

5TH ANNUAL URBANA EVENT

PROVOCATIVE VIDEO ART + A RICK MERCER FEATURE
ADD UP TO A GREAT WAY TO HELP SUPPORT DECENT HOUSING



Top: (from left to right) Lorraine Bentley, Executive Director of Options Bytown stands next to a volunteer from Options Bytown; Akash Sinha, President of Dharma Developments; Katy Sinha, Vice-President of Dharma Developments holding baby Pallavi

Bottom: (from left to right) Anjali Patil; Akash Sinha, President of Dharma Developments; Meghna Sharma; Sameer; and Supriya Sharma

The bad news is that homelessness in Ottawa continues. The good news is that Urbana has again risen to the challenge to do its part to help provide decent housing to those who need it most.

Now in its fifth year, Urbana is an annual fundraising party that supports groups which work to ensure that people find and keep decent, affordable housing in Ottawa.

Ottawa residents showed their strong support for decent, affordable housing in their city by attending the Urbana event on April 16. The funds raised – an impressive \$17,500 – will be donated to Options Bytown, a local organization that works tirelessly to provide decent housing and related support services to those in need.

To date, Urbana's founders, Dharma Developments owners Akash and Katy Sinha, have raised nearly \$70,000 for organizations that work to end homelessness.

"Each year, I am struck by the growing support of our guests who attend Urbana," says Akash Sinha. "I am inspired by the work of staff and volunteers from the charitable organizations that Urbana sponsors – this year, Options Bytown. And I am thankful to our sponsors: the individuals and businesses that help us continue to host this event year after year. It takes all of us working together to build communities where people can find and keep decent, affordable housing."

"At Options Bytown, we believe people have a better chance to succeed



DJ Memtic and VJ Ryan Stec

when they have a roof over their heads plus the support systems that offer the assistance they need,” adds Lorraine Bentley, Executive Director of Options Bytown. “We are deeply grateful to the community and to Dharma Developments for their strong show of support and their commitment to provide decent housing to those who need it most.”

Urbana always has a strong focus on arts and culture, and this year was no different. Housed in one of Ottawa’s trendiest urban spaces – Saint Brigid’s Centre for the Arts and Humanities in the Market – the event spotlighted live visual art constructed around the theme of supportive housing, presented by a group of some of the city’s best local artists including Ryan Stec, Ben Welland and Tony Fohse. A video endorsement by Canadian satirist Rick Mercer was also featured.

ABOUT OPTIONS BYTOWN Options Bytown is a non-profit organization that provides supportive housing services in Ottawa, combining affordable housing with on-site counselling and training for people who need help to live independently. The organization helps people who face social isolation and other complex challenges – individuals who may have very low incomes, a history of homelessness or special needs that may relate to mental illness, HIV/AIDS or substance use.

Options Bytown operates two apartment complexes that house approximately 120 tenants: one in

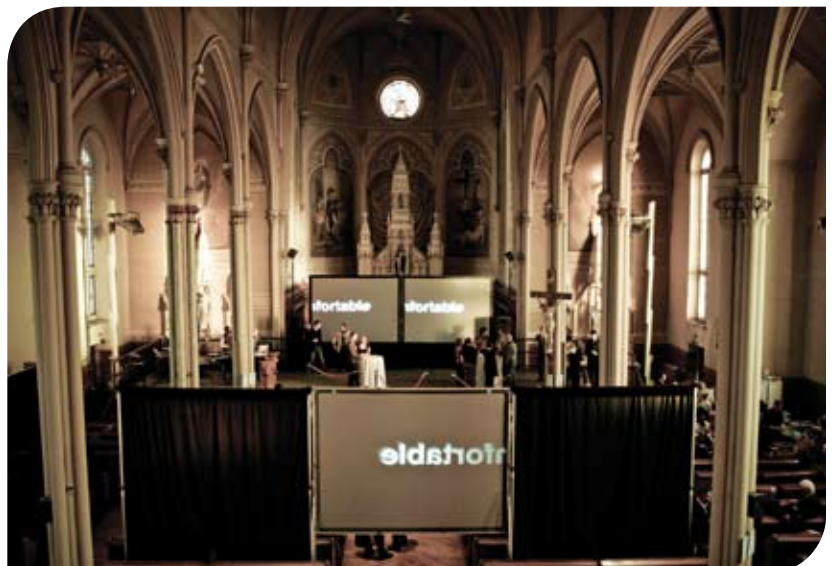
the Byward Market and the other in Centretown. The group also operates a number of resource centres in Ottawa Community Housing complexes where a variety of support services is offered including prevention of eviction, crisis intervention, referrals to various community resources, social and recreational activities, computer training, and health and nutrition counselling.

ABOUT URBANA Now in its fifth year, Urbana is an annual event that raises funds to help people find and keep decent, affordable housing. Founders of the event, Akash and Katy Sinha, who co-own Dharma Developments, believe it is important to give back to the community. Making a contribution to improve the community by supporting organizations that contribute to creating decent,

affordable housing for those in need is where the couple agreed to focus. To date, Urbana has raised over \$50,000 to this worthy end.

The couple gets its inspiration from the many organizations that work tirelessly and without accolades to improve the quality of life of those less fortunate. Organizations that have benefited from Urbana in previous years include The Alex Munter Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, the Ottawa Youth Services Bureau, Cornerstone Housing, Raising the Roof and now, Options Bytown.

For more information, visit the website at www.dharmadevelopments.com/urbana.



St. Brigid's Cultural Centre