



bethlehem
housing and support services

Building the Base

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

Our Mission Statement

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is a multi-service organization serving the diversified needs of Niagara residents by offering support for individual growth through housing and other focused services.

Our Mission

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, in partnership with the community, provides affordable housing and services to support the personal growth of individuals and families.

Our Vision

Stable affordable housing and support services contribute to a vibrant, caring, and inclusive Niagara where everyone has a home.

We believe:

- Safe, supportive, and affordable housing is fundamental to the health, well-being, and resilience of all people.
- Responsive and person-centered support promotes our residents' independence, self-reliance, and increased engagement in the community.
- Stable housing, combined with personalized support, is fundamental to our residents gaining greater confidence and realizing their housing goals and life aspirations.
- Affordable housing and support services provide a critical cornerstone for a caring community.

Our Values



Compassion

We provide the highest quality services with empathy, hope, understanding, and caring.



Integrity

We act with integrity and honesty, treating all people with respect and fairness.



Dedication

We are passionate about our mandate and go above and beyond to deliver superior results.



Inclusiveness

We welcome and accept all people, embrace individual differences, and create inclusion.



Accountability

We strive for excellence by being responsible, accountable, and committed to improvement.

“Bethlehem assisted me in becoming more secure with my life and finding peace within myself.”

- VAL

Message from the President of the Board and Executive Director



LORI BEECH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JOHN LEE
BOARD PRESIDENT

“ Never underestimate your ability to make someone else’s life better – even if you never know it.

- GREG LOUGHANIS

The Past Year In Review

Dream it, plan it, work it, build it - make it happen!

A little progress each day adds up to big results. The execution of our strategic plan was in full swing this past year. We are “Building the Base” for a strong foundation that will meet the emerging needs of the community for new affordable housing, programs, supports, and services that keep people housed and improve their quality of life.

INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

Our staff members face challenges every day to meet the needs of those they serve. Bethlehem is very

fortunate to employ some of the best in the sector that are dedicated to our clients, our cause, and meeting our mission. To us they are everyday Housing Heroes! We have built and strengthened the management and staff team in each department by investing resources in professional development to build capacity, systems to improve work flow, and find efficiencies that enhance our services to clients and tenants.

HOUSING AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Plans are developed to make improvements to our existing capital assets with renovations in the coming year to physically accommodate our growth. This past year we have engaged tenants to get involved through new Tenant Advisory committees and participation in energy efficiency education activities. The maintenance team has been restructured to re-purpose resources that will improve tenancy supports and find efficiencies in managing building maintenance.

PROGRAMMING FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

We celebrated the retirements of some long-standing loyal employees and re-built the support team. We have re-organized support and service programming to be more mobile, by providing communication tools and expanding our outreach to meet clients where they are at in the community. New and improved program evaluation processes have been implemented to gather information that helps us with quality improvement and telling our stories.

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Children and their families are welcomed into the Centre to participate in early childhood development and parenting programs offered in partnership with community children's services. With support from the United Way St. Catharines, this year we started offering school age children the opportunity to enjoy after school activities and programs. All of our children and families are very excited to watch the construction progress of our new family playground and can't wait for the gates to be opened in June of 2017.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We can't do what we do alone. Our community partners are essential in providing housing and support services. Together we have cleared a path for growth in affordable supportive housing development through leadership with partners and a commitment to ensure long term results. The partnership includes many investors, PennTerra Group, and FirstOntario Credit Union as private sector developers; City of St. Catharines, Niagara Region, and Niagara Regional Housing with municipal tools that further the affordability for tenants and community service partners that participate in the implementation of the Housing and Homeless Action Plan. All have worked diligently and collaboratively to realize a plan for new affordable housing developments in Niagara. The first pilot project model will begin construction in 2017 of a 128-unit building in downtown St. Catharines.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A new staff team and volunteer committee was put in place this past year to re-position our development strategy and build momentum for increased community engagement. Our generous donor community supported our annual campaign

with \$188,599 plus an additional \$93,000 to build the Bethlehem Place playground. The Billes Family matched that with \$100,000 to our Future Housing Endowment Fund. Thank you never seems to be a big enough word. On behalf of the clients and tenants we serve, we express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our donors that assist us in providing housing and supports to improve their lives.

However, the affordable housing crisis in the Niagara region continues to grow. We are again asking the greater community to get even more involved in the movement to change the direction of a social economic situation that will affect us all. In response, we have launched the **Housing Hero** concept to build awareness, stimulate interest, and inspire participation that will support the movement for housing justice! Our vision is to create a Niagara where everyone has a home.

Over the next year we will showcase real Housing Heroes in our community. A Housing Hero is anyone who believes that everyone deserves a home and takes action in some way to make a difference for those who are challenged with housing stability. No heroic act is too small! Check out our website or contact Bethlehem Housing to find out more about housing heroism, housing justice, and a Home for All!

Sincerely and Respectfully,



Lori Beech
Executive Director



John Lee
Board President

Helping Women, Men & Families in the Niagara Region

Our Programs & Services Include

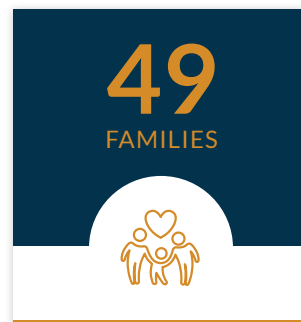
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional Housing Program (Bethlehem Place) is a staged approach to assist and support client residents to make a successful transition to having a safe, stable home and tenancy. An individual or family household's program can include:

- Outreach supports while on the housing waitlist
- Structured transitional housing with supports for up to one year
- Information, referrals, and connection to community services
- Life skills and capacity building programs
- Child development and parenting supports
- Goal and safety planning, support, and advocacy
- Access to rent subsidy programs and continued supports post-move out to reside in Bethlehem permanent housing sites or in the community throughout the Niagara region

Many continue with supports through our outreach programs while transitioning to living in the community, which helps to ensure housing retention, a stable safe environment, and connection to resources and services.

- 39% of the transitional residents are survivors/victims of domestic violence
- Our waitlist is 10 - 20 families at any given time



49 families including 79 children lived at Bethlehem Place in 2016–2017

- 37% of the transitional families moved to market rent units
- 52% moved on to live independently in community-based subsidized housing

PERMANENT SUPPORTED HOUSING

Permanent Supported Housing is long-term permanent affordable and/or subsidized housing with on-site support and advocacy services. Supports may include information, referrals and connection to community services, as well as social and recreational activities.

- 104 households lived in our permanent supported housing buildings and community homes
- 44% are persons with physical or mental disabilities
- 30% are low-income working families living in market rent units

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUPPORT

Community Outreach Support Program for Homelessness and Violence against Women offers support services in collaboration with service provider/ agency partners for individuals and families who are designated homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and/or who have experienced domestic violence. When an individual reaches out to Bethlehem for help they are connected with a Community Support Worker (CSW) who meets with them in the community. The CSW assesses the needs of the individual, works with them to develop a service plan, and may make referrals that will assist them to achieve their personal goals.

- 256 households were served through the Community Outreach Support Program
- 132 individuals were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- 124 women were victims of domestic violence

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First Program assists individuals and families who are chronically and episodically homeless to find independent and permanent housing through our Housing First Program, funded by Niagara Regional Housing and Niagara Region Homelessness Services. The underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. Once the person is housed our Community Support Workers provide client-driven supports to address ongoing housing stability, health and mental health needs, and life skills.

- 30 family households were provided community-based affordable housing allowances and community outreach support services



84%

OF THOSE WHO MOVED OUT OF SUPPORTED HOUSING TRANSITIONED TO STABLE AND SECURE HOUSING

PERSONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Personal Capacity Building Programs include housing supports, goal planning, safety planning, community based life skills for personal capacity building, employability, empowerment, self-esteem and leadership, mental health awareness, legal matters, anger management, healthy lifestyle, budget and money management, and community-based recreational and arts activities.

- 72 group sessions were conducted including a variety of life skills, information workshops, personal empowerment and development programs, along with social and recreational activities

EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRES

Early Learning Resource Centres (ELC) includes a variety of parenting and early childhood development programs for families that live at Bethlehem Place and in the community. Our ELC drop-in program provides a healthy and safe educational environment where adults and preschool children interact, play, and learn together. Our After School Club, funded by the United Way St. Catharines and District, provides interactive activities and skills development for children and youth. In 2016, we offered our Early Learning program at St. Christopher School in St. Catharines and St. Patrick School in Niagara Falls one day a week.

In 2016, the Early Learning Centre Program welcomed:

- 1,996 child visits
- 1,100 parent/caregiver visits

Client Journey

FROM CRISIS TO STABLE HOUSING

EMERGENCY
SHELTER REFERRALS



OTHER SERVICE
PARTNER REFERRALS



SELF-REFERRALS
AND SERVICE INQUIRIES



Central Access Intake & Assessment

'NO WRONG DOOR' APPROACH TO SERVICE & SUPPORT REFERRAL



CASE MANAGEMENT
SUPPORTS

COMMUNITY
OUTREACH SUPPORTS

HOMELESSNESS
PREVENTION

PERSONAL
CAPACITY BUILDING

TRANSITIONAL
HOUSING

PERMANENT
SUPPORTED HOUSING

AFFORDABLE
HOUSING



Stable Housing

HOUSING + SUPPORT = STABILITY



Stable affordable housing and support services contribute to a vibrant, caring and inclusive Niagara where everyone has a home.

Investing in Our Community

As donors, volunteers, and supporters, your giving invests in our work and enables us to continue to provide programs and services to help build a stronger community. Whether you donate monthly or annually, attend our fundraisers, volunteer your time, provide in-kind services, or have given a major gift, we are grateful for your contribution. It is through your giving that you express to the men, women, and families that someone cares about their wellbeing.

Legacy Partners

As part of the Niagara Community Foundation's Legacy Partners Program, gifts provided by our loyal donors through bequests and other estate gifts are placed in an endowment fund at the Foundation. Legacy gifts are endowed and preserved in perpetuity with only the investment income used. Income earned on the endowment will provide Bethlehem with a sustainable revenue source so we can continuously provide housing and support services for families in crisis now and in the future.

In 2016, \$1,680 was distributed from our endowment fund and directed to our current annual needs to support the personal growth of individuals and families that reach out to Bethlehem for help. Through our 2016 Matching Gift Campaign the Billes family donated \$100,000 to enhance our Future Housing Endowment Fund.

Empty Bowls

Our 12th Annual Empty Bowls event took place on Wednesday, March 8th at Club Roma in St. Catharines. We had over 350 guests in attendance with 22 different food and beverage vendors. Guests enjoyed sampling gourmet soups, local wine, and craft beer. This year we had a Silent Auction, Mystery Soup Can raffle, and 50/50 draw. The event raised more than \$30,000 in proceeds after expenses.

The proceeds from the event will help us to continue providing affordable housing, targeted programs, supports, and services to help individuals and families who are designated homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to issues with poverty, physical disability, mental health, domestic health, domestic violence, and family breakdown.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

- HENRY FORD

Community Support

Planning an event is another great way to show your support of our organization. A DIY fundraising event is organized and managed by people other than Bethlehem staff and funds raised benefit Bethlehem Housing. With special thanks to the Barry Team of Revel Reality, Fashion in Bloom, Furtney Crysler LLP, and Niagara Chapter of Ontario Insurance Adjusters Association for donating over \$7,000 in proceeds from their fundraiser events.

Christmas holds a special place in the hearts of our supporters. A big thank you to Henry Schein, Mastermind Toys, the Murphy family, Octane Hair Lounge, Penn Terra Group, St. Amand Auto & Truck Repair, St. Catharines Meridian Credit Union branches, and St. George's Church who helped to make the holidays magical for our families this season. Your commitment is a demonstration of good social responsibility that makes an impact on our community and those around us.



“ When people come together it is possible to create positive, significant, and lasting differences in communities. ”

- LORI BEECH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Donations Over \$500

APRIL 1ST, 2016 – MARCH 31, 2017



- ▶ Dorothy Barley
- ▶ Emily Barry
- ▶ Elizabeth Bedford-Jones
- ▶ Owen Billes
- ▶ Canadian Tire Corporation, Limited
- ▶ Canadian Tire Financial Services
- ▶ Canadian Women's Foundation
- ▶ Castle Plumbing & Heating Inc.
- ▶ CBC Computer Systems Inc.
- ▶ Richard & Maureen Chudyk
- ▶ CMS Intelligence Inc.
- ▶ Constellation Brands
- ▶ Domenic Cortese
- ▶ Court Holdings Limited
- ▶ Covenant Christian Reformed Church
- ▶ T.J. Critelli
- ▶ Gregory Datunaishvili
- ▶ First Reformed Church of St. Catharines
- ▶ Josephine Frankzak
- ▶ Barbara Fraser
- ▶ Janet Fraser
- ▶ Grant Thornton LLP
- ▶ Peter & Linda Hammond
- ▶ Edgar & Karen Hielema
- ▶ Inner Wheel Club of St. Catharines
- ▶ Mike & Anne Jones
- ▶ Jubilee Fellowship C. R. Church
- ▶ Kiwanis Club of St. Catharines
- ▶ Lions Club – Merritton
- ▶ Lions Club – St. Davids
- ▶ M & N Walker Foundation at the Niagara Community Foundation
- ▶ Helen Mathies
- ▶ Erna McBride
- ▶ Meridian Credit Union
- ▶ Randy & Mary Momot
- ▶ Rotary Club of Niagara Falls Sunrise
- ▶ St. Andrew's United Church
- ▶ Niagara Chapter of OIAA
- ▶ O'Brien/Jackson Family Foundation
- ▶ O'Hara Trucking & Excavating
- ▶ PenFinancial Credit Union
- ▶ Penn Terra Group Limited
- ▶ Lisa Punch
- ▶ Tom & Gail Richardson
- ▶ Mark & Wendy Rittenhouse
- ▶ Rotary Club of Niagara Falls Sunrise
- ▶ Carmen Sauer and Constellation Brands
- ▶ ServiceMaster of Niagara
- ▶ Sideline Telephone Services Inc.
- ▶ Sleep Cheap Charities Reap
- ▶ St. George's Anglican Church
- ▶ St. John's Anglican Church
- ▶ St. Thomas' Church
- ▶ Sullivan Mahoney
- ▶ Synergy Benefits Consulting Inc.
- ▶ The Ontario Paper Thorold Foundation
- ▶ Trinity Christian Reformed Church
- ▶ Graham & Mary Louise Turner
- ▶ David & Carolyn Vilim
- ▶ Vineland United Church
- ▶ Willy's Greenhouses Ltd.
- ▶ Wise Guys Charity Fund
- ▶ Elsjie Zwart

Memorial Gifts

Gifts were received in memory of the following individuals:

- ▶ John Anderson
- ▶ Dr. Donald Ballyk
- ▶ Gloria Rooney
- ▶ Richard (Dick) Halverson

We also wish to acknowledge the contribution of our donors who wish to remain anonymous and those who gave to the United Way and designated Bethlehem Housing and Support Services as the recipient of your gifts. A special thank you to our anonymous investor for the \$1,000,000 towards our future capital housing development projects.

Thank You to Our Funders

In addition to your donations, Federal, Provincial and Regional Government agencies and foundations help to support our housing maintenance, programs, and operational costs. We are truly thankful for the support they have given us.

Government Funders

- ▶ Ministry of Community and Social Services
- ▶ Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- ▶ Niagara Region Children's Services
- ▶ Niagara Region Community Services
- ▶ Niagara Regional Housing
- ▶ Service Canada Summer Student Employment Program

Foundation Funders

- ▶ Canadian Women's Foundation
- ▶ Canadian Tire Financial Services
- ▶ Niagara Community Foundation
- ▶ United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie
- ▶ United Way of St. Catharines and District

“Bethlehem Housing and Support Services has been instrumental in helping me, along with other supports, to “Break the Cycle” of addiction and abuse. I am free from the bondage of that lifestyle and no longer just survive.

- DIANE

Financial Highlights

Our core revenues for the fiscal 2017 increased significantly from the prior fiscal year. Overall revenues were up by 52% from the prior year, largely due to a significant anonymous donor making a capital housing development investment and the sale of two small property assets. These funds will be used for the upcoming new building capital project expected to be completed in the spring of 2018. Without the large donations and sale of the community homes, operating revenues are down by 5%. The decrease is due to revenue received for Capacity Funding for Plumbing Repairs in 2016 but not in 2017, a hydro recovery refund in 2016, and decreased rent revenue due to the sale of the community homes. Expenditures were only \$5,000 lower than last year in correlation with revenues, due to lower fundraising expenses and savings for five months due to the sale of the community homes. Expenditures were consistent with the prior year demonstrating strong management of housing, support programs, and administrative costs. The consistency in year over year financial results is paramount as the organization continues to expand its much-needed services.

Financial Highlights

The overall net operating surplus (including the capital donation and asset sale) for fiscal 2017 was \$1,296,776. In terms of fund category, direct service programs recorded a surplus of \$22,462 largely due to increased Bingo revenue, new Housing First program revenue, and decreased expenditures in fundraising costs and in administrative expense allocation.

Housing projects recorded a deficit of \$61,427 which was largely a result of hydro cost increases, building maintenance wages were increased to Living Wage levels, the impact of revenue allocations from an estate donation applied in 2016, and hydro recoveries in 2016 but not for 2017.

Long-term debt related to property mortgages was reduced by \$235,217. Restricted reserve fund activity resulted in an overall increase in assets by \$1,275,146 due to the capital investment donation received and the sale of the community properties. All the restricted reserve funds are set aside and tracked in secure investments. These funds are essential to the organization's long-term sustainability, as they provide a concrete level of funds for future capital requirements and emergencies.

The organization is pleased to report we have maintained a healthy and stable financial position moving into fiscal 2018. As a result, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services will continue to provide our valuable and highly regarded services for years to come.

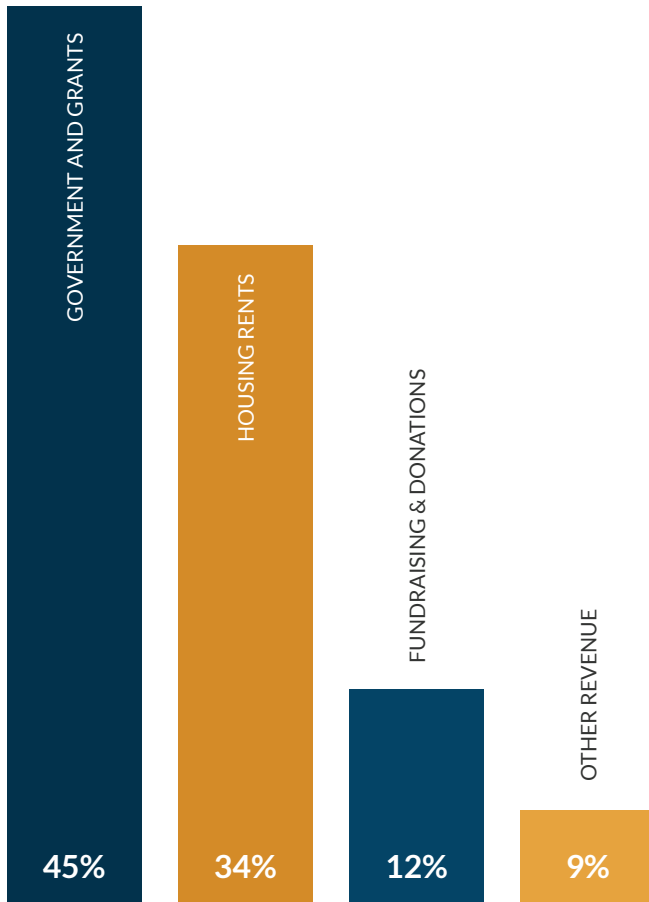
Statement of Operations for Year

ENDING MARCH 31, 2017

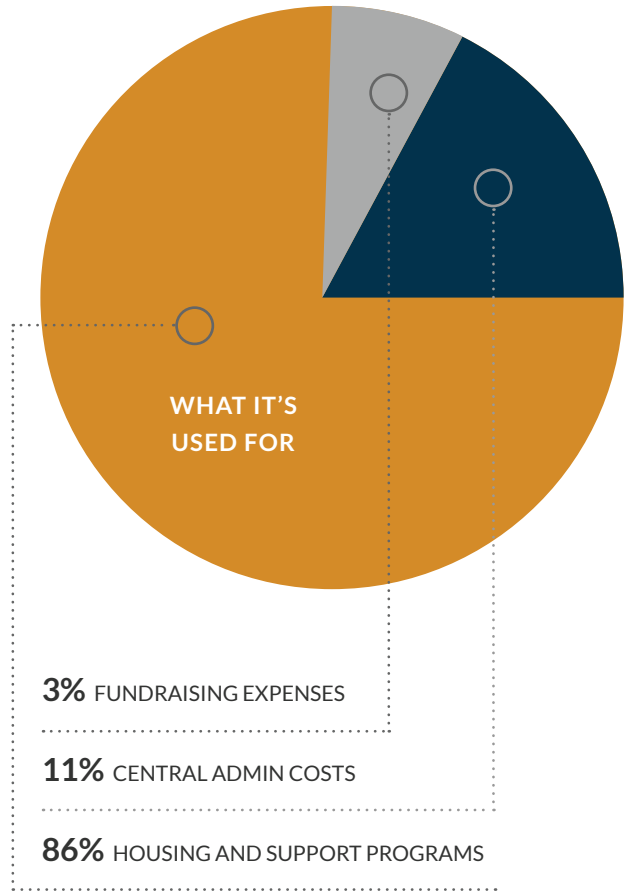
REVENUES	
GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES AND GRANTS	\$1,056,056
RENTS	\$799,453
FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS	\$281,599
MISCELLANEOUS	\$86,256
OTHER	\$117,975
TOTAL	\$2,341,339
EXPENSES	
WAGES AND BENEFITS	\$914,605
HOUSING RELATED	\$770,797
AMORTIZATION OF BUILDING COST	\$366,537
PROGRAMS AND BUILDING COST	\$238,313
TOTAL	\$2,290,252
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$ 51,087

Funding Sources

Bethlehem has a diversified source of revenue and although we receive some financial assistance through Funders, Foundations, and Government subsidies, these are additional funds that we must raise on an annual basis to continue to maintain our affordable and transitional housing buildings, support services, and targeted programs.



SOURCES OF REVENUE 2016-2017



“ The constant support from my workers at Bethlehem Place is the reason I have made it this far. They have helped me with my confidence, time management, and my overall outlook on life.

- KRYSSTYN

We Are Grateful for Our Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential part of our organization. Your kindness, dedication, and commitment are an inspiration to us all. We are very fortunate and appreciative of your time, talents, and efforts in showing that you want to make a difference in our community and for Bethlehem Housing.

This year an incredible 933 hours were provided by our 87 dedicated volunteers who contribute their skills consistently in the office, on Board committees, event committees, for fundraising events, meeting support, and caregiving.

Our Early Learning Centre Program had six volunteers who contributed over 150 volunteer hours to provide a healthy and safe educational environment. There were over 40 volunteers who assisted us during our 12th Annual Empty Bowls fundraiser, contributing a total of 256 volunteer hours towards the event!

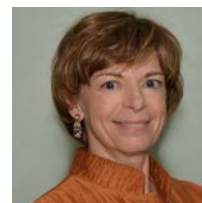
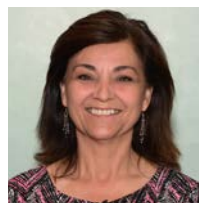
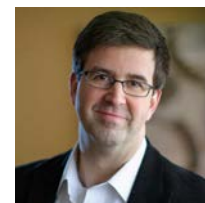
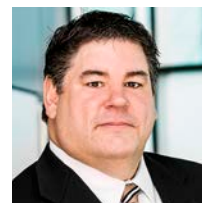
Thank you to the hardworking women, men, and youth who generously give their time and talents to our organization. We couldn't do this without you!

“ *The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.* ”

- OSCAR WILDE

Board of Directors

2016-2017



Volunteers Serving

2016-2017

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- ▶ John Lee *President*
- ▶ Drew Semple *Vice President*
- ▶ Andrew Costantini *Treasurer*
- ▶ Todd Bright *Secretary*
- ▶ Steve Stone *Past President*
- ▶ Larry Anderson
- ▶ Karin Barnes
- ▶ Bryon Johnston
- ▶ Sara Prince
- ▶ Sandra Richards
- ▶ Jo-Anne Thibodeau
- ▶ Erica Walters

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- ▶ Larry Anderson
- ▶ Bryon Johnston
- ▶ Erica Walters

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- ▶ Todd Bright
- ▶ John Lee
- ▶ Sara Prince
- ▶ Drew Semple
- ▶ Jo Anne Thibodeau

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

- ▶ John Lee
- ▶ Sara Prince

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- ▶ Andrew Costantini
- ▶ Chuck Greenham
- ▶ Bill Keogh
- ▶ Brian Mocha

EMPTY BOWLS EMCEES

- ▶ Brad Baker

EMPTY BOWLS JUDGES

- ▶ Jay Allin
- ▶ Mike Hand
- ▶ Stuart Mena
- ▶ Tara O'Brady
- ▶ Stacie Royds

EMPTY BOWLS LEAD POTTERS

- ▶ Chris Sora
- ▶ Roberta Schmidt
- ▶ Sonja Zanuttini

EARLY LEARNING CENTRE CAREGIVERS

- ▶ Megan Appleton
- ▶ Mari-Anne Collee
- ▶ Traci Colli
- ▶ Madison Kempf
- ▶ Alliyah Phillip
- ▶ May Truong

BRAND BLVD GRAPHIC DESIGN VOLUNTEERS

- ▶ Sarah Bosman
- ▶ Cam Hawrylenko

SOCIAL ACTIVITY VOLUNTEERS

- ▶ Andrea Clarke

BINGO VOLUNTEERS

- ▶ Joseph Prosper
- ▶ Leah Spiering
- ▶ Max Steel
- ▶ Megan Willis



NIAGARA COLLEGE EVENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM STUDENT

- ▶ Michelle Morton

NIAGARA COLLEGE BROADCASTING PROGRAM STUDENTS

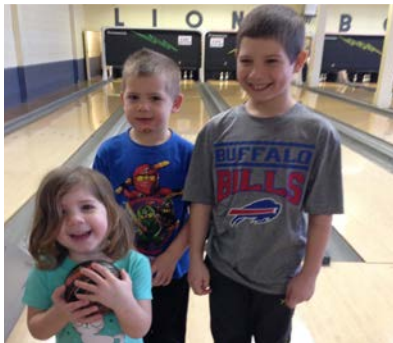
- ▶ Ricki Grella
- ▶ Andy Paul
- ▶ Daniel Pauco
- ▶ Daniel Bickerton
- ▶ Trevor Carey
- ▶ Jason Kitsemety

“ The willingness to volunteer is a selfless act.

-MIKE DOODY



“ Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give.
 - BEN CARSON



Our Team

Our dedicated staff is committed to serving the Niagara community and it is with great appreciation and thanks that we recognize their contributions to Bethlehem.

UNDER 5 YEARS

- ▶ Lori Beech *Executive Director*
- ▶ Charles Booth *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Rob Cammaert *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Sarah Dashwood *Early Childhood Educator Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator*
- ▶ Carolyn Fish *Program Manager*
- ▶ Janet Fraser *Administrative & Accounting Assistant*
- ▶ Tiffany Grant *Early Learning Centre Coordinator*
- ▶ Dave and Betty Kelley *Superintendents*
- ▶ Yvonne Kulawic *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Lindsay McKillop *Community Engagement Coordinator*
- ▶ Jena O'Neil *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Mayra Orellana *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Candace Persia *Early Childhood Educator*
- ▶ Chris Richardson *Finance Manager*
- ▶ Laura Sauer *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Nicole Shaddock *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Jennifer Sinclair *Philanthropy Manager*

5 – 9 YEARS

- ▶ Courtney Counsell *Inake Worker*
- ▶ Kathy Fraser *Property Manager*
- ▶ Diane Gendron *Security Resident*
- ▶ Paul Kwiatkowski *Maintenance*
- ▶ Kirk Martin *Security Resident*
- ▶ Dell Wilson and Lori MacFadyen *Superintendents*

OVER 25 YEARS

- ▶ Laura Arbour *Community Support Worker*
- ▶ Catherine Chambers *Early Childhood Educator*
- ▶ Joan Gordon *Community Support Worker*

“ We rise by lifting others

- ROBERT INGERSOLL



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

A BETHLEHEM COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKER

Mayra's journey as a Community Support Worker (CSW) with Bethlehem Housing and Support Services began three years ago after graduating from the Social Service Worker program at Niagara College. She is one of our team of eight Community Support Workers that provides support services to individuals and families living at Bethlehem Housing or within the community on an outreach basis. The CSW's are an essential part of what makes our organization so successful in helping people overcome their issues related to homelessness, family breakdown, domestic violence, physical disability, and mental health.

“ Our Community Support Workers are an invaluable resource to our community, making a difference in people's lives every day.

- CAROLYN FISH, PROGRAM MANAGER

Every day Mayra walks alongside her clients by providing advocacy and support. When supporting clients that are dealing with domestic violence she assists with safety concerns, ensuring the well-being of children, and addressing physical and mental wellness. When supporting clients that are facing homelessness she often learns about histories of childhood trauma or abuse, even though initially a client may only be seeking assistance with housing. *“It is important for me to respect my client’s boundaries and let them choose what they want to share. In many cases they end up opening up about their past, which helps them to move forward.”* Mayra works with the client and the issues they are facing in a way that will make them feel comfortable.

Mayra’s caseload consists of individuals and families with a mix of ages, genders, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Since working with a wide variety of demographics, Mayra finds it very important to understand that one size does not fit all. She says, *“Everyone handles experiences differently. We are all resilient in our own way. If I come in wearing only one hat and I’m unable to be flexible depending on the client’s needs, then nobody benefits.”*

An important role of our Community Support Workers is building partnerships with other social service organizations and connecting clients to community services. Sometimes Mayra acts as an advocate and supports her clients by accompanying them to meetings with other agencies. *“It’s very important for my clients to feel as though they have someone to support and advocate for them. It makes them feel believed in and furthers their motivation.”*

While the role of a CSW can bring on its fair share of challenges, for Mayra, it’s important to focus on the rewarding moments. One of her most memorable clients was several years her senior. When they first met, the client was quite apprehensive about their age difference and was unsure if Mayra would be able to relate. She was homeless, battled with addictions, and had mental health issues. She had just finished an addiction treatment program when she came to Bethlehem Place.

In the end the client completely bloomed while working with Mayra. She is now out in the community living on her own, has a beautiful apartment, and has reconnected with her children. Mayra received a beautiful letter from her saying that her life would not be where it’s at now if she had not been taught to love herself. *“These are the moments that make being a Community Support Worker at Bethlehem so rewarding.”*

bethlehem

housing and support services

Bethlehem Housing & Support Services, along with our clients, are grateful for the funding support of these organizations.



Bethlehem Housing and Support Services

166 James Street, St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 5C5

☎ 905.684.1660 ✉ info@bethlehemhousing.ca 🏠 bethlehemhousing.ca