

35

YEAR ANNIVERSARY



PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING &
SERVICES TO OUR CLIENTS & TENANTS,
WHO ARE AMONG NIAGARA'S MOST
MARGINALIZED RESIDENTS

2023 Spring Newsletter

BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA

It's Spring

WE ARE WARMED BY YOUR GENEROSITY

Meeting Our Goals

Our goal at Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is to ensure that we are doing everything we can to help men, women and families in need of stable housing in Niagara.

Lori Beech, Executive Director

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

We believe that everyone deserves a home! People like Joanie and her children deserve a safe home and a fresh start.

“My family was being torn apart and I felt guilty for trying to get help. It took a few tries, and it was really hard, but I did eventually leave and get to the shelter. I was told I may qualify for the Bethlehem program. I started to feel better after talking with them and getting connected to my support worker. Now that I am here at Bethlehem Place and working with the staff, it is still hard, but things are looking up and getting better. I am still not sure where I am going from here because housing is a scary subject, but I feel stronger because I have the right people helping me and my family.”

Joanie, Bethlehem Place Client 2022

Joanie's housing and stability were at risk due to a family trauma. We are walking with Joanie on her personal healing journey, but she is right, finding housing for her struggling family in the Niagara Region is not going to be easy. She and her children need an affordable and safe place to live permanently. We believe in a Housing First philosophy; people cannot focus on other issues if they do not have a place to live. House people first and then provide the right supports to meet their needs and goals to prevent issues that put housing at risk. **At Bethlehem Housing, we are climbing mountains to find solutions.**

IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMY, PEOPLE ARE REALLY STRUGGLING

Housing & Hunger Are linked - In the Niagara Region, over 15% of our citizens are experiencing food insecurity. The impact statement attached demonstrates the correlation between hunger and rising cost of housing across Ontario. Our Bethlehem families are facing greater economic challenges that follow this trend. When lower income families have to make budget choices, they choose the more inexpensive, less healthy food options.

In partnership with the United Way, we were able to add a food program to our client services and over 50% of our residents participate to increase their access to fresh nutritious food. Activities include on site pop-up food markets, monthly cooked meals with their neighbours, and discounted fresh food boxes. The residents enjoy a real shopping experience where they can choose nutritious foods they like, and an opportunity to connect within their own community over food.



**United Way
Niagara**

EMPTY BOWLS 2023

This year's event was our most successful yet, raising \$72,000 in net proceeds. Thank you to our donors, vendors and sponsors, YOU are the true heroes, without you we couldn't work to provide supportive transitional and permanent housing for individuals and families across the Niagara Region.



Thank you to all of the artisan potters, the hobby, and student potters who donated so much of their time and talent to create the beautiful bowls that they donated to this year's Empty Bowls event!



Congratulations to Niagara College, they won both the Judges & People's choice vote!

1989

Opening of the Parent-Child Resource Centre located on the main floor of Bethlehem Place

1994

Julie Dennis, our second Executive Director, was hired

Elsje (Ellen) Zwart retired



Elsje (Ellen) Zwart retired

2008

20th Anniversary Celebration Brunch (February 2008)

20th Anniversary Open House (September 2008)

20th Anniversary Harvest Dinner (October 2008)

20

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

2009

Construction began on a new 40+ permanent supported apartment building

2010

1st tenants move into Kenmore Court

Official Grand Opening of Kenmore Court (June 21, 2010)

Manchester Drop-in & Play Centre opened

Membership approved changes of the name to "Bethlehem Housing and Support Services"



Kenmore Court Official

Mapping Our 35 Year History

PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING & SERVICES TO OUR CLIENTS & TENANTS,
WHO ARE AMONG NIAGARA'S MOST MARGINALIZED RESIDENTS

1986

The Social Planning Council of St. Catharines & Thorold conducted research on the need for second stage housing.

Together with a concerned group of citizens and local churches, The Bethlehem Project was formed

Provincial-Federal government funding was secured for building second stage housing

The Bethlehem Project officially incorporated (June 1986)

Dedication ceremony took place at the construction site on the corner of Lake and Welland Avenue



1987

Construction of the building began

Elsje (Ellen) Zwart, our first Executive Director, was hired

Regional government funding was approved to hire staff to offer programs and services

Funds were raised to provide basic furnishings for the units and to provide program delivery



1988

The first residents moved into Bethlehem Place (February 1, 1988)

Official Grand Opening of Bethlehem Place (May 14, 1988)

A volunteer coordinator was appointed and a team of nine front line staff were hired to provide program delivery



1997

Opening of Brighter Day Early Learning Centre at Edith Cavell Elementary School

1998

1st community support home opened

10th Anniversary Gala Dinner & Cabaret

2001

Skills of Success program created and offered in five cities across the region



2002

Opening of the Billes House community support home. The project was named the Billes House in honour of the co-founders of Canadian Tire, J.W. and A.J. Billes

2003

St. Catharines Community Housing Projects Committee was formed as a result of the Forum on Homelessness



2004

CAW Local 199 committed to provide volunteers for construction of an affordable housing project

Bethlehem proposal was short-listed for funding from the CMHC Affordable Housing Program

2005

Received approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing

A community investment of \$1.2 million was required to complete the project

Marilyn and Norris Walker were announced as Honourary Chairs of the "Building Community" Capital Campaign

Community Transitional Housing Support Program began

2006

1st Empty Bowls fundraiser event

Public launch of the "Building Community" Capital Campaign (February 2006)

Construction started on a new 40-unit affordable, permanent supported apartment building in St. Catharines

85% of the campaign goal was realized

Marilyn and Norris Walker named the building Genesis Court to reflect "new beginnings"



2009

New 40-unit affordable, permanent building in Niagara Falls

2010

Kenmore Court in Niagara Falls

Opening of Kenmore Court (2010)

Centre pilot project began

Adoption of the organization's name and Support Services"



2012

Launched our new mobile Early Learning Program

Bethlehem began recruitment of private landlords as part of our participation in the NRH Homes First Housing Allowance pilot project

Bethlehem staff actively participated in the development of a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan in collaboration with the community's housing advocates and agencies



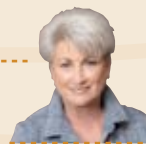
2013

25th Anniversary Luncheon (January 27, 2013)

Julie Dennis retired

2014

Lori Beech, our 3rd Executive Director, was hired



2015

Empty Bowls 10th Anniversary

Bethlehem formed a consortium with a local developer and financier to build affordable housing in Niagara



2016

Lori Beech, Executive Director, was appointed as the Chair of the Housing Affordability Group of the A Home for All Taskforce

2017

Revitalized the Bethlehem Place playground to create a Naturalized Family Park

Bethlehem Place lobby & main floor were renovated to create an accessible & welcoming environment

Ground Breaking Ceremony for new affordable housing development at 111 Church Street (November 22, 2018)

2018

Construction began at 111 Church Street providing 127 affordable rental units with on-site support services & community amenities



2019

A P3 partnership established between PennTerra Group, the Niagara Region, and Bethlehem Housing for the Court Building

P3 Partnership

Niagara Region
pennterra

Partnerships & head service agencies es supportive housing ser of North C

Community Impact

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE HEALTH, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE OF OUR COMMUNITY

TAX CLINIC = \$ IN TAX BENEFITS

We offer a free, convenient (telephone based) tax clinic service for our clients and tenants. For low-income households, tax time is an important and often missed opportunity to bolster household finances and promote eviction prevention.



There are many government benefits, grants, and savings programs that subsidize low-income earners. Many of these services & entitlements can only be accessed by filing tax to either claim the benefits directly or to establish eligibility. Niagara Regional Housing requires a Notice of Assessment for applications so keeping tax information updated is necessary to ensure they qualify.

2007

The first tenants moved into Genesis Court (March 1, 2007)

Official Grand Opening of Genesis Court (June 28, 2007)

Niagara Region and the Niagara Economic Development Corporation presented the Genesis Court project with a Niagara Community Design Award



DID YOU KNOW?

There are many government benefits, grants, and savings programs that subsidize low-income earners. We helped 87 clients with their tax returns equaling over \$55,000 in refunds!

2019

Partnership established & finalized with Terra Group/FirstOntario Credit Union, Niagara Region, City of St. Catharines, and Niagara Region Housing for the new North Church Building in St. Catharines

Partnership



& head leases with community agencies established to provide housing services for clients/tenants at North Church Court

2020

Through the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the doors of North Church Court were opened for Administration & Tenant Services. Then in May 2020, apartment units were completed & 127 families, over 300 people, moved in to their new permanent homes

September 2020 A Child's World Daycare opened their doors at reduced capacity providing childcare services for families of North Church Court

2023

IT'S OUR

35

YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Impact Statistics

Your support provides the most vulnerable in the Niagara Region with essential supports needed to maintain their housing stability and quality of life.

For the year 2022



1550

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN OUR PROGRAMS & SUPPORT SERVICES



155

PEOPLE SERVED PER YEAR THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH



1800

CHILD VISITS TO EARLYON CENTRE



920

CALLS OF INQUIRY TO OUR CENTRAL INTAKE



500

PEOPLE CURRENTLY ON OUR LIST



OVER **2500**

FAMILIES HOUSED IN NIAGARA THROUGH BETHLEHEM SERVICES SINCE 1988

We all need a secure place to call home! Housing is the foundation on which we build our lives, engage in society and contribute to the economic well-being of our community. When everyone has an affordable, safe place to live, we all benefit.

NEW MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM

We are pleased to announce and introduce Adam Shields and Joe Labrie as our new community engagement team! Both come with years of experience in the media sector with extensive backgrounds in marketing, communications, community engagement and fundraising. We are excited to embark on a new adventure with Adam and Joe to engage the community in affordable housing solutions and supportive housing programs. To start the conversation, contact Adam at ashields@bethlehemhousing.ca | 905-641-1660 ext 206

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS

With Laura Arbour

Laura first began working at Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, then known as Bethlehem Projects, on May 1, 1988. At the time, Laura was a student in the Social Service Worker Program at Niagara College and was completing her placement in the Senior Citizen Department at Niagara Region. Her placement supervisor recommended they attend a luncheon where the first Executive Director of Bethlehem, Elsje Zwart, was speaking about the newly opened organization.



After listening to Elsje speak, Laura decided Bethlehem was where she wanted to begin her career. She sent in her resume, received an interview, completed her program at Niagara College and started working for Bethlehem immediately after. Now 35 years later, Laura says she has never imagined working anywhere else. Laura's role has changed over the course of her 35 years with the organization. She is currently filling the role of Intake and Community Support Worker. Additionally, she facilitates support groups focused on developing healthy relationships, as well as coping with grief and loss.

"As the intake worker I am the initial point of contact for people when they call Bethlehem. I help them to determine what exactly they are looking for help with, whether it's housing, support services or community outreach." Laura will then assign a Community Support Worker to work with the client based on their needs.

There are a number of reasons why Laura has committed her career to Bethlehem, but the one that stands out to her most is that the organization is always growing. *"I admire how Bethlehem is able to adapt and grow based on the needs of the community. For example, we built a new affordable housing development that houses 127 individuals or families in our community who need supportive housing."*

Laura walks alongside her clients throughout their journey to stable housing and improved quality of life. *"I have had over 1000 clients since 1988 and each one has been significant. It means so much when a past client tells me they remember the life skills I have taught them and that they still use these skills in their day-to-day life. After hearing these positive comments, why would I want to work anywhere else?"*

COMMUNITY HOUSING HEROES

REVEL REALTY

“ Our goal is to raise the standard of previous charitable efforts by issuing a challenge to ourselves, driving us to “do more” in the upcoming decade. Throughout the year, REVEL participates and leads various charitable events, but this time around we are motivated by the prospect of eventually beginning our own foundation that consistently contributes to helping those who are marginalized by socio-economic issues in our region. ”

~ REVEL REALTY



Revel Realty hosted their 2nd Annual Charity Ball June 3, 2022 and Bethlehem Housing & Support Services was their charity of choice. We are honoured and humbled that they raised a whopping \$40,000 that they donated to our organization.

This event is recognized as one of the grandest social events of the year in support of those who need a home. Thank you so much for your contribution, you are the true heroes. Without your generosity we couldn't work to provide supportive transitional and permanent housing for individuals and families across the Niagara Region.



A HOUSING HERO BELIEVES THAT EVERYONE DESERVES A HOME

Summer is coming! Do you want to be an ambassador in our community and do you have an idea for a DIY event?

A DIY fundraising event is organized and managed by people other than Bethlehem staff and funds raised benefit the work of Bethlehem. Engage your community of friends, family and colleagues to join you in your Housing Hero efforts. Event ideas might include:



Golf
Tournament



Gala
Event



Fashion
Show



Concert
Event



Customer
Appreciation



Birthday
Party

Contact us to learn more: 905.641.1660 housinghero.ca #BeAHousingHero