



2016-2017 Message & Reflections FROM THE LEADERS OF BETHLEHEM HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

"Respect is earned. Honesty is appreciated. Trust is gained. Loyalty is returned."

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services was built on the principles of loving your neighbor. In 1986 a concerned group of citizens and local churches came together to form our first and only transitional housing, Bethlehem Place. In February of 1988 our first residents moved in. Since then, we have been able to help more than 2.000 families turn their lives around by providing housing and support services.





As the leaders of Bethlehem, we are inspired and humbled by the loyalty of our donors, supporters, volunteers, and staff.

Throughout this newsletter you will recognize a theme of loyalty, devotion, and commitment to our organization. An outstanding example of devotion is Joan Gordon, one of our Community Support Workers who has been with Bethlehem Housing since day one. This month, Joan retires after 29 years of working for Bethlehem.

"Joan's allegiance to Bethlehem Housing is nothing short of remarkable. Even more wonderful is that she has touched and changed the lives of hundreds of women, men and children. For that we owe her a great depth of gratitude and our heartfelt appreciation for her life's work. We wish Joan many equal years of well-deserved peace and joy in her life of retirement"

- Lori Beech, Executive Director

We are astounded by the devotion of our many loyal donors that have been supporting Bethlehem Housing for over 10 years, of which 160 have been giving for more than 20 years. It is because of the faithful support of our donors that we are able to continue to grow and accelerate our efforts to set more families on the path to long-term health, safety and independence.

Additionally, we have an incredible number of supporters that continue to participate and attend our Empty Bowls event year after year. We are currently going into our 12th year of hosting our signature event, which will be held again on March 8, 2017. Early Bird tickets go on sale in December!

Because of your ongoing support over the years, we have on your behalf, shared that loyalty to the community and client families who need our services. In this newsletter you will read the story of Krystyn, a past resident of Bethlehem Place. She has traveled a difficult journey starting from a young age. Bethlehem was never willing to give up on her. We stayed loyal to her strengths and walked alongside her until she reached a point of positive personal capacity to stabilize her housing and family life.

Many, many thanks for your loyal support and for your faith in us for 29 years. With your continued help, we will impact hundreds of lives in the Niagara region and never give up on people like Krystyn. On behalf of the Bethlehem Board of Directors, Staff and our families, enjoy all that the holiday season has to offer.

PRESIDENT

Lori Beech EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ldei Beech

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services

Administration Office: 166 James Street | St Catharines, ON | L2R 5C5 Business Line: 905.684.1660 | Housing and Programs: 905.641.1660 info@bethlehemhousing.ca www.bethlehemhousing.ca

Celebrating 29 Years with Joan Gordon



Joan first began working at Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, then known as Bethlehem Projects, in January of 1988. Joan was working at Brock University when a friend mentioned to her that a group of local churches were hiring staff for a new affordable housing project. A Christian Service group called Outreach Niagara recognized the need to provide affordable housing for people at risk of homelessness in St. Catharines.

What first attracted Joan to work for Bethlehem Projects was the concept of helping people secure safe and affordable housing. Bethlehem Projects started small, with only five employees who shared two desks in a small office. Years later, Joan received an office that she shared with her colleague, Laura

Arbour. "I have been working with Laura since May of 1988, almost 29 years." When she first began they were starting from scratch, without any support programs. They started by incorporating life-skills programming into Bethlehem Place. A few years later they created support groups, including a healthy relationships and co-dependency group, which Joan has continued leading for over 20 years.

Over the years, Joan's title has transformed from Support Counsellor to Support Staff and finally to Community Support Worker. However, what remains the same is Joan's commitment to the organization. For the last 29 years she has been working directly with clients and residents of Bethlehem Housing and Support Services. For Joan, the most fulfilling part about the job is seeing her clients make changes for the better and sticking with it. "I have never had a client I didn't like. I may not have liked their behaviour, but I always liked them." This motto was especially important for Joan because she found it important to separate people from behaviour.

Some of Joan's best memories of working for Bethlehem Housing and Support Services are the Children's Christmas parties.

Joan has had a powerful impact on the organization for the last 29 years. We know that if she puts in as much effort into enjoying her retirement as she has working for Bethlehem Housing, her retirement will be truly amazing!

Congratulations Joan! We wish you all the best.



CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is excited to announce the launch of our updated website! The new site has a fresh, clean, and updated look and was designed with your needs in mind. The user-friendly navigation provides easy access to our services, events, volunteer opportunities, and more!



Krystyn's Journey to Redemption

Krystyn's journey with Bethlehem Housing and Support Services began when she was just 13 years old, when she lived with her mother and siblings at Bethlehem Place. Of no fault of her own, Krystyn was a victim of family breakdown due to the barriers and challenges her parents were facing at that time in their lives. She constantly went back and forth between her parents' homes and the lack of a safe and stable environment led to her cycle of destruction.

When Krystyn's mom left Bethlehem Place, the family moved into an apartment where Krystyn lived for approximately three years. At that point, Krystyn became immersed in a partying lifestyle. By the age of 18 she became pregnant with her first son and decided it was time to get a place of her own. When her son was six months old, she became pregnant with her second child. Because of her lifestyle, her children were removed from her care and placed in custody with Krystyn's grandmother. "I wanted to be a mom, but I still wanted to be a teenager and I wasn't ready to give up that lifestyle." Krystyn moved into her grandmother's house to be with her children, but she still needed to make significant changes to her lifestyle. In order for Krystyn to have her children returned to her care, Family and Children's Services recommended she connect with Bethlehem Housing and Support Services transitional housing program.

Her second time living at Bethlehem Place began when she was 20 years old. Krystyn stayed for several months and found that she wasn't ready to fully participate in the program. "At the time I was involved in an abusive relationship, which is one of the reasons why I didn't take the program seriously." Like many other women experiencing abuse in their relationship, she isolated herself to hide the abuse she was experiencing. Fearful for herself and her children, Krystyn ended the relationship.

Feeling at a loss, Krystyn got back together with the father of her two children, and became pregnant with her third child. "Life just went downhill from there. I started partying again, was drinking a lot and started using drugs." At that point, her grandmother received temporary custody of her three sons.

In 2015, Krystyn turned to Bethlehem Housing and Support Services for the third time. This time things were different for Krystyn. **She was determined to move forward in her life, especially for her sons.** She became very involved, attending many of the Early Learning Centre activities and field trips with her children. She also attended the life skills classes and joined both the relationships and codependency support groups. "I did everything I possibly could. I really grew up at Bethlehem Place."

Before her journey with Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, Krystyn had a difficult time saying no to people because she wanted to please everyone. Because of this, she says she was always irritated or stressed out. Now, after her year of transition at Bethlehem Place, she feels the complete opposite. She has learned the value of setting boundaries so that she is not taking on more than she can handle. "The constant support from my workers at Bethlehem Place is the reason I have made it this far. They helped me with my confidence, time management, and my overall outlook on life."

During her stay at Bethlehem Place, Krystyn realized many of her personal goals. This past summer Krystyn celebrated two years of sobriety. After six long and difficult years Krystyn gained full custody of her children and recently moved into a three bedroom apartment provided by Niagara Regional Housing. When asked what Krystyn is most proud of about her life she easily answers, "My sons." When Krystyn was showing their new home to her middle son, he looked up and said to her "I'm so happy mommy. You make me so proud." At that moment, she knew this was home.

For Krystyn, her life finally feels normal. "Because of Bethlehem I actually enjoy waking up every day." She loves to be with her children and enjoys everyday moments, such as getting her sons ready for school, doing homework together, and bedtime stories. Krystyn wants everyone to know that "no matter what has happened in the past, you can have a great future as long as you put in the work and stick to what you believe."

Help end homelessness and reduce the impact of poverty across the Niagara Region by joining us at the





Club Roma 125 Vansickle Rd., St. Catharines Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 6 p.m.

Niagara's finest chefs prepare and serve their favourite soup in one-of-a-kind bowls created by local potters. Included as the perfect complement are Niagara wines, specialty beverages, and delicious sweets.

Guests take their empty bowl home as a reminder of those who struggle to meet basic living needs and secure affordable housing throughout our community.

Empty Bowls Raffle with Exciting Prizes

NEW this Year! Additional 120 Seats Available.

Food and beverages proudly served by:

- Café Gatti
- Calamus Estate Winery
- Dani's Bistro
- Diamond Estates The Winery
- Feastivities Events and Catering
- Gwen's Teas

- Great Lakes Brewery
- Hernder Estate Wines
- Hilton Garden Inn N.O.T.L
- Jacob's Personal Chef Services
- Karma Kameleon Gastropub
- Niagara Oast House Brewers
- PigOut Catering
- The Heat is on Catering
- Weinkeller
- White Oaks Resort

EARLY BIRD

VIP

\$75 each till February 1st 2017. After February 1st tickets \$85 each. Tickets \$100 each.
Includes V.I.P. Reception and Empty
Bowls event with guaranteed seating
(Limited quantity)