

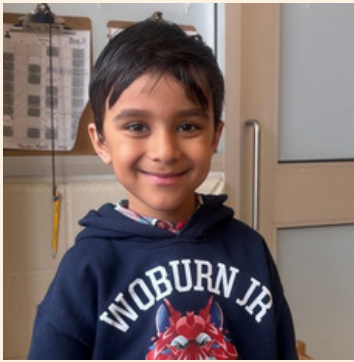


(Formerly the Leacock Foundation)

# ANNUAL REPORT

20  
25

*Opportunity Changes Everything*





*"LiftED has not only helped me grow, it has shown me the kind of person I want to become."*

**– Abi, 2025 Peter Oliver  
Leadership Award Recipient**

*(former LiftED student, volunteer, and program assistant)*





# **A Letter from the Executive Director and Board Chair**

When we visit LiftED Literacy and Leadership programs, we are reminded why this work matters so deeply. We see it in the students who arrive ready to learn, in the volunteers who show up week after week, and in the families and educators who believe in what is possible. These moments stay with us because they reflect the strength of our community and the shared purpose that connects us all. They remind us that every contribution, no matter the size, has the power to change a life.

LiftED's legacy began simply as a club rooted in the idea of giving back and creating a sense of community. That spirit is still at the heart of everything we do. We cannot look at inequity and say it is someone else's problem. It is all of our responsibility to take it on together. Leadership is about showing up consistently and courageously and believing that when we act together we can create lasting change.

As we look ahead, we remain deeply connected to that legacy while continuing to evolve as an organization. We are always reflecting, listening, and learning so we can better serve our communities. Over the past year, we have strengthened our programs, and clarified a renewed vision and mission that reflect both where we come from and where we are going. This balance allows LiftED to stay responsive, relevant, and grounded in what matters most.

**At the core of our work are the values that guide every decision we make.**

## **Empower Youth**

Belief in the limitless potential of young people and a commitment to investing in their well-being, growth and leadership in a positive and inspiring environment.

## **Delivering Excellence**

Demand and deliver excellence, while at the same time, strive to create joy in all our offerings.

### **Empathy and Respect**

Ensure that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, has a sense of belonging and purpose. Recognize and value the perspectives and experience of others. Treat all individuals with dignity, respect and compassion to enhance their well-being in a safe environment.

### **Community Driven**

Develop strong connections with youth, families and local communities. Work together, listen to community voices, and build strong relationships to achieve lasting impact.

### **Integrity Always**

Hold the organization and its members responsible for their commitments and actions. Be transparent, honest and consistent in all of our operations and decisions.

These values are reflected every day through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, families, and supporters.

Thank you for standing with us in this important work.

With appreciation,



Jessica Murphy, Ed.D.  
Executive Director



Danielle Cerisano  
Board Chair



*At LiftED, we believe **every child deserves the chance to thrive** not just in school, but in life. By offering free programs in literacy, math, leadership, and recreation, **we're helping children and youth** in underserved Toronto communities build confidence, break down barriers, and unlock their full potential. When children feel seen, supported, and inspired, **there's no limit to what they can achieve.***

**- Jessica Murphy, Executive Director**



Children in Toronto's underserved communities are facing widening educational inequities, limited access to enrichment opportunities, and growing barriers to confidence and academic success. As demand for LiftED's free literacy and leadership programs continues to grow, waitlists remain high across partner communities.

Now more than ever, students need safe, engaging spaces where they can **strengthen academic skills, build confidence, and develop the tools to thrive** both in and beyond the classroom.



# A New Chapter



In 2025, the organization entered a new chapter as **LiftED Literacy and Leadership**, a name that reflects both its history and its future.

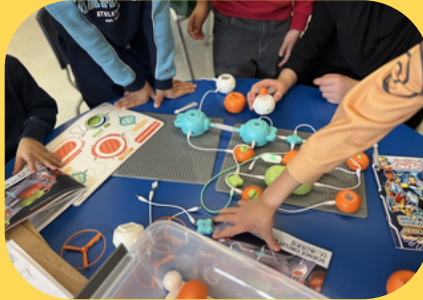
This change is more than a new name. It provides greater clarity in how we describe our work today. At LiftED, literacy includes math, reading, writing, communication, and well-being, helping young people enter any space with a strong sense of belonging.

The response from our community and partners has been overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing that the new name clearly reflects our work and impact.

This evolution also honours our roots. Founded by Peter Oliver in 1992, the organization was built on a belief in opportunity, community, and the power of education to change lives. As LiftED Literacy and Leadership, we remain committed to carrying his legacy forward while expanding opportunities for the young people we serve.



# Looking Ahead: Our 2026–2028 Strategic Plan



## Vision

Students in underserved Toronto communities thrive with expanded opportunities to learn and explore their full potential.

## Mission

To boost the confidence of students aged 5-17 in underserved Toronto communities by providing free, out-of-school literacy and leadership programs where students learn new skills in a safe and engaging environment.

## Our Strategic Priorities

Our 2026–2028 Strategic Plan is a commitment to excellence today and opportunity for the future through strong programs, sustainable growth, clear impact, and trusted partnerships.

### Program Excellence

Deliver innovative and engaging literacy and leadership programs in underserved Toronto communities that build confidence and help students explore their full potential.

### Financial Sustainability and Growth

Ensure LiftED's long-term financial health so we can meet growing student demand responsibly and continue delivering high-quality programs year after year.

### Operational Excellence

Strengthen internal systems, collaboration, and organizational effectiveness to support sustainable growth while maximizing limited resources.

### Impactful Communications

Deepen connections with current and future supporters by clearly and consistently sharing LiftED's mission, values, and measurable impact.

### Get Ahead Schools Partnerships

Continue to evolve our educational partnership with Get Ahead through knowledge sharing and support of their student scholarship program.

# Our Impact in 2025

At LiftED Literacy and Leadership, we believe that measuring our impact matters. Thoughtful evaluation helps ensure we are doing what is best for students and allows us to continuously improve our programs to meet their evolving needs. By combining measurable outcomes with lived experience, we stay accountable to the supporters, families, and communities we serve.

## By the Numbers in 2025



Partner schools



Free literacy and leadership programs offered



Individual students served across all programs



Hours of learning offered



## Student Outcomes



**80%**

Improved literacy



**92%**

Improved math literacy



**74%**

Gained self-confidence



**84%**

Increased self-esteem



**82%**

Increased physical well-being

## Engagement and Satisfaction

✓ **84%**

Student retention rate

✓ **85%**

Student attendance rate

✓ **94%**

Student and parent satisfaction rate

*"I feel like I read faster now and enjoy learning new words. I am better at explaining what I am learning. I like activities like reading and coding because they make learning fun."*

**- Crystal, Grade 3 LiftED Student**



*"My reading has gotten better, and I enjoy it more now. When I see a word I don't know, I break it down to figure it out. I've also gotten faster at learning things and feel more confident talking about my ideas. I talk more now, can spell more words on my own, and so I'm better at reading and figuring out big words."*

**- Christian, Grade 3 LiftED Student**

# A Shared Journey, A Lasting Impact

**Hannan and Alisha Yousaf's journeys with LiftED** reflect the lasting impact of community, mentorship, and opportunity.

Because of LiftED, **both siblings stepped beyond what once felt impossible**. Hannan opened doors he never imagined, while Alisha discovered confidence and strengths she did not know she had.

**Their experiences were shaped by meaningful moments**. Hannan supported a child who felt alone, helping him find connection and belonging. Alisha remembers students across grades coming together to collaborate and succeed as a team.

Through these experiences, **they developed leadership skills, empathy, confidence, and purpose**. LiftED created an environment where they felt supported and empowered to grow. Hannan discovered a passion for public service and policy, while Alisha stepped into leadership roles, including co-heading her school's Muslim Student Association.

Guided by mentors and strengthened by a community that believed in them, **both now give back in meaningful ways. They embody the impact of LiftED as confident, compassionate leaders** committed to creating opportunities for others and strengthening the communities they call home.



***"LiftED programs have had a profound impact on our lives. These programs provide youth in underprivileged communities like St. James Town with access to quality after-school programs and summer camps, helping bridge the academic and social gaps present in these communities."***

**- Hannan & Alisha**

# What Families are Saying About LiftED

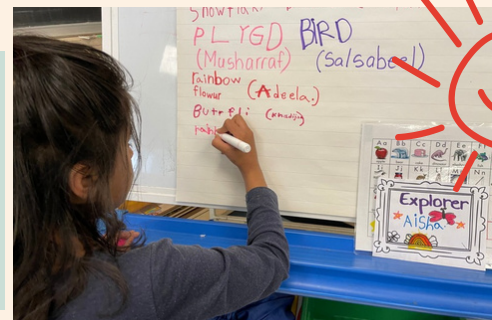
*"LiftED is providing equal opportunities to kids as I feel we would not have been able to afford something so incredible for my kids."*



*"My child is **more comfortable reading aloud** and **trying new words** after participating in LiftED's literacy programs."*



*"I would like to express my **gratitude to everyone at LiftED** for arranging such an engaging, **fun filled learning experience for the kids.**"*



*"I've noticed **increased confidence**, improved persistence, greater independence and a **positive attitude towards math.**"*



*"Please continue these programs. It keeps children active, **while having fun and learning** at the same time. I love it and will keep registering my child."*



# Partnerships that Strengthen our Work

## A Partnership Rooted in Community: LiftED and MNP



The partnership between LiftED Literacy and Leadership and MNP began with a simple moment of connection. When members of the MNP team attended the Leacock Debate, they saw firsthand the impact LiftED was having in local communities. But it was hearing Ajilan speak about his journey that brought LiftED to life. His story sparked curiosity, inspiration, and a desire to do more.

That curiosity turned into action.

MNP's commitment to community runs deep. With teams embedded in the regions where they live and work, volunteering locally is a core part of their culture. Partnering with LiftED felt like a natural fit. It was an opportunity to support students in underserved Toronto communities while giving MNP team members a meaningful way to contribute and connect.

Financial literacy was a natural fit for MNP's mission. As a firm that supports entrepreneurs and businesses, MNP understands that learning how to save, spend, give, and plan is foundational to long-term success. When students learn these skills early, they are better equipped to build healthy habits, pursue opportunities, and contribute to thriving communities. In many ways, this work reflects LiftED's own legacy, which began as a club founded by Peter Oliver, who believed in giving back and strengthening community through collective effort.

### A Day That Left a Lasting Impression

During MNP's Community Volunteer Day with LiftED, the impact was immediate and mutual. From the moment they arrived, the energy was palpable. Volunteers quickly found a rhythm with LiftED staff, youth volunteers, and students. What stood out most was the ease and authenticity of the interactions. Professionals who typically spend their days with clients were able to laugh and connect deeply with students.

The highlight for many was seeing students truly engage with the material. As concepts like saving, interest, and responsible spending clicked, volunteers could see the learning taking hold.

One volunteer became an instant favourite with the students, using humour and openness to create trust and spark curiosity. Another volunteer was told by a group of students, "You should have been a teacher."

For the MNP team, it was an absolute privilege to be part of the students' journeys, even for a single day. As one volunteer shared, the experience offered a rare window into how young people think, learn, and imagine their futures.

## More Than a Moment: A Shared Vision

The experience reinforced why corporate partners like MNP play such an important role in addressing educational inequities. Representation matters. Intentionality matters. Showing up in classrooms, in communities, and in partnership strengthens the future pool of leaders. A single day of volunteer time from a small group can have a profound and lasting impact.

That shared commitment deepened when Tamika Mitchell joined LiftED's Board of Directors, bringing her passion and leadership to the organization.

Looking ahead, Tamika's message to LiftED students is simple and powerful. *Keep going. Life may be challenging, but resilience is a superpower. Stay connected to your community, embrace opportunities, and do not be afraid to reach for what is possible.*



## Tamika Mitchell

**LiftED Board Member**

*Partner at MNP*

*"I'm excited and **honoured to be a part of the Board**. LiftED does so much to positively impact the lives of children and families in some of the most deserving communities in the GTA. **Literacy is the key to a bright future** and it is wonderful to see students deepening their critical thinking skills, learning more about their world, and how they can change it for the better. **My hope is that I can help grow the programs and garner additional support for this incredible organization.**"*



And to other companies considering a partnership with LiftED, the advice is just as clear. *Do not hesitate. Financial support matters, but showing up matters too. When employees volunteer and engage directly with students, the impact extends far beyond a single day. It transforms everyone involved.*

# Ian Kerr's Journey



Ian was introduced to LiftED Literacy and Leadership through a volunteering opportunity. What started as a suggestion quickly became a passion. LiftED's focus on youth immediately resonated with him. **Supporting the next generation and helping young people succeed felt both meaningful and urgent.** That commitment led to several years of board service and deeper involvement in youth focused initiatives.

Volunteering at Driftwood Public School and Brookview Middle School marked the beginning of his hands-on connection with LiftED's students. **Working closely with two small cohorts at Driftwood quickly became the highlight of each week.** Drawing on his professional experience, Ian began teaching public speaking, helping students build confidence and find their voices. The experience has been deeply rewarding.

Several moments stand out as especially meaningful for Ian. One was organizing a special movie outing for students with the support of a close friend and generous donor. Two busloads of children travelled together for a day out, and the joy on their faces made the experience unforgettable. Another highlight was a visit to the Textile Museum of Canada, where students participated in hands-on activities and heard from MPP Stephanie Bowman. The energy, excitement, and sense of community made the day truly inspiring.



**It was also at Driftwood that the breakfast program began.** Noticing that some students struggled to engage early in the day, Ian paused before reacting and asked why. Often, the reason was simple. Many students had not eaten breakfast. Understanding how nutrition affects focus and learning, he began bringing breakfast for sixty children each weekend. The goal was simple and powerful. Ensure every child starts the day nourished and ready to learn. Today, the breakfast program remains a cornerstone of the experience and a commitment that will continue.

**Looking ahead, Ian is focused on growing support and expanding impact.** He hopes to engage more colleagues and community members, build more stable and permanent funding, and continue strengthening what is happening at Driftwood. One future dream is to launch a golf camp for students. Having played the game for over fifty years and benefitted from a golf scholarship, Ian sees golf as a powerful teacher of life lessons like discipline, patience, and confidence. Sharing those lessons with students in the community would be a meaningful next chapter.

**Ian's story** reflects what LiftED is all about. Showing up. Paying attention. And responding with care, generosity, and long-term commitment.



**Ian Kerr**

**LiftED Volunteer**

*Account Executive at Empire Life*

*"Ever since I joined LiftED through my involvement with Kiwanis Foundation of Toronto, I am better off. Why? I feel like I am making a meaningful difference in the lives of public and middle school students. That is a great outcome."*



# People Power Behind the Programs

LiftED's impact is made possible by a dedicated team of educators, youth leaders, and community volunteers.



youth hired as program staff and leaders

**26**



nutritious snacks served to students

**23,500**



Ontario certified teachers delivering programs

**43**



community and corporate volunteers

**50**



youth volunteers

**100**

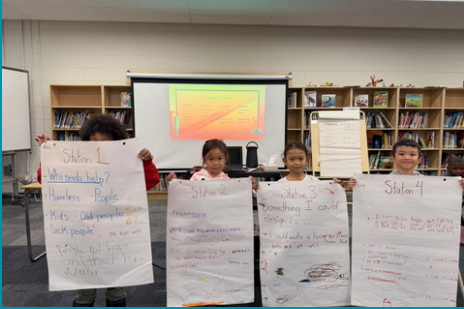


collective youth volunteer hours contributed

**5,800**



# Programs In Action



*"For more than 40 years, The National Ballet of Canada's Share the Magic programme has **opened the door for children, youth and adults** who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience the wonder of live performance. Over the past three years, **we have been proud to partner with LiftED Literacy to welcome families to the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.** Few moments are more meaningful than watching a yellow school bus arrive and seeing children step into the theatre, **many for the very first time.** We look forward to **continuing this special partnership** and sharing the magic for years to come."*

**- Lisa Robinson,**  
Senior Manager of Education and Community Engagement, The National Ballet of Canada.

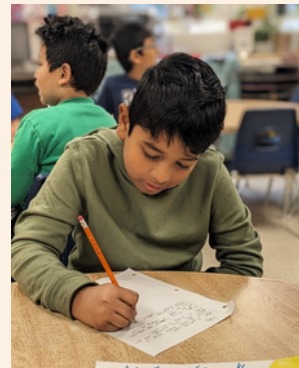
# Rotary Clubs: Giving Back in Action

We are grateful for our partnership with the Rotary Clubs of Leaside, Toronto East, Willowdale, and East York, whose commitment to giving back is making a meaningful impact in the communities we serve. This partnership is a powerful reminder of what is possible when a community comes together to invest in the next generation.

*"As Rotarians serving in the Leaside and surrounding area, **we were drawn to LiftED for its strong alignment with our values and vision, particularly in literacy**, which is a core focus for Rotary International. We are impressed by LiftED's impactful programs, such as the literacy initiatives during March Break and summer programs, and the dedication of their youth leaders. **This partnership not only supports our mission to strengthen communities through education but also provides invaluable opportunities for young people to engage and lead.***

*Our collaboration with LiftED has grown significantly, and we are excited about the potential for continued impact together."*

**- Paige Fernandes,**  
Past President, Rotary Toronto-Leaside  
(2022-24)



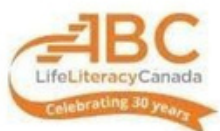
# Advocating for Opportunity

Government leaders visited LiftED program sites to see our work in action and connect directly with students and staff. These visits provided an opportunity to observe the impact of our literacy programming firsthand. By welcoming policymakers into our programs, LiftED contributes to ongoing dialogue around educational equity, helping to highlight both the needs and the potential of the communities we serve.

di



# Community Partners



AndSo



**Share the Magic**

**Save4YourChild  
Foundation**

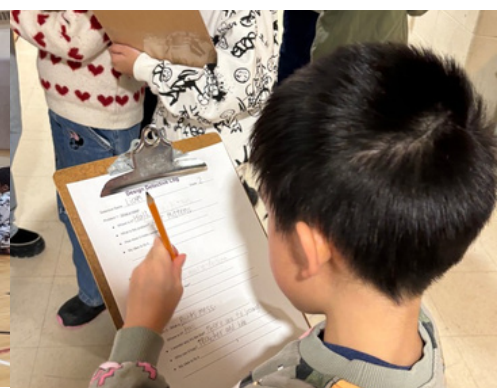


SCHOLASTIC CANADA  
**Possible Fund**

**Step into  
Wellness**



**WORKSDESIGN**



# Small Team. Big Impact.

In 2025, LiftED generated **more than \$1.5 million in revenue** and delivered free literacy and leadership programming in **Toronto's underserved communities**.

At the centre of this work was **a core team of just four staff members**. Together with program staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners, they worked to ensure **every dollar invested expanded opportunities for children and youth**.

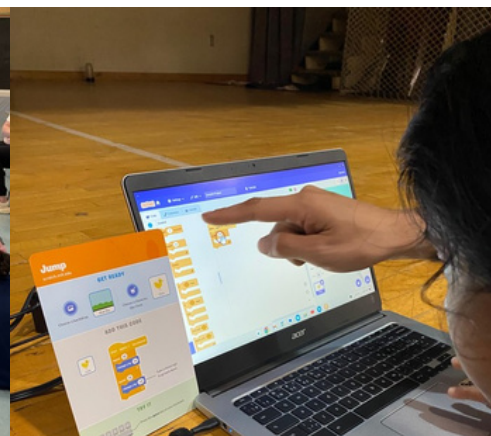
| STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION:                                |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                                                   |                    |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents                                       | \$1,109,782        |
| Marketable Securities                                           | -                  |
| Accounts Receivable                                             | \$3,500            |
| Sales Tax Recoverable                                           | \$13,258           |
| Prepaid Expenses                                                | -                  |
| Total of Current Assets                                         | \$1,126,540        |
| <b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>                                      |                    |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities                        | \$28,536           |
| Deferred Contributions                                          | \$530,763          |
| Total of Current Liabilities                                    | \$559,299          |
| <b>Net Assets: Unrestricted</b>                                 | <b>\$567,241</b>   |
| STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS:                                        |                    |
| <b>REVENUE</b>                                                  |                    |
| Donations                                                       | \$1,088,295        |
| Fundraising Events and Sponsorships                             | \$424,166          |
| Federal Government Funding                                      | \$14,010           |
| Investment Income and Other                                     | \$10,985           |
| Total Revenue                                                   | \$1,537,456        |
| Deduct Direct Fundraising Activities and Special Event Expenses | \$(133,458)        |
| <b>Net Revenue</b>                                              | <b>\$1,403,998</b> |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                                                 |                    |
| Program Support Funding                                         | \$1,184,238        |
| Office and General                                              | \$19,633           |
| Total Expenses                                                  | \$1,411,275        |
| <b>EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR</b>            | <b>\$(7,277)</b>   |
| <b>NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF THE YEAR</b>                       | <b>\$574,518</b>   |
| <b>NET ASSETS - END OF THE YEAR</b>                             | <b>\$567,241</b>   |

# Together We Make this Possible

## Corporate & Foundation Supporters

Actuarial Foundation of Canada  
Canada Summer Jobs  
Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation  
CIBC Foundation  
Empire Life  
Excellence in Literacy  
Frederick and Douglas Dickson Memorial  
George H. Stedman Estate Foundation  
George Lunan Foundation  
Hodgson Family Foundation  
iA Financial Group  
J.P. Bickell Foundation  
Jackman  
Kiwanis  
LesLois Shaw Foundation  
Lewitt Family Foundation  
McColl Early Foundation  
Nicola Wealth

OpenRoad Foundation  
R.H. Howard Webster  
RBC  
Robert Kerr Foundation  
Rotary Club of East York  
Rotary Club of Leaside  
Rotary Club of Willowdale  
Rotary Club of Toronto East  
S.M. Blair  
ScotiaRise  
TD Bank  
Telus  
Temerty Foundation  
The McLean Foundation  
The Pottruff Family  
Tippet Foundation  
Toronto Fresh Air Fund  
Traquair Family Foundation





## Leacock Debate Sponsors

Air Canada Foundation  
CIBC  
Ernst & Young LLP  
EY Parthenon  
Fitzrovia  
Georgian Capital Partners  
Life Design Systems, Joe and Jake Sheehan  
Loblaw Companies Ltd.  
Louise Summerhill & Will McDowell  
MNP  
Nicola Wealth - Jessica Sheehan  
Nicola Wealth  
The Oliver Family  
Rob Collins  
TD Bank Group  
Torys LLP

## The Peter Oliver Golf Tournament Sponsors

Croxon/New Roads Auto  
Life Design Systems  
McCabe Family Foundation  
The Pottruff Family  
Quality Engineered Homes

## Gifts In-Kind Donors

The Avadawn Agency  
Air Canada Foundation  
AndSo  
Bank Vodka  
Cave Spring Vineyards  
Cosecha Imports Inc.  
Craft360 Beverages  
Encore  
Gruvi  
Indigo Love of Reading Foundation  
Kari Lynn Larsen  
Lost Craft & Local Spirits Distilling Co.  
Oliver & Bonacini Restaurants  
The Oliver Family  
Pomp and Circumstance  
Shiraz Ali  
Swing Lab

## Special Thanks

Oliver & Bonacini  
Encore  
Shiraz Ali  
Karilynn Larsen



# Ways You Can Support LiftED

## MAKE A DONATION

Support LiftED's programs and help more students in Toronto reach their full potential.

1



## ATTEND & SUPPORT EVENTS

Support our signature fundraisers, the Leacock Debate or the Peter Oliver Golf Tournament, and help create lasting impact.

2



## VOLUNTEER WITH US

Share your time, skills, and passion to help create meaningful experiences for students and families.

3



## CORPORATE & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborate with LiftED to build impactful initiatives that strengthen and support our community.

4



# Together We Are Creating Opportunity

Every day, students across our programs are **building skills, gaining confidence, and discovering what is possible.** This work is only possible **because of a community that believes in them.**



**You can help create moments like these.**

Whether through partnership, volunteering, or investment, your support helps expand opportunity, strengthen communities, and **empower the next generation of leaders.**

## LIFTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Danielle Cerisano, *Chair*  
Renaldo Ferreira, *Co-Treasurer*  
Kristine Gaston  
Colleen Lamont, *Co-Treasurer*  
Dan McAlister  
Tamika Mitchell  
Jessica Oliver  
Joanne Pickard  
Tim Price  
Kim Rainford  
Joe Sheehan  
Karrie Weinstock



**Thank you for joining  
us on this journey  
and helping make  
this year possible.**



## Stay Connected

LiftED Literacy and Leadership  
2323 Yonge Street, Suite 303 Toronto, ON M4P 2C9  
[info@liftededucation.org](mailto:info@liftededucation.org)  
416.489.9309

**[www.liftededucation.org](http://www.liftededucation.org)**

Registered Canadian Charity #890014541RR0001

 @liftededucation

 LiftED Literacy and Leadership

 LiftED Education

