

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Hong Fook Community,

As we celebrate the Lunar New Year and the promise of spring, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude for each and every one of you. While the winter months can oftentimes be tougher to get through, I am also excited about what's ahead, especially as our days get longer.

Throughout December and January, we've spoken to many of you as part of our strategic planning process. We had the great privilege of hearing your feedback and insights on what Hong Fook means to you and where you think we should be headed in the future. Thank you for all the words of affirmation and wisdom, and your

honest feedback about how we can be better. I look forward to sharing the final version of our new strategic plan with you later this year.

While it's still wintertime, the Hong Fook Mental Health Foundation is busy planning our 2025 Hong Fook Gala: Together for Tomorrow. This year's theme is about the Hong Fook community's power to change lives when we all work together. This year, we have a special twist as we are collaborating MasterChef Winner, Eric Chong, who will be curating a special four-course dinner for gala attendees. We hope you will join us if you can!

I hope you will take a few minutes to read through this brief newsletter to learn what we've been up to. And don't miss out on the "Upcoming Programs & Activities" section. We have some great offerings this month that you or someone you care for might be interested in.

Wishing you a safe and happy winter season. Thanks for staying close and connected to us.

Andrew

During the past giving season, we were honoured to be featured in The Globe and Mail's special edition. **Read Ann's story** and learn more about our impact. Scan here.



In the bleak days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ann was discharged from hospital and dropped off at our Downtown office. When Ann's daughter was called to collect her, it was the first time she learned of her mother's illness. Ann, a divorced mother of five, had struggled with schizophrenia for over 10 years before any of her children knew about her serious mental illness.

Mental health stigma among Asian Canadians is a major barrier to seeking help and even receiving informal support from families. This creates invisible walls, leaving too many individuals to battle mental health challenges alone and in silence.

Give the gift of hope today, so no one struggles alone tomorrow.



But there is hope. At Hong Fook, we have been dedicated to providing a culturally safe space where people in recovery and their caregivers can learn, connect, and heal together. We are so grateful for everyone who supported our year-end giving campaign or contributed throughout the past year.

We are delighted to invite you to the **2025 Hong Fook Gala, "Together for Tomorrow."** Please join us for an evening of inspiration and collaboration on June 21 at the Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites.

Collaboration Spotlight: Multi-lateral Partnerships for Wraparound Care in Housing

Housing is a fundamental social determinant of health, yet Ontario faces challenges with a limited supply of supportive housing units and multi-year waitlists. According to Toronto Mental Health and Addictions Supportive Housing Network (TMHASHN), 22,000 Torontonians need access to mental health and addictions supportive housing, while only 5,000 are currently accommodated.

Hong Fook is a longstanding member of the TMHASHN, a coalition of 27 organizations providing affordable, supportive housing for individuals with mental health and

addictions challenges, including those with histories of chronic homelessness, by combining housing assistance, such as rent supplements, with comprehensive wraparound services like counselling, peer support, and life skills training. The group is also dedicated to addressing the critical unmet demand for mental health and addictions supportive housing in Toronto.

Hong Fook's supportive housing program provides rent supplements to 65 clients and their families, enabling them to access market-level rental units while

receiving services that empower them to live independently in a safe and stable environment. Thanks to a grant from the Echo Foundation, we provide more frequent home visits within client apartment buildings to engage clients in joining Hong Fook's in-person programming. This also allows us to better serve clients living in units with Good Sheppard Non-Profit Homes near East Chinatown, and enhance wraparound care for clients.

Asian Clinic Annual Dinner: Celebrating Another Year of Collaborative Impact for Our Asian Community

This January, Hong Fook hosted the annual dinner for the Asian Community Psychiatric Clinic (AC). 17 attendees, including AC psychiatrists, psychiatry residents interested in learning more about the AC, our strategic plan consultant, and Hong Fook staff, came together for an evening of connection and celebration.

The AC psychiatrists shared their personal journeys with the clinic, contributed to Hong Fook's current strategic planning, and discussed their visions for the future of the clinic with Hong Fook.

The annual dinner was also a valuable opportunity for psychiatry residents to explore how they can serve Asian communities.

Currently, the AC comprises seven psychiatrists, who are either independent or affiliated with a local hospital. They dedicate a portion of their month to seeing patients at Hong Fook's offices or online. In 2023-2024, the AC accepted 373 new patients. Referrals to the AC mainly come from primary care providers like family doctors and nurse practitioners. The unique partnership fosters smooth service navigation within the mental healthcare system.

A big salute to the dedication and outstanding work of our AC doctors, first row from left to right: Dr. Brian Cho, Dr. Sam Law, Dr. Nancy Lin, Dr. Ted Lo, second row left: Dr. Michael Mak, second row right: Dr. Kenneth Fung, Dr. Soh-Yoon Min not present



Updates from the NPLC

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, in 2022, there were over 78,000 fall-related hospitalizations (not including Quebec) among adults aged 65 years and above, representing 88.6% of all injury-related hospitalizations among this age group. In addition, over a third of these cases are associated with a hip fracture.

This statistic is alarming for our older adults. Fall prevention is a top priority for all seniors. Supporting seniors to grow young and healthy is always one of our top priorities in our HF Connecting Health NPLC's community programing. Improving balance and strength can be achieved through various physical activities, including Tai Chi and dancing, or some simple exercises like

Sit-to-Stand, Heel Raises, Leg Lifts, Toe-Heel Walking, and Hip Circles.

Join our 55+ Fit class to practice these exercises with a group of Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking seniors. If you prefer to practice independently, please consult your healthcare provider for guidance on safe exercise practices at home.

Hong Fook's First Ever Holiday Hamper Program



The holidays can be a joyful time for many, but for some, they can amplify feelings of loneliness or social isolation. Social connection is crucial for our well-being, impacting both our physical and mental health. Studies have shown that strong social ties can boost our immune system and lower rates of anxiety and depression.

At Hong Fook, we are committed to fostering a warm and inclusive environment for our clients. In the past holiday season, we launched our inaugural Holiday Hamper program to support clients experiencing chronic mental illness, low income, and a higher risk of social isolation.

200 hampers filled with culturally appropriate food, warm essentials, and holiday treats were distributed to bring warmth and cheer to our clients while supporting their essential needs.



This initiative would not have been possible without the generous support of the Toronto Police Service Chinese Community Consultative Committee, T&T Supermarket, Lynnpak Packaging Ltd., and our dedicated donors.

But that's not all! Our peer supporters hosted a wellness ornament activity that was also a resounding success. It was heartwarming to witness clients come together, creating beautiful ornaments while engaging in self-care and reflection.

“The Holiday Hamper truly brightened my holiday season. Hong Fook really understands our needs and made us feel special and cared for during the holidays. Picking up the hamper at the North York office was a welcoming experience. It was a wonderful way to connect with others in the office, and I left with a small handmade keepsake that brought even more joy to my holidays. I am deeply thankful for this supportive community that I proudly belong to.”

Since November 2024, our trained youth ambassadors have led a half-year social media campaign called **Fresh Perspective Friday**, where they proudly share mental health wellness posts, including weekly fun facts and hands-on activities to reduce stigma. Topics include early signs of burnout, seasonal depression, healthy relationships, final exam stress, lunar new year mental health, etc. Follow our Instagram and check out these new and practical mental health insights that weren't cliché and closely related to our youth's daily lives.



To foster cross-cultural understanding and social integration within our Hong Fook community, the Recovery and Community Programs have organized a series of **ethnic food making** workshops. In November, 15 participants attended a kimchi-making event and enjoyed a hands-on experience guided by Korean-speaking volunteers. Participants learned the art of making kimchi, enjoyed the flavors, and took home a portion to share with their families and friends. Beyond those with cooking experience, many first-timers also gained a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance of kimchi and enjoyed the shared experience.



Upcoming Programs & Activities



Chair Myo Stretch (Mandarin)

Tue., Jan. 21-Mar. 25, 11am-12pm
@Markham Office & Zoom
RSVP: slui@hongfook.ca

Mental Health Ambassador Training (Cantonese)

Tue., Feb. 4-25, 1:30-3:30pm
@Zoom
RSVP: tyuen@hongfook.ca

Adulting 101 For Asian youth 18-29

Tue, Feb. 18, 6-8pm
@Zoom
RSVP: msakal@hongfook.ca

Transformation & Thriving Psychotherapy Group For Asian youth 16-25

Sat., Feb. 15 & 22, 10am-2pm
@North York Office
RSVP: lkwan@hongfook.ca

Our board nomination and annual volunteer drive are underway. Explore the opportunities on our website and contact nomination@hongfook.ca or volunteer@hongfook.ca if you are interested.

Save the Date: 2025 Hong Fook Gala



While mental health awareness is growing across Canada, this stigma lingers more strongly in Asian communities. In many Asian cultures, which prioritize harmony, mental health is a taboo subject, resulting in many Asian Canadians to internalize their emotions and feel fearful or ashamed of sharing their struggles or seeking help—sometimes until it’s too late.

At Hong Fook, we aim to change this narrative—promoting open, supportive conversations that recognize mental health as essential to well-being and community resilience.

Our 2025 Gala theme is “Together for Tomorrow” which is embracing the rich tapestry of diverse identities and cultural beliefs that shape our Asian community, and charting a united path forward to end the stigma today for a healthier tomorrow. This event will bring together community leaders, philanthropists, and Hong Fook supporters, providing a unique platform for networking and collaboration.

This year, we are introducing exciting new elements to enhance the gala experience. Our guests will savor a special four-course dinner curated by MasterChef Winner Eric Chong, and more surprises are in store.



Scan to visit our Gala website to explore sponsorship, donation and volunteer opportunities. Order your gala tickets now and enjoy the Early Bird Rate of \$275 until April 30!



Hong Fook Raffle is Live Online!



Your chance to win big for a cause you care about! Scan to visit our Raffle website or call 416-493-4242 to get your tickets today! Chase six incredible prizes, PLUS, enter for your chance to win cash in our newly introduced, exciting 50/50 bonus draw. But that’s not all! By participating, you’re directly contributing to building a healthier tomorrow for our communities. The draw will be held at the Hong Fook Gala. All winners will be notified within a week after June 21.

Appreciation

We extend our deepest gratitude to our corporate partners for their shared commitment to improving mental well-being within our community, and for their generous contributions in the past quarter, including **Mawer Investment Management Ltd.**, **iA Financial Group**, **World Financial Group-PANDA team**, and **AlectraCARES Community Support Fund**.

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