



## GERALD'S JOURNEY FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HIS OWN HOME

**G**erald was living in squalor. His group home was infested with pests and people would enter his room uninvited to use drugs. Gerald, 34, has a substance addiction and lives with mental illness. He felt trapped and couldn't escape the life that he found himself in.

Then his group home was evacuated due to what health authorities described as unlivable conditions. That is when Gerald first met the frontline workers at Good Shepherd. Forced into homelessness, Gerald and his fellow residents were welcomed into the safety of Good Shepherd's surge shelter at the former Cathedral High School.

Within four hours, he moved to McGinty House, part of Good Shepherd's HOMES (Housing with On-site, Mobile and

Engagement Services) program, which provides housing and supports to people living with mental illness and are homeless or are at risk of being homeless.

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**"People are incredibly resilient. They have been able to adapt to so many challenges in their lives. We are seeing strength and hope in our clients."**

**Heidi Barton  
Community Health Worker**

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McGinty House is transitional housing on Catharine Street North in Hamilton. It accommodates up to 10 people who are struggling through the pandemic, so that local hospitals could free up beds in

anticipation of COVID-19 patients. Supportive housing is a foundation of health and stability for HOMES tenants. Housing is crucial to a person's rediscovery of hope and their desire to move forward in life, says John Lee, director of HOMES.

"We understand that a person's life is a journey," he says. "For us, it's all about being with them for their journey."

The community mental health workers in the HOMES program set out to get to know the residents and to assess their strengths before deciding on their next steps.

"We give people opportunities and choices to help them gain their independence," says Heidi Burton, a community mental health

*Continued on next page ...*

# McGinty House has helped Gerald find hope

worker with McGinty House. “Our support is adapted to their own needs”

Victoria Melgar, program manager at McGinty House, says that residents stay in close contact with community mental health workers as they deal with barriers that prevent them from achieving independence. They are supported to help them become healthy, return to work and reconnect with their families.

Community mental health workers supported Gerald in achieving his goals to live a stable life on his own with benefits from Good Shepherd’s supportive housing. He told them he was determined to live in his own apartment.



Victoria Melgar (left), John Lee and Heidi Burton of Good Shepherd’s HOMES program.

Gerald says his life was mired in tragic and hopeless circumstances.

He was frustrated and scared. He didn’t know where to turn before he connected with Good Shepherd’s housing and counselling program.

“Good Shepherd is an excellent organization,” Gerald says. “I had a lot of issues that I needed to talk to somebody about. They listened and gave me great advice.”

Now, just five months after the trauma of being evacuated from his group home, Gerald has taken possession of an apartment in west Hamilton. He has hope that he will be able to overcome his physical and mental barriers and live an independent life in the community. He’ll be supported by Good Shepherd for as long as he stays in the HOMES program.

“Good Shepherd has helped Gerald find hope,” says Victoria. “He sees that people were willing to sit with him and work alongside him to work on his goals; now he’s in his own home.”

Gerald joins about 400 HOMES clients who are now living in the community. And that is John Lee’s definition of success.

“We view success as getting someone housed because it has a positive impact on a person’s health,” he says. “Housing reduces hospitalization because the more time you spend in hospital, your ability to recover from mental illness is impacted. Getting a person housed means we’re able to help them on their journey to healthy living.”

Good Shepherd has more than 500 affordable and supportive housing units throughout the City of Hamilton, including Good Shepherd Square, our landmark location on King Street West. Combined, more than 700 people live in the units. Each one is a vital piece of our organization’s goal to use our values and expertise to contribute to building a healthy and resilient community.

## Volunteers in Action



**GLADYS** is often the first person you see when you visit Good Shepherd’s Administration and Development offices on King Street West. She is a stalwart, taking on any administrative task almost every day of the week.



**JOANNE**, who has been volunteering at Good Shepherd for three years, is an important part of the lives of women and children who stay at Women’s Services. Joanne feels a great sense of accomplishment while helping to prepare meals with us once a week.

# 'I give differently'

## Bill MacKinnon takes on the projects nobody wants



Good Shepherd is forever grateful for the generosity of our donors. Their kindness fund programs that have helped to build one of the region's largest health and human services organizations, serving vulnerable people from cradle to grave.

But what about the needs that aren't front-of-mind? The mundane projects that are vital to Good Shepherd's day-to-day operations – and our clients' well-being – are often overlooked and remain uncompleted due to a lack of funding.

Enter one of Good Shepherd's champions, a person who has his eye on those projects that don't generate public interest. Burlington's Bill MacKinnon, owner of RPM Mechanical, has a strong affinity to Good Shepherd as a longtime donor and former member of the organization's board of directors. Bill encountered the works of Good Shepherd as a young boy, when Father Angus Smith, a priest from St. Augustine's Church in Dundas, took him and three other kids to see the hot meal program in downtown Hamilton. It changed his view on life forever.

"Within 20 minutes from where I lived I saw poverty and it was presented to me in a way which was not judgmental," said Bill. "Father Smith opened up my eyes to the world and I don't think he ever realized how it impacted me."

Years later, Bill was sitting at his desk at RPM Mechanical and realized that his company was having a very good year.

"We had done very well so I decided to write a cheque to Good Shepherd, unsolicited," he said. His childhood experience with Good Shepherd influenced his decision.

That was around the holiday season and Good Shepherd's Chief Development Officer Cathy Wellwood appeared at Bill's door with a poinsettia.

"I hate poinsettias. Hate them with a vengeance," he said.

Nonetheless, it started Bill's decades-long relationship with Good Shepherd that continues to this day.

Over time, he got to know Cathy, who talked passionately about the organization. Now they work together to identify needs that he could help fund. He takes a pragmatic approach to his giving.

"I give differently than most people. The projects that I assign the funds to are the ones that no one really wants," he explained. "It's not sexy. It's not something anybody would necessarily want to contribute to."

For example, Carmen Salcicciolli, director of Good Shepherd's men's shelter, invited Bill to see the program.

"He took me around the place. He showed me things that would absolutely make a difference," Bill said.

Bill ended up funding numerous projects, including the purchase of a stove and deep fryer for the community hot meal program and a commercial steamer to protect against bed bugs.

"Conversely, Carmen has helped me," Bill explained. "I was looking for an employee and he helped me recruit a fabulous person. We brought this person on to our company and what a difference they've made to us, and what a difference we've made to them. And I wouldn't know about them had I not given to Good Shepherd and got to know Carmen, so it works both ways. It's like a circle and the world is very small."

Why does he continue to give to Good Shepherd when there are so many worthy causes?

"I believe in what you're doing," Bill said. "I see people helping people and it really makes me feel encouraged. I give to Good Shepherd and I participate with Good Shepherd because I see the successes. I see it making a difference in thousands of ways."

A MESSAGE FROM

## CATHY WELLWOOD



On behalf of Good Shepherd, I want to express my deepest gratitude to you, our donors, for your support while we all continue to navigate the challenges of the pandemic. As vaccines continue to roll out, I pray that this is the last time that I have to reference living with this terrible virus.

While our community was locked down during the winter months, Good Shepherd ensured that the vulnerable members of our community were safe and comfortable. We were able to do that thanks to you, our donors and supporters. Over the last year, we all have had to give up things that are important to us, but the fact that you have kept in your hearts the health and well-being of our at-risk neighbours has reinforced my Faith in People. You are awesome people and we love that you are a part of our team!

I hope you had a chance to learn about Bill MacKinnon in this issue. Bill is a great friend to Good Shepherd and to me, personally. Bill has displayed his humility and generosity for many years, and we have benefited from it. We are truly grateful for Bill's giving. He is a person who prefers to donate to the less-visible projects. Although they are items that don't attract attention – like a stove and a steamer to get rid of bed bugs – they are extremely important to the day-to-day operation of our organization. Thank you, Bill, on behalf of our co-workers, volunteers and clients!

Finally, while we're on the subject of gratitude, I would like to thank the staff of Emmanuel House hospice for the compassion that they display every day. Here is a note from one of our co-workers at the hospice, relating her experience with a local funeral home:

A funeral home came to pick up one of our residents and they said that all of their clients rave about Emmanuel House, and whenever the funeral home gets a call all of the staff want to come here. They were so thankful for the work that we do and the service that we provide to people at the end of their life. It was such wonderful feedback I had to share it with everyone!

God bless,

Cathy Wellwood  
Chief Development Officer



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### General Inquiries:

400 King St. West, PO Box 1003  
Hamilton ON L8N 3R1  
Phone: 905.528.6565  
[info@gsch.ca](mailto:info@gsch.ca)

### Donation Inquiries:

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