and our generous donors. We are truly grateful to have the opportunity to continue to provide our services to the Ottawa grieving community.

Thank you!

Sincerely

Micheline Lepage  
Chair, Board of Directors

## 2023 Impact

Over the course of 2023, BFO Ottawa region has continued to support the Ottawa community. The number of participants supported this year grew by 27% over all programs, from 1,279 in 2022 to 1,697 participants. To meet this growth, we trained 10 new support facilitators in 2023. Our 41 volunteers gave 1,794 hours over all programs.

Table 1: Comparing Impact from 2022 to 2023

	2022	2023
New peer support facilitators trained	6	10
Volunteers (excluding Board members)	40	41
Volunteer hours (excluding Board members)	1,455	1,794
Closed Group participants	90	80*
Tree of Life/Candlelight memorial event participants	60+	102
Butterfly memorial event participants	115	126
Support and Share Afternoon (SSA) participants	646	771
Support and Share Night (SSN) participants	541	690
Support and Share Walk (SSW) participants	92	169
Enquiries through telephone	487	504
Enquiries through emails	282	290
Board of Director volunteer hours	3,380	2,022**
Email Subscribers	2,720	3,020
Facebook followers	2,750	2,984

\*In 2023, Closed Groups had 2 less groups than 2022

\*\*In 2023, we had 2 fewer Board members



### **Access to Service**

In 2023, BFO Ottawa started to return to its pre-Covid programming, including a return to in-person support groups. Grief walks and some closed groups such as the Art Therapy group were held in-person. BFO Ottawa plans to continue to offer virtual sessions going forward and are looking for ways to make the use of our limited resources and staff to offer both modalities of service.

In addition to accommodating various mobility restrictions which prevent some participants from accessing our in-person sessions, virtual programs are a way to overcome geographic barriers and to be able to service those on the outskirts of the Ottawa region. Virtual offerings also allow us to accommodate participants with various work and availability conflicts which prevent them from accessing our in-person programs. We also make use of varied daytime and evening sessions to allow more participants to access our service who have different availability. We plan to continue offering some virtual sessions in 2024, as there is a demand for them in our community. There are, however, limitations to virtual offerings and many participants have requested a return to more in-person services as these are often more intimate, personal and conducive to bereavement work. In 2024, BFO Ottawa will increase the number of in-person services while maintaining a portion of virtual services.

## Changing Roles

### **Staff Changes:**

There were some changes in BFO Ottawa office staff in 2023. In April of 2023, Program Manager Brittany Kingham left BFO Ottawa to pursue full-time employment with another organization. In June of 2023, Nicole Frenette also left BFO to pursue full-time employment. We are very grateful to have the services of these very dedicated and talented individuals. We also want to thank the volunteers for their patience during this time of many changes.

With these two departures, we were very fortunate and grateful to welcome back Jane Davey as the Program Manager. Jane brings many years of past BFO history and experience to the team. We also welcomed Monique Strathern, a previous BFO Ottawa facilitator as BFO's Office Manager, as well as Shalyn Isaacs as Diversity Program Manager thanks to the Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) Canadian Red Cross for a 9-month contract.

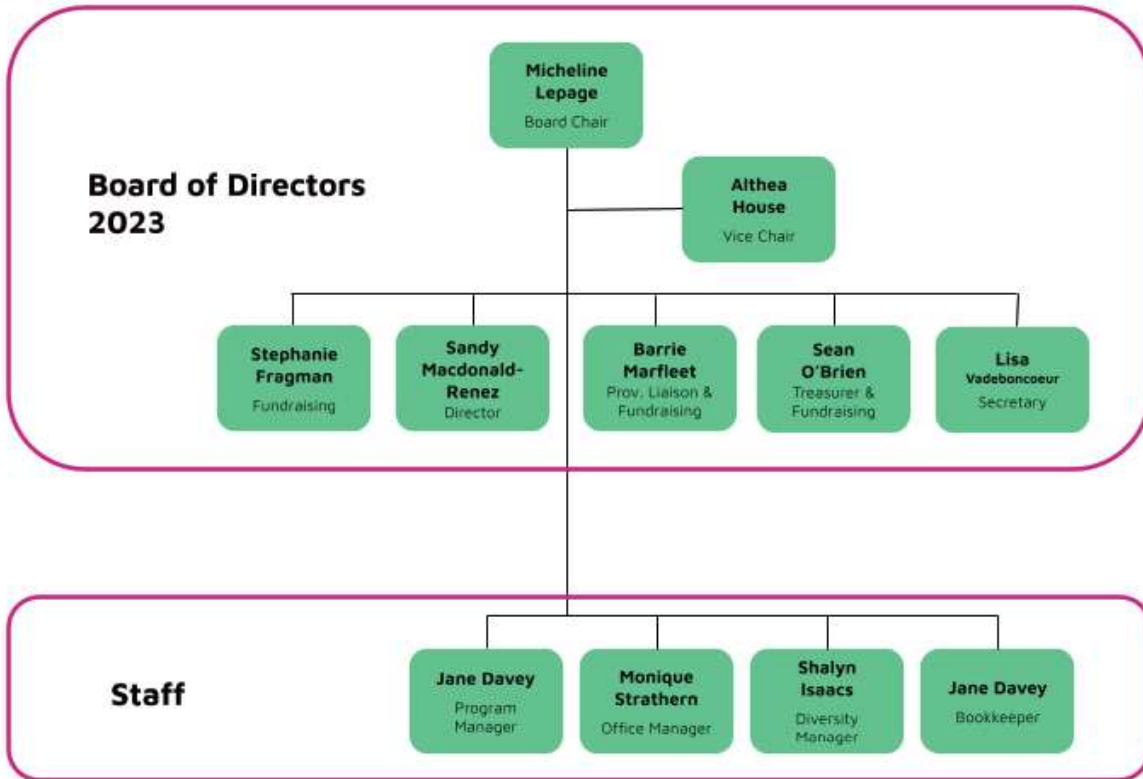
### **Board changes:**

Outgoing from our Board in 2023 were Erika Wagner, Althea House and Sandy MacDonald-Rencz. Erika completed her 2-year term in December but although she may be gone from the Board, she remains involved with BFO Ottawa's Events as she is a Beechwood employee which is where the BFO Ottawa events are held. In December, we also said goodbye to Althea House who was key to helping in numerous areas but mainly in the Boards' strategic direction and Annual Report. Sandy also left the Board mid-year to pursue other interests. We thank them all for sharing so generously their time, commitment, dedication and expertise while they were part of our team. They will always be welcome as members of the BFO Ottawa community!

At the end of 2023, Sean O'Brien, left the Board after 5 years of dedicated service to BFO Ottawa. His grant writing and annual holiday donor campaign are the reason BFO has been financially sustainable, and he still occasionally contributes his time. We deeply thank Sean for his continued support.

Incoming to the board in November 2023, was Lisa Vadeboncoeur as board secretary. Lisa is a bilingual program support specialist with experience in providing collaborative, and technical support on various projects and programs in the public service, public health, and community sectors.

## BFO Organization at the end of 2023



### Note: all staff are part-time

Office Manager and Program Manager: 3-days per week

Bookkeeper: 1-day per week

Diversity Manager (9-month contract): 4-days per week





## Support Groups

In 2023, BFO Ottawa ran over 300 peer support programs:

**Support and Share afternoon (SSA)** is a weekly peer support program that is open to all. SSA is facilitated by our volunteer facilitators and runs every Thursday from 12:00 to 1:30 PM. This session is available for mixed loss groups, and when the number of participants and facilitators allows, groups are formed by their loss type. These sessions were held virtually in 2023.

**Support and Share night (SSN)** is a monthly peer support program that is open to all on the first Tuesday of every month from 7:00-9:00 PM. SSN features a guest speaker or presentation on a grief topic, followed by loss-specific Support and Share sessions. This is our support and share program with the highest attendance numbers. These sessions were held virtually in 2023.

**Grief Walk** is a program that runs every Wednesday from 11:50 AM, meeting in the lobby of our office at the Bronson Centre before going on a walk outside. Participants can walk in small groups with trained volunteer facilitators. It is our only true "drop-in" program where no advance registration is required.

**Closed Groups** are held twice a year in the Fall and the Spring. In these groups, the same small group of participants meet for 8 - 9 weeks to explore various topics with their facilitators. Each group is specific to a type of loss (Spouse, Suicide, Child, etc.) and took place either in-person or virtual based on facilitator availability. Unlike SSA, SSN and the Grief Walk, Closed Group participants must apply and interview before they can join, as not all participants are ready to participate in a group of this nature.

**Art Therapy** is provided through BFO Ottawa as an 8-week seasonal closed group. It is held in-person in the spring and fall. Expressive art therapy is a form of working through bereavement. It explores and gives expression to the challenging feelings of grief. This is not an art class. There is no requirement to be artistic. Together with trained facilitators, art is created each week using different modalities. The group allows for a deeper exploration of grief, as there is a focus on a different grief topic each week. Like other closed groups, intake and interviews are a requirement before participation.

**Facilitator Training** is a two and a half day training that is held twice a year to train new volunteer peer-support facilitators. While anyone who has experienced a significant death may apply, most of our facilitators are past participants from our open and closed programs. In this training, participants are trained on identifying different kinds of grief, as well as on methods of active listening, compassionate communication and emotional management which are employed during peer-support sessions.

## Types of Losses

At BFO Ottawa, we support participants primarily by the type of loss:

**Spousal/partner loss** - anyone who has experienced the death of a spouse or partner

**Child loss** - a parent or parents who have experienced the death of a child

**Parent loss** - anyone who has experienced the death of a parent

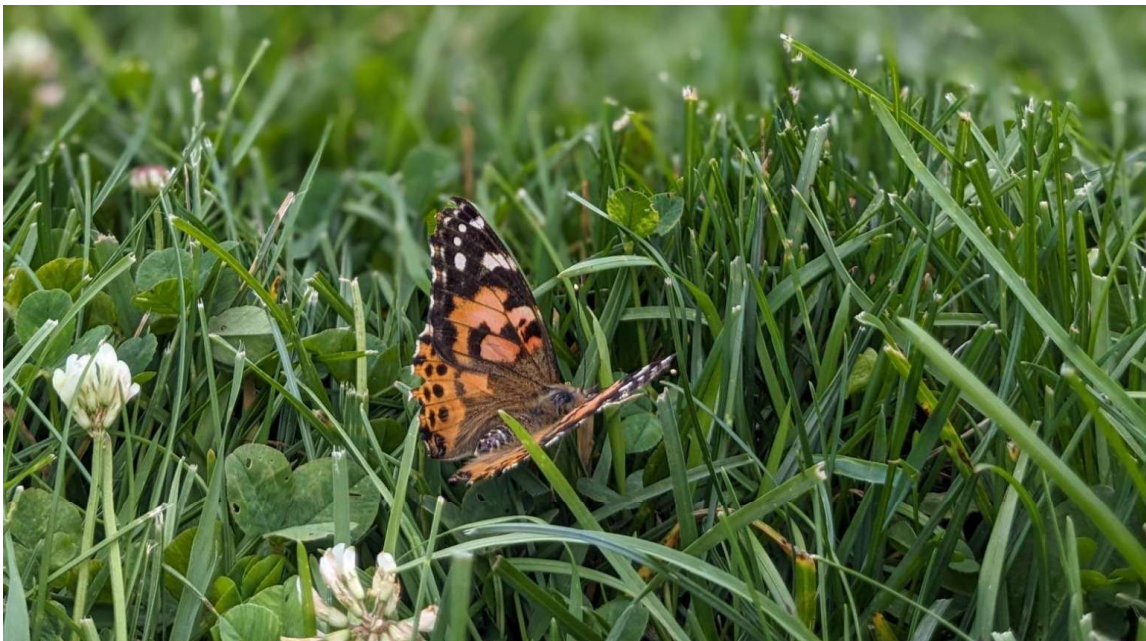
**Siblings, friend and relative death** - anyone who has experienced a life changing death of either a sibling, a friend or a relative

**Suicide loss** - anyone who has experienced the death of an individual to suicide

## 2023 Events

### **Annual Butterfly Release Memorial Event**

In 2023, the Annual Butterfly Memorial Event was attended by over 126 people, who honoured their significant person at the event through live music, the words of the guest speaker Tina Boileau, the mother of Jonathan Pitre (“Butterfly Child”), a memorial slideshow and butterfly release. With the generous support of Beechwood Cemetery, members of our BFO community were able to come together and commemorate their significant people and honour them in a safe place amongst fellow grievers.



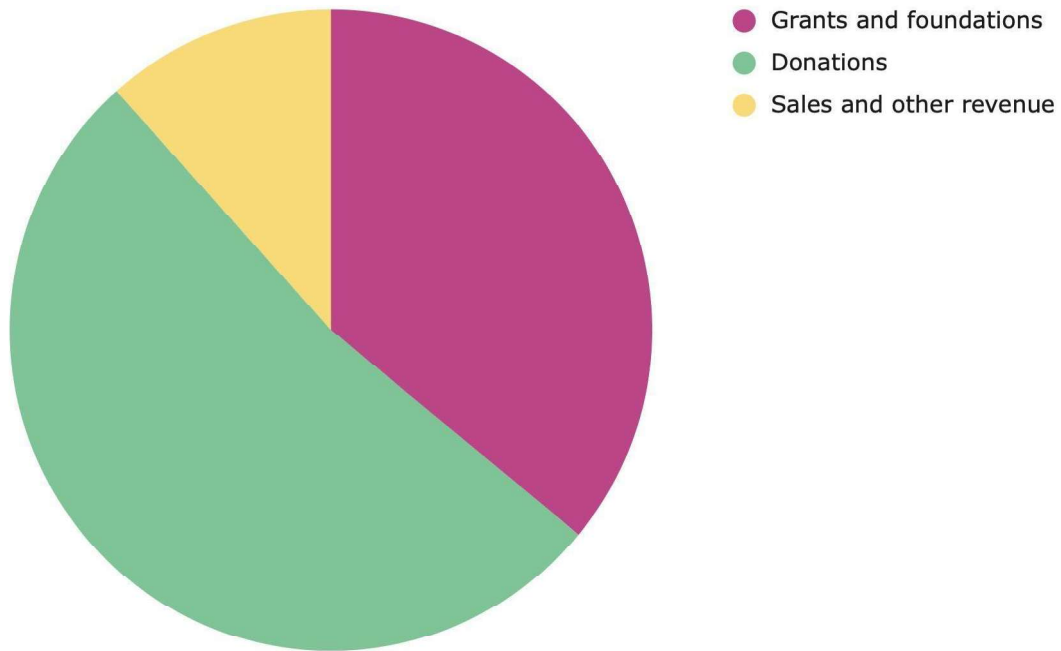
## **Annual Candlelight Memorial Event**

In 2023, BFO Ottawa held its 31st annual Candlelight Remembrance Event. With 102 people in attendance, the afternoon included a photo tribute, the words of our guest speakers Janet LeRoy and Heinrich Teworte, storytelling, live music, a candlelight remembrance ceremony and the chance to personalize a memory ornament to take home.



## 2023 Financial Report

BFO Ottawa was able to sustain revenue levels in 2023. We continued to pursue grants and foundation support which serves as our primary source of income to sustain the organization, in addition to receiving generous support from both corporate and individual donors.



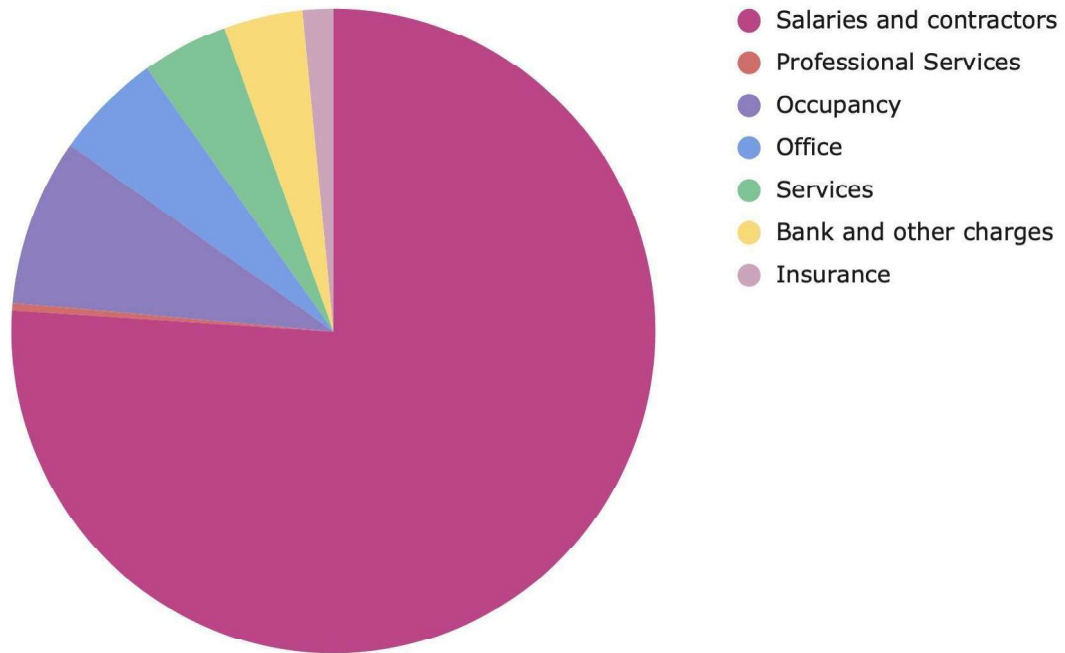
Grants and Foundations	36%
Donations	52.4%
Sales and other revenue	11.6%

**BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO - OTTAWA REGION  
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b><u>ASSETS</u></b>		
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 127,706	\$ 35,790
Investments	-	31,126
Government rebates receivable	1,792	688
Prepaid expenses	<u>3,973</u>	<u>3,623</u>
	<u>\$ 133,471</u>	<u>\$ 71,228</u>
<b><u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u></b>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 4,431	\$ 3,550
Deferred revenue	46,327	2,000
Loan payable	40,000	-
	<u>90,758</u>	<u>5,550</u>
<b>LOAN PAYABLE</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>40,000</u>
	<u>90,758</u>	<u>45,550</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted	<u>42,713</u>	<u>25,678</u>
	<u>\$ 133,471</u>	<u>\$ 71,228</u>

## 2023 Financial Report:

BFO Ottawa had the support of several volunteers and staff and board members over 2023 to help meet the demand for programming and administrative support.



Salaries and contractors	76%	Services	4.3%
Professional Services	0.4%	Bank and other charges	4%
Occupancy	8.4%	Insurance	1.5%
Office	5.4%		

**BEREAVED FAMILIES OF ONTARIO - OTTAWA REGION  
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Grants and foundations	\$ 51,073	\$ 43,536
Donations	74,314	59,732
Sales and other revenue	16,504	13,081
	<u>141,890</u>	<u>116,350</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Salaries and contractors	94,904	93,512
Professional Services	460	4,853
Occupancy	10,485	12,759
Office	6,740	8,007
Services	5,392	7,665
Bank and other charges	4,952	2,881
Insurance	1,921	1,878
	<u>124,855</u>	<u>131,555</u>
<b>NET EXPENSES</b>	17,035	- 15,205
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<u>25,678</u>	<u>40,883</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<u>\$ 42,713</u>	<u>\$ 25,678</u>





## Thank you to our Financial Supporters

BFO Ottawa wouldn't be able to provide the support it does to the Ottawa community without the support of our generous donors. Our donors are instrumental in ensuring we can continue providing free and accessible support to our community in its times of grief and loss. To every one of our generous supporters, thank you. Without you, our critical work would not be possible.

### Sponsors:

Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services

### Grants and Foundations:

Abundance Foundation  
The Burgetz Family

Arbor Memorial

Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) Canadian  
Red Cross

Crabtree Foundation

Kelly Funeral Homes

Knights of Columbus

Ottawa Community Foundation

Random Acts of Kindness

Taggart Parkes Foundation

### Friends and Partners:

Deserres Ottawa

Metro Inc.

Bridgehead Coffee

## Thank you to our Dedicated Volunteers

We wish to extend a huge thank you to our 41+ volunteer facilitators from 2023, who gave over 1,794 hours of their time to provide support for their community. The work



of facilitating peer support groups for those in grief takes a great amount of compassion, kindness and resilience. For all that you do to make the services we provide at BFO Ottawa possible, thank you.

We would also like to thank all the event volunteers who gave their time to help with the Butterfly Memorial and Candlelight Memorial. We could not have done it without you!

**THANK YOU!**  
*thank you!*

## What's in store for 2024

In 2023, BFO Ottawa grew our reach and provided peer support services to more of the Ottawa community. Through the previous necessity of online services, we have not only discovered a need for bimodal programming but also to appreciate and reinvest in the unique benefits of in-person programming. Moving away from recovery and adapting, in 2024 BFO Ottawa will focus on going back to in-person programming and rebuilding after COVID as demands for services in a variety of modalities continues to grow.

One focus for 2024 will be to find ways to better serve the Ottawa community. We want to ensure that BFO Ottawa is welcoming to diverse communities and that we acknowledge and honour the unique cultural, social and personal factors that shape each individual's grief journey. All levels of our organization are informed on and committed to this goal.

Thanks to generous grants from the Ottawa Community Foundation and the Canadian Red Cross, we have already made significant strides in ensuring that BFO-Ottawa adopts an equity lens and becomes more inclusive of diversity. The funding enabled BFO to train its board members, staff, and volunteers, reach out to organizations serving equity-seeking and marginalized populations, and review and revise our documentation, including our website, brochure, and outreach presentation materials.

BFO Ottawa will continue to strongly pursue sustainable funding through grants and foundations, serving as the primary source of funding to support our organization in delivering programs to the grieving community in Ottawa.

We are optimistic that in 2024, we are well-positioned to move ahead with some important planning and growth. Along with continued and growing in-person support and events, we anticipate an increased focus on grief and mental health, more partnerships and community outreach to continue to raise our profile as well as increasing our grant funding revenue.

To meet the rising demand for our services, we would like to focus on growing our volunteer base in 2024. Without volunteers, we cannot run our peer-support programs and we will be focusing on recruiting more Board members, training more facilitators and running more volunteer appreciation and continuing education sessions in 2024.

BFO Ottawa will continue to focus on working, developing and growing more meaningful partnerships with organizations and individuals in 2024. These partnerships will help us provide more meaningful services to our community and create awareness for our services so that those who need them will be able to access them.

## Volunteering Opportunities

The support work BFO Ottawa does is made possible by our amazing team of volunteers. From our peer support facilitators to event volunteers and our board members, there are many ways to give your time at BFO Ottawa. We have a large group of committed volunteers who find satisfaction in the contributions they make and the community they find with not only participants, but also with their fellow volunteers. We are all here because we have experienced a significant death and want to find a way to give back the pearls of wisdom from our own grief journeys.

While the role of volunteer facilitator is often the first that comes to mind, it isn't our only opportunity! We are always looking for new and enthusiastic volunteers and would love to hear from you.

BFO Ottawa is also looking for a volunteer event coordinator to take on a lead role in organizing our events with the help of an event committee which will include staff. If this interests you, please contact [office@bfo-ottawa.org](mailto:office@bfo-ottawa.org).





## **Board Members**

If you are looking for a meaningful volunteer opportunity, BFO Ottawa is looking to increase its Board of Directors. BFO Ottawa has a working board that meets monthly. It is made up of people with a variety of professional skills and personal experiences who help grow BFO Ottawa by providing direction, by doing outreach in the community, by researching and source funding, writing grant and foundation applications as well as assisting and attending events. Could this be you? If this interests you, please reach out to [chair@bfo-ottawa.org](mailto:chair@bfo-ottawa.org).

## **Volunteer Facilitators**

Peer volunteer facilitators participate in a 3-day training program that provides information on grief, mental health and self-care, as well as exercises to develop skills in active listening, conflict management, and communication. Our trained facilitators provide peer support through group facilitation. If you have experienced a significant death and would like to find a way to give back, please reach out to [office@bfo-ottawa.org](mailto:office@bfo-ottawa.org) to inquire about volunteering opportunities.

## **Event Volunteers**

BFO Ottawa was pleased to host our two memorial events again this year. The Annual Butterfly Memorial and the Candlelight Memorial were able to allow over 250 people to honour their loved ones. These events were made possible only with the help of volunteers who donated over 60 hours of their time to help make these events a success. From set up and take down, manning registration and sign-in, and providing donated refreshments, there are many ways to volunteer your time or your handiwork in support of BFO Ottawa. If you would like to volunteer, please contact us at [office@bfo-ottawa.org](mailto:office@bfo-ottawa.org).

## Support BFO Ottawa

Through pursuing grants and generous donations, BFO Ottawa can continue to provide its critical programs at no cost to individuals seeking support. Donations are critical to sustain BFO Ottawa's mission to our grieving community.

One-time donations can be made anytime on our website or by phoning the office. Please consider setting up a monthly donation as this can help us plan for the year ahead. Some workplaces also have matching donation programs where they will match a monthly or one-time donation for your chosen cause. We hope you will consider donating if you are able.

Other ways to support the work we do at BFO Ottawa is through participating in our memorial Fundraising events, such as the Annual Butterfly Memorial and the Candlelight Memorial event.

We also suggest that those who are able can make a donation when participating in our weekly and monthly Support and Share sessions. All donations go back to the program to help us provide support for you and others in the Ottawa community who need some extra support in their time of loss.

### Corporate Support

BFO Ottawa is keen to build corporate support. This might be through donations, sponsorships or partnerships. If you work for or have a connection with a company that you think might be interested, please consider making an introduction. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Micheline Lepage at [chair@bfo-ottawa.org](mailto:chair@bfo-ottawa.org).

### Donations In-Kind

BFO Ottawa welcomes donations that we can use either as prizes or refreshments at our events, or as a part of a silent auction. This could be a gift card from a favourite local business, a product that has been purchased or procured through a workplace, or a service that can be donated. We thank you in advance for any donations made to help us continue to serve you and our community.

## Sharing Our Impact

*"It is incredibly helpful to have a designated safe place to grieve with those who truly understand. Instead of carrying the heavy weight all day and night, alone, I was able to take my grief backpack off for much of the time outside the meetings, allowing me to rest, recover and experience more joy. At meeting time, with the support and understanding of the group, I had the energy and desire to pick the backpack up again... I am now stronger and feel braver in moving forward with my grief."*

*"Thank you for running this organization. I have only attended once but I can tell this will be so helpful as I try to better manage my grief"*

*"The BFO Ottawa programs came at a time when I needed support that those who love me were not able to give. I am grateful for the positive difference BFO has made in this terrible time of my life"*

*"It is a place just for what you feel about what you have lost. It's healing and supportive."*

*"This group is the perfect way to open up your heart to the grieving journey. Grief is excruciating and having a support system to support you and the others in the group is such a beautiful and powerful thing."*

*"The value of sharing and learning from others the value of the connections is invaluable."*

Photo Credits:

Butterfly Photos on Pages 1 and 11 were generously provided by Butterfly Event Participant, Ro Dineen.