

bethlehem
housing and support services

BEST WISHES THIS

Holiday Season

& THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



2023 Winter Newsletter

BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA

2023 Message & Reflections

FROM BETHLEHEM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Once all struggle is grasped, miracles are possible.”

- Mao Zedong

Let's just say it..... 2023 was a difficult year. As I was thinking about a theme and updates about our past year here at Bethlehem, the words that came to me were; struggle and challenge, not very positive words, but words I have used many times this year. The reality is that the people we serve are struggling, more than usual and in a different way. They are struggling to survive.

Harsh I know....but on the positive side of Bethlehem; we are all about giving hope. How do you provide hope when a family's life is a constant struggle? Our goal is always about providing housing and keeping people housed by supporting their journey towards healing and hope, even if it means that we have to stretch just a bit. For example, it is not in our mandate to provide food programs, but it became necessary to help our families with access to food and fresh produce. We held 40 fresh food market programs at our building sites over this past year. Our families, like many are impacted by the high cost of living. Through collaborations and community partnerships we were able to access funds and low cost, nutrient dense food products that our families could not afford through regular retail stores.

The Bethlehem staff team through partnerships with you, our generous community, will continue these efforts to bring fun and joy through the holiday season; and into 2024. We will continue to assess and respond to the needs of families and do what we can to contribute to their good health and well-being. In these pages you will see and we will tell you about our service impact and how we use the fundraising gifts and support from our donors to improve quality of life for our clients and families.

This year, we wanted to share Riley's raw story of struggle and hope. Those who read her story may grapple with the choices that she made. We know her as a young woman who had a rough start in life and accepted responsibility for the consequences of her choices. She was passionate about rebuilding her life with her children and deserved the chance to try. Albeit reluctantly, she knew she had to accept some tough love and hard work to get there. Her journey was not straight forward and she was besieged along the way with challenges that caused her to take as many steps backward as forward.

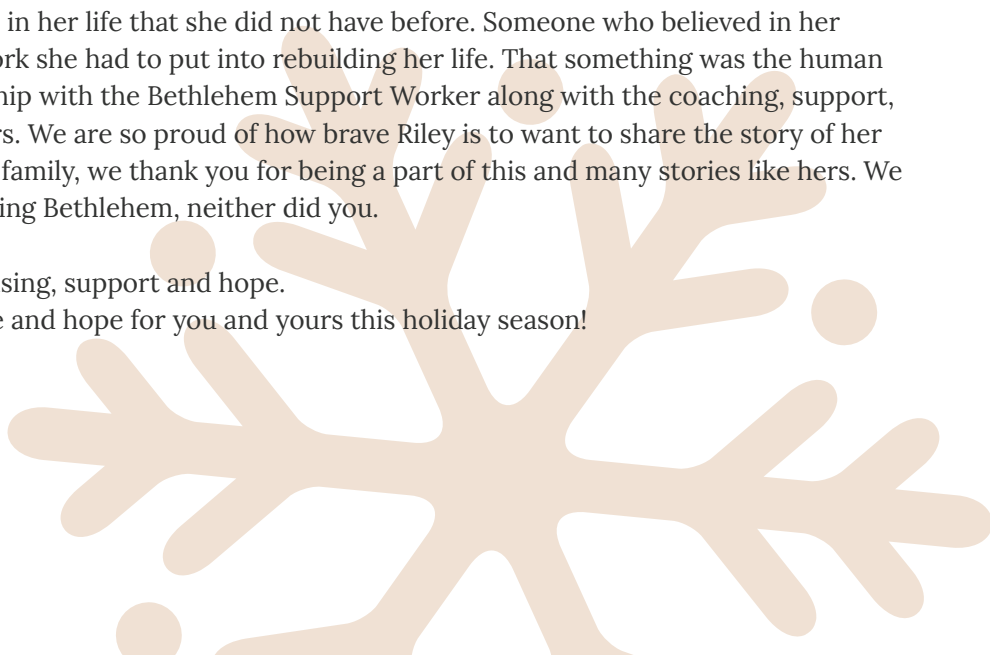
She needed something constant and reliable in her life that she did not have before. Someone who believed in her ability and coached her through the hard work she had to put into rebuilding her life. That something was the human connection she found through her relationship with the Bethlehem Support Worker along with the coaching, support, and hope that she received over several years. We are so proud of how brave Riley is to want to share the story of her journey with you. On behalf of Riley and her family, we thank you for being a part of this and many stories like hers. We never gave up hope with her and by supporting Bethlehem, neither did you.

We need you to keep helping us provide housing, support and hope.
May your home be filled with peace, joy, love and hope for you and yours this holiday season!

Warmest Regards,



Lori Beech
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Our 1st Annual Country Harvest Soup Fest Event Was a Huge Success!!!



PRESENTED BY
 **ESSENTIALS**
CREMATION AND BURIAL
SERVICES INC.

On Wednesday October 18, 2023, in the Event Court at The Pen Centre – St. Catharines, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services hosted the 1st Annual Country Harvest Soup Fest fundraiser fueled by Empty Bowls and presented by Essentials Cremation And Burial Services Inc. We want to express our gratitude to our generous sponsors, vendors, venue, staff and volunteers that helped make this event so amazing. The soup was fantastic and everyone seemed to revel in the atmosphere of the event.

Thank you to everyone who helped or came to take part, you are the true Housing Heroes! We raised over \$19,000! Thank you to our community for supporting us for this event!



MY STORY

HOW BETHLEHEM PLACE HELPED ME

At Bethlehem Housing, we offer in-house and community support services for those living in our transitional and permanent housing, as well as people living in the community.

“ October 2016, I was a single parent who had just lost her two sons to Family and Children's Services (FACS) due to a domestic relationship that had turned me to drug use. I was 23 years old. I was living on the streets, in shelters or on loved ones' couches. I missed my kids. The courts and FACS wanted to adopt out my boys as they were only 2 and almost 4 years old at the time of apprehension. My world was crashing down around me. FACS suggested I do intake at Bethlehem Place to obtain housing and follow their guidelines and enroll in their programs as the LAST chance for me to have my kids returned. Reluctantly, I agreed.

I believe it was in May 2017 when I had my very first meeting with a support worker - Rob. When I met Rob, I didn't want to be there. I was still using, had a major attitude and was downright rude. But I went and sat, and had a conversation with someone that could potentially help me get my life back in order. Even though I didn't know it at the time, I was lost without my kids. They never knew their father or his family, only me and mine. Mostly, just me. So I knew I had to do whatever was needed to get an apartment there, and I did. I moved into Bethlehem Place Transitional Housing.

I knew it was going to be a long road ahead. However, the staff there were super helpful and supportive. The few I talked to encouraged me to go to CASON to deal with my addiction issues, and Rob helped me get situated with Design For New Tomorrow to have counselling to deal with trauma. EarlyOn staff supervised visits for me and my boys so they had "home time" with mom. I took many of their different groups and earned certificates in Parenting (Triple P) and Healthy Relationships. I also participated in art classes at the building held by staff members which was a lot of fun and gave me something to do other than run the streets. With all their support and help, come June 2018, I was sober. In January 2019, my babies came home permanently. I stayed at BP with my kids until October of 2019 when I moved into an apartment with a landlord Rob knew and had worked with previously. Something happened with a mix up on the deposit, Ontario Works did not have his money for him in time to want to give me the keys to the unit. Still to this day, I don't know why they did it for me, but Bethlehem gave me the rent money needed for me to move in as long as I paid it back as soon as I could, which I did within the month.

A lot has happened in between then and now. I am now 31, with 3 boys; 10, 9 & 2. I still use BP as a HUGE support system, and they're happy to help whenever possible. Without them, I wouldn't have received my high school diploma in June 2023 or be applying to Niagara College in September 2024. They've helped me obtain things I've needed for my children that I couldn't afford on my own, they've helped me get prepared for this education path I'm on. The staff at BP has encouraged the career path I will be pursuing. I'm going to be a Social Worker with a certificate in Pre-community Services. I want to work with families and help people in the same situations I was in. BP helped me believe in myself again and still helped me with funding for a therapist who I've now been seeing for 5 years. The therapist helps me with emotion regulation triggers because of my Borderline personality disorder.

I honestly believe I wouldn't be where I am today or have the happy family, or thriving life I do now if it wasn't for everything Bethlehem Place had to offer. A great worker from there once told me "we will support you all the way. Whatever encouragement or help we can provide when we can, we will. But you have to do the work yourself. We are not going to do it for you. You will have our support as long as you do what you need to do and keep working hard yourself to get to where you want to be and achieve your goals."

Thank you for your time,
Riley



Our Impact in 2023

38

FAMILIES INCLUDING 42 CHILDREN
LIVED AT BETHLEHEM PLACE

214

HOUSEHOLDS LIVED IN OUR
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

106

PEOPLE WERE SERVED THROUGH OUR
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

100%

INDIVIDUALS WERE HOMELESS OR AT
RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS

55

WOMEN WERE VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2034

CHILD VISITS TO OUR
EARLYON CENTRE

77%

OF THOSE WHO MOVED OUT OF SUPPORTIVE
HOUSING TRANSITIONED TO STABLE & SECURE
HOUSING. 100% CONTINUED TO RETAIN
HOUSING FOR 180 DAYS AFTER.



The 12 Days of Fundraising...Ideas

Some great fundraising ideas for schools, clubs or just for a group of generous friends with good intentions like you!
Give us a call to discuss your ideas and we'll do our best to help you iron out the details - 905-641-1660.



HOLIDAY PARTY



MOVIE NIGHT



VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENT



LAST HOUR'S PAY



SCHOOL DANCE



10,000 STEPS CHALLENGE



TALENT SHOW
OR



KARAOKE



NO TALENT SHOW



PET SITTING



QUIZ NIGHT



READ-A-THON



Save the Date!

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Americana Conference Centre, Niagara Falls

bethlehem
housing and support services

19th Annual Empty Bowls

presented by: **FirstOntario**
CREDIT UNION

5pm VIP Reception | 6pm Main Event

Tickets on Sale 9am Monday, December 4, 2024

\$95 Early Bird | \$115 General | \$130 VIP

*Reserved Seating Only - Get Tickets Today,
They Make a Great Christmas Gift!*

www.bethlehemhousing.ca/empty-bowls

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

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