

## Annual Campaign

May 2015

*“... by my twenties I didn't feel I was worthy of living. Eventually, my family disowned me . . .  
. . . My eighty year old father told the staff in his nursing home to not let me in.”*

As I look back on my life from a healthier lens, I can understand how not dealing with the death of my mother became the start of me destroying everything around me.

Growing up I had a great childhood and a very close and supportive family. I am the only girl in a family with two brothers. My mother passed away when I was very young and my elderly European father had the sole responsibility of raising us kids.

I went to college and had a promising future in modelling. I partied like every other twenty year old, but began to take drinking to the next level where I couldn't function without it. I always had difficulty expressing my emotions or talking to others so I reached for a drink and the more I drank the worse I became. I had no self-esteem, depression sunk in and my behaviour was so destructive that I didn't care if I lived or died. I was running from my problems, drinking to cope with everything.

Soon my alcohol addiction was out of control. Throughout all of this my family was supportive and trying to help me – but I didn't think I had a problem, and eventually they disowned me. I got so bad that my eighty year old father told the staff in his nursing home not to let me in. Even writing this brings tears to my eyes of how bad my life spiraled out of control that I was at risk of losing the people who loved me the most.

I met a man during my addiction who was going through problems too and drinking was his solution. Misery loves company, right? I moved into his house that was labeled the 'party place', his friends used to climb into the windows of the house all hours of the night – I was completely surrounded by other alcoholics and didn't care enough about myself to get out.

So, as you can imagine, our relationship wasn't the healthiest, we knew what buttons to push on one another and fought all the time. One fight ended with him going to jail and me being badly hurt. (I wasn't an angel either, I got myself into trouble with the police too). Eventually we lost the house and I moved out of the area to get away from the craziness, I was completely homeless and lived on the shores of Grimsby that summer, until the colder weather set in.

*over . . .*

### Annual Campaign Reply

One-time Gift Option:  \$50  \$75  \$100  
Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed my cheque payable to Bethlehem Housing and Support Services

I prefer to use my credit card:  VISA  MasterCard

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

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

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

Yes! I want to become a monthly donor to support Bethlehem's clients all-year round!

I want to support Bethlehem with my monthly gift commitment of:

\$10  \$20  \$40  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please debit my credit card (details above)

I have enclosed post-dated cheques payable to:  
Bethlehem Housing and Support Services

*Tax receipts will be issued for donations \$10 or more  
Monthly donors will receive one consolidated tax receipt*

I found a part-time job and moved into a hotel and still had a drinking problem. Then I discovered a bump on my belly only to find out I was six months pregnant. I was terrified. How could I raise a child when I was such a mess?

Shortly after my son was born, I began drinking again, back to that old crappy life I was leading. My drinking quickly escalated out of control. One night when my baby's father had our son he called me to see how I was doing and because I was drunk he said he's not bringing him back until I'm sober and we got into a huge fight. So, I called the police. The police came and Family and Children's Services (FACS) released my baby to my sister-in-law to care for, because clearly I wasn't a fit mother.

My world crashed. I stopped paying rent on the hotel and eventually was evicted. It was then that I decided to put myself into a detox centre, all I knew what that if I ever wanted to see my son again I would have to get clean and sober. I had hit rock bottom.

During my detox program I moved into a shelter and began looking for an apartment, but the only ones I could afford were horrible and the areas were not safe to live in. I then reached out to Bethlehem Place. I knew it was the right place for me because it is family oriented and safe. During that time I had been sober for almost a year and began to have supervised visits with my son.

I went through Bethlehem's intake process and was put on a four month wait list, however during that time I was connected with one of their Community Support Workers who came to the shelter to talk with me regularly so that I could begin working on setting goals for myself. Once I got into Bethlehem Place my visitations with my son became more frequent and eventually I was able to have unsupervised visits with him – the first one I had was on my birthday in December, what a birthday present that was!

I have been actively participating in Bethlehem's Life Skills program and regularly attending courses to improve my self-esteem, understand healthy boundaries, and meet with my Support Worker weekly. It has all helped immensely. Now I'm not afraid to speak up and am even considering teaching one of the Life Skills programs to build up my confidence.

I am also working to improve my health by seeing a Nutritionist and looking into psychotherapy sessions through Bethlehem's Henk Zwart Memorial Fund to help me work through my problems. I am working to have my son one week on and his father have him the other week so that we can share the responsibilities of being good parents.

After a decade of self-destruction I'm rebuilding my life because I want to be the best I can be. I can clearly see the possibilities in life and want to live. I couldn't have come this far without the support services and programs that Bethlehem offers and I'm getting stronger every day – ready to face the world!

Thank you to those who support this wonderful organization, for you are helping people like me to become a better person and be the mother I know I can be for my son.

-Tatiana

*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](http://www.bethlehemhousing.ca)*

**A heartfelt *thank you* for helping people  
to rebuild their lives by supporting**

***bethlehem***  
housing and support services