

AT THE Table

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Who do you talk to if your child is using drugs?

Read Supporting Caregivers of At-Risk Youth – p3

Diverse Community Centre Team Meets Man's Desperate Need

Pedro* escaped one of the most dangerous cities in Mexico. When he arrived at Pearson airport in Toronto, he had no contacts and nowhere to go.

Previously, he fled his violent, drug cartel-controlled city by crossing the border into the United States. He was quickly apprehended and deported back to Mexico. But watching his sons succumb to the influence of the destructive culture and the death of his wife nine months ago was too much for Pedro. So he made another desperate attempt to escape. This time he purchased a plane ticket to Toronto.

Upon his arrival, Canadian immigration authorities gave Pedro a choice of where to live. Pedro chose Kitchener-Waterloo and he was dropped off at the Ray of Hope Community Centre.

Recognizing the desperation of Pedro's situation, our diverse, multi-ethnic team sprang into action. While Centre Program Manager, Dan Wideman, called local agencies to mobilize support for Pedro, front line staff member Claudia Sanclemente who is fluent in Spanish, pieced together Pedro's story.

Claudia reached out to the local Latino community for help. Her contacts helped secure a hotel room for Pedro's first night in Kitchener. Dan collaborated with other agencies to find space at a men's shelter. But unfortunately, Pedro couldn't handle living in the shelter environment due to his past trauma from crime and drug abuse.

Pedro shared his fears with our frontline staff, who worked feverishly to make sure Pedro did not end up on the streets. Claudia reached out to Ray of Hope's supporters,



Members of the Ray of Hope Community Centre team Faith Laverty, Claudia Sanclemente, Dan Wideman, and Boris Emanuel.

friends, family, and churches. As a result, she found a safe place for Pedro to live with someone from Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church, one of our major church donors.

Pedro joyfully expressed his thanks! He was finally safe. At Ray of Hope Community Centre, we're so grateful for caring donors—without you, people like Pedro will fall through the cracks!

We work for God's outcome, not the income. Sincere thanks from men and women like Pedro make our efforts and your gifts worthwhile.

*Not his real name

– Boris Emmanuel, Program Supervisor, Ray of Hope Community Centre

YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Ray of Hope was
1 out of 165
Coldest Night of
the Year fund-
raisers in Canada!



THANK YOU

713 walkers in
83 teams, supported
by **28 volunteers**,
raised **\$241,240** with
gifts from **2,771 donors**

SPONSORS

Starbucks Coffee
Company, Martin's
Family Fruit Farm,
Eby Manor Dairy

SHOUT OUT TO

UW School of Pharmacy
for a safe, warm rest
stop and Julie Sawatzky
for taking photos
and video.



Your efforts will demonstrate God's love to people in poverty all year long at our Community Centre.

GOLF FOR A GOOD CAUSE Ray of Hope Golf Classic in support of our Youth Employment Program

1 pm, Monday, June 20, 2022
Rebel Creek, Golf & Country Club

Shotgun start with scramble format.
Includes 18 holes, cart, and dinner.

\$175 with space for 144 golfers of all abilities
Questions? Email golfclassic@rayofhope.net



Register by
scanning this
QR Code



Hot Chili Served by Warm Hearts

Last Christmas the Ray of Hope Community Centre was short on volunteers to serve meals. “Our pastor asked if anyone wanted to organize dinner over the holidays,” says Jane Vander Velden. A retired teacher, Jane thought, “I could do that.” The first meal she and Anita Hoekstra served was such a positive experience they decided to put on a homemade meal every month. Thankfully the two women had no trouble recruiting eager volunteers at Community Christian Reformed Church.

The church pays for the ingredients from their Benevolence Fund and Jane and Anita buy the groceries to make Anita’s chilli recipe.

The two women begin preparing the chilli at the Community Centre at 3:30 to allow it to simmer. Their serving volunteers arrive by 6:30 to dish out the hot meal to hungry guests. “We always get lots of compliments on the chilli, so we make it every time,” says Jane.

Jane remembers a pregnant young woman coming to the serving window for seconds. “She wasn’t more than 25. I couldn’t refuse her; she looked so hungry. She ate two full meals!”

Like other churches who serve meals at Ray of Hope, Community Christian Reformed Church sees it as a vital way to demonstrate God’s love with their local community.



A meal team from Community Christian Reformed Church serves chilli to hungry guests at the Community Centre each month.



To volunteer, visit rayofhope.net/how-you-can-help/volunteer/ or scan this QR Code

Supporting Caregivers of At-Risk Youth

Who do you talk to if your child is addicted to drugs? “Parents fear being judged,” says Brandi Dowe, Program Manager with Ray of Hope’s Youth Addiction Services (YAS). Ray of Hope started the Parent Support group in 2012 to give caregivers of addicted youth a safe place to share challenges. Caregivers who join the group feel a sense of relief when they realize, “I am not the only one.”

Guardians of addicted youth often struggle to set boundaries. “Parents feel discomfort separating their love

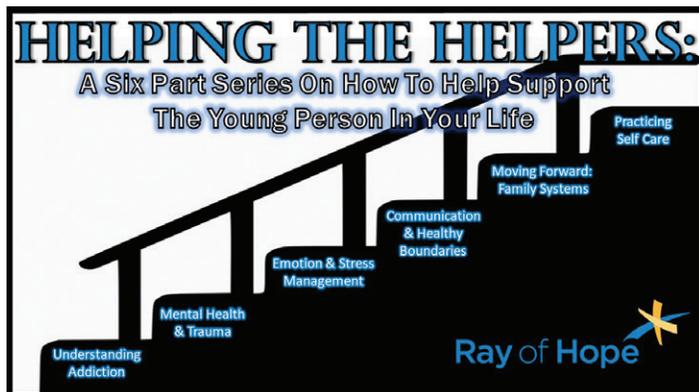
for their child from not condoning their behaviour,” says Brandi. In the group, they learn it’s healthy to keep their homes and themselves safe with boundaries.

The group couldn’t meet in person during the pandemic, so YAS staff created a six-video series called *Helping the Helpers*. This series provides caregivers with knowledge about addiction, self-care tools, and parenting strategies to deal with at-risk youth. Each week, parents watched a video on their own and discussed it in a Zoom group facilitated by a YAS therapist.

After the six-week series, parents wanted to stay connected. “During the pandemic, people felt especially isolated, and there was a lack of access to resources,” says Brandi. In response, the YAS team started a weekly drop-in group where parents could continue to support each other with help from a therapist.

As part of the YAS team for 12 years, Brandi says, “We’re privileged that parents and youth trust us to walk alongside them through their messy, difficult moments and their triumphs.”

Need Support? Visit rayofhope.net/need-help/youth-addiction/ or call 519-743-2311 ext 510





From the CEO: Staying Strong and Resilient

Most importantly, I want to thank each and every one of the people we support. You are the reason we show up every day. You are the reason we do what we do. You inspire us, encourage us and give us purpose. Thank you for your faith in us as we walk these uncertain paths as partners.

In 2021, Ray of Hope's teams rallied beside each other for the people we support.

We continued to pivot and adapt to offer strength-based, trauma-informed programs to empower others to have a sense of peace and wellbeing.

In this issue of *At the Table*, you will read about Pedro, who escaped one of the most dangerous cities in Mexico and how the Community Centre Team worked to make sure Pedro did not end up on the streets. You will also read about the Caregiver Support Program offered from Youth Addiction Services and how they adapted during the pandemic to create a video series

called *Helping the Helpers*. Read about the success of Coldest Night of the Year, Ray of Hope's largest fundraiser. Thank you to all who participated and donated. You will also see how volunteering on a meal team in the community centre changes the lives of both givers and those who receive. These are just a few stories of the work we do at Ray of Hope every day.

You are the reason we show up every day and do what we do.

Let's charge forward with hope for better days to come. Let's not lose sight of our many, many blessings. Keep the faith, hold tight to our bold and unshakeable resilience; that's how we'll create a better future.

On behalf of all of us at Ray of Hope, I wish you peace and well-being.

In the Potter's Palm I remain,
Tonya Verburg

At Ray of Hope we are so blessed to live and work in such a resilient, generous, and supportive community. Despite all the challenges we have all faced, Ray of Hope remains strong.

I thank each of our partners in mission – donors, funders, neighbors, local businesses, and our community, who make up the Ray of Hope family. You all play a role in sustaining our social and economic fabric. Your drive, commitment, and dedication are truly exceptional.

Make a difference in your community! Give today at www.rayofhope.net/donate



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