

bethlehem
housing and support services

BEST WISHES THIS

Holiday Season

& THROUGHOUT THE NEW YEAR



2020 Christmas Newsletter

BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA

CHARLIE'S JOURNEY

TO STABLE HOUSING

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.

This is Charlie's Story! Charlie has been on a journey to make a home for himself, and his little girl. After struggling with reaching out for help, Charlie gained the courage to begin taking steps towards achieving stable housing so that he could watch his little girl learn and grow in a safe, and healthy environment.

“ **My name is Charlie.** I became involved in the outreach program after I completed transitional housing at Bethlehem Place.

The best thing that has happened as a result of taking part of the program was housing stability. I have made many positive changes since participating in the outreach program. I have learned more about my community and what I can access.

I receive assistance from my Community Support worker in navigating the goals I have set for myself. My knowledge in various life skills have improved including my self-esteem, budgeting, and healthy boundaries. The support I continue to receive through Bethlehem Housing has helped in the reunification of me and my child.

I believe I wouldn't be where I am today without the support through Bethlehem Housing. I have had trouble in the past with reaching out to get help. I found myself as a care taker and was always helping others without putting myself first.

With the outreach assistance from my Community Support Worker through Bethlehem Housing I now feel more empowered to make positive choices that will help improve my future. I feel safe and stable in my housing and I am excited to watch my daughter learn and grow in a healthy environment”.



2020 Message & Reflections

FROM BETHLEHEM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A child's story in the time of COVID...

Even before COVID-19, a lot of children struggled with their mental health, increased anxiety and depression. Children and teens face many challenges on a day to day basis, including grief and loss, as a result of many things including illness, trauma and social determinants of health. COVID-19 has added another layer of grief and loss for children and teens which need to be understood, recognized and addressed.

Most families are doing their best to understand the impact on their children, finding resources to help them cope and work their way through these difficult times.

Now if you can imagine being a child in the time of COVID over the past year.

Perhaps in a family where both parents have lost their jobs and are struggling financially, pressure is building between mom and dad....and then something terrible happens....tempers flare and violence takes place.....you are frightened watching your mom be scared and hurt. Your world and your home fall apart. Your mom is scared and she doesn't know if there is safety anywhere, especially with the pandemic. You are told for your own protection, you are to be separated from your parents, just for a little while until things get better.

You are being taken from your home, your toys and your bed to live in a strange place. Because of the pandemic, you can't even go to school to be with your friends. You feel very frightened and alone. But they tell you your mom has moved to Bethlehem Place where there are nice people who are protecting and helping her. You get to visit your mom and she has been working hard to make things better in her new home at Bethlehem Place.

Soon you get to go to live there too in a nice clean safe apartment. There are lots of people who really care about you and are helping your family heal. There is a fun playground and a place where you can play and learn with other kids. Because of the pandemic, they give your family a computer to use in your home.

Your mom uses it to attend programs and talk to people who are helping her. The nice people at Bethlehem make sure you get to go to school and help you with your homework at an after school program. You are starting to feel better and say to yourself "hey! My mom and I are doing much better and we feel safe. I like living here at this Bethlehem Place"

This is one child's reality when experiencing trauma, grief and loss. It has been harder for them in the time of COVID.

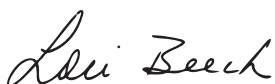
This Christmas, this child, among 79 other children living at Bethlehem Place will experience a new isolation in addition to being uprooted and the traumatic impact due to their family challenges.

Every year, we provide our Bethlehem children with a party and a visit from Santa. We will not be able to do so this year. BUT - As we always do, we are going to be creative! We are going to make sure these children, who have already suffered so much, will feel like they have a real home and hope for a good Christmas. We believe they deserve it - do you?

A portion of your generous donation this year will go towards ensuring these children and their families experience the magic of Christmas with special gifts and food to celebrate the holiday season!

This past year, our thoughts have also been with you, our donors and supporters. We hope you and your family are well and staying safe. As it will be for most of us, the 2020 holiday season will not be the same as in the past. While you are planning your different Christmas this year, we hope you will find room in your heart and remember our Bethlehem children and families. Help us make it magical for them too!

On behalf of all of us here at Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, we wish you good health, comfort and joy this holiday season!



Lori Beech
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bethlehem Breaking Barriers

BREAKING DOWN ACCESS BARRIERS BY CREATING ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY



The Resource

In May 2020, Employment and Social Development Canada established a COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund (COVID-19 ECSF). The objective of this fund is to provide assistance to organizations attending to the needs of vulnerable populations during the global COVID-19 outbreak. Thanks to United Way Niagara, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services was approved for some of these funds and we began the process of breaking down the barrier between our clients and their support services with technology solutions.

The Project

As a result of COVID-19, we had to be creative and developed virtual supports as an alternative to our in-person programming. The funds allow us to purchase technology equipment that enables client access to support services, both internally and by community partner agencies. We will transform our support and life skills programming to be delivered online, and connect our clients with virtual programming offered by outside partner agencies.



The Impact

Increasing access to supports increases housing stability, and gives opportunity to make a life-changing difference for more families and individuals in our community. This project will reduce the barrier of isolation due to lack of access to the internet, and will increase communication between our clients and their supports.

The past several months, our EarlyON staff members have been reaching and engaging with families virtually by conducting activities and reading stories to our Bethlehem Children on Facebook. Another great example of how the staff of Bethlehem carries out the organization's mission every day to reach our vision: "stable affordable housing and support services contribute to a vibrant, caring and inclusive Niagara where everyone has a home."

In 2019-2020 You Helped Us to Serve

THOSE SUPPORTED BY BETHLEHEM IN 2019-2020

44

FAMILIES INCLUDING 79 CHILDREN
LIVED AT BETHLEHEM PLACE

82

HOUSEHOLDS LIVED IN OUR
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

272

PEOPLE WERE SERVED THROUGH OUR
COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

195

INDIVIDUALS WERE HOMELESS OR AT
RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS

77

WOMEN WHO WERE VICTIMS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1,535

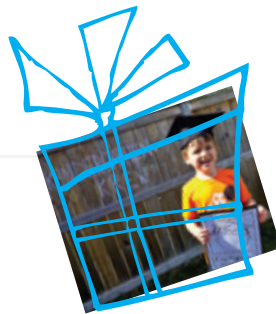
CHILD VISITS TO OUR
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

30

HOUSEHOLDS PROVIDED COMMUNITY-BASED
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLOWANCES AND
OUTREACH THROUGH HOUSING FIRST

127

HOUSEHOLDS MOVED INTO OUR NEW
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT
111 CHURCH STREET IN ST. CATHARINES



Empty Bowls 2021

Do you love the Annual Empty Bowls Fundraiser Event?

We do too! This year we want everyone to stay safe and still participate in a fun exciting and delicious event - but hmmm? How do you do that in our new world of small gatherings? You turn it upside down, spin it around and explode it out into the community for all to enjoy!

We rely on the fundraising that this event provides and hope you will continue to support Bethlehem in making EMPTY BOWLS 2021 just as successful as in the past. Visiting our website at bethlehemhousing.ca for all Empty Bowls updates! Stay Tuned!



2020 Housing Heroes

AND THEIR STORIES

Housing Hero Champions are valued volunteers who offer their time, talent or treasure to help solve the affordable housing crisis in Niagara. As brand ambassadors for our Housing Hero Campaign, these Champions are making a difference in our community.



Jimi Russell

NIAGARA SELFIE KING

Jimi coordinated a raffle at this year's 15th Anniversary Empty Bowls Fundraiser raising net proceeds of \$1,000 for Bethlehem.

"These days, waiting lists are truly unacceptable. Safe and affordable housing should be available to all."



Claire & Evelyn Fish

PHILANTHROPIC DUO.

Claire & Evelyn continue to encourage more young people to go out and help people in need.

"Everyone deserves a safe place to live. We are the youngest Housing Hero Champions, and we want to influence young people to help our community, and people in need"



Candace Popivanov

SALES REPRESENTATIVE, GOLFI REALTY

Candace donates from each real estate commission she earns to support BHSS, and four other housing charities in Niagara.

"I would like to challenge all Niagara area Realtors to join me in the vision of a Niagara without homelessness."

HOUSING HERO

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

📞 905.641.1660 🏠 housinghero.ca # BeAHousingHero

VISIT [BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA](https://bethlehemhousing.ca) AND SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR STORIES AND UPDATES

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