

# 2024-2025

# Annual Report

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# Introduction



**Cheryl Stout, Supporter and Donor of CoSA Ottawa**

Growing up in Quebec City in a family where our father was unable to work after contracting multiple sclerosis in his early twenties, it was important to have extended family for support during medical visits and for socialization. I totally loved visiting with one particularly large family where I felt the warmth and interaction of their busy lives. In the late 1960's, I moved to Ottawa to attend Carleton University, ostensibly choosing English as my field of study. However, the intrigue of psychology lured me and I switched to that program, graduating with an Honours degree in that field of study. During my second year at university, while visiting home for Christmas, I inadvertently learned that the extended family I had enjoyed time with was one member larger than I was aware of. This person had been incarcerated but was never spoken of. How could this have happened in such a "good" family? This created an interest on my part in learning more about offenders and their re-integration and led me to continue on with my Masters in Criminology at the University of Ottawa. Field placements at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre and St. Joseph's Training School further expanded my learning about the lives of offenders and how societal family circumstances and childhood trauma and abuse played such a vital role in criminality. I was also fortunate to land a summer intern position at the Office of the Solicitor General, working on a Task Paper on Ex-Offenders and Self-Help Groups. It gave me the opportunity to visit several prisons, meet with offenders and appreciate the vital role that re-integration could play in the criminal justice system.

I went on to work as a probation officer with young offenders. This was back before the Young Offenders Act when the Juvenile Delinquents Act made youth wards of the state until they were 18, meaning that you might work with a youth from a young age and sometimes unfortunately, see them graduate into the adult system. During this time, I particularly enjoyed learning about the various criminal justice partners that played a role in the system from prevention, policing, counselling, treatment, incarceration and after-care support. What a myriad of various functions, not always working in a particularly integrated fashion. There was also much silence around the subject of sexual abuse. My sorrow when the abuse of wards at St. Joseph's where I had completed my field placement came to light was profound. I now know that at least one of my clients was a victim.

I later moved on to Carleton University's Criminology and Criminal Justice program where, as Field Placement Coordinator, I had the privilege of supervising 80 very bright students annually in field placements in all aspects of the criminal justice system. Part of my role here was to expand the variety of placements available. We always had a core of students who wanted to become police officers. I had fun convincing them that working directly with offenders in group homes, etc. would teach them much about dealing with and understanding the perpetrators they would later meet in their line of work.

You may now ask what this all has to do with COSA. Well, I was delighted to meet the indomitable Susan Love and set up two placement students to work in the program annually. Each year, I invited her to speak with my class of students where she would show a video of a Circle in action.

She always left an enduring impression upon the students on how support of sex offenders after their release might not just assist them with their reintegration needs but also help protect society as a whole from further harm. COSA's persistent fundraiser, Thomas Allgoewer, is now working towards getting the new video, Facing Our Messy Lives, in the hands of university professors across the country to further spread knowledge of the work done by COSA.

After retirement, I remained familiar with COSA's work through my younger brother, John Richardson. How did that happen that he also chose the field of corrections after starting off as a philosophy major?! Following his retirement as a parole officer and work with Correctional Services Canada, he became a Circle volunteer for 10 years. COSA now has a Legacy Fund in his name following his death in 2022. I can also watch a crab-apple tree grow in Minto Park, planted by COSA in his memory. I was impressed by the words of appreciation extended to our family by one of his long-time circle core members. As a family, we will continue to donate to COSA and continue to encourage others to do the same. Needless to say, when it comes to supporting a charitable cause, COSA is probably the last on anyone's thoughts of generosity so they face a tremendous hurdle in moving forward with their work.

KUDOS to all the work completed by this amazing organization!



John Richardson's commemorative tree in Minto Park.

# President's Message



On behalf of the Board, I would like to express our deep appreciation for your ongoing support and for your ability to surmount the too often societal response of pigeon-holing those who have experienced the justice system as being disposable.

CoSA is the only volunteer-based organization that works with people who have caused sexual harm. Upon release, they face nearly insurmountable barriers to reintegration. Our objective is to stop the spiral of trauma, to reinstate self-worth in those who ask for help, and, critically important, to prevent further victims of sexual violence.

CoSA Ottawa has had great success in achieving these objectives, mainly because of our dedicated Executive Director, Michaela De Curtis, her part-time staff and our fantastic volunteers. We are also grateful for the many sister organizations that support our clients, such as the John Howard Society and the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

Sadly, CoSA is yet another Canadian story of being better funded abroad than at home. CoSA's effectiveness is recognized and funded in the UK, South Korea, and some US states, to name only a few. However, here in Canada, CoSA faces little government funding and dramatically reduced funding from other traditional funders. Operating a CoSA program involves inevitable overhead (skilled staff to oversee the circles, adherence to non-profit regulations, etc.), and despite our pared-down budget, we must always continue our fundraising efforts to allow us to keep our doors open to accept as many core members as possible.

On April 18, 2026, we will hold our first Tasting and Toasting Event in lieu of a Gala to raise funds. We hope we can count on you to set new records in attendance and spending at our Silent and Live Auctions. This event will be held at St-John's church; aren't we the lucky ones to continue to benefit from their ongoing support.

It is up to each one of us to collectively shoulder the responsibility to support initiatives like CoSA that make our community safer, happier and more engaged. Stay tuned for CoSA's super team in the 2026 Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend Fundraiser. Additional funding is needed to keep our doors open beyond September 2026.

In closing, we acknowledge the courage of our core members in stepping forward and working hard every day, and in being positive members of our community.

Lyse Morin, Circle Volunteer and President of the Board of CoSA-Ottawa



# Board of Directors

Lyse Morin, President

Dillon Brady, Vice-President

Mutong Zheng, Treasurer

Diana McGlinchey, Secretary

David Swan, Indigenous Liaison

Anne-Marie McElroy, Director

Lannie Mitchell, Director

Emmett Fawcett, Director



# **Advisory Group**

Robert Cormier, Former Board Member

Dasa Farthing, Former Board Member

David Swan, Indigenous Liaison

Chuck Daly, Restorative Justice Practitioner



# Director's Report

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The past year has been one of meaningful growth and steady progress at CoSA Ottawa. Our commitment to supporting Core Members in their reintegration journey through connection, accountability, and compassion remained central to our work throughout 2024–2025. Together with our volunteers, partners, and community, we continued to build safer communities grounded in dignity, inclusion, and second chances.

Over the past year, we strengthened our social programming, recognizing its essential role in helping Core Members develop stability and pro-social routines. These initiatives create opportunities for building healthy relationships, fostering community connection, and supporting long-term success beyond their time in circle.

A particularly meaningful addition this year was the introduction of homemade holiday meals for Core Members, beginning with Christmas. More than a shared meal, this initiative represented belonging and care during a time that is often isolating for many Core Members. The generosity of our volunteers made this effort both impactful and deeply appreciated.

We also invested in internal improvements to enhance the experience of both volunteers and Core Members. The implementation of Vome, a volunteer management software, has streamlined onboarding, improved communication, and reduced administrative burden, resulting in a more welcoming and efficient process for new volunteers.

Our volunteer training program continued to evolve, incorporating updated learning materials, interactive components, and feedback-informed enhancements. The addition of our Volunteer Resource Library further supports ongoing learning and best practices. We extend sincere thanks to Virtual CoSA for their collaboration and for welcoming CoSA Ottawa volunteers into their training sessions, further strengthening volunteer capacity across our community.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated administrative staff, Vanessa, and to our committed volunteers, funders, and community partners. Your support enables us to foster a community grounded in respect, accountability, and lasting safety for all.

We also express our sincere gratitude to St. John's Church for their continued generosity in providing space for circle meetings, training sessions, and community events. Their support remains invaluable to our work.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to CoSA Ottawa. Together, we continue to create pathways to belonging, hope, and safer communities for everyone.

Michaela De Curtis, Program Director, CoSA Ottawa



# 2024-2025 At a Glance

## Core Members

- 19 Core Members supported (annual total)
- 2 individuals designated a Dangerous Offender
- 2 individuals with a Long Term Supervision Order
- 10 individuals under federal supervision
- 5 individuals under provincial supervision
- 4 individuals under no community supervision (completed parole or probation)
- 3 Indigenous Core Members
- 1 breach resulting in new charges

## Events

- Walking Group - walks held 3-4 times a month
- Social Gatherings - held monthly
- May 7 - Discussion Session - Rick Goodwin, Men and Healing (18 attendees)
- June 3 - Discussion Session - 161 Order (10 attendees)
- June 13 - Volunteer Appreciation (17 attendees)
- September 21 - End of Summer Party (20 attendees)
- October 24 - Healthy Lifestyle Training (Volunteers, 8 attendees)
- December 2 - Discussion Session - Social Activities (15 attendees)
- December 7 - Holiday Party (40 attendees)
- January 6 - JHS Ottawa Presentation/Training (Volunteers, 12 attendees)
- March 10 - Effective Circle Practice's Training (Volunteers, 10 attendees)

# Official Supporters

We are honoured to recognize the following distinguished community members who lend their name in support of CoSA Ottawa.

Drury Allen: Criminologist, Former Senior Federal Corrections Official

Andrejs Berzins: Former Chief Crown Attorney of Ottawa

Lorraine Berzins: Former Community Chair of Justice, Church Council on Justice & Corrections

Charles Bordeleau: Former Chief, Ottawa Police Service

Robert Cormier: Psychologist, Member Ontario Review Board; Former CoSA Ottawa Board Member

John Edwards: Former Commissioner, Correctional Service Canada; Past President, John Howard Society Ottawa

Phil Firestone: Psychologist

James Foord: Defence Lawyer

Rick Goodwin: Managing Director, Men & Healing

Joel Harden: Former MPP, Ottawa Centre

Susan Haines: Executive Director, National Associations Active in Criminal Justice; Former Circle Volunteer

Diane Holmes: Former City of Ottawa Councillor

Heidi Illingworth: Executive Director, Ottawa Victim Services

Kimberly Mann: Former Executive Director, Collaborative Justice Program; Co-Chair, Ottawa Restorative Justice Network

Liam Marshall: Psychologist, Rockwood Psychotherapy & Consulting

Lisa Murphy: Forensic Psychometrist, Royal Ottawa; Former Circle Volunteer

James Scott: United Church Minister; Community Mediator

Geris Serran: Clinical/Forensic Psychologist

Jill Skinner: Former Deputy Chief, Ottawa Police Service

Donna Watson-Elliot: Manager Victim Crisis Unit, Ottawa Police Service

**Thank you to our Supporters - we are forever grateful  
for your continued support and belief in us!**



# Financial Report



CoSA Ottawa extends sincere gratitude to our funders, donors, and community partners whose generosity enables our ongoing work supporting individuals reintegrating into the community after incarceration. Through grants, foundation partnerships, and private donations, we continue to build safer communities grounded in restorative justice principles.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided vital operational support through a two-year grant that strengthened our core programming, enhanced volunteer training, and advanced organizational capacity. We are proud to recognize their commitment to fostering resilient and inclusive communities across Ontario.

The Ottawa Community Foundation continued its invaluable partnership, providing funding that allowed CoSA Ottawa to enhance Circle operations and strengthen outreach initiatives aimed at volunteer recruitment and public education.

We are also deeply appreciative of the Basilian Fathers of Toronto, whose continued philanthropic support reflects a shared dedication to restorative justice and community safety. Their generosity sustains our programs and directly benefits both Core Members and volunteers.

As we look ahead, securing continued funding remains essential to maintaining operations beyond September 2026. Sustained investment will ensure that CoSA Ottawa can continue to deliver vital programming, support volunteers, and meet the growing needs of our community.

Community engagement remains an important part of our sustainability efforts. The 2024 Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend campaign raised just over \$6,000, and our 2025 campaign was our most successful to date, bringing in over \$10,000. Planning is already underway for Race Weekend 2026, and we look forward to another inspiring event with our growing team of runners and walkers.

Our holiday campaign, launched on Giving Tuesday and running through December 31, 2024, raised over \$12,000 thanks to the generosity of individual donors and matching fund contributors. These efforts continue to strengthen our ability to provide meaningful support and programming throughout the year.

We are pleased to report that, following the audit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, CoSA Ottawa received a clean audit opinion. The audited financial statements, presented on page 12 and 13, confirm that our financial position is accurately and fairly presented.

On behalf of CoSA Ottawa, thank you to all who contribute to our mission. Your financial and community support ensures that we can continue to walk alongside Core Members, promote accountability, and foster lasting safety for everyone.

Mutong Zheng, Treasurer, CoSA Ottawa Board of Directors

# Audited Financials

## Circles of Support and Accountability – Ottawa

### Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2025

#### Assets

##### Current Assets

	2025	2024
Cash	\$60,567	\$50,523
Short-term investments	86,634	102,281
Accounts receivable	776	5,595
Prepaid expenses	2,711	3,538
	<b>\$150,688</b>	<b>\$161,937</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$5,389	\$5,529
Deferred revenue	11,590	9,526
	<b>16,979</b>	<b>15,055</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Unrestricted	133,709	146,882
	<b>\$150,688</b>	<b>\$161,937</b>

### Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

Year Ended March 31, 2025

	2025	2024
<b>Revenue</b>		
Donations and fundraising	\$90,790	\$40,038
Grants	62,062	105,600
Other revenue	3,797	5,311
	<b>156,649</b>	<b>150,949</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Personnel	101,974	85,819
Professional fees	21,441	20,641
Administrative	18,816	2,615
Office rent	14,276	13,934
Program costs	13,315	22,832
	<b>169,822</b>	<b>145,841</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses (expenses over revenue)	(13,173)	5,108
Net assets, beginning of year	146,882	141,774
Net assets, end of year	\$133,709	\$146,882

# Audited Financials

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## Circles of Support and Accountability – Ottawa

### Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended March 31, 2025

#### Cash Flows for (Used In)

##### Operating Activities

	2025	2024
Excess of revenue over expenses (expenses over revenue)	\$(13,173)	\$5,108
Changes in non-cash working capital components:		
Accounts receivable	4,819	65,752
Prepaid expenses	827	(1,283)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(140)	141
Deferred revenue	2,064	9,476
	(5,603)	79,194
<b>Investing activities</b>		
Sale (purchase) of short-term investments – net	15,647	102,281
<b>Increase (decrease) in cash</b>	10,044	(23,087)
<b>Cash, beginning of year</b>	50,523	73,610
<b>Cash, end of year</b>	\$60,567	\$50,523

# Circles of Change



## Amber Robinson: Meeting People Where They Are

*Welcome to The Inner Circle: Volunteer Spotlight, a blog series highlighting the volunteers behind CoSA Ottawa. In this series, we share the stories of the people who complete our Circles – from their backgrounds to their experiences with CoSA, and the impact they’ve made along the way.*

For nearly a decade, Amber Robinson has brought empathy, experience, and a passion for justice to her role as a CoSA Ottawa volunteer. With over 10 years of professional experience in the criminal justice system, including work in federal halfway houses and with individuals facing mental health and substance use challenges, Amber was already well-acquainted with the barriers facing justice-involved people. But it was a university research paper on CoSA that first sparked her interest in restorative justice.

*“I started to learn more about the different barriers that individuals face, especially those who have committed sexual related offenses. They have a very difficult time reintegrating back into society. And then if you add the added barrier on top of them being labeled a sex offender, it’s even harder for them” she explains. “So for me, it was a way to not only help these individuals who don’t have much support in the community, but also to be able to use my experience as a volunteer, the things I learned, to educate other people as well.”*

For Amber, volunteering is about more than just giving back—it’s about challenging stigma and seeing people as whole human beings. *“As soon as [people] hear the word ‘sex offender,’ they automatically go to the worst of the worst...” she says. “they don’t understand ...that label encompasses so much... Everyone has their own unique story. They have their own history... upbringing, and background as to what led them to offending. And so I feel like through my volunteering, not only am I helping somebody, but I’m also changing how others view these people too.”*

Throughout her nine years with CoSA, Amber has seen both the organization evolve, and believes the changes have been meaningful. *“There’s been a lot more programming offered to volunteers,” she explains. She also discusses the importance of including Core Members in planning and coordination of programming. “...getting core members to kind of help with organizing [programs], really getting a core members perspective on, you know, what sort of activities would you like to see, what sort of things help you or are beneficial to you’.*

*When it comes to what makes CoSA’s approach effective, Amber points to “the whole aspect of restorative justice and a non judgmental approach”. “We have volunteers from all different walks of life, different experience levels, different education, backgrounds. It brings different perspectives, and all that adds to that wraparound support for Core Members.”*

Despite her long-standing commitment, Amber still encounters stigma and misunderstanding.

*“When I told friends or family that I was going to become a volunteer with CoSA, there were definitely the questions of; why do you want to do that? Why do you want to work with that population? Are you going to be safe?” she recalls. Amber also mentions other institutions who “work with the same types of clientele, but from different standpoints or different views,” explaining that she navigates these moments with openness and clarity, using both her professional background and personal experiences to shift perspectives. “...how I face that is explaining my thought process, my reasoning for wanting to get involved in CoSA.” She also adds, “another way to just address stigma is, I did participate in the CoSA documentary that we filmed, so that is also my way of being able to address the stigma that the greater society views towards this population.”*

Amber hopes that in the future, the general public will gain a better understanding of the people CoSA supports. *“... at the end of the day, yes, these individuals made a mistake. It doesn't excuse those actions or the offenses that they committed, but people need to have more of an open mindset that people can change, but they need the supports in place to be able to do that.”* She highlights the need for safe and healthy reintegration to reduce recidivism rates, stating that *“to make sure that they don't ever re-offend, we have to be a lot more open minded... and understand them as a person versus as a sex offender.”*

Her advice to new volunteers? *“Go into it with an open mind and a non-judgmental approach.”* She encourages potential volunteers to ask themselves, *“how would you feel if someone close to you was put into this situation? Would you be willing to still be a support to that person? If you are, then why not to somebody else?”*

Amber continues to use her voice to create change with CoSA and beyond, contributing to CoSA's ultimate goal of No More Victims.

CoSA Ottawa is deeply grateful for the dedication and compassion of our volunteers. Their commitment plays a vital role in building safer communities and supporting meaningful reintegration. If you're interested in volunteering with CoSA, contact us at [admin@cosa-ottawa.ca](mailto:admin@cosa-ottawa.ca).

Read past blog posts on our [website](#) and follow us on social media to see informative posts on CoSA Ottawa's work.

**Follow us:**







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