



# THE BRIDGES NEWS



Photo Credit: Cindy Nicolson Photography

## Corporations Giving Back!

**The Gap is one of many employers who offer volunteer grant program opportunities to their employees.**

“So many wins on so many levels.”

This is how Michelle Stanley, a team leader at the Gap in Cambridge, describes their store’s experience with the Gap Employee Engagement Program in partnership with the Cambridge Shelter Corporation.

Once a month, a team of Gap employees come to the Bridges to volunteer in the kitchen to help prepare, serve and clean up during dinner. For every 25 hours of time that the Gap employees give in volunteering, the Gap contributes \$250 as a Field Team Grant to The Bridges! The Gap team also has ongoing staff fundraisers throughout the year; they have bake sales and food events where staff give additional funds that they use to purchase and donate needed items for The Bridges.

When Michelle interviews for new employees, part of the focus is on community and volunteerism, as



Michelle Stanley, a team leader at the Gap

giving back is a big part of the Gap culture. “It is so refreshing to take young associates to the Bridges for the first time. They feel good about how they can contribute.”

“The program is a win on so many levels. The Bridges gets volunteers and a donation. The Gap pays The Bridges for us to be there. The store team gets stronger by contributing to the community, and associates get to have life impacting experiences!”

Thank you to The Gap, and to all our volunteers who dedicate their time to help every day!

## Did You Know? Many employers right here in our community have Volunteer Grant Programs?

Ask your employer if they have a program like the Gap that will allow time off for YOU to volunteer and have your hours go toward a donation made by your company! Many employers like the Gap also have Employee Matching Programs, where your company will match a donation you make! Thanks to our partners at the Gap for their dedication and support. You are changing lives!

## Your Newsletter. Your Way!

**We would like to communicate with you in the way you prefer!**

If you would like to sign up to receive this newsletter electronically please email Lee-Anne at [LBarker@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:LBarker@cambridgesheltercorp.ca).

# A Focus on Embracing Hope

I am back sitting in a chair that I vacated over five years ago. I am continually surprised by what life holds for us. And while some things seem exactly as I left them, many are different.

The people we serve have not changed, but the numbers have. On any given evening, there are over seventy individuals seeking shelter. How did this happen? Over 40% are seniors. At a time in their lives when they should be enjoying themselves, they are vying for a bottom bunk in our dormitory.

Numbers on waiting lists for affordable housing have increased, and someone can wait from 8 – 10 years for a one-bedroom unit. The vacancy rate in Cambridge is less than 2%, with average rents at \$1,050 for a one-bedroom. Our housing workers have great connections with local landlords, and thus we are able to house some of our residents. It gives others hope that they will get their own place. And isn't that what we all want? A place where we can close the door on the world. A place where we can stay up all night, or eat ice-cream at 3:00 a.m. Where we can lie down if we're sick or tired.

Residents with mental health issues are a challenge for us. Many are undiagnosed and not taking any medication. This results in erratic behaviour. These residents remain homeless longer. Many come from hospitals and jails without any support. There is no housing that offers enough assistance for them to be a successful tenant.

And the drugs have changed. They are a lot scarier. Fentanyl and crystal meth cause behaviour that is unpredictable and sometimes life-threatening. Regularly, we receive alerts about a new 'strain' of fentanyl laced with something else. Staff are resigned to constantly carrying Narcan. As a result, there is incredible stress on staff. They are expected to be mental health workers, addiction counsellors, healthcare workers, and therapists, all the while trying to keep order among a group of people who would never have chosen to reside together. It is often frustrating, time consuming, emotionally draining, and sometimes heartbreaking.

Despite this, there is hope; hope for change, hope for a better future, and hope for a place to belong and call home. It is my good fortune, once again, to lead an incredible staff team who never give up, who are always willing to go the extra mile, and who truly see the unique gifts of each person who comes through our doors. They are an awesome group. And in spite of the constant hectic pace, the emotional roller coaster ride, and the sheer numbers of people in need, I feel privileged to be back.



**Anne Tinker, Interim Executive Director**



Photo Credit: Cindy Nicolson Photography



## Board Member Spotlight

**The Board of Directors chairperson's seat at the Cambridge Shelter Corporation has been filled with a familiar face. Welcome back to former Board Chair, Sharon Livingstone.**

Full-time gerontologist and volunteer, Sharon Livingstone, has found a way to help people age successfully while pursuing her passion of ending homelessness. In addition to the Chair of the Board for Cambridge Shelter Corporation, Sharon is a member of the Board of Directors for St Luke's Place, as well as the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation.

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**“We need housing. This is the basis of why homelessness exists. No one chooses this.”**

"If I didn't like what I was doing, I wouldn't be doing it. I believe you need to give back to community."

Sharon explains, "If we want to reduce homelessness and people living with homelessness, we need affordable housing and housing options. Right now, we don't have these."

Sharon paints a picture of an older adult receiving CPP and OAS, "You are just barely getting by, and can afford the rent for your apartment. But then, your spouse dies. Along with the tragedy of losing your partner, you also lose your partner's income as well. The next thing you know, you can't afford your apartment and you have no place to go."

**The fact is, 40% of residents at The Bridges are seniors who have lost their housing because they cannot afford their rent.**

But there is HOPE and there are solutions!

The Bridges has 20 Supportive Housing units, as well as Housing Support Workers who work with our residents to find solutions to access affordable housing. The Bridges also has the Blair Voluntary Trust Program to help people manage their money and teach financial literacy skills.

We have staff, volunteers and Board members like Sharon who are interested in finding solutions so that no one will be homeless! And we have people like YOU who make this possible.

Your kindness provides shelter, food and hope to people experiencing homelessness in our community. Thank you!

## Upcoming Events!



### 14th Anniversary Open House

**November 2, 2019 | 1pm-3pm**

Drop-in any time between 1pm - 3pm.

Tours, Music, Light Refreshments. Everyone is welcome!



### Changing the Conversation

**November 14, 2019 | 6pm-8:30pm, Bowman Room, Cambridge City Hall.**

Join us for an evening of inspiration and conversation!

**Tickets now on sale!**



### Walk to Change

**Saturday December 7 | 9am-12:30pm**

Route starts and ends at Monsignor Doyle C.S.S.

**Together we can Walk to Change lives!**



### The Cambridge Shelter Golf Classic

**Thursday Feb 20, 2020 | 6pm-9pm**

Join us at Golfplay in Cambridge for our first WINTER golf tournament!

For more information on events and sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website or contact Lee-Anne Barker at [LBarker@cambridgesheltercorp.ca](mailto:LBarker@cambridgesheltercorp.ca) or call (519) 624-9305 ext 100.

# Real Life Stories of Change, Inspiration and Hope

**One night led her down a path of opioid addiction, poverty, and homelessness.**

Michelle was 29 years old. She had a home, 2 children and a partner. She never expected that one night of using drugs for the first time would lead her down a path of opioid addiction, poverty, and homelessness that would take 17 years to climb out of from.

"I was at a friend's house. I never did drugs before. She asked me if I wanted to try it, and that was it. That was the moment I became an addict."

She hid her substance use from her family for many years. When they understood what was happening, she agreed to go to a detox treatment. But as soon as she got out, she started using again, and it was back to square one. "I tried to commit suicide. I was put in the hospital after that." And then, on top of everything else she was facing, Michelle was evicted from her home.

Michelle's life continued to spiral for years. There were times she couldn't keep employment or housing. She struggled to pay her bills. For Michelle, it was the tragic death of her partner that would be the turning point in her life.

"I said to myself, you know what - I'm doing it! I'm going to better myself and I'm going to stop using for good."

That was 6 years ago. Michelle has been clean ever since!

Michelle has had many supports to help her achieve her hopes and dreams of a better life, including The Bridges! The Bridges has provided Michelle with emergency shelter, support to secure housing, Specialized Outreach Services and The Blair Voluntary Trust Program. Michelle says the Trust program changed her life.

"They coach and guide me to make good decisions with my money. I can even save money now, which I have never done before!"



Michelle and Blair Voluntary Trust Administrator, Melissa.

**“I was never able to manage my money before. Now, my rent is always paid on time. I don't have to worry! I have learned to budget for my needs and save for my wants.”**

Michelle uses the Blair Voluntary Trust program to help her to feel secure, knowing she is in control and doesn't have to worry about her money. The program began in 2006 with just 6 clients. Last year, in 2018, we served 178 clients and graduated 36 people who now use their financial literacy skills independently!

It is thanks to the support from our community and donors like you that help people like Michelle to move forward in a positive direction in their life! We are thankful for **The Jim and Lorna Blair Charitable Foundation**, and donors like Slotegraaf Construction, for their financial support of this program.

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*If you or someone you know needs help with substance use, the first step is to tell someone and ask for help. Talk to anyone you trust. There is support, there are treatment options, and there is hope!*

## A Letter of Gratitude From a Blair Voluntary Trust Program Client

"I originally went on the trust program just so I could get my cheques cashed. But the Blair Voluntary Trust Program has benefitted me in so many more ways. I usually have money at the end of the month, a rarity for me. Even though it's voluntary, the program instills accountability in my life.

The program to me is so much more than where I get my money. It is where I feel cared for, supported and treated as an equal where I reach out to and am always welcome.

Thank you for all you have done."



# CSC Team Spotlight

The cooks at The Bridges have found a way to turn donated ingredients into warm, comforting meals for people in the community who need help with food assistance.

Each week Cambridge Shelter receives donated food through The Community Food Assistance Network. With the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank at the centre, they source, collect and distribute donations from local retailers and provides 95% of The Bridges kitchen inventory with food that is fresh, healthy, sustainable, and might have otherwise been thrown away!

**"Everyone deserves to eat a good meal. We are able to feed people with good, healthy food and at the same time, be a part of reducing food waste from farm to table,"** says Moe, Kitchen Manager with The Bridges for nearly three years.

What the kitchen receives in donated ingredients is a mystery until it's delivered each week. Here is where Moe and his kitchen team dive in like an Iron Chef "Black Box" challenge! They assess their ingredients, create a menu and use the food according to freshness and ripeness. If a food item starts to ripen too fast, they figure out a way to use it. Tomatoes are turned into sauces, bananas make a great banana bread, and any fruit can be made into homemade jam!

A former resident himself, Andrew started working in The Bridges' kitchen three years ago. "I was in the Trust Program and told the worker that I was looking for a job. She told me, 'Oh! You have chef experience! We are hiring a cook here!'. I was interviewed and started working the next day!"

Judy has been a member of the kitchen team now for eight years. Judy tells us, "I really enjoy the creative side of winging it with what we have and knowing how much it's appreciated."

**Thank You for Feeding People in Need. There are always items not provided which are essential to our kitchen. Thanks to your donations of food, kitchen items and financial contributions, The Bridges served an incredible 78,566 meals to people last year!**

***Thank you for supporting people in support of their hopes and needs!***



Pictured from left to right, Andrew, Judy and Moe.

For Moe, Judy and Andrew, cooking at The Bridges is a team effort that is deeply gratifying. They all agree the best part of working at The Bridges is the heartfelt, "Thank you" they receive from people, without fail, every single day.

Here at The Bridges, our doors are open, serving dinner to the community 365 days a year. We also offer community breakfast and lunch every Thursday, and breakfast to our residents every day.



## Give the Gift of Donating Needed Items

**Top 5 items needed in the kitchen:**

- 1 Coffee**
- 2 Sugar**
- 3 Cornstarch**
- 4 Parchment Paper**
- 5 Butter**

**Needed and appreciated:** towels, twin sheets, new socks and underwear, personal care items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, combs, razors, shampoo.

Drop by any time with your donated items!

*Gift in kind donations over \$10 will be issued a charitable receipt!*

[Click here to donate!](#)

# Never Too Young to Make a Difference

Just ask Carla and Faith!



Pictured from left to right, Carla & Faith.

Carla tells us, "Anything will make a difference. If you don't know how to donate, or don't know what to donate, just ask!"

Carla Dietrich is just 9 years old! Carla and a friend started a fundraiser for a classmate who had broken a leg. After they had success with that, they thought, "We should do more fundraisers!" This time they decided to focus on helping people living with homelessness.

Carla made her donations box using a tissue box with the sign, "We need your help to help the homeless. Help the Homeless survive. Every penny counts!" Then she put her homemade donations box on her desk and collected from her classmates at her school!

Faith Kinsie is another young person making a difference in our community.

Grade 7 student Faith visited The Bridges with her Grandmother, Nancy Kinsie, on a cold day this past winter. Faith was a little nervous when she first came to us, not knowing what to expect. But after meeting people experiencing homelessness and talking to staff about the work we do to support, she immediately wanted to do something to help! Together with her Grandmother, they approached their church family at Preston Mennonite Church and soon, their Pancake Supper Fundraiser was planned! There were over 100 in attendance and over \$4500 was raised!

Thank you for your friendship and support, Carla and Faith!

If you are interested in organizing your own third-party fundraiser, there are many ways you can put the FUN in fundraising! You could organize a dance, a donation drive, a BBQ, or a carwash, just to name just a few ideas!

Check out our third-party fundraising tool kit for ideas and guidelines to organizing a great fundraiser here. Here at Cambridge Shelter Corporation, we will always be happy to assist you! Just call Lee-Anne at 519.624.9305 ext 100.

## The Bridges: Embracing Hope

Through generous community donations, The Bridges is making a difference in our community!



### Emergency Shelter

A 78-bed, year-round, emergency shelter for persons aged 16 years of age and over experiencing homelessness. The Bridges is the only fully accessible shelter in the Region.



### Supportive Housing Program

20 Region of Waterloo Housing subsidized bachelor units for people who experience chronic homelessness. We provide life skills, goal planning, education and employment supports, food programs and community involvement!



### Welcome Aboard

A daily Drop-In Centre where we deliver programs and services including Advocacy, Clothing & Toiletries, Crisis Support and Intervention, Employment & Volunteer Connections, Haircuts, Harm Prevention Support, Housing Assistance, Identification Clinic, Meal Program, Medical Clinic, Mental Health Support, Outreach, Referrals to Drug & Alcohol Treatment, Social & Recreation Programs, Spiritual Care, System-wide Capacity and more!





# Make a Difference Today!



## Consider becoming a Monthly Donor!

Did you know that monthly giving saves on administrative fees and helps us to set more predictable budgets?

And, it's easy to set-up!

Regular donations can be made in affordable monthly payments. And, you can easily increase, decrease, pause or stop your gift at any time!

You can set-up online or give us a call!



## Leave a Legacy Gift

A gift in your will has a lasting impact and gives you the satisfaction of knowing that the charity you felt passionate about in your lifetime will continue to receive support.

To find out more, call Lee-Anne at (519) 624-9305 ext 100.



## We rely on volunteers as an essential part of our team.

In our kitchen  
At events and fundraisers  
As corporate teams - supporting The Bridges while team building!

To learn how you can get involved, please visit our website or call (519) 624-9305 ext 106.

We would love to have YOU join our team!



# Your Donation is a Gift of Hope!

## Donating is Easy!

Give people the hope they need to move beyond homelessness. Your financial support is key!



### Donate Online

Visit us online



### Mail or Drop By

26 Simcoe St, Cambridge  
Ontario N1R 8P2



### Call Us

(519) 624-9305 ext 100

Charitable receipts are provided for every donation \$10 and over. Cheques payable to Cambridge Shelter Corporation.

# Yes! I want to help today!

Please cut out this portion if you wish to make a donation.

Charitable Registration Number: **89025 9419 RR0001**

Donation online go to: **cambridgesheltercorp.ca/get-involved/donate/**

Please make cheques payable to: **Cambridge Shelter Corporation**



\$25     \$50     \$100     \$250     \$500     Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up as a Monthly Donor.  
 12 post-dated cheques enclosed  
 Permission to charge my credit card

I may withdraw from the program at any time in writing. Please provide 12-post-dated cheques or credit card information below.

VISA     MC

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_

CVV# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please include your email and check here

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations of \$10 or more will receive a tax receipt**

**Ask your employer about Employee Matching Programs**

## Imagine Canada's Standards Program

We're very pleased to be recognized as an accredited non profit agency by Imagine Canada. Imagine Canada's Standards Program launched in May 2012. Designed to strengthen public confidence in the charitable and not for profit sector, the Standards Program 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
- Volunteer involvement



For further information please contact the Standards Program Coordinator at [standards@imaginecanada.ca](mailto:standards@imaginecanada.ca)

**Cambridge Shelter Corporation**

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