

## Designing Change at Archway

He now looks forward to Mondays, says **Naji Mourani**, Senior Interior Designer with NORR Limited, and one of the volunteers working with ARIDO (Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario) to redesign a healing environment at CAMH's Archway Outpatient Clinic.

Since the majority of the work by the painters and other workers is being accomplished over the weekend, Monday is when he and his colleagues on the Archway design committee have the opportunity to take a look at how the space is evolving and improving.



*Pictured above: Archway Designers (L-R): **Elsie Cheng** (ARIDO); **Naji Mourani** (ARIDO); **Anna Stranks** (ARIDO); ARIDO Registrar **Sharon Portelli**; **Sherry Bilenduke** (ARIDO); and **Mahesh Baboram**, a member of the Planning Committee. Missing from the photo is Dayna Bradley, Planning Committee member.*

Monday is also the day **Sharon Portelli**, Registrar for ARIDO, says that they receive emails from the Archway staff expressing what a huge difference the changes to the space are making for them and their clients. "Knowing we're playing a part in improving the lives of clients at CAMH who are engaging in Archway for support in dealing with their day-to-day struggles with schizophrenia makes us feel good about what we're doing," she says.



**Sharon Portelli**, Registrar for ARIDO

### **Design Community and Construction Industry Climb On Board**

Sharon became involved with the project after meeting with **Jim Davey**, Coordinator of CAMH's Corporate Volunteer program, who introduced her to **Joan Loughran**, Recreation Therapist at the Archway Clinic.

Originally, Sharon says, the Archway staff asked if there was any advice or guidance that ARIDO members could give to help them best use the small budget they had to improve the space. But Sharon, whom Jim describes as a woman with compassion who understood the importance of creating a space of recovery and wellness, thought they could do more. She discussed the request with colleagues and members of the interior design community including **Mahesh Baboram** and **Dayna Bradley**. They had been looking for a cause to which they could make a contribution. She then recruited ARIDO Registered members for a design committee.

"One thing I've learned with this association is that our members and the industry are very generous in giving back to really important causes," she says. "We really took a shining to the Archway staff's dedication to their clients. Every time you meet with them they are always so positive. We wanted to do something to improve the environment not just for the clients but also for the staff for helping to support the clients of the Archway Clinic," she says.

The response for volunteers was so overwhelming that Sharon had to turn some people away and select those who had past experience with CAMH and understood the needs of the health care environment, as well as designers with office design experience.

**Elsie Cheng** of Elsie Cheng Design, another member of the design committee, says, "Of course, designers are so passionate about design, when we go into any space, we want to tackle everything." Rather, they looked at what could be accomplished within tight timelines to minimize disruption for clients and staff and was achievable within the health code regulations for the space.

The other aspect to consider was that the design committee set out to accomplish the project on the basis of completely donated labour and materials. They each sent out emails to their contacts and were surprised by the immediate and generous response. Naji says "The amount of people involved in this project is overwhelming, especially knowing that everybody is donating their own personal time on a part-time basis." (For a list of supporters see the [ARIDO website](#).)



***Naji Mourani***



***Elsie Cheng***

### **Involving the Clients in the Design**

One of the first things the design committee volunteers did was meet with the clients to get their input into the redesign. When they visited the clinic, Elsie says, "We noticed that the clients were very excited to know who we were. When we said, 'We're volunteers, we're here to make your space beautiful,' their smiles were beaming." Elsie has been interested in mental health, watching documentaries and reading everything she can on the subject, since a graphic designer she knew died by suicide.

"The accent color that we came up with was in response to the user meeting that we had with the Archway clients who had expressed that they wanted something to do with nature. That's why we picked this particular green, which is quite muted, but bright enough that it's very calming," she says.

They are also going to be selecting some art depicting nature with the help of an arts consultant from Denison Gallery. "When clients go into the space, if it's winter outside some of the images will look like it's still summer or something bright rather than dull, which is really important," Elsie says.

The design committee also made some suggestions about the layout of the space in the clinic. "Just doing simple things like organizing the space and making it more uniform with colour, you feel lighter and more comfortable. If it's cluttered, you feel stressed out," says Naji, who has worked with CAMH projects in the past.

The ARIDO volunteers are also planning to give the staff more efficient work space and change the counters in the upstairs kitchen and meeting space. Naji says they had already secured a laminate counter when a supplier wrote to tell them that they would donate a stone Quartz countertop. They will also be installing new blinds in the downstairs program room that will let more light in, while retaining the privacy of the clients attending the programs.

The work is scheduled to be mostly completed by September with some smaller ongoing enhancements after that. Sharon says, "Every fall ARIDO has a gala where we celebrate excellence in design across Ontario. We actually want to use that opportunity on September 25th to bring some more exposure of Archway Clinic to our membership, to the industry and to share and celebrate the progress of the initiative with the industry."

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What a great story!

Sonia on August 15, 2013 1:05 PM



Reply



Rated 4 out of 5 (5 votes)



## Inspiring Change at Archway Outpatient Clinic

Marianne, who has experienced depression, did not always like visiting the Archway outpatient clinic. The yellow walls were too brilliant and overwhelming and the colours made the rooms feel very small. Now that a redesign project has begun, she enjoys the space more and feels Archway has become a healthier atmosphere.

"It's more calming. I'm from the north. I prefer earth tones," Marianne says about the new muted colours that the group room, hallway and first floor kitchen have been painted. "You know when you paint your bedroom or living room, it gives you a sense of well-being and a cleaner, fresher look. Change is a good thing because we have to change our lives."



**Jim Davey**, Coordinator of CAMH's Corporate Volunteer program, is pleased he was able to help kick start that change. He was giving a tour of CAMH to **Sharon Portelli**, the Registrar for ARIDO, the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario, who was exploring volunteer opportunities for the staff of her organization. It occurred to Jim that the group might be able to contribute some of their skills to Archway.

"There are so many vibrant and diverse programs that happen here and the clients I've met are very inspiring. I thought it would be nice to have a space that reflected that energy. I wanted to have someone come in with a critical eye like Sharon from ARIDO, keeping my fingers crossed that she would be inspired to do something," he says.

Inspired she was. She immediately sent out a call for help to her colleagues at ARIDO and set up a planning committee with volunteers who in turn, contacted people they knew in the design and construction industry who donated all the labour and materials to the project. The response was so overwhelming, they actually had to turn some people away.

**Joan Loughran**, Recreation Therapist at CAMH, is the point person organizing the renovations on the Archway end of the project. She says that one of the first things the planning committee did was meet with the clients to get their input. They said they "wanted to bring the outdoors in", which Joan says is reflected in the colours and materials selected both for the walls and in the new durable, high quality hardwood-like vinyl flooring, which had just been installed.



"I'm still smiling. This morning I couldn't wait to show the renovated areas to both clients and staff so I could observe their reactions. Some of the reactions were *"this is amazing"* and *"it feels homey"*, Joan says. This is especially true in the downstairs kitchen where she leads a healthy baking class. Sometimes she has more than 12 clients in a very small space and the newly painted walls and flooring make the space more comfortable to be in.



*Jim Davey and Joan Loughran are thrilled with how the renovations are going so far.*

The contractors have begun painting the second floor and will be installing new durable laminate flooring which is suitable for high traffic areas. The ARIDO group is also committed to replacing the staff's outdated desks. An art consultant will be helping with the selection of art work, including a staff-client Archway mural project, which she will frame and secure safely onto the wall.

Marianne is pleased by this. "Long ago institutions were designed with art work from the world of professional institutionalized images, but now it's from the world of the clients," she says.

Joan says some clients don't actually come to programs but still need to come to Archway to meet with their psychiatrists and case managers and to pick up their medications. "Sometimes there are delays and they have to spend time here sitting and waiting. I think it's a far more calming

environment to wait in – one that's conducive to recovery."

Jim looks forward to a "reveal party" when the redesign is complete. He feels fortunate to have met the right people with understanding and compassion who could see what needed to be done, especially Sharon. "She's a woman who immediately understood the importance of creating a space of recovery and wellness and a respite for many people. That's what inspires me for my position, getting to meet people who have this type of energy and positive light."

*(Stay tuned to Insite for more stories about the Archway Clinic redesign and to learn more about Sharon Portelli and the design team and other volunteers involved in transforming the space.)*

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Wonderful, and not too soon, I hope some of the clients' paintings will be reinstalled, I would miss them.

*annick.aubert@sympatico.ca on August 12, 2013 2:57 PM*

This is an exciting change in the making....hope we won't be kept in suspense too long. Look forward to hearing/seeing more about this change.

*biraj.khosla@camh.ca on August 12, 2013 2:56 PM*

Fantastic work and kudos Jim, Joan, and Sharon! As always, good work being done by the Corporate Volunteer Program as well as the Archway Outpatient Clinic.

*Kristen Palomera-Dinglasan on August 8, 2013 8:39 AM*

Great work, Jim and Joan.

The change is long overdue and will be much appreciated.

*Barbara.trudell@camh.ca on August 7, 2013 4:39 PM*

Beautiful! And what a great way for it to happen.

*Patricia Cavanagh on August 7, 2013 3:05 PM*



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*Rated 5 out of 5 (6 votes)*



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