

# Annual Campaign

April 2013

Dear

My life was spiraling out of control before I found Bethlehem Place . . .

I was born in Italy and when I was two years old my family moved to Canada. I came from a good family with good values and beliefs and was expected to live up to them, but my life took some unexpected turns and I wound up very desperate and very alone. My parents never learned to speak English and that was a bit of a challenge for me living in an English-speaking country as they didn't know what was wrong with me or how to help.

I became pregnant at age 19 and although my family was supportive it was time for me to move out. I soon entered a relationship that wasn't the healthiest, but I stayed in it because being a single mom is tough and I was afraid that I couldn't survive on my own. When that relationship ended, I found myself in the exact place I didn't want to be in – raising my daughter alone with very little money to support ourselves.

My daughter and I moved in to the YWCA for a while and within a few months we found a tiny apartment and moved in. The landlord was horrible, I could barely afford the rent and it wasn't in a good area to raise a child. When my daughter was young she was diagnosed with a hearing disability and soon after she began to exhibit erratic behaviours. She would have these meltdowns where she'd crawl under the table and throw chairs and things at me. I didn't know what was wrong with her or how I could help her. I began drinking as a way of coping with my guilt and shame because I had somehow thought that it was my fault she was like that.

I was too proud to ask for help, I wanted to do things my way, but gradually realized that “my way” was going downhill.

My addiction to alcohol grew to a point that brought me to AA and it was there that a woman told me about Bethlehem Place, a transitional supportive housing facility and how they helped her get her life on track. She told me that it was more than a safe place to live, it had a support system in place with programs to help you learn how to improve your life.

I applied to Bethlehem Place and was put on a wait list for an available opening. During that period of time things worsened with my daughter. Although I had taken her to many doctors, I soon realized that there was a huge gap in services for children with mental health disabilities. She wasn't able to function properly at school and because she wasn't being properly treated her symptoms worsened. When she was around 11 years old her behavior escalated to the point of the police arriving who contacted FACS and admitted my daughter to a crises bed.

Our situation wasn't safe for either of us.

*over . . .*

## Bethlehem Housing and Support Services

Administration Office, 166 James Street, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 5C5  
Phone: 905.684.1660 Fax: 905.684.1666 [www.bethsupporthousing.com](http://www.bethsupporthousing.com)



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My Gift to Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is:

☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tax receipts will be issued for donations \$10 or more.  
Charitable Registration No. 12192 6547 RR0001

☐ I have enclosed a cheque payable to Bethlehem Housing

☐ I prefer to use my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

OR I want to be a Monthly Supporter  
in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_/ month.

☐ Please debit my credit card (details above)

☐ I have enclosed post-dated cheques payable to  
Bethlehem Housing

FACS then moved my daughter into a group home and I was left alone, feeling guilty of not being able to help her and so depressed that I didn't want to live. It was a low point in my life in all aspects, mentally, spiritually, and financially – I had no self-esteem and had a mental breakdown myself. If I couldn't help my daughter, how could I help myself?

Within months I received a call from an intake worker at Bethlehem Place telling me that an apartment was available, so I moved in and my daughter followed one month later. I knew this was my opportunity to turn my life around and that I needed help doing it. I participated in all the life skills programs and groups – I was totally focused on making improvements in my life. While living at Bethlehem Place we had 24/7 support from staff, not only for the programs, but just to talk and help sort things out. As I think back, if I wasn't living at Bethlehem Place when my daughter came back, there's no way I'd be where I am today.

If you don't have your basic needs met, you can't get to the next level. The pressures in my life began to lift because not only did we receive a secure, safe and affordable place to live without worrying about financial stress, but we were empowered with the tools to heal our relationships, make appropriate decisions and cope with my daughter's illness.

We were both apprehensive to leave Bethlehem Place, although we knew and felt it was time to go – it was our time to use the tools we had learned. My mind was put at ease when we were informed that Bethlehem had a Community Outreach Program that would support us while we were in transition. We were supported through the services of a Community Worker for a while until we were strong enough to realize we were doing well.

While living at Bethlehem Place I returned to high school to upgrade my grade 12 English and even applied to college where I am a student today finishing off my first year of social work. My daughter and I are living together happily, in a really nice area too. Don't get me wrong, we have our moments (because now she's a teenager) but we learned to communicate with each other through the skills learned at Bethlehem Place. My daughter is doing well in school where she is on an independent education plan that is modified for her needs to set her up for success. She plays basketball and even helps children in a special needs class at school because she tells me that she can relate to what they are going through.

In addition to all the positive changes, my relationships with my family have grown stronger and I am very close to my mother as a result. I believe everything I went through was for a reason. I wish there were more places like Bethlehem Place. The support helped us to get stronger – I can't imagine where I would've ended up without Bethlehem.

Thank you to all those who support the great work of Bethlehem Housing and Support Services.

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*Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is the only organization in the Niagara Region that offers supportive transitional and permanent, affordable housing for women, men and families.*

*For more information on our diverse range of services please visit our website  
[www.bethsupporthousing.com](http://www.bethsupporthousing.com)*

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## Pledge Card



*A heartfelt THANK YOU for supporting Bethlehem's many programs and services!*