

The Edge

Mission Services of Hamilton

Winter 2024

Since 1956

New Year, Same Challenges

The new year is often looked upon as a time of new beginnings. People challenge themselves to lose weight, to experience new things, pick up a new hobby, or change their life situation for the better. For many people, though, a new year presents the same old challenges.

For many in Hamilton struggling to keep a roof over their head, or to put food on the table to feed their family, the change from one year to the next really makes no difference. When January 1st arrived, it didn't bring lower rents or more affordable food prices. It didn't magically make the opioid crisis disappear or end homelessness. For them, the change in the calendar was merely that to another day, with the same struggles that already existed in one day earlier, in 2023.

That is why we need your support. As we work to help the individuals and families most affected by this cost-of-living crisis, we need partners who are willing to help us make that difference in their lives. We do our best to ensure that their basic needs of food and shelter are provided, so that they can have hope that the next day, the next month, or the next year will be the new beginning they long for.

As you will see in this issue, we have made changes to bring a new sense of peace at our Emma's Place shelter. You will hear from Trudi, who has found a place that she can call her own. You will read about the important work happening at Willow's Place. You will also see anyone can make a big difference in their community through unique fundraisers.

While food and housing insecurity continue to rise, we are thankful for your support, which is a constant that we can count on no matter what the new year may bring.

Wishing you the best for 2024,

Carol Cowan-Morneau



Carol Cowan-Morneau
Executive Director

Mission Services of Hamilton is located on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas.



Act Justly. Show Mercy. Offer Hope.



Trudi was welcomed into Emma's Place with open arms, a much easier transition than she expected.

As you walk into the new space for Emma's Place Shelter, you are immediately struck by a newfound sense of peace. There is less foot traffic, voices are more hushed, and the only sounds are the hum of the washing machine, the drone of the lounge tv, and the occasional jingling of keys as support workers make their rounds. For shelter residents, it's a welcome change.

"It was really hectic, but now it's a quieter atmosphere," said Trudi, who has been staying at Emma's since October. "You can sleep if you want, you can go in and watch TV, or you can just have a coffee. It's calming, very calming."

Emma's move coincided the Willow's Place Drop-in Program shifting to a 24/7 schedule during the winter months. From December through March,

Willow's Place will also be used as a warming centre to help those who have nowhere else to go. With a sudden influx of extra women taking shelter at Willow's, it meant a lot more commotion while the women at nearby Emma's were trying to sleep.

Beginning December 1st, Willow's Place opened up 45 additional overnight spaces for women and gender-diverse people, helping keep them out of the cold. This 300% increase in overnight clients means more staff and more resources are needed. In the first month of the program, Willow's Place saw 111 unique women using the overnight service, with over 300 using the regular drop-in.

"We still haven't met all the women who need help in the city," said Lindsay, Manager of

Community Services and Outreach Programs at Willow's and Emma's Place. "That number just keeps increasing."

Emma's Place didn't move far, just to the other side of the central hall from the previous location near the Willow's Place Drop-In Centre, but for clients and staff it was a necessary change that has made a huge difference already.

"When we moved everybody and put the shelter area on the other side of the hallway, it created a sense of peace," Lindsay said. "As workers, we can sit down and really get to the heart of finding out how we can help the women."

Sheryl, Director of Community Services, added that the quieter area allows the women to focus on taking the next step, whatever that may be.

"In the drop-in space, there's a lot going on, so it's easy for the women to get distracted," she said. "At Emma's, it's quieter, and they're able to focus on themselves and what they want to do."

The goal of both Willow's and Emma's Place is to provide a safe, low-barrier space for women and gender-diverse people to escape the pressures of the streets and find peace and hope.

When Trudi came to Mission Services in October of 2023, she originally braced for a difficult transition. However, she was welcomed with open arms, and soon realized that she didn't need to fear.

"I didn't want to come here. I was so afraid, but it's been the best experience of my life, and the staff have made it happen."



DID YOU KNOW?

More than **225** individuals have been able to come out of the cold into our warming spaces at Willow's Place and beds at our Men's Shelter so far this Winter.

Thanks to your support, Willow's and Emma's Place can provide safety, shelter, and peace.





"As workers, we can sit down and really get to the heart of finding out how we can help the women."

- Lindsay (pictured on the left), Manager of Community Services and Outreach Programs at Willow's Place



While the space may have changed significantly in the 10 years that Willow's Place has been operating, the staff's commitment to the residents has remained the same.

"The direction of our support has never changed, but the population has," said Lindsay. "We've grown from five hours a day, Monday to Friday, to now being a full 24/7 service, because we're always adapting with the needs of the folks that we serve."

"We've stayed true to our core values of why we're here," added Sheryl. "The needs in the community are always changing, but at our

heart, we are a community of women helping women, genuinely caring about their well-being, and that's what is important."

It's through the power of community that programs like Willow's Place Drop-In and Emma's Place Shelter are able to continue to run. As community members partner with Mission Services of Hamilton, they are able to help people like Trudi find safety, shelter, and peace, away from the outside world.

"Getting out of the noise is how I'd describe it," Lindsay said. "There's so much chaos outside, and we can bring them in and help them be safe."

In Our Community

Check out how YOU - our amazing community - supported our neighbours over the Holidays!
Go to www.mission-services.com/stories-of-change

Mission Services' Full Circle of Care

Relationships are at the core of serving our community.

When a client comes to one of Mission Services' programs, they are often at their most vulnerable. While they may need a warm meal, shelter for the night, or grocery support, what they also need is for their voice to be heard.

Because of your support, we are able to help those in our community who need it most. The relationship we establish with clients gives them a listening ear and someone who they can trust to have their best interests at heart.

For many women, that relationship starts at the Willow's Place Drop-In Centre. There, they are introduced to a caring staff who will work with them to understand their needs and see how they can address them.

"We're the first point of access for a lot of women into the system," said Sheryl, Director of Community Services. "Someone can come into the drop-in and start to feel comfortable, before starting to touch the waters of 'Maybe I can go into the shelter, maybe I can do this.'"

"Then, because we've built that relationship, if they come into the shelter or when they leave the shelter into a housing unit, they still feel comfortable. That full circle effect is so important."

People using the Good Food Centre are also greeted by a friendly smile and genuine care for their situation. GFC workers are ready to provide



them with contact information for other services they may require, either provided by Mission Services or another agency.

"Emergency food is the most important thing we provide, but people require much more than the basics," said Jim, Associate Director of Food Services.

"They need social inclusion, a safe space to meet, security and understanding," he said. "At the GFC, we are glad to provide these things as well as food."

Our shelter support workers at our Men's Shelter and Inasmuch House continue to be available for clients, even after their situation has improved.

Since 2020, our Housing Up! workers have helped to place 414 former men's shelter clients into permanent housing, ensuring these men have the supports that they need to flourish into the future. If their situation changes for better or worse, they know that they have someone who they can turn to.

"People can call up our systems navigators, even after they haven't worked with them in months, because of the rapport and the relationship that they already have," said Lindsay, Manager of Community Services and Outreach. "They know they can touch base and say, 'Hey, I'm struggling', and they will get the help they need."

Your contributions help our community members get the help they need. Consider donating today to make a difference in their lives.

Dressing Down to Raise Funds

Fundraising doesn't have to be stiff, starchy, or boring. It can be as simple as a group of friends or coworkers finding a cause that they all believe in, and figuring out how to have fun while raising funds.

That's the idea that Vince Ippolito, an insurance agent with Desjardins, took to heart when he started "Dress Down Fridays" at his office, raising money for Mission Services' Good Food Centre.

"I started volunteering at the Good Food Centre in 2017, and I saw the impact that was made to members of our community," said Vince. "I wanted to do more to help, and it was a great way to get my team involved in supporting such a great cause."

Members of Vince's team at Desjardins Insurance who want to dress in business casual attire on Fridays make a minimum donation of \$2, which Vince matches. In the seven years they've been doing it,

they've seen great success, with 10 other offices joining the program, collectively raising over \$57,000 for the food bank.

"The team over the years has had a lot of fun with it," Vince said.

"The unique thing about fundraising is that you get to decide how you do it," said Susan, Director of Development at Mission Services of Hamilton. "The only limit is your creativity."



If you would like more information about fundraising with a group, or would like a list of ideas that you can use to help raise funds, contact Marceli at **905-528-4211 x 3102** or **mluz@mission-services.com**.

YOUR Gifts at WORK

During 2023

 **112,605**
Meals Served

 **23,819**
Households
Accessing Grocery
Assistance

 **19,561**
Visits at
Willow's Place

 **1,054**
Men and Women
Sheltered

 **1,678**
Addiction Services
Interactions

Host a Winter Drive!

For a list of needed items, and other ways you can help, go to:
www.mission-services.com/how-you-can-help



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.

PO Box 368 196 Wentworth St N Hamilton, ON L8L 7W2 | 905-528-4211 |
Charitable No. 11904 3206 RR0001