

# FRESH START SUPPORT SERVICES



*"To Provide Hope and a Future"*

**ANNUAL REPORT** 2016

# Message from the Board President

This past year was a chapter filled with adventures, fitting for a legendary tome. From the fire that was confined to a single apartment thanks to the quick response of staff member Carolyn Bernardo and the St. Thomas Fire Department, to the grand opening of The Family Central Apartments in partnership with an amazingly God-centred team, both arms of Fresh Start Support Services had plenty to be thankful for. We welcomed new Board and staff members to our team bringing new and fresh perspectives.

Coupled with our celebrations, we endured challenges and losses. One of our founding Board members, James Carruthers, bid his farewell from the Board after 30 years, as did long time supporter Ted Linker, a Board member since 2008. We wish them all the best as they continue to serve the Lord.

As we have before, Fresh Start ended the year with a deficit, though confident that the Lord would make a way for His ministry to flourish in ways never seen before. We are grateful to our supporters and sponsors who continue to see us through the challenges by their generous donations, gifts, and prayers. We sincerely thank them for partnering with Fresh Start.

With every challenge comes a new opportunity. The Board at Fresh Start Support Services is excited about the future of the ministry. We continue to hold to the belief that God has ordained this organization to meet the needs of those needing a hope and future. Together, with the staff and community partners, the Board at Fresh Start look to the future as the next chapter in the story that began nearly 30 years ago.

Todd Rowley

## Our Staff 2016

We are blessed to have a dedicated team of Christian workers who believe Fresh Start is more than a job, it is a personal ministry for each of them.

The following testimonial from one of our staff members says it all:

*“What I appreciate most about Fresh Start is the opportunity to work with the women and babies that come to us. While they may be considered the most difficult cases by many, they represent those who are almost always wounded, struggling, untrusting, yet deserving of no judgment, God’s love and our best work. I appreciate them for allowing me to be a part of their story regardless of how it ends. I appreciate that Fresh Start gives them the chance that they want... The thing is... they can leave knowing love and respect possibly for the first time. The other thing that I appreciate so very much is the team that stands beside me. This is not a workplace, rather a family. While there is leadership and seniority, we are all equal in respect, passion and matter of the heart.”*

It is easy to understand why we call our staff our greatest asset.

## Fresh Start Maternity Supports

Lori Wall, Executive Director

Marjorie Steenbergen, Program Manager

Anna Gohm, Client Support Worker

Carolyn Bernardo, Client Support Worker

Justine Gordon, Client Support Worker

Candice MacDouell, Client Support Worker

Lisa Siemens, Community Development Worker

Sue Sawatzky, Night Support Worker

Carol Sluis, Tutor

Serena Evans, Tutor & Relief

Michelle Van Vliet, Relief

Birtha Wall, Client Support Worker

## The Family Central Apartments

Lori Wall, Executive Director

Birtha Wall, Support Worker



# FRESH START

## MATERNITY SUPPORTS

O/B Fresh Start Support Services



Almost 30 years ago, a visionary group of Christians answered God's call and established a group home in Springfield, Ontario in response to the need for a viable alternative to abortion for young women.

Since that date it has been our honour, privilege and ministry to serve well over 1000 clients.

### Our Vision

From Jeremiah 29:1, *"to provide hope and a future"* to everyone the Lord leads to our door.

Our vision includes a plan for each person; to provide them with a place of safety, security, protection, and comfort, to ensure, as far as possible, their physical and emotional wellbeing.

It is our vision to provide our clients with a place free from disturbance, a place of calm and restfulness. A place to regroup and recover their strength.

Above all, we provide hope for a better future and a dedicated, committed Christian staff to travel the road, to a better future, with each resident.

### Our Mission

To show and share Christ's love to pregnant and parenting women in need of support.

To improve the quality of life for them and their children.

To help them succeed in life and parenting by equipping them with the required support, including life skills training.

### Our Services

Throughout the years Fresh Start has been home to clients with young children or those expecting a child. Through the ministry, 100's of women have chosen to give birth to their child rather than to have their pregnancy terminated.

We support our clients through the challenges related to addictions, mental health issues, abuse, and homelessness and assist them with parenting and life skills training.

In 1995 we established support housing in St. Thomas to provide semi-independent living for young women, age 16 and over, who have need of pre and post natal support yet do not wish to live in a family style setting.

Our Pregnancy Support Centre was established in 2000 to try and address the high teenage pregnancy rate in the St. Thomas area.

In 2010 we amalgamated our group home into our St. Thomas property, our current home 118 Centre St, St. Thomas, which now houses and acts as home base for all our services, including Support Housing, and Crisis Pregnancy Centre. Our original home in Springfield was sold at that time.

Our service model includes an individual case worker for each resident, with college trained support workers and transitional community support to serve women leaving our supportive housing and going to their own homes.

# 2016 in Review

In 2016, we served a total of 20 women plus children residentially. We had a total of 42 new applications. Two women carried over service from 2015. Four women that we served were community clients in our apartments.

## 2016 In House Programs

**Healthy Baby, Healthy Brains** – A program to provide parents with information on important actions they can take to foster their baby's brain development. These include responding to their baby's needs, interacting with them in a positive way, providing opportunities for learning, etc.

**Me, My Baby, Our World** – A strength based program, reflective engagement model, this group program focuses on the interaction and relationship between the young parent and their infant.

**Taming your Fears** – A faith based program that is offered to encourage learning a new approach to fear that will help you overcome any obstacle you are facing with joy and success.

**Christian Fellowship** – A faith based program offered to women encouraging a deeper understanding of the bible and building a relationship with God.

**Elgin St Thomas Public Health Unit (PHU)** – Visits Fresh Start weekly for well baby checks.

Many other short session programs offered throughout the year, including: infant massage, couponing, organizational programs, food programs, budgeting, shaken baby, infant CPR and the use of the Realityworks parenting program for prenatal women.

## 2016 Out of House Programs in Partnership with Community Services

**Balaclava Street Adult and Alternative Education Centre** – Provides education in all subject areas from grade 9-12.

**Central Community Health Centre (CCHC)** – Provides primary health care for women without a doctor. Identification Clinic: helps to replace lost or damaged identification, fill in the forms for replacement birth certificates, health cards and other identification.

**Mission Thrift Store** – The women give back to the community by volunteering at Mission Thrift Store, pricing and preparing low-cost clothing and household items for sale there.

**St Thomas Public Library** – Books and Bounces is a drop in self led program that helps create a special bond between mother and baby through rhymes, songs, and stories. Gale Courses: An education program that offers hundreds of online courses that are accessible online for advancement in goal oriented studies.

**Merrymount Children's Centre Reconnect** – An education program that helps teen mothers cope with their new role as parents while allowing them to work on getting their diploma. Provides parenting education, support and development of skills in personal well-being.

**Elgin St Thomas Public Health Unit (PHU)** – Fresh Start residents have utilized the PHU's sexual health clinics, immunization clinics and prenatal classes.

**Addiction Services of Thames Valley** – Provides programs, screening, assessment, treatment planning and support as well as education to persons who are concerned about or struggle with substance misuse.

**Counselling** – provided by various sources.

**Right from The Start** – A program that teaches parents methods shown to be effective in reducing parenting stress and improve parent-child relationships. Parents work together on solutions to parenting challenges, share ideas and explore the many facets of parenting.

**Nobody's Perfect** – A program designed to meet the needs of parents who are young, single, socially or geographically isolated, or who have low income or limited formal education. It is offered in communities by facilitators to help support parents and young children.

**SafeCare®** – This is an evidence-based, parent-training program for parents of children ages 0-5 years. SafeCare providers work with families in their homes to improve parents' skills in three areas: (1) parent-infant/child interaction skills, (2) health care skills, and (3) home safety. SafeCare is typically conducted in weekly home visits lasting from 50-90 minutes each. The program is typically provided for about 18 weeks for each family.

**Positive Parenting Program** – A flexible program that teaches a practical way to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation.

## Resident Testimonials

### RESIDENT 1

Fresh Start made me realize what's really important in life and gave me motivation to change.

### RESIDENT 2

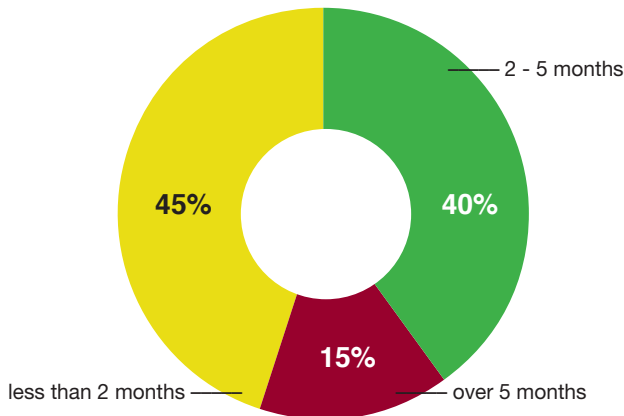
Fresh Start gave my son and I a place to thrive, a place where I could focus on us and not have outside stressors added to our world. They provided a happy place where my baby and I got to get close and have all my new mom questions answered.

### RESIDENT 3

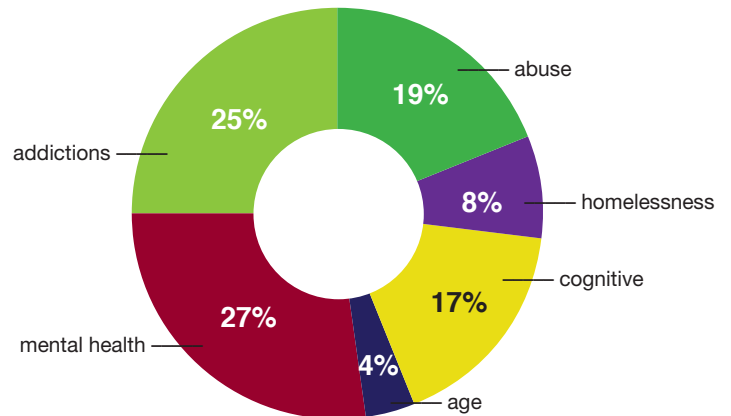
I think that Fresh Start is an excellent program, it helped me grow as a person and a mother. Staff was really supportive and helped me mentally and emotionally. I really enjoyed my time at Fresh Start! I learned a lot about being a mother and about myself as an individual, it gave me hope for the future. Fresh Start helped me become more motivated. They helped me get more in touch with my inner self, goals and dreams etc. I became more independent and grew in my spiritual life.

## Fresh Start Maternity Supports

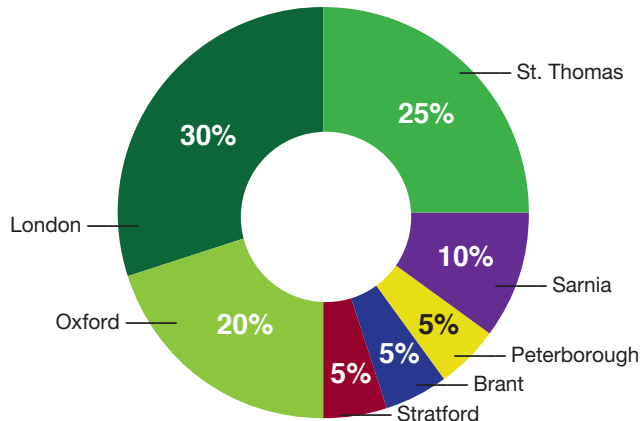
### Length of Stay



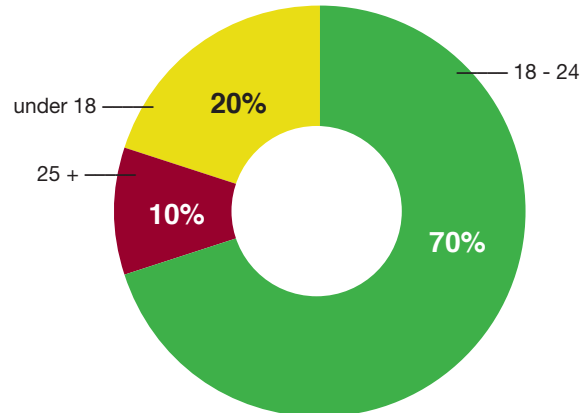
### Primary Issues



### Area Served



### Age of Residents



Throughout 2016 our staff continued to expand their skill set and trained in:

**Infant Mental Health:** to raise awareness and understanding of the unique needs of infants and toddlers in order to promote healthy social emotional development in the early years and reduce the likelihood of poor mental and physical health outcomes in the later years.

**Mental Health First Aid:** to increase awareness of signs and symptoms of the most common mental health problems, and to increase the confidence participants have in engaging someone experiencing a mental health problem or crisis.

**Trauma Informed Care:** to increase the ability to understand, recognize, and respond to the effects of all types of trauma.

**Bridges out of Poverty:** to strengthen understanding of poverty, changing the mindset about it, and learning local strategies to make a difference in our community. Bridges brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty.

**SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool):** to understand issues regarding homelessness as well as learn how to use the assessment tool.

**Excellence in Housing based Case management:** to learn approaches, strategies and tools to improve long term housing stability.

**Occupational Health and Safety:** to foster a safe and healthy work environment, and to protect co-workers, residents, and many others who might be affected by the workplace environment.

## Finances and Fundraising

We ended our year with income of \$347,847 and expenses of \$373,039, leaving a deficit of \$25,192.

**Note:** Early in 2017, our vast array of faithful committed donors, supporters of our ministry, blessed us with a tremendous response to our need for funding. Today our ministry operates with a comfortable reserve and we fully expect our ongoing fundraising efforts will lead to a surplus in 2017. The mortgage on our home has been reduced to less than \$60,000.

Our funds came primarily from 5 sources:

1. Donors
2. Baby Bottle Campaign - held annually between Mother's Day and Father's Day
3. Annual Banquet – funds come from both banquet sponsors and donors (2017's banquet will be held on Friday, September 29)
4. City of St. Thomas funding and other grants
5. Rent, Room and Board – geared to the income of our clients.

In addition, we are thankful for the many other fundraisers and donations of supplies, gift cards, etc., provided to our ministry.

We continue our efforts to build up our base of monthly donors to provide a significant stable foundation for our financial requirements.

## Our Board of Directors 2016

Todd Rowley - President

Team Assistant, Family & Children Services

Susan Burke - Vice President

Retired Public Health Nurse

Carla Matos - Secretary

Teacher, Thames Valley District School Board

Father Gilbert Simard -Treasurer

Priest, Diocese of London

Jasmine Pink

Director of Marketing, CJ Pink Ltd.

Dr.Carroll Harder

Physician, St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital

Rachel Oegema

Social Worker, London Health Sciences Centre

James Carruthers (retired in Fall 2016)

Ted Linker (retired in Fall 2016)

## Our leadership focus

- To communicate and deliver our vision and mission to honour the trust and faith of all our stakeholders
- With God's direction and guidance, we will provide the green pasture, still water which leads to restored souls and lives

## Our values and principles

- Commitment to excellence
- Reflecting Psalm 23, provide a green pasture, still waters, and a life and soul restoring environment
- A safe place, the best place

- A home, house, condo, apartment, whichever is best to achieve our vision and mission
- Exceptional staff – life and soul restoring
- Compassionate and committed partners whose prayer, time, talents and money are vital to the success of the ministry
- Our partners: donors, volunteers, potential new Board members
- Increase effectiveness of ministry delivery
- Be good stewards, increase our success

## Our Stakeholders

- God – gives us our vision and mission
- Clients, beneficiaries
- Staff, volunteers
- Donors – individuals, churches, organizations, businesses, grant givers, government, foundations

## Others

- Local community – part of a larger community
- Other non - profits
- Regulators - Government
- Better Business Bureau (BBB)
- Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC)

Our Leadership Team is committed to honour the trust of our current stakeholders and to continue and honour the ministry legacy of those who have gone before.

Together with the staff and community partners, the Board at Fresh Start looks forward to the future and the next chapter in the story that began 30 years ago.

# History of Fresh Start Support Services

**1987** became incorporated as Rehoboth Girls Home of Refuge & Support

**1988** opened Group Home in Springfield (owned property)

**1995** opened Support Housing in St. Thomas (leased)

**2000** opened Crisis Pregnancy Centre in St. Thomas (leased)

**2005** purchased 118 Centre St. St. Thomas and moved Support Housing and CPC into that building

**2009** rebranded to our operating name of Fresh Start Maternity Supports as well as implemented our new service model of having individual case workers for each resident, with college trained support workers.

**2010** amalgamated group home into 118 Centre Street and sold Springfield property, added Transitional Community Support to serve women leaving our supportive housing and going to their own homes

**2016** added The Family Central Apartments to our list of services

**2016** changed official name to Fresh Start Support Services

**2016** accredited with Canadian Council of Christian Charities

**2017** accredited with Better Business Bureau

# Exciting New Developments

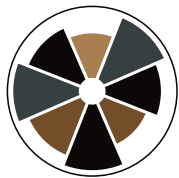
## Strategic Planning Initiative

The Board has been actively engaged in discussions with our community partners to determine the future vision for Fresh Start Support Services. We have narrowed our focus to 2 exciting opportunities which we continue to explore. We will have further details to share in the months to come.

## Executive Director Leadership

In May 2017, our Executive Director Lori Wall applied for and was successful in securing the position of Residential Services Manager at the Salvation Army Centre of Hope in London. It has been our privilege to work with Lori over the past 12 years as she served not only as the face of Fresh Start but also as a visionary. The Board wishes Lori much success in her new endeavour.

To move forward, we appointed an interim Administrative Director, Iona Woolley, who has worked behind the scenes with Fresh Start Support Services for a number of years. Iona brings a history of related experience, including other directorships, and a solid understanding of the operations of our organization. She began her new role on May 23, 2017, and will work with us in that capacity until a new Executive Director has been hired.



## The Family Central Apartments



In the Fall of 2016 we began implementing our newest venture – The Family Central Apartments in Aylmer.

The mission of The Family Central Apartments is to share Christ's love by providing a unique apartment community committed to equipping others seeking to build a better future through intentional relationships.

The Family Central Apartments is a unique apartment community that will offer guidance, mentoring, and support for those looking to hold tight to a hand up. By building intentional relationships with people dedicated to supporting others and those looking to build a better future, The Family Central Apartments will serve as a source of hope.

The Family Central Apartments is a partnership with landlords Dave & Mary Thiessen who provide beautiful, newly renovated apartments and Fresh Start

Support Services who provide transitional, supportive housing case management.

This service model, created and implemented by our then Executive Director, Lori Wall, consists of Program Participants who want some assistance to attain goals around employment, education and life skills to increase their standard of living and quality of life. Intentional Neighbours provide support and encouragement to Program Participants on an informal basis as they work towards goals. Staff provide formal supports on a weekly basis through individual and group support meetings and activities. Staff focus on providing housing based supports that ensure housing stability for Program Participants while achieving their goals related to education and employment.