

This copy is for your personal non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies of Toronto Star content for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, or inquire about permissions/licensing, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com

NIAGARA REGION

Former CFLer to develop game plans for Gateway, Mainstream community support agencies

Brian Hutchings will help to bring about amalgamation as new executive director

By **Matthew P. Barker** Standard Reporter

Tue., March 21, 2023 | 2 min. read

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

A man who once served as Niagara's community services commissioner and played pro football will now be formulating game plans for both Mainstream Community Support Services Niagara and Gateway Residential and Community Support Services.

Brian Hutchings, former chief administrative officer for the City of Brantford, after serving as vice-President of administration at Brock University, stepped into the role of executive director for the community agencies on March 6. He said he plans to improve services offered through an amalgamation of the two agencies to streamline assistance for vulnerable and marginalized individuals.

Hutchings also spent some time behind the desk with Niagara Region as community services commissioner, working on homelessness programs and housing projects.

Sports fans may know of him for having played in the Canadian Football League, starting with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats (1989), then Ottawa Rough Riders (1989), Calgary Stampeders (1990) and ending with the Toronto Argonauts (1992-93).

Where it comes to today's home turf, there are many people needing help, said Hutchings.

"Gateway has filled a crucial void and a hole in our social services sector to fill with the homeless services, as well as providing a continuum into housing and mental health supports for people to live independently," he said.

"Gateway plays a crucial role, so I want to be part of that, and I want to lead the organization into the future and be a major part to helping people."

Hutchings said merging Mainstream Community Support Services Niagara and Gateway Residential and Community Support Services, mainly at an administrative level, centralizes workers from offices in Welland and St. Catharines.

"The most challenging thing will be to work together, both Mainstream strengths with people with developmental differences and Gateway strengths working with mental health supports, to become one of the first dual-diagnosis agencies in Ontario and Canada to work with people in the community that have a developmental difference and mental health challenges," he said.

Hutchings' approach will focus on community-based rather than clinical-based to get the best results.

He said his passion for helping people comes from his experiences growing up.

“I was raised by a single mother, she had five of us by the time she was 22 or 23... my dad was on the road, he really didn’t come back. So, we were raised in a tough situation and my mother worked three jobs,” he said.

Hutchings said his mother’s job with developmental services for Community Living Grimsby introduced him and his siblings to working with people living with developmental disabilities.

“My sister worked there and so did my brother as did I, starting at a young age and working at Community Living in Lincoln and Grimsby, as a support-in-independent-living worker,” he said.

“I’ve always tried to give back to the community because many people gave towards me, whether they coached me or assisted me in growing up, because I didn’t have much parental supervision, so that’s where my passion for giving back to community has been,” he said.

“I wanted to come home to Niagara as my family’s here and my daughter is pregnant with our first grandchild and my wife’s businesses is in Niagara.

“I’ve done my time in Brantford and want to come back and work in the community.”

mbarker@niagaradailies.com

SHARE:

Copyright owned or licensed by Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or distribution of this content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited and/or its licensors. To order copies of Toronto Star articles, please go to: www.TorontoStarReprints.com
