

The

# BRIDGES NEWS

## From Homelessness to Hope

“I can say with absolute certainty that I would not be where I am today without The Bridges.”

That powerful statement comes from a young man who came to us several years ago, addicted to OxyContin and homeless. Robbie had been a casual drug user until a friend overdosed; but then his sense of loss muted the warning signs and his drug use became the crutch he needed to dull the pain.

“I thought homeless was the end of the world,” Robbie said. “But I soon learned that The Bridges could offer me a great deal of support to turn my life around.”

Staff from The Bridges helped Robbie get into a residential treatment centre in Ottawa, but he was young and far from home, and not ready to accept the help he needed. Soon, Robbie was back on the street in Cambridge.

Again, he turned to The Bridges for support.

Robbie was given a place in Saginaw House, a men’s recovery home operated by the Cambridge Shelter Corporation and there he had the first meaningful stretch of time without drug use in years. Staff were there to catch him when he took a backwards step and having chores to do around the house gave him a sense of purpose.

Still, Robbie struggled.

With CSC staff and his parents actively advocating on his behalf, Robbie was referred to a psychiatrist who identified his condition as Asperger’s Syndrome. As Robbie told us, “Armed with this knowledge, I was able to begin to change the way I think and react.”

Today Robbie is enrolled in the Blair Voluntary Trust program and lives in his own apartment. The Bridges housing support team continue to keep in touch, working through issues that may arise and, most importantly, helping him to stay housed.

Like many others who find themselves at The Bridges, Robbie became homeless through a set of circumstances. And like many others, with help from our staff and by using our services, Robbie was able to change his future.

**We work closely with each person to develop a case plan for moving forward and we help them to find permanent housing. Once we have done that, we assist with furniture and household items and connect them to community supports to ensure that they remain housed.**

## HOUSING FIRST

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“Now I lay me down to sleep.” How many of us remember reciting that simple sentence when we were children? For too many individuals in Waterloo Region, laying down to sleep means curling up on a park bench or under a tent somewhere. Without a place to call home, many individuals never break the cycle of experiencing homelessness.

Using a “Housing First” approach reflects our belief that people are better able to move forward if they are housed. We focus on supporting recovery and providing individuals with the supports, services, and connections they need to reclaim control over their lives.

**“There are two pandemics in this province and around the world, neither of which is ending anytime soon. One is Covid-19; one is homelessness.”**

**Sharon Livingstone  
Interim Chair, CSC Board**

Any search for housing and supports begins with each client listing his preferences – where he would like to live, the type of accommodation he would feel most comfortable with, and which supports are needed to ensure he remains housed.

Despite the restrictions in place during the early months of the pandemic, our full-time housing team was able to find affordable, appropriate housing for 148 individuals. With help from community partners, like the St. Vincent De Paul Society, we were able to provide the physical necessities. Support from our own Mental Health Manager assisted these men to understand their own mental health concerns and begin the process of changing. Once housed, many of these men connected with our Blair Voluntary Trust program which ensured their bills were paid on time, thereby maintaining their housing.

Like our “wraparound” model of service design and delivery, our “Housing First” models succeeds because it addresses the needs of the whole person. We are grateful to our community partners that work with us and to our donors who provide the funding for this service.

## VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As we move from pandemic restrictions to opening our facility and creating in-person fundraising events, we are looking for a variety of individuals to join our volunteer team. Whether you are an event enthusiast or simply someone who wants to make a difference, we have room for you. To find out more about Cambridge Shelter Corporation’s volunteer program, contact Paul Corkery at [pcorkery@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:pcorkery@cambridgesheltercorp.ca) or by phone 519-239-4821.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Looking back, it is hard to believe that we have been in pandemic mode for two years now. And while some things in our world do not seem to have changed significantly, when I look back, much has happened at The Bridges.

We have learned that we are very adaptable and can pivot at a moment's notice to address new challenges. Early on, we restructured how we provide programming and services to ensure that our residents, tenants, and staff would remain healthy and safe. We continue to observe all Covid protocols daily. Unfortunately, this has meant that we can no longer welcome community members into our building for dinners, and that workers from our community partners often have to meet with our residents virtually. Zoom meetings have become the new normal.

Despite the pandemic, our amazing staff have continued to work with our residents to find affordable, appropriate, permanent housing and, at last count, had successfully housed 147 individuals. This is no mean feat when the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment hovers around \$1,500, while the average income for many of our residents is only \$733. We are so thankful for the private landlords that we partner with. We could not have achieved this without them.

The right to housing is a human right that is critical to a person's health, dignity, safety, inclusion, and contribution to their community. Every day, we see the consequences of the lack of that housing, and the toll that it takes physically, mentally, and emotionally on our residents. We all deserve a place where we can lie down when we're sick or shut the door when we're tired. We all deserve a home.

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.**



## 200 THANK YOUs

Mark Ward truly gives til it hurts. Mark and Ruthann have been kitchen volunteers since 2011, but their giving extends far beyond their hours on-site. At Christmas, Mark showed up to volunteer bringing with him a donation of 200 pairs of socks and boxes filled with hats, mitts, scarves, coffee, and disposable gloves.



## TRIBUTE GIFTS

A Tribute Donation offers a thoughtful way to celebrate a special occasion or person, at the same time supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

Whether you are celebrating one of life's many milestones or remembering a life well-lived, your donation to the Cambridge Shelter Corporation will help us to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Your thoughtfulness will ensure we can continue to offer the many programs and services, including shelter and a nightly meal, to those who need it most.

We will send a personal letter to the honouree or their family to inform them of your gift.

We are very grateful to the families of Mr. Dean Hislop and Mr. Bruce Imrie who designated CSC for memorial donations. Their kindness is appreciated.

To donate online, please visit:

[www://cambridgesheltercorp.ca/donate](http://www.cambridgesheltercorp.ca/donate)


**Cambridge Shelter Corporation**

**26 Simcoe Street**

**Cambridge ON N1R 8P2**

**519.624.9305**

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

 <b>CAMBRIDGE SHELTER</b> <i>Embracing Hope</i>	Name _____	
	Street Address _____ Unit/Apt # _____	
City _____	Province _____	Postal Code _____
Phone Number (____) _____		Email _____
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	Amount: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Please add me to your monthly donor list. Enclosed are _____ monthly post-dated cheques.		<input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 <input type="checkbox"/> One Time Donation
<input type="checkbox"/> Cheque		<input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card
Card Number _____		Expiry date ____ / ____ CVV# _____

Please do not mail cash. Cheques made payable to Cambridge Shelter Corporation  
 Please mail cheques to the Cambridge Shelter Corporation 26 Simcoe Street Cambridge ON N1R 8P2  
 Cash donations are accepted at the Shelter Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.