

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OPENING OF WARMING CENTRE & SUPPORT SERVICES FOR UNSHELTERED IN ST. STEPHEN

The Unsheltered Working Group of St. Stephen is pleased to share that our community's winter out-of-the-cold warming centre opened its doors on Tuesday, December 13th. Since that first night, the warming centre has welcomed clients from 8:00 PM - 8:00 AM, 7 days a week, in its central downtown location at 51 King Street using a side entrance found at 1B Prince William Street.

The centre offers a safe, warm location that provides hot beverages, snacks, various activities, wifi and tv. The warming centre is staffed with a warming centre manager, overnight staff and daytime support staff. In partnership with Neighbourhood Works every morning from 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM, breakfast is available at 59 Union Street. At Neighbourhood Works, there are also shower facilities and laundry available for anyone in the unsheltered community during those breakfast hours, regardless if they choose to use the warming centre or not.

"NWI is pleased to be the lead organization in this initiative to assist some of our unsheltered neighbours in partnership with many individuals and organizations in our community. The centre has welcomed guests on the first night and the number has increased over the past few weeks. We have yet to meet capacity, but as it gets colder that will likely change. Thank you to our generous, supporting and caring town and neighbours for all the help in making this a success." Jim Stuart, Executive Director Neighbourhood Works

The opening of the warming centre has been just one piece of the puzzle that the working group has been working on to assist those experiencing unhousing. A smaller team of community partners was formed to focus on the personal needs of individuals currently unhoused called the Community and Social Response Team (CSRT).

"Our first goal was to secure funding and hire an Outreach Worker which has been completed through a partnership with the John Howard Society, Social Development and Neighbourhood Works. The CSRT team also recognized that many individuals that are unhoused lack basic supplies such as socks, sleeping bags and first aid kits. We have developed a priority list of needs and are encouraging the community to support with donations, if possible. The next two goals for the CSRT will be to activate a Rapid Rehousing Team for St. Stephen and form a harm reduction network for the community." Heather Chase, Community Developer, Horizon Health

Donations have been accepted at Neighbourhood Works and are distributed throughout the community by the community outreach worker and volunteers with Neighbourhood Works. The CSRT team has representatives from many invested community organizations, who will continue together on paths forward for those experiencing being unsheltered.

Sophia Recovery Charlotte County proudly supports this wonderful initiative in our community. As Community Coordinator, I felt it was essential to contribute to the planning process through the unsheltered committee, in order to provide a voice for our clients who are concurrently struggling with addiction and housing. We are very excited about the launch of the Warming Centre, and believe that all women deserve the right to have their basic needs met first and foremost. The ability for a woman to access shelter (and ultimately stable housing) is a critical factor in her recovery journey. This is only the first step in the right direction, and we are committed to the growth of this initiative for all unsheltered or unhoused women in Charlotte County. Emily Rodas, Community Coordinator, Sophia Recovery Centre Charlotte County

The unsheltered housing working group are well aware that these steps are just the beginning of all the necessary work to ensure every member of the St Stephen and the surrounding area has the safe and affordable housing they deserve.

Learn more about what has already been accomplished, who's involved and how you can help as we work together to end homelessness in our community on the Together St Stephen website: <http://togetherststephen.ca/>

Neighbourhood Works

Neighbourhood Works is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that believes in a strong, inclusive neighbourhood in which community members fully participate in opportunities to enhance well-being for all. Together, we can advocate for change.

John Howard Society

The John Howard Society is an organization which exists to promote and support healthy and safe communities by mobilizing partners and engaging families and individuals while addressing the social conditions that give rise to crime.

Sophia Recovery Centre

At Sophia, we empower all women seeking recovery from addiction to take their lives back via a range of daytime programs including on site and virtual peer support services, 12 step coaching, group therapy and individual counselling.