

The

# BRIDGES NEWS

## 'Tis the Season

As the snow flies and thoughts of ribbons and wrapping paper take over more of our time, the staff at Gap Factory (Cambridge) turned their attention to helping others. We were delighted when they told us early in November that they had already collected about 100 pairs of socks and an equal number of underwear for The Bridges' Christmas stockings. Even more exciting is their commitment to financially assist us with much needed repairs and renovations.

Just as every home requires ongoing maintenance – a fresh coat of paint, replacing appliances that wear out or



break – The Bridges, after 16 years, needs some TLC. As we walk through the building, mindful that many individuals call our facility “home”, we take note of areas that are showing signs of ordinary wear and tear. Some of our beds need replacing, and donations of linens are always welcome. But it was our bathrooms that caught our attention.

Staff from The Gap have been volunteering at The Bridges, generously giving their time to prepare and serve meals every second Tuesday, for several years. When the volunteer hours reach 25, the parent

company, in keeping with the founders' spirit of giving back, donates \$250 (USD) to The Bridges. For several years now, these dollars have helped us purchase everything from cooking supplies to computers. However, Gap staff have committed to direct these grants towards our bathroom project. “Having something tangible, like a sink or toilet, gives our team a great visual goal,” said Michelle Stanley, the team community leader.

While the corporate donation is important to Michelle's team, the value of their volunteer hours (completed on their personal time) is what matters most. Working with our kitchen staff, they see first-hand how a hot meal and a friendly smile can transform a person's day. “Getting new associates involved in community service is pretty easy once they see how committed and positive we are about our partnership with The Bridges,” Michelle said. “Once they see how much these few hours mean to so many, and how much fun we have volunteering, they are more willing to sign up. For me, it is one of the best perks of working for the GAP.”

**'Tis the Season for giving, caring, and sharing.**

**We look forward to sharing pictures of our bathroom renovations, courtesy of this caring team.**

## CSC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## MORE THAN JUST A DROP-IN CENTRE

Homelessness is not just about not having safe, affordable, and appropriate housing. Every individual's experience is unique, and one strategy does not apply for every person.

Since its inception, Cambridge Shelter Corporation has been a person-centred agency, dedicated to assisting individuals in moving forward with their lives. The drop-in centre at The Bridges is not just a room where individuals come to sit and drink coffee. Staff are fully engaged with everyone there, creating opportunities to connect socially, and assisting with building life skills.

For many, the drop-in centre is the doorway to a stable future. We understand that moving from homelessness to being housed is a big step, one that requires planning and commitment. It is important the individual feels accepted and has a sense of belonging. Activities at the centre are intentional in creating community, encouraging social discourse, and providing a feeling of accomplishment.

Drop-in workers align closely with staff in other service areas; a key



responsibility is to provide assistance with the development of systems and programs for each client. Utilizing a wrap-around model of support, we are able to identify individual needs and to create a personal plan of action.

Whether our clients are carving pumpkins for Hallowe'en, decorating Christmas cookies, or

crafting messages of belonging, they are taking a step towards hope

## CSC ANNOUNCES NEW HR AND PROGRAM MANAGER

Our new HR and Program Manager, Ian Fitzgerald, brings an impressive resume to his new position. An employee with Cambridge Shelter Corporation since 2009, Ian transitioned to Supportive Housing in 2013. His natural empathy for those coming to The Bridges seeking help in moving forward gave his approach an air of authenticity. "When someone has been homeless for a long time it is almost a shock to the system to be housed again," Ian explains. "My job was to be there to help them on their journey of restarting and healing. It was a privilege to watch growth before my eyes."

As HR and Program Manager, Ian's role will move from direct work with our clients to overseeing the delivery of services and supports. His previous positions within CSC give him a strong understanding of how best to realize our vision that "no one in our community will be homeless."



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

It has been an interesting winter already, and, at this writing, it is only November 24 and not really winter yet. The weather has turned colder, earlier than usual, and many of those individuals who spend the summer and warmer months camping outside, are now looking to find inside shelter for the winter. At the same time, the House of Friendship announced the closure of its men's emergency shelter located at the Holiday Inn in Guelph. Over 80 men needed somewhere else to go by the end of November.

Working with our regional shelter partners, we have been directly involved in finding alternate shelter for these men for the winter. We have increased our capacity at The Bridges and at our winter overflow site.

Our increased numbers mean that we need more of everything. Our community has been incredibly generous in helping us meet this emerging need and we are very grateful for the support that we receive. And a special thank you to our incredible staff team who have risen to this latest challenge to ensure that no one is left on the streets.

Numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness in our region have tripled in the last three years. Of concern, is the growing number of seniors who are homeless and who have no hope of finding housing that is affordable to them on their very fixed incomes. Surely, we can do better than this.

Interim Executive Director



We're very pleased to be recognized as an accredited non-profit agency by **Imagine Canada**.

CSC was the first emergency shelter in Canada to be accredited under the Imagine Canada's standards program, and one of only a handful of agencies to be accredited unconditionally.

Imagine Canada's Standards Program, launched in 2012, is among the first of its kind at a national level, offering accreditation to charities and non-profits that demonstrate excellence in the following five key areas:

- Board governance
- Financial accountability & transparency
- Fundraising
- Staff management and
- Volunteer involvement.

**CSC receives re-accreditation annually.**



With so many demands on his time, Santa sometimes cannot stop at The Bridges. But everyone likes to open a gift on Christmas morning. In the weeks leading up to December 25<sup>th</sup>, staff and volunteers are busy putting together gift bags for the homeless individuals who stay with us. If you can help out, we would greatly appreciate you considering a gift of:

- Laundry detergent
- Dish soap
- Chocolate or candy
- Men's underwear
- Deodorant

## 'TIS THE SEASON FOR GIVING

By mid-November, all emergency shelters in Waterloo Region were at capacity, which does not bode well for the coming colder weather, as many individuals are still camping, both in Cambridge and Kitchener/Waterloo.

The Bridges is working to reconfigure our space internally to accommodate eight to ten more individuals, but that will bring us over capacity. During November, it was not unusual for us to shelter close to 100 individuals every night.

Government funding for sheltering the homeless covers only so much of the actual expense. Serving more of those who need our help increases our overall costs, from additional staff to preparing more bagged lunches, ensuring no one in need misses out.

Financial support from individuals, corporations, faith communities, and organizations will fill the gap between government funds and actual costs.

**Thank you for making a donation today.**



**Cambridge Shelter Corporation**  
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**Cambridge ON N1R 8P2**  
**519.624.9305**

**[info@cambridgesheltercorporation.ca](mailto:info@cambridgesheltercorporation.ca)**

Charitable Registration # 89025 9419 RR0001

☐\$25   ☐\$50   ☐\$100   ☐OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐VISA   ☐MASTERCARD

☐ I have enclosed a cheque payable to Cambridge Shelter Corp.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD # \_\_\_\_\_

STREET \_\_\_\_\_

EXPIRY DATE \_\_\_\_\_

APARTMENT/UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

NAME ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/PROV \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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