

The Edge

Mission Services of Hamilton

Winter 2023

Since 1956

A Home for Everyone

Housing is a right which is why we focus on finding housing for every single client that walks through our doors. Each of Mission Services of Hamilton's (MSH) shelters are housing-focused. Although we provide emergency shelter to men, women and children in need, our main goal is to find them safe, stable and permanent housing because everyone deserves a home.

As you'll see in this edition of The Edge, we are here to support individuals like Patty (pg. 1 & 2), when they are unable to support themselves. But we are just a stop on their housing journey. Our system navigators, early intervention workers, transitional housing workers and our entire Housing UP! team, are here to assist each person in preparing for, finding and maintaining housing.

There are also many people who are isolated from their community and living precariously in unsuitable housing situations. By providing meals, shower and laundry facilities at Willow's Place we allow women to save on the costs of groceries and utilities, when nearly all their income is being used for rent.

Each month we support thousands of individuals at our Good Food Centre by providing basic, healthy groceries. This is another way we can help our neighbours who are having to choose between feeding their families or paying their bills.

Without the support of community members, like you, we would not be able to continue our fight to find a home for everyone and end homelessness. You are an essential part of the housing journey too.

Thank you,

Carol Cowan-Morneau



Carol Cowan-Morneau
Executive Director

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This story is from a Mission Services client who experienced domestic violence. Although, there is no graphic information, if this content is triggering for you, please skip pages 1 & 2

Patty* came to Emma's Place, Mission Services low barrier women's shelter, after traveling down a long, dark road.

Patty was a successful woman by all standards. She went to university, she had a successful, six-figure career. She owned her own home and maintained it by herself. But one decision changed everything for her.

It all started several years ago when Patty and her partner moved into the dream home they built together. She was in the process of selling the home she independently owned when her partner started acting strange. Patty felt like she was witnessing some red flags.

"I was a hair away from calling my real estate agent and saying please take my house off the market and cutting my losses."

But she didn't listen to her gut. Her house sold and her partner became more abusive.

After one particularly violent evening that nearly cost Patty her life, her world started to crumble.

Her partner cut off their internet, he removed all receipts that proved that Patty had invested any money into the house they built together and he served her with assault charges, claiming he

was the victim. Sadly, this is not an uncommon tactic in a domestic abuse situation.

"He sued me for the entire house, as well as all the belongings in it. My clothes, my furniture, everything. As well as all his legal costs."

Over the next few years while Patty dealt with legal proceedings, she tried to maintain work and housing but the criminal charges made it difficult to find work and after living in multiple rentals she ended up back at home with her elderly mother.

"This [violence], the losing my job, I lost my house. I can't tell you the amount of money it's cost me income wise, the equity in my home. What I've pulled out of savings. I became a mess. I started self-medicating with alcohol."

All this culminated with a falling out with her family. This is how Patty ended up at Emma's Place.

"I don't know where I'd be today if it wasn't for Emma's. This place saved my life."

Emma's Place provides emergency shelter to women accessing Mission Services' Willow's Place day program, offering 15 low barrier overnight beds to women and non-binary

individuals. The average stay is 13 days, but people can stay up to 90 days, and in some circumstances longer.

“Many unhoused women have experienced the downward spiral of violence,” shared Jaclyn, Assistant Director of Outreach Programs for Women and Children. “They leave ‘stability’ with their partners to avoid further violence.”

Emma’s Place is a safe space for people like Patty.

“We know it’s not permanent housing but we want to make it feel home-like, so the women can be comfortable enough to drop their guards and allow us to support them,” said Jaclyn. “Maybe not every person is ready to be housed, but everyone deserves to be safe.”

When a woman comes to Emma’s they are connected to a Mission Services System Navigator who works with them to get all their documents in order, to navigate resources available in Hamilton and to assist with housing applications.

“The System Navigator tries to bring stability to their lives so that they can be ready to rent when an opportunity presents itself. Without them, a lot of these tasks would not happen as the women are facing physical and emotional barriers, and often do not have the capacity to tackle these tasks independently,” explained Lindsay, Manager of Community Services and Outreach Programs.

Once a person is housed, the System Navigator continues to support them, to ensure that individual remains housed.

“I’ve learned that [the clients at Emma’s Place] are treated as human beings and they’re given hope. The staff have been over the top supportive emotionally. They’re looking at people for who they are, not just the fact that they’re here,” said Patty.

Patty is working on maintaining a daily routine, getting her budgeting in order, and trying to find a place to bring home her babies...her dogs, who are in foster care.

**Name changed for privacy*

From October 2021 to October 2022, Emma’s Place provided safe shelter to 226 individuals, some needing to return more than once.



Emergency Shelter

To Permanent Housing



Mission Services' current Men's Shelter building, left, and an artist rendering of the new location

MSH's Men's Shelter operates with a housing focus. We provide a safe space for men and non-binary adults experiencing homelessness – either chronic or episodic, with the goal of assisting them to find sustainable, permanent housing.

The Early Intervention Program intentionally explores options with everyone entering the shelter system and works with those who may have other sheltering options available to them; sometimes that is intervening in an eviction process, assisting with transportation to join family in another city or province, or to help with grocery options or utility arrears to keep the electricity on.

“While some stays in an emergency shelter may be longer than others depending on the individual's circumstances, shelter stays are not permanent,” said Shawn, Associate Executive Director of Programs.

When early intervention is not possible, and the individual has no other options for shelter, the case management staff in the Housing Up! Program work intensely with individuals through their housing journey. This is a long term commitment to support each individual from entry into the shelter system through to permanent housing for up to two years.

“We want to make sure they have all the connections in the city and community, mental health supports, addiction supports. We're a housing first program but once they have a stable place, we keep working with them to ensure they remain housed,” explained Reinaldo, Director of Housing UP!.

The program opened in April of 2020, during the challenges of the pandemic, and since that time, the program has assisted 291 individuals in securing and maintaining permanent housing.

Our Men's Shelter is preparing to move to a new location on King St E that has been purposefully built to operate as a shelter. Though our space on James St N has served us well, it was never designed to be a shelter and we are excited about the housing opportunities that this new building will bring to our community. In addition to our 58 emergency shelter beds, this new location will offer 50 transitional housing beds and will help us to transition those individuals to permanent housing in the community.

Emergency shelters are a part of the housing journey, providing a supportive and connective bridge to ending homelessness.

In Our Community

We were blown away by the number of community members, social clubs, churches, schools, businesses and volunteer groups that supported our neighbours in need this past Christmas season!

Over the holidays **Loewith Dairy Farm** held an open “farm” which hosted 1,400 people and collected an amazing 1,346 lbs of food.

Students and staff of **Westdale Secondary School, Calvin Christian School, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Elementary School, Lisgar Elementary School, A.M. Cunningham Elementary School** and **Sherwood Secondary School** each ran food drives and collectively donated more than 4,600 lbs of non-perishable items, while **Norwood Park Elementary School** supplied hygiene items.

The Bayfront Endurance Running Group collected pillows and sheet sets for our new Men’s Shelter, while **North Star Technical Inc.** and **Harvest Cannabis** donated toys for our Christmas Care Program. **Canadian Motorcycle Cruisers of Hamilton** collected items to donate to Inasmuch House at their Christmas party.

The Hamilton Shoebox Project donated gift cards for the women at Willow’s Place and Emma’s Place, while **Pack a Purse** and **The Purse Project Network** donated 125 bags and 65 purses respectively, all filled with toiletries, self-care items and gifts for the women accessing our services.

Bethel Tabernacle Women’s Group donated bags of vital necessities for the women and children at Inasmuch House, while residents of **Twenty Place Condos** collected personal care items for the shelter as well. The team at **Dominion Lending Centre** assembled care packages for those at Willow's on Christmas Day.

Much needed food was donated by **Desjardins, NFP Insurance, The Mississauga Cosmetic Surgery & Laser Clinic, Concentrix, Integrimark General Contractor, Mohawk Facility Services, Scotiabank Upper Wentworth, The Mystic Peach, Susan**

Pauls-Valerio Real Estate, Biox Canada, Access Community Church, Defensa Volleyball Club, Hamilton Plumbing Supply, Rosedale Medical Group, LiUNA, Maple Villa Long Term Care Burlington, North Point Insurance and Bentley Condominiums.

As well as food, **The Carlisle Retirement Residence** donated winter gear, **Church of God** supplied hygiene products, while **Good Neighbour Ministries** collected personal care items and gift cards. All combined these groups brought in over 3,800 lbs of non-perishables to our Good Food Centre.

To help keep our neighbours warm during the winter **Pharmasave Paramount** collected coats, **McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences** and **VoxxLife** donated socks and the **Jamaican Foundation** and many individuals knitted beautiful winter gear.

And through their businesses, **Sequel Jeans** collected financial donations for our Christmas Care Program, **Vintagesoulgeek** and **Lulu & Lavigne** donated a percentage of their December sales and **Nerdcore** ran a draw, all supporting Mission Services of Hamilton in December. **Maria Dorego** purchased items for Willows with money raised from sales at her kiosk at Eastgate Square.

Some companies made incredibly generous donations including a group of **Desjardins** agents who supported Mission Services Good Food Centre, as did **Green Benefits Group. Peony Investments VMW Ltd** donated funds to support families over Christmas, and **Boehringer Ingelheim** and **Taylor Leibow LLP** supported the greatest needs at Mission Services.

There’s many more companies, individuals, families and groups who made financial donations, organized drives, or sponsored families through our Christmas Care program. Thanks to our amazing community partners we were able to support over 3,000 individuals during the holidays. Thank you to our community for caring so much.

A Poem for Willow's Place

Written by an Emma's/Willow's Place client to express her gratitude for the staff and program.

I needed a place
Needed a space
Had to clear my head
Went to Willow's Place
Got me a bed

We have hard times
Good times too
I wouldn't be me
If it wasn't for you

Willow's helps give back
What you've always had
You go from sad, lonely
To happy and glad

I may not have a place of my own
I do know that right now Willow's is my home

I'm so blessed
No need to guess


The staff is extremely amazing
When you need them, they are there
Right away with no time to spare

This may be a shelter
But it's more than that to me
They have saved my life more than once
Willow's has always been meant to be

YOUR Gifts at WORK

November - January

 **25,470**
Meals Served

 **5,412**
Food Assistance
Packs

 **3,696**
Visits at
Willow's Place

 **275***
Men and Women
Sheltered

 **935**
Addictions Treatment
Interactions

**no longer includes
temporary-shelter data*



Everyone Deserves Safe Housing

In
2022

>1,509 Hamiltonians were unhoused

1,202 people stayed in our shelters

216 people were housed through MSH programs

To support Mission Services, call 1-877-542-2732, donate online at mission-services.com/donate, donate with online banking (RBC, BMO and Central 1 customers), or on site with debit/credit card machine.

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