

December 2014

My daughter was only two months old when I decided that we couldn't live this way anymore. I had to find a better place for us and wanted to stand on my own two feet.

At the time, my daughter and I were sharing a bedroom at my mom's house after leaving an unhealthy relationship with her father. There were eight other people living at the house so it was really crowded and hectic and proved to be a challenge with parenting. I couldn't afford an apartment on my own because my take home pay wasn't enough, when a friend told me about Bethlehem Place. She explained she had lived there and went through their program that really helped her. She also told me it's subsidized and they have a Support Worker dedicated to you and classes to help you learn skills to gain independence – so I contacted the intake worker at Bethlehem Place and told her my situation. At the time there was a waitlist, but after four months I got a call that a two bedroom apartment was available, I was so happy for a new beginning where I could focus on raising my child.

At first it was tough living there. I had to comply with a schedule and take classes each week and I wasn't used to having this kind of structure. Although, I began to realize that I had to work the program to make life better for me and my baby. The Life Skills program had weekly classes that taught me about the resources that are available, what codependency is, how to have healthy relationships, and how to budget your money. I also had one-on-one sessions with my Transitional Support Worker who was able to help me further and listen to me when I was having difficulties.

I learned so much while I was at Bethlehem Place, that I even became a security resident who looked after the building when staff left, allowing me to show leadership skills and make important decisions.

over . . .



Holiday Reply

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My daughter learned all of her “firsts” at Bethlehem Place, how to crawl, walk and speak. We regularly attended the Early Learning Centre in the building, playing with other children and meeting other parents. She was thriving.

As I became close to my nine month mark, I had to start looking for an apartment because the stay at Bethlehem Place is one-year. The Community Outreach Support Worker assisted me with my search which was really difficult to find a clean, safe, affordable place for my daughter and I to live – until a two bedroom apartment became available at Bethlehem’s permanent housing, Genesis Court.

I moved into Genesis Court about seven months ago and enjoy the community feel the tenants share. People are friendly, everyone knows my daughter and it’s in a central location, right on the bus route so that we can easily get around and I can walk to work.

We still go to Bethlehem’s Early Learning Centre to spend time with the other children and enjoy the family-style Fridays where we can all sit down, have lunch together and chat with the other parents and Early Learning Centre Coordinator.

My daughter sees her dad on occasion and I have a healthy relationship with him today because of what I learned while at Bethlehem Place through understanding boundaries. I continue to use my budgeting skills and re-budget as I understand how to afford things. All of this is quite helpful when living on your own.

Genesis Court has a Community Support Worker on-site, and her door is always open. She’s been a good support for me when I need to talk and has even helped me to develop long-term goals that I can’t wait to achieve. I’m really looking forward to going to college and get my Early Childhood Education diploma when my daughter is old enough to go to full-day kindergarten. It’s nice to have something like this to look forward to.

It’s been quite a journey for us, but a good one of learning and growth. I’m thankful for Bethlehem’s Support Workers and programs that helped me to learn the skills that I can use every day.

-MM

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is a multi-service organization that provides housing and targeted programs, supports and services for individuals and families who are designated homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to issues with poverty, physical disability, mental health, domestic violence and family breakdown.

We are the only organization in the Niagara Region that offers supportive transitional housing and supported permanent affordable housing for women, men and families - helping them to rebuild their lives.

For more information on our diverse range of services please visit www.bethlehemhousing.ca

A heartfelt *thank you* for supporting
our many programs and services!

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