

AT THE Table

The Newsletter of Ray of Hope Inc.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Seven from Community Centre Faith Family Baptized 2

Thank You Home Hardware 2

Ray of Hope Welcomes Welcome Home 3

Coldest Night of the Year 3

Food Distribution Changes Increase Dignity 3

From the CEO: Flexible But Focused 4

Shy Teen Learns to Greet Customers Warmly

by Sandra Reimer

"I used to hate talking to strangers," says Autumn, an 18-year-old participant in the Morning Glory Employment Training program.

Tired of high school, Autumn tried to get a job but was unsuccessful. Through volunteering in the kitchen at the Rockway Senior's Centre, she discovered a love for cooking, so she jumped at the chance to do a Morning Glory internship.

At times, Autumn makes mistakes and gets frustrated with herself. "I would forget how to make the sandwiches." Then John, the Café Manager, tells her, "Relax, you're doing a good job. You're learning."

Supportive staff have helped Autumn to improve her skills and increase her confidence. With Ray of Hope Community

Centre Chaplain, Colin Wallace, she works on life skills like budgeting and how to cope with stress. "I can talk about my problems. It's a weight off my shoulders," she says.

She is excited to be earning money at Morning Glory—as a participant under a provincial program she works 30 hours/week and receives minimum wage. Beaming proudly, she says, "I moved out of my mom's house, pay half of the rent and pay my own phone bill."

Autumn hopes to get a job in a restaurant and maybe one day to go to culinary school. "I like making things taste good and impressing people with how food looks."

For Autumn, Café staff are like family. "They are very helpful. They keep teaching me until



I understand." Beginning to overcome her fear of strangers, one of the staff recently encouraged Autumn. "Julia told me that I am welcoming—like when you invite someone into your home and make them feel comfortable—that's what I do for the customers."

Ray of Hope Redesigns Employment Training Program

The Federal Government discontinued funding for the Employment Training program in 2014. With less funding but fewer constraints, Ray of Hope redesigned the program to continue helping youth and young adults with significant barriers to employment to succeed.

Most participants are trained for 17.5 hours per week during a 17-week volunteer placement at the cafés (Morning Glory at Heffner's, or at the Family Centre) or the catering location in the renovated Community Centre kitchen. One session per week they learn life skills like conflict resolution, goal setting, and budgeting, or

they take First Aid, Safe Food Handling, WHIMIS and Smart Serve courses. Participants earn a \$250 stipend each month and receive a program completion bonus of \$1,250. Employment Training Program Director Sharlene Wallace helps the youth with resumés and job search or returning to school.

Though the Morning Glory Café in downtown Kitchener was busy, it was closed because it was unsustainable. Renovating the Community Centre kitchen to handle catering and baking for the other cafés makes better use of resources. Now the program requires

fewer managers but can serve more participants—up to 21 per year instead of 16. After the first round of the new program, Sharlene said, "It is very successful. Three out of four graduates are employed." Partnerships with Heffner Toyota and Family & Children's Services are critical to the viability of the remaining café locations.

You can help youth get back to work. Make a donation, order catering, or volunteer in an afternoon to help with light prep and practical tasks at the Community Centre catering location.

Seven from Community Centre Faith Family Baptized

by Colin Wallace

Sometimes it feels like an uphill battle providing pastoral care for the faith family at Ray of Hope Community Centre—they face so many obstacles! But we celebrate every small victory—like a young woman with anxiety issues praying out loud for the first time; or a gentleman wrestling with his faith and recovery at our Life's

Healing Choices group; or a young man telling me he's tired of the life he's living and asking how to move forward.

Having seven people get baptized was also a highlight.

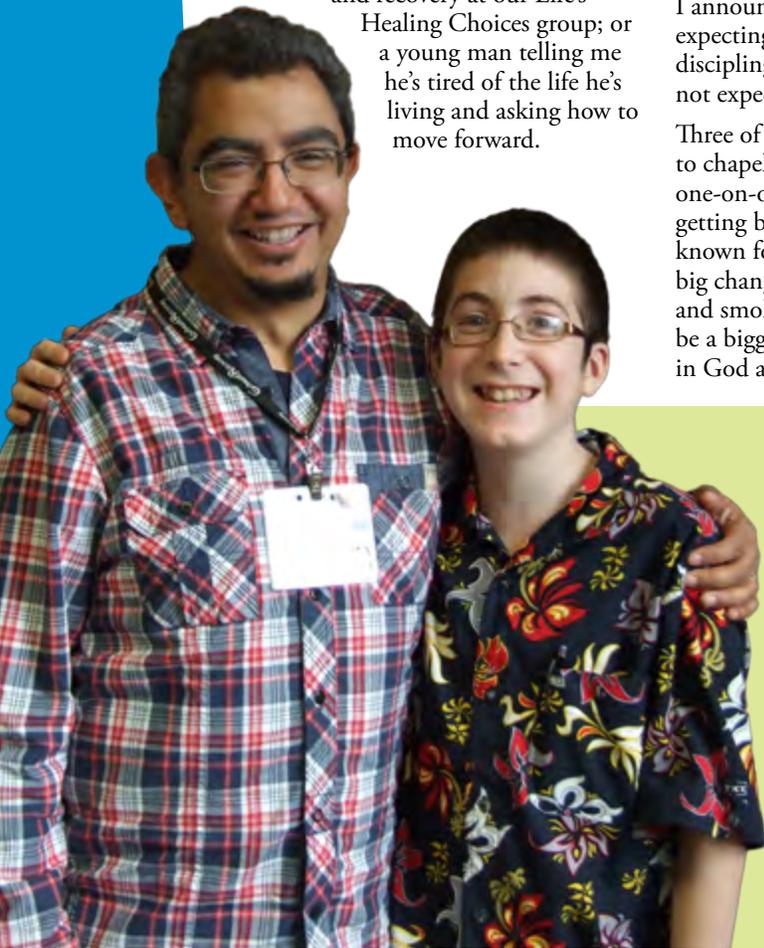
At the request of a young man I've known for about five years, I set up a baptism service on Sunday, January 25th at Breslau Evangelical Missionary Church, a church that has been a great partner of our chapel program. I announced the baptism service, expecting two or three people I'd been discipling to step forward. But I was not expecting seven!

Three of the seven were relatively new to chapel but I connected with them one-on-one to hear their reasons for getting baptized. One man I have known for several years recently made big changes in his life, quitting alcohol and smoking, and he wanted God to be a bigger part of his life. He believed in God and Jesus but had never

committed himself. I led him in the sinners' prayer and a couple of weeks later he was baptized. He continues to come to chapel.

I won't soon forget the day of the baptism. Picking up several candidates in my minivan, I drove them to Breslau. They were like kids on Christmas Eve! Not only were they excited to be baptized—they were excited to be baptized together! Many candidates weren't friends beforehand but they were like family by the end.

A bus brought the rest of our faith family to Breslau EMC. They were so supportive of our candidates. Some volunteers from churches like Koinonia Christian Fellowship also came to encourage the candidates. It was a great day!



Ray of Hope's Community Centre Chaplain, Colin Wallace, is pictured here with Blake, one of seven people baptized in January 2015.

Blake says he didn't grow up knowing God. He and his Dad started going to chapel services after a year of eating meals at the Community Centre. "Blake was quiet at first, but as he got comfortable he came up with some brilliant insights," says Colin. "I was surprised a teen could be so reflective about what discipleship means."

Blake says the motivational songs (worship) really spoke to him. After listening to the songs and sermons, and getting to know the faith family, Blake became a Christian.

"This chapel is like a second family," says Blake. Now he contributes his technical skills running the sound board on Sundays. He also asked to share a reflection with the congregation. Colin jokes, "He's going to take over my job someday!" Adding more seriously, "God has a plan for Blake for sure."

Thank You Home Hardware and Good Luck!

For the past 20 years, Home Hardware vendors, business partners, dealers, and corporate staff have been getting together to golf and raise funds for a local charity. For two years, funds will go toward Ray of Hope. While charities are guaranteed \$20,000, often more is raised. Last year, 576 golfers, on four courses, raised \$57,000! Their next tournament is in June.



Ray of Hope CEO Harry Whyte receives a cheque from Home Hardware's Tammie Piel, Golf Tournament Chairperson.

Ray of Hope Welcomes Welcome Home

Welcome Home (WH) provides safety and belonging to refugees who arrive in the Waterloo Region through housing and supportive relationships. Over the past ten years, WH housed approximately 200 refugees in units above the Morning Glory Café at 260 King St. East in Kitchener. The organization operated under the umbrella of International Teams. When Ray of Hope sold the King St. building to the Working Centre in the fall of 2014, WH was asked to move by December 31st. International Teams discontinued support, but WH staff and a committed board of advisors were unwilling to let the ministry die. Seeing an overlap in caring for people who are disadvantaged and marginalized, the Ray of Hope leadership team agreed to support WH through this transition until March 2016. A re-launch team headed by Steve Tulloch, Associate Pastor at Elevation Church in Waterloo, is praying and talking to community stakeholders, as they actively discern next steps for the ministry.

Welcome Home, my family!
– refugees with a staff member



I'm excited and optimistic about the future of Welcome Home, grateful for the strong leadership, warm welcome and passionate commitment of Ray of Hope, and eager to see how God will lead us.

– Sharon Schmidt,
Welcome Home Director

Contact Sharon Schmidt at 226-220-4081 or director [at] welcomehomekw.ca for more information or to get involved.



Coldest Night of the Year

Thanks to all walkers, sponsors, and the 102 volunteers who made this event happen!

Although the temperature was a “balmy” -9 C at the beginning of the walk, it was cold enough for walkers to experience Canadian streets in winter, albeit for a short time. With a light snow adding a challenge, these hundreds of determined walkers trekked up and down King Street with energy and excitement! In all we had 66 teams made up of 490+ registered walkers, sponsored by 2,334 donors, who raised over \$139,000!

Special thanks to:

- **UW's School of Pharmacy and WLU Science Department** for being our 5 & 10 km rest stops
- **Starbucks** for providing hot chocolate & coffee on the route
- **Piller's** for providing the Ball Parks
- **UNA Church** for providing the sound system
- **The Waterloo Police Services Auxiliary Unit** for keeping our walkers safe

Food Distribution Changes Increase Dignity

When Pastor Bob Bauman from Eastwood Christian Fellowship hosted his famous roast beef dinner on the third Monday of the month, the hungry line used to snake through the Community Centre parking lot, down Pandora Ave all the way to Charles Street, across from Cameron Heights high school. Even for regular meals, people lined up at 4:30 pm for a 7:00 pm meal.

Now guests pick up a numbered ticket any time after 3 pm. The first 20 ticket holders line up at 7 pm and are served within five minutes. Then the next 20 line up and so on until everyone eats. “Our guests rave about the new system,” says Community Centre Director, Jon Hill. Fights in line ended and people who can't stand for long periods are happy.

Distributing food hampers by appointment, instead of everyone lining up at the Centre, has also brought more dignity. With points received based on their financial and family situation, guests “shop” for pasta, rice, fresh produce, bread, milk, and canned food supplied by the Waterloo Region Food Bank. Volunteers connect more deeply with guests and can talk to them about budgeting and nutrition.

From the CEO: Flexible but Focused



Meeting human needs requires the right combination of flexibility and focus. At Ray of Hope, we never want to continue doing something “because that’s the way it’s always been done.” Yet we also don’t want to drift away from our mission and core values.

When we acquired the building at 659 King St. E. in Kitchener, we knew from the first walk-through that renovations would make the space more efficient. Construction on the Ray of Hope Community Centre began last March. One of the ripples of this plan was the decision to stop hosting the Out of the Cold program on Tuesday nights from November to April each year. To meet building code requirements, we would have had to spend an extra \$200,000.

This was a very difficult decision. We care deeply about people who are homeless but wanted to invest our resources in a way that would make the most difference. We were willing to stop providing temporary assistance in hopes that our community would devise a more permanent solution.

Over the course of the summer of 2014, churches decided to close all but one Out of the Cold site. People were angry, and some community members accused Ray

of Hope and churches of not caring. But the result of letting the 15-year temporary solution die was our local government, along with other interested parties, collaborating on a more permanent plan.

The YWCA offered 50 emergency beds in one of their facilities and the Region of Waterloo provided additional funding for support workers. Recognizing that some people came to Out of the Cold to meet social needs, the YWCA chose not to provide meals or socializing. To make sure people who are homeless or vulnerably housed have a place to be during the day, St. John’s Kitchen is open from 8 am to 3 pm on weekdays while the Ray of Hope Community Centre is open 3 pm to 10 pm. Those who absolutely need a place to sleep go to the YWCA for the night. Anyone who stays more than one night is approached by an outreach worker to help them find permanent housing. Since November 2014, 37 people have been housed.

Recently, we also had to be flexible with our Youth Employment Program. With the loss of more than \$250,000 in government funding in September 2013, we faced a

major crisis. We are committed to train young people with barriers to employment but needed to find a different model than the one we had been using for ten years.

I am excited to share that with some creative thinking, difficult resource allocation decisions, and new partnerships, we have adjusted this program and we believe made improvements. (See the article on page 1). Currently we have seven youth engaged in the training program, which is much more sustainable in its new format.

Though the way we deliver our programs may change, our commitment to “Demonstrate the love of Christ with those who are disadvantaged, marginalized, or troubled” will not change. Thankfully, we serve a God who is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8), so we will continue to confidently trust Him to lead and guide us.

Harry Whyte
CEO, Ray of Hope



RAY OF HOPE GOLF CLASSIC

In support of our Youth Employment Program.

Monday, June 8th, 2015 | Rebel Creek Golf Club
You Golf, People Give, Kids Thrive
Register at www.rayofhopegolfclassic.net



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