

bethlehem
housing and support services

BEST WISHES THIS

Holiday Season

& THROUGHOUT THE NEW YEAR



2017 Winter Newsletter

BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA

2017 Message & Reflections

FROM BETHLEHEM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'll Be Home for Christmas!

This is my family's most favourite time of year! It's not just because there is snow on the ground or because Santa will be visiting soon; it is because we will be together at home enjoying each other's company, having a great meal, playing a board game and watching traditional movies.

One of the activities I have always enjoyed – receiving good old fashioned holiday cards and newsletters in my real mailbox! It is often suggested that we should go paperless and electronic; but you, our supporters, tell us how much you too enjoy receiving the newsletter, seeing our annual Bethlehem baby such as Tobias pictured on the front page, and hearing about the journeys of our Bethlehem families and individuals such as Marilyn in our feature story.

You tell us that our shiny paper newsletter is a tradition you look forward to receiving by regular mail as your gentle reminder that there are others in our community who need your help to change their lives from homeless to hopeful, from addicted to recovered, from broken to made whole.

At this time of year, you share in our celebration and expression of gratitude for our dedicated and hardworking volunteers and staff. All year long they walk alongside the many people, families and children who are on this journey to a better life and stable housing. Each year we need your help to make sure people like Marilyn have a successful journey. Your gifts make second chances possible!

The song *"I'll Be Home for Christmas"* deeply touches me. Home is a place many of those we serve don't have, yet dream about. Each year we thank you, our donors, for ensuring there is always hope of home for Bethlehem families.

On behalf of the Board of Directors at Bethlehem, may this season bring you joy in your own family traditions!

Warmest Regards,



Lori Beech
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HOME FOR CHRISTMAS WITH BETHLEHEM HOUSING



"It's a wonderful feeling knowing we are able to help out a family with children at Christmas time in our community. The letters we receive back are heartwarming to say the least."

- THE MURPHY FAMILY

"I have always felt it necessary to give back to families in need. Octane Hair Lounge continues to support families through their hardships in hopes this can be the light or strength they need to have a better life. I truly believe no child should have to look back and remember Santa didn't come Christmas morning! Supporting these families is very humbling for myself, my staff and my clients who all contribute!"

- BROOKE ST. AMAND, OCTANE HAIR LOUNGE



"The HR Team at Henry Schein Canada has been hosting an annual Holiday Open House where Team Schein Members donate mittens for our Christmas tree, in support of Bethlehem Housing. This is a fun event that we look forward to every year! We are thrilled to support a local organization that is making a positive impact in our community."

- KATIE FLETCHER, HENRY SCHEIN CANADA



"Partnering with Bethlehem Housing and providing Christmas gifts to the children who reside there has become an annual tradition that our staff looks forward to. It's an incredibly rewarding way for us to show our commitment to our community; by supporting those most vulnerable."

- BRAD SHARP, MERIDIAN CREDIT UNION



What You Helped Us Achieve in 2017

41

FAMILIES INCLUDING 58 CHILDREN
LIVED AT BETHLEHEM PLACE

90

HOUSEHOLDS LIVED IN OUR
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

207

PEOPLE WERE SERVED THROUGH OUR
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

135

INDIVIDUALS WERE HOMELESS OR AT
RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS

72

WOMEN WERE VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1,230

CHILD VISITS TO OUR
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

21

CHILDREN AND BABIES WILL CALL BETHLEHEM
PLACE HOME THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The renovation of our Naturalized Family Park at Bethlehem Place was completed in June!

“The naturalized environment gave my children and me a chance to play safely and we learned new things together. It has encouraged my children to be thinkers.”

– BHSS RESIDENT



MARILYN'S JOURNEY

TO STABLE HOUSING

When Marilyn was in her 20s she was diagnosed with retinal detachment, resulting in the gradual loss of her eye sight. Marilyn turned to alcohol to help her cope with the grief and anger related to her diagnosis and vision loss.

Marilyn's journey to stable housing began when she was 65 years old. After more than three decades of being consumed in an unhealthy lifestyle, she found herself homeless for the very first time. She stayed at a homeless shelter in St. Catharines where a friend referred her to Bethlehem Housing and Support Services.

After reaching out to us, she was connected with a Community Support Worker and they worked together to determine her needs and set personal goals. In November of 2016, she moved into an accessible unit at Bethlehem Place, our transitional supportive housing program.

When she first arrived, Marilyn had approximately 5% of her vision left, however since then she has completely lost her sight. She didn't have any proper training on how to manage her vision loss. *"Bethlehem connected me to different services that would make living on my own easier."*

We connected her with an independent living specialist and a mobility specialist at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. The mobility specialist worked with her so she can guide herself properly using a cane. The independent living specialist introduced her to different devices and tools to help with daily living.

Some other important services that Marilyn was connected to were the Canadian Diabetes Association, Meals on Wheels and the Niagara Regional Native Centre. Additionally, she received assistance with her income taxes, which provided her access to financial supports.

As a result, Marilyn is surrounded by a wonderful support system of community partners that help to ensure her needs are met. *"Before I came to Bethlehem I had no idea where to go or who to ask for help. I didn't even know some of these places existed."* These community based resources have contributed to improving her quality of life.

While living with us she worked on life skills training, including healthy coping strategies, self-care, setting healthy boundaries, and how to deal with the grief of the loss of her vision. *"My support worker also assisted me with daily tasks such as reading mail, doing laundry and making phone calls."*

Through the supports she has in place, Marilyn has been working on coming to terms with her vision loss. *"Becoming blind has made me see things in a different way. Before, I had no reason to smile. Now I smile all the time thanks to my support worker and Bethlehem."*

In October of 2017 Marilyn completed our transitional housing program and moved into an apartment within the community. She receives a rent supplement through a housing program designed to support individuals moving from homelessness to a life of stability and success.

Marilyn expressed a desire to continue her journey towards improving herself so she can be better to those in her life. *"The most important thing in my life right now is taking care of myself."*

She believes that with ongoing support from us and other community partners, she will only move forward in life. *"I would recommend anyone who needs help with housing to contact Bethlehem in an instant."*



2017 Housing Heroes

AND THEIR STORIES

A Housing Hero believes that everyone deserves a home. Read the stories about our 2017 Housing Heroes who contributed their **time**, **talent** or **treasure** to be part of the affordable housing solution in Niagara.



Drew Semple

PAST BOARD MEMBER

"By serving on the board, I quickly recognized that the community is what leads to enjoyment in my life. This inspired me to give back to make Niagara just a little bit better for the people living here."



Cam & Sarah

BRAND BLVD GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

"We love to use our talents to give back to our communities. Designing the Housing Hero brand gave us the opportunity to learn about Niagara's needs and create awareness by building an engaging logo!"



Claire Fish

YOUNGEST HOUSING HERO

Claire celebrated her 8th birthday and decided she wanted her family and friends to donate to Bethlehem.

"I really like helping others and I knew doing this would help people that need help finding somewhere to live."



You too can become a Housing Hero! Contact us to learn more.

☎ 905.684.1660 ext. 2 🏠 housinghero.ca #BeAHousingHero

VISIT BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA AND SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR STORIES AND UPDATES

bethlehem
housing and support services

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