



BY OUR SIDE: OVERCOMING A HIDDEN CRISIS TOGETHER

Recovery is never an easy road to walk. Nowhere is this more evident than in the struggles with mental health so many of us experience in our own lives or with those we love. Getting better isn't something that simply happens; it's made step by step and piece by piece, from better support, better environments and better care.

Thanks to you, the journey to better has a new beginning at Southlake.

Mental illness is an invisible disease with a visible need: space. For a patient in crisis, *where* they recover can be key to *how* they recover. Southlake's vision is to build an environment where our remarkable Mental Health Team can provide compassionate care at some of the darkest moments in our patients' lives.

Last year, you made that vision possible.

Our Mental Health Program provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient services for people of all ages. From the teen recovering from a suicide attempt to the new mother struggling with post-partum depression to the elder navigating the challenges of dementia, every segment of our community can find a safe place for treatment at Southlake.

We also coordinate care with local and regional partners to provide patients with additional services they need. Nearly a third of Ontario's group homes are in York Region, with 17 falling under Southlake's catchment area – eight within walking distance of our hospital. We have always been committed to supporting our most vulnerable neighbours, but now we're seeing an urgent rise in need that reaches across demographics.

Mental health needs more than medicine. We launched our **Better Begins Today** campaign in October 2020



to expand our capacity with a new space dedicated to the most urgent mental health crises. The Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit you helped build opened its doors to patients on September 15, 2020. Now people in crisis don't need to share an Emergency Department with those suffering from physical illness and injury. **Your support has given our talented team the environment they need to optimize care at the moment of intake, when every decision is critical.**

The story of the Mental Health Assessment Unit isn't just about our clinicians, physicians and nurses. It's your story too, about how a community can remember those often forgotten in this pandemic, and rally to build a place where better can begin.

THE PERFECT STORM: A CRISIS IN NUMBERS

Already one of Canada's fastest growing communities, the 8% growth in population our region saw between 2010 and 2015 is expected to more than double to 17% by 2025. That means even more people who will require urgent mental health care.

The economic burden from mental illness in Ontario is greater than all cancers combined, and more than seven times that of pre-COVID infectious diseases. Here at Southlake, 17 mental health patients come to our Emergency Department on an average day, which means our occupancy rate can be as high as 180%. **In a crisis of this magnitude, your support is making the difference every day.**



A Year in Our Mental Health Program*

33,513 ADULT OUTPATIENT VISITS

1,074 ADULT INPATIENT ADMISSIONS

9,684 CHILD & ADOLESCENT OUTPATIENT VISITS

429 CHILD & ADOLESCENT INPATIENT ADMISSIONS

6,972 CHILD & ADOLESCENT EATING DISORDER VISITS

1,069 YOUNG ADULT EATING DISORDER VISITS

*Statistics reflect annual numbers from the most recent hospital data available.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE OF THANKS FROM THE FRONT LINE:

By having this Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit now, that's a much better place for people to start to be taken care of in individual rooms. Environment is so important, and the Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit really is cutting edge, it is very clean, it's got showers, it's got space. It's a great place to start a recovery journey for many people coming in crisis. I think that none of us can really say that we don't have a loved one or a family member or a friend who has not struggled with mental illness. It hits all of us. And I'm so grateful to you, the donors who make sure our dedicated mental health team can deliver them the care that they need, in a safe health-giving environment right from the start of their recovery.

Dr. Stephen Stokl Psychiatrist, Southlake Regional Health Centre



THE PEOPLE YOU HEAL

How peace and privacy made a difference for one new mother.

On the first day the Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit (EMHAU) opened in September 2020, a new mum came to Southlake's Emergency Department for care. She was experiencing severe symptoms of post-partum depression, and her family knew she needed help and support. At first, she was brought into our older space for admitting mental health patients directly to the Emergency Department: the Mental Health and Wellness Area. It was dark, hectic, loud and crowded. When the Mental Health Team arrived to transfer her to the newly opened EMHAU space, she was completely unresponsive. **Despondent, the new mum wouldn't speak a word, staying curled into herself on a stretcher and covering herself with blankets.**

I tried to engage with her in a meaningful way, coaxing some response that would give me a better sense of her condition. Nothing. But within an hour of arriving in the EMHAU and **placing her in a private room with a bed, I passed by her room and noticed she was sitting up and looking out the window;** it was a sunny fall day. To most people, this might seem insignificant. But I've seen so many other people experience what



she was going through, and to me the difference was like night and day. Something as simple as a change of environment, a moment of peace in an overwhelming experience, can be the key to shifting from breakdown to recovery. **That's the essence of our new space: building an environment where the healing can begin as soon as patients come through our doors.**



While there's a long way to go, we're heading in the right direction because of donors like you. **On behalf of the entire Mental Health Team at Southlake: thank you.**

Aga Dojczewska Manager, Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit

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Our Emergency Department at Southlake is constantly developing new ways in which to better help our patients. Thanks to the new Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit, we can ensure that those who come to us experiencing a mental health crisis receive the upmost respect in regard to treatment, while keeping in mind the patients individual safety. This new development will help patients receive the treatment they need faster, in a space designed for safety and patient care at its forefront.

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Dr. Gaurav Puri Chief of Emergency Department, Southlake Regional Health Centre

THE SPACE YOU HAVE BUILT

Support from donors like you often goes to fund priority equipment – the latest technology needed to deliver leading edge care. But for mental health, tools are less important. What matters is space.

To replace an often stressful and inadequate intake area for mental health patients in our Emergency Department, and to dramatically reduce the time patients must wait before treatment begins, we've built our new unit with six private rooms designed for peace, security, dignity, all fundamental for support and recovery. Here are some of the impacts that seemingly small changes can make.

Personal TVs and audio players give patients more control over their entertainment.

Windows provide vital natural light, proven to contribute to improved mental health.



Twice as many bathrooms as the old space, including showers.



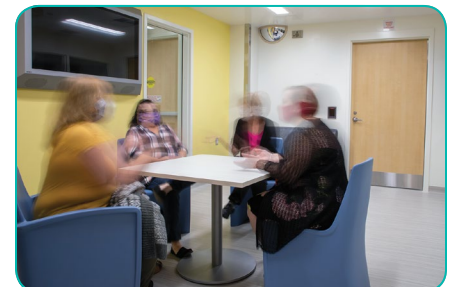
A secure place to store personal belongings.



A comfortable common room for meals and watching TV.



A private interview room gives patients and family members a welcoming space to speak with clinicians without being overheard.



More dedicated space for patients to stretch their legs.



An enclosed nursing station means a quieter floor for patients, while increasing staff safety ensuring conversations about treatment remain private.

THE LIVES YOU HAVE CHANGED

Here's a look at how the new Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit is already helping people across our community.

Mental health patients: by giving them access to the care they need, right when they need it.

Families: by allowing them to be more involved and better equipped to provide better support at home, and giving them peace of mind knowing their loved ones are in a healing environment.

Our communities: by alleviating the pressure on an already stretched Emergency Department to enable more timely access to critical care.

Our staff: by eliminating space as a barrier to the best patient outcomes, building a healing environment where they can do their best work for the patients who depend on them.



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Having lived through our son's struggles with mental illness and the challenges families face in accessing appropriate supports, I know all too well that many individuals are at risk of falling through the cracks, sometimes with tragic consequences. Those struggling with mental illness often suffer in silence with a sense of isolation. This new space and expansions are welcome additions to Southlake's Mental Health Program where patients can feel supported and cared for in a specialized setting. The need for expanded facilities for mental health patients is critical.

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Ansar Ahmed Vice-Chair, Southlake Regional Health Centre Board of Directors

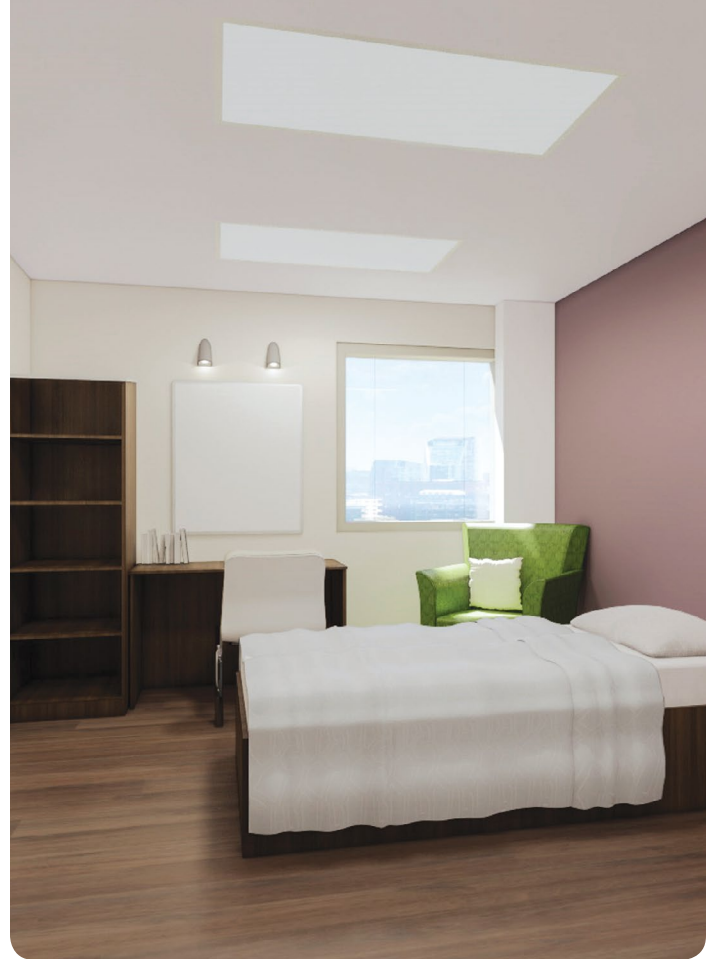
LOOKING AHEAD

With high volumes causing significant overcrowding, the semi-private rooms of our Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit must be used for up to three patients at a time, while the best practice is a private room for each. The average length of stay for patients in these conditions is **14.5 days**. Imagine struggling through a crisis in a room for two weeks with two strangers and little privacy. **How can anyone expect to get better if their journey is disrupted as soon as it begins?**

But as we face this monumental challenge, we also need to celebrate how far we've come today. **Together our community has raised more than \$4.3M towards our \$7.5M goal. Thank you so much for your thoughtful support.** Now is the time to push on: the work ahead will be critical to meeting the growing mental health needs of our community.

With our community's support, we can raise the funds needed to build 12 private rooms, bringing the total beds to 36 and letting us serve **400 more patients each year**. Imagine what this will mean to a young person paralyzed with anxiety. Or a senior confronting dementia. Or a resident from a nearby group home experiencing psychosis. When 400 more of our neighbours can receive inpatient treatment each year, our entire community will experience the benefits.

The future expansion will be designed with the same principles as our Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit: a peaceful, supportive environment



built for recovery. **We're committed to welcoming our first patient in the summer of 2022, and are on track to meeting that goal.**

Beyond the fundamentals of security, natural light, greater privacy and more bathrooms, the expansion will revitalize the existing space. An outdoor patio will give patients fresh air, greatly reducing any feelings of confinement. They'll be able to enjoy recreation in an expanded lounge and share meals with visiting family members in a new dining area.

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Our Mental Health Program has an amazing team of healthcare providers but our spaces just aren't up to today's standards. We owe it to these patients and their families to provide the very best care in the best environment. I am grateful for every single donor in our community who is helping us make that vision a reality.
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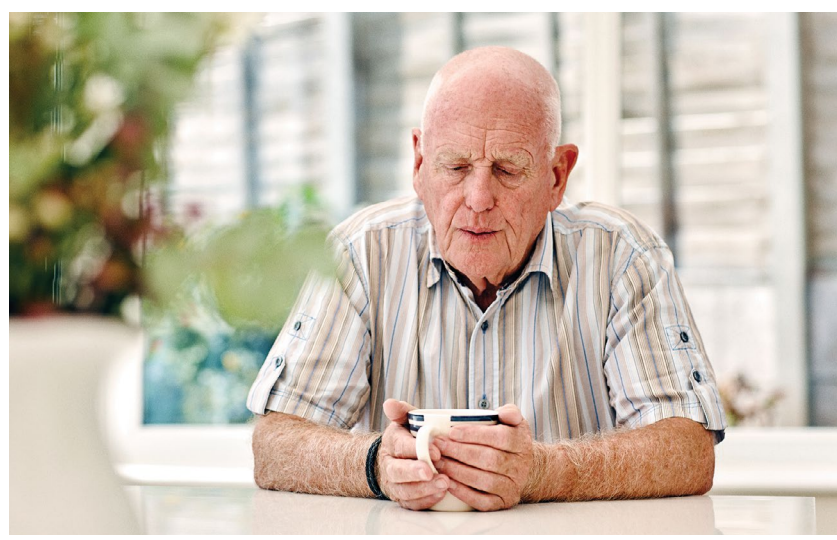
Arden Krystal President and CEO, Southlake Regional Health Centre

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We've made great progress this year and seen the positive impact of the new Emergent Mental Health Assessment Unit for both patients and staff. But our work is far from finished. As we look ahead, we know that expanding our Adult Inpatient Mental Health Unit is vital to helping us meet the growing demand, made worse by the pandemic. The right space is as important to our mental health patients as an MRI is to screen for tumours. And together, we can make sure that every patient who depends on us can get the leading edge care they expect and deserve.

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Dr. Mahdi Memarpour Chief of Psychiatry,
Southlake Regional Health Centre



THANK YOU

You helped give your neighbours the gift of recovery.



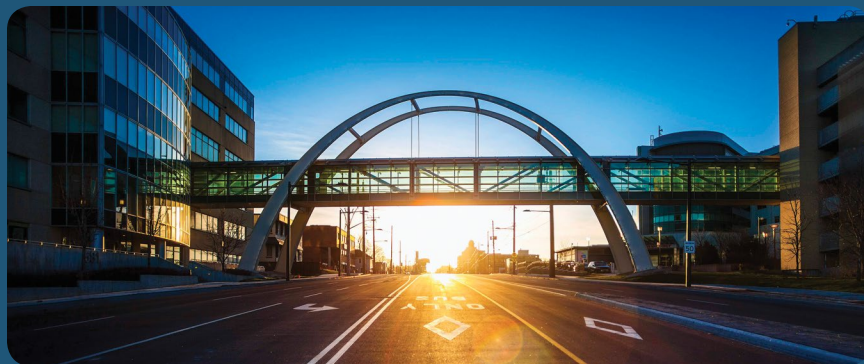
We are so grateful for your support this past year – your generosity made incredible work possible. Because of you, our Mental Health Teams are getting an environment that matches their talent.

Just like in recovery, each step forward counts. **Every donation helps ensure that a patient finds privacy when it matters most. Every donation can become another day for that patient to make critical progress.** Every donation, no matter how small, can change someone's life.

As we look ahead, we're committed to providing the kind of care that gets people back to living their lives. We know that the challenges posed by mental illness are going to grow as the long-term effects of isolation and economic turmoil brought on by the pandemic affect every part of our communities. But we also know that caring and generous people like you will rise to meet this challenge. And so we'll take the journey to better together.



Jennifer Klotz-Ritter President and CEO, Southlake Foundation



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Leading edge care takes a community, and your support is more than important: it's vital.

If you have questions or would like more information about the difference your gift has made, we're here to help.

Reach out and connect with us at 289.319.3234 or foundation@southlakeregional.org

southlake.ca/donate

