

NEWS RELEASE

May 22, 2025

Executive Director Transition at Luke's Place

(Durham Region, ON) We are excited to announce a significant leadership transition at Luke's Place. Following a thoughtful and thorough search process, The Board of Directors are thrilled to welcome Lily Pourzand as the incoming Executive Director of Luke's Place.

Lily is a first-generation immigrant woman who came to Canada for political safety and personal freedom in 1999 after graduating from law school in Tehran, Iran. In 2007, she earned a bachelor's degree in Women and Gender Studies, followed by a Master of Laws in 2010, with a focus on the intersection of socio-legal barriers in immigrant women's lives.

Lily brings over a decade of leadership in the gender-based violence and social services sector. A recognized advocate for equity, inclusion, and justice, Lily has worked across York Region to bridge service gaps and empower communities. Her deep commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and feminist frameworks aligns strongly with the mission and values that guide Luke's Place. Lily's professional achievements have been recognized nationally, and her lived experience informs a leadership style grounded in empathy, resilience, and a deep understanding of the challenges many women face.

"I am deeply honoured to join Luke's Place, an organization I have long admired for its commitment to legal advocacy and support for women facing violence. Not only is this role incredibly close to my heart professionally, but it also feels profoundly personal, as it aligns with my lifelong passion for justice, equity, and amplifying women's voices. I look forward to walking alongside this incredible team to build on a powerful legacy of compassion, systemic change, and impact."— Lily Pourzand

As Lily steps into this role, she brings a clear and inspiring vision for the future of Luke's Place, one that builds on our strong foundation while advancing new strategies to meet the evolving needs of survivors. We are confident that under her leadership, Luke's Place will continue to innovate, grow, and deepen its impact on the lives of women navigating the family law system after intimate partner violence.

As we look to the future, we also take a moment to honour our past.

After more than 20 years of visionary leadership, Carol Barkwell will be retiring from Luke's Place. Carol has been the heart and driving force behind Luke's Place since its inception. Her commitment to justice for women who have experienced intimate partner violence has shaped not only this organization but also the broader legal and social landscape for survivors in Ontario and across Canada.

Under Carol's leadership, Luke's Place has grown from a team of two to more than twenty, transforming into a nationally recognized leader in family law support for survivors of intimate partner violence. She spearheaded the development of our unique wrap-around service model, which informed the design of Ontario's Family Court Support Worker Program and is now being adapted across Canada.

Carol has steered the development of our legal clinic, innovative direct services, and sector-leading training programs, including “After She Leaves” and FamilyCourtAndBeyond.ca, while forging impactful partnerships and influencing policy and practice at every level. Her unwavering commitment to systemic change has earned both Luke’s Place and Carol numerous provincial awards, including three Attorney General’s Victim Services Awards of Distinction and the Ontario Bar Association Foundation Award.

Reflecting on her journey with Luke’s Place, Carol shared, *“my time at Luke’s Place has been shaped by the strength of the women we serve and the unwavering dedication of those working alongside them. This work has changed me in ways I will carry forever. As I step away, I do so with immense gratitude and deep hope for what’s to come.”*

We are deeply grateful to Carol for her decades of tireless advocacy, leadership, and heart. Her impact will be felt for generations to come, and we look forward to celebrating her remarkable contributions in the months ahead.

Please join us in welcoming Lily and in expressing our profound thanks to Carol.

Additional Resources

<https://LukesPlace.ca/>

<https://FamilyCourtAndBeyond.ca>

Media Contact

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