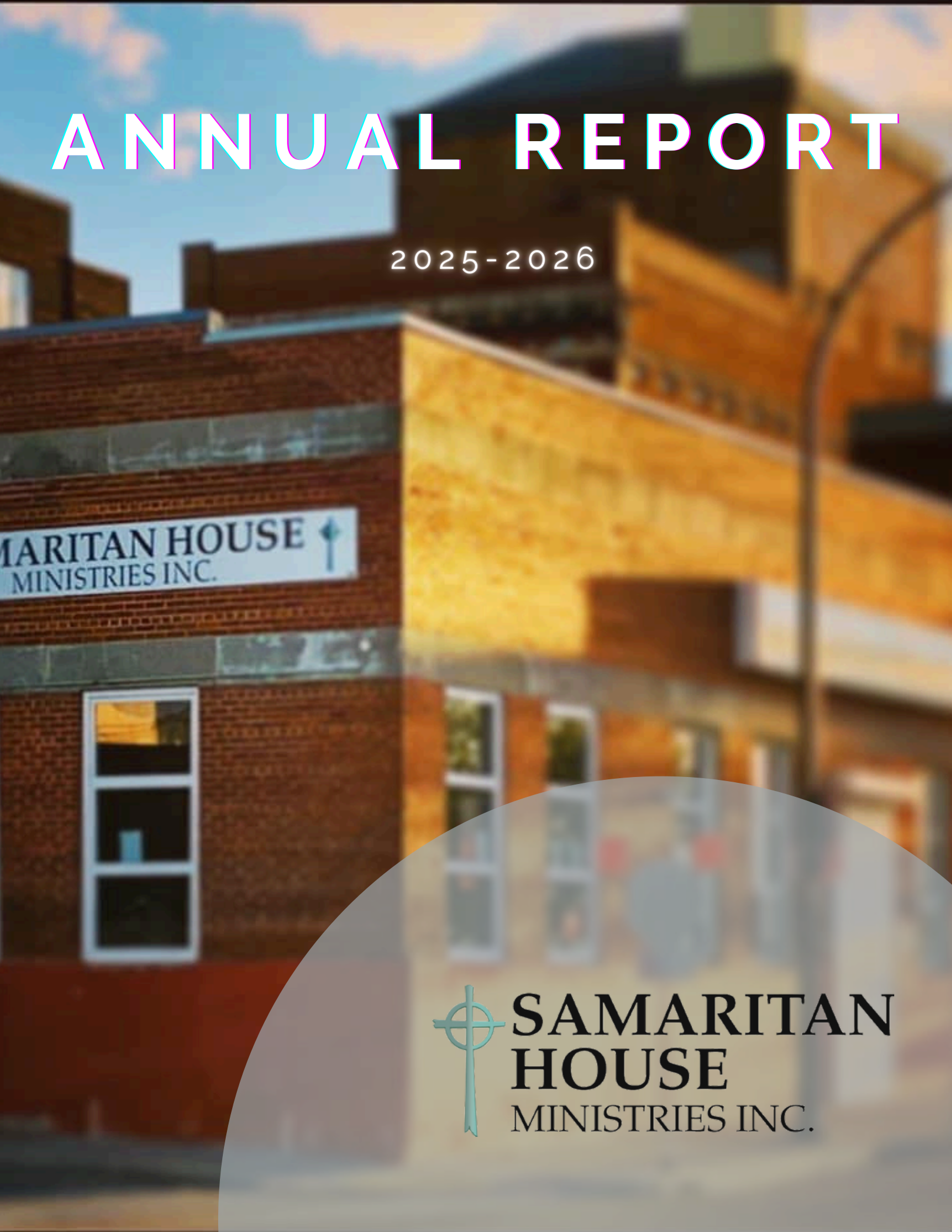
ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026



SAMARITAN HOUSE
MINISTRIES INC.

Board of Directors

***as of March 31st, 2026**

David Simard - Board Chair
Jackie Kamann-Oke - Vice-Chair
Marianne Thiessen - Treasurer
Shelley Mushumanski - Secretary
Brenda Paddock-Thiessen - Member
Nelli Sippel - Member
John DeBeer - Member
Shawna Mozdzen - Member
Michaela Hopfner-Mailman - Member
Rob Reville - Member

SAMARITAN HOUSE MINISTRIES INC.

OUR MISSION

LABOURING TOGETHER WITH ONE VISION - TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

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Land Acknowledgement

Samaritan House Ministries Inc. acknowledge that we serve, work, and gather on Treaty 2 Territory, the traditional lands of the Dakota, Anishinabek, Anisininew, Cree, Dene, and the national homeland of the Red River Métis.
We are grateful to share in the beauty and abundance of this land that has been cared for by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.
Grounded in our faith and shared values, we seek to walk alongside Indigenous peoples in humility and friendship, learning from their teachings and working toward reconciliation and renewal.
May our work here honour the teachings of those who came before us and contribute to a just and healing future for all who call this land home.

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, Donors, and Community Partners,

What a year it has been.

There have been challenges, changes, and plenty of moments when we simply had to find a way forward. Thanks to the commitment of our staff, we did.

To our team, thank you for adapting, stepping up, supporting each other, and continuing to put the people we serve first. We know it wasn't always easy, and we appreciate everything you've done.

We're also grateful to our volunteers, donors, community organizations, businesses, government partners, and everyone who supported us throughout the year. Your time, resources, and support helped make our work possible.

To our Board, thank you for your guidance and committment thoughout the year. There is still plenty of work ahead, but there is also a lot to look forward to. This year showed what we can accomplish when our organization and community work together.

Thank you for being part of it. We look forward to what we can accomplish together in the year ahead.

THANK YOU,

DAVID SIMARD

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2027, Samaritan House Ministries Inc. will celebrate 40 years of serving the Brandon community; and most importantly, forty years of people helping people. Labouring together with one vision - to help those in need.

When Samaritan House began, it was because someone saw a gap—a need that could not be ignored. Women and their children who were leaving gender-based violence needed somewhere safe to go. They needed more than a roof over their heads. So, a group of like-minded individuals began Mary's House Second Stage Housing. The program was created to support individuals leaving an abusive relationship. The path they take with Mary's House is one of new beginnings; residents are rebuilding more than a home. They are rebuilding their life and healing in a new peaceful and foreign place for them. The women and their children are reconnecting to themselves, some for the very first time. The impact of trauma can reach deeply into a person's life—emotionally, physically, financially, and socially. The road forward can be difficult and uncertain yet we make sure they are not alone on their journey.

As we look at the work that Samaritan House does, we must make note of the Food Bank as it is led by our longest-serving staff member, Marcia, who has been part of Samaritan House from the very beginning. When Jim and Astrid departed, they entrusted Marcia with carrying forward the mission and spirit of Samaritan House Ministries Inc. She has embraced that responsibility with dedication, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the people we serve.

Marcia truly defines the heart of Samaritan House. She is a mentor, a confidant, a friend, and a steady presence for staff and clients alike. Her heart is devoted to this work and to the people who walk through our doors. For all of us, Marcia is our "go-to" person—the person we turn to when we have something to celebrate, when we need perspective, and when we are trying to find a way through a challenge. Marcia, "thank you" seems like such a small phrase for everything you have given to Samaritan House. We want to take a moment or year to honor Marcia's life long work. You represent the history, the heart, and the spirit of this organization. You remind us why we are here. And you are one of the reasons so many of us continue to believe in this work and continue to show up every day to serve our community.

Okay, we could go on about Marcia yet we should provide some details about the Food Bank. The Food Bank is our only un-funded program that provides more than 16,000 cans and packages of food to people in the Brandon community each month. Yes, that is correct we put out that much food to our community each and every month. That represents more than $100,000 worth of food each year—food purchased with donations and fundraising dollars generously provided by people right here in our community. And that is something worth acknowledging and humbly recognizing that without the Brandon Community's support, we could not carry on our work.

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

How is that possible? It happens because of people like you. It happens because community members organize food drives. Because businesses hold fundraising and food-collection events. Because of initiatives such as Sobeys cash-register donations. Because individuals make monthly contributions. Because people see a need and decide to help, like organizations like Harvest Manitoba who provides 10% of the non-perishable food items each month for the hampers. That means our community helps us fill the gap of more than 14,000 additional units of food every month so that families and individuals can receive the hampers they need. Thank you is never enough.

A team of four knowledgeable, compassionate, and dedicated staff members at the Employment Resource Centre support more than 400 clients each year. They help people review and strengthen their resumes. They help with job applications. They provide workshops. And, perhaps most importantly, they help people see possibilities. For someone who has been out of the workforce, experienced significant life changes, or simply doesn't know where to begin, finding employment can feel overwhelming. Our staff provide the tools, encouragement, and support people need to take that next step. And we are continually amazed by the dedication of the staff who help people move forward toward employment, independence, and a stronger future.

Our Adult Literacy and Learning program is another important part of our story. Each year, facilitators support approximately 80 individuals as they strengthen their skills in areas such as English, mathematics, writing, and other essential learning. For some, it is about improving their confidence. For others, it is about preparing to complete their CAEC. For others, it is about gaining the skills needed to find employment that better matches their abilities and goals. Learning can open doors. And our facilitators are there to help people take that first step—and then the next one.

And then there is Safe and Warm. The staff who work within this program are some of the calmest, strongest, and most empathetic people our clients have the privilege of meeting. Every day, they support individuals experiencing homelessness as they navigate uncertainty, instability, and challenges that many of us may never fully understand. Staff meet people where they are. Staff listen without judgment. They help people navigate difficult circumstances. And employee’s remind individuals that their current situation does not have to define their future.

One of our newer initiatives at Safe and Warm, supported through Reaching Home funding, focuses on prevention and diversion—helping individuals who are at risk of becoming entrenched in homelessness find alternatives before their situation becomes more difficult to change. Sometimes that means helping someone return to their home community. Sometimes it means helping them connect with a community where they have family, supports, or resources available.

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The goal is simple:
Help people find a safe and sustainable place to call home before homelessness becomes entrenched.
So as we approach our 40th anniversary, we are not simply celebrating how long we have been here. We are celebrating every woman who found safety. Every child who found a place to feel secure. Every family who received a food hamper when they needed it. Every person who walked through our doors looking for hope. Every individual who found a job. Every learner who gained confidence. Every person who found a path forward from homelessness.

Every staff member and volunteer who showed up and made a difference.

Every donor. Every community partnership. Every person who said, "How can I help?"

Forty years ago, Samaritan House responded to a gap in our community and today, we continue.

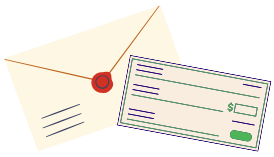
WITH GRACE AND GRATITUDE,

Heather Symbalisty

WHO WE ARE

Samaritan House Ministries operates Manitoba's 2nd largest Food Bank which relies solely on donor support to provide food and essential items to families in need. We also offer a variety of government funded programs including Safe and Warm overnight emergency shelter, Literacy Program, Employment Resource Centre, and Mary's House Second Stage Housing for people fleeing domestic violence. With your support, we work to uplift others in their time of need.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US



Cash or Cheque donations can be mailed or brought in person to our Food Bank location at 820 Pacific Avenue

Non-perishable Food donations can be made through one of our store partners, or brought to our food bank

EFT donations can be sent to exec@samaritanhouse.net. To receive a tax receipt, please include your name and address in the memo line

Credit Card
Scan the QR code for more information on donating through Canada Helps

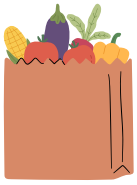
MOST NEEDED FOOD BANK ITEMS

FOOD BANK AND RESOURCE CENTRE

The Food Bank distributed 21,413 hampers in this reporting period. When perishable items such as crusty bread/buns and larger amounts of garden produce are donated, then these items are available in the front reception area to clients on a first come, first serve basis. Staff report many requests for milk/bread between monthly hamper visits.Clients with no access to cooking facilities are able to access food on a weekly basis that does not require preparation in a kitchen. We offered this kit style hamper 2143 times this year.

Food is shared with the Safe & Warm Shelter on a regular basis to create meals and offer breakfast items and snacks for the clients at the shelters. Food is also offered to several community agencies in various ways through out the week; milk is shared with Helping Hands Soup Kitchen and Food for Thought. Bread items are shared with Brandon Friendship centre programs, Westaway Bay, and Teen Challenge. Partnership with Housing First has resulted in monthly food donations to their clients; Housing First staff collect food each week to bring to one location. This ensures that the food is stored appropriately and the client has more reliable access to it. Sioux Valley Dakota Nation also picks up on a weekly basis for two community programs offered in their community.

Relationships with grocery stores continue to be strong, with daily pick-ups made by our organization. We receive approximately 230,927 kgs of food, as well as hygiene and personal items by donation over the year. We continue to receive faithful support from churches, businesses, individuals and families who donate food to enable us to continue serving others. One key example is that our partnership extends to the sharing of cooler space when we have serious need.



230,927 kgs
of food items were collected from our generous donors and store partners to be shared with our clients

59% of clients accessing the food bank are children

21,413 monthly hampers and kits were distributed to households in our community

Harvest Manitoba delivers food to Brandon every other week, and this delivery shows increase in demand.The number of pallets has risen to more than 20 per load. The greatest challenge is to transport the food from MB Harvest to the rural areas. Very dedicated volunteer drivers from the rural area are the backbone of this process.

Second Harvest has coordinated the donation of several very large loads of food that have been accepted, distributed and shared widely. The only products available to us to this point have been potatoes and onions.

The **Meals 2 Go** program was delivered for the entire school year in 2025/26 and will resume in October 2026. There are currently two schools involved, and we have great team work from staff and volunteers to deliver this food to 600 students every Friday!

Volunteerism continues to be a mainstay of food bank operations. A group of faithful volunteers and Youth in Philanthropy students from Vincent Massey bring a lot of energy to the team at the Food Bank. Volunteers are involved in hamper distribution during the work day, and also on occasional evenings and weekends to work on food organization and cleaning tasks that are best done while the building is not open to the public. Several student groups ranging from grade 7/8 to university and college students are involved with educational tours, and/or practicum placements.

Community Support Services with Prairie Mountain Health continue to be involved. These mental health proctors and their clients tended several plots and donated a portion of the produce to the food bank. Career Connections and Early Intervention clients are also involved with gardening and maintaining the garden grounds. Staff involved report that clients are up early and ready to come to the garden, motivated to grow their own food and enjoy the green space and the relationships between gardeners. City of Brandon Green Carts have been added at the garden site to increase efficiency for composting garden waste. Occasionally food waste from the food bank program is diverted from the landfill here as well.

Samaritan House Community Garden and Orchard hosted 15 community gardeners this season. We also had three groups were involved with bringing an additional 13 plus people. Summer staff and volunteers were able to tend more than 32 raised garden beds for use by the food bank.

Southend Community Garden consists of two large plots that are tended by Neelin High school students and one very dedicated community volunteer. This year United Way Summer of Service participants visited the garden twice a week for July and August, helping with harvesting and watering. Neelin students have been involved for several years with planting in May/June and clean up in September/October.

Relocation plans for the community garden at Stickney

The Food Bank Coordinator and a couple of garden volunteers attended a meeting of the City of Brandon Planning Commission to participate in discussion of the current garden/orchard space being allocated to housing for Habitat for Humanity housing projects. The discussion was very positive, the commissioners are knowledgeable and supportive of community gardening in our city in general, and specifically with our organization. The transition to the new garden space will be gradual and with minimal disruption of the current garden plots. There is no need for any movement of garden plots until the new location has been excavated and landscaped. This initial phase of the move will happen late fall 2025. The Food Bank Coordinator has been researching and networking for potential partners and funding sources to start preparing the new space with fencing and installation of a well no earlier than fall of 2027 to allow for the ground to settle.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marcia
Food Bank Coordinator

SAFE AND WARM SHELTER

408 individuals

utilized the overnight shelter space during this period

927 visits

from individuals accessing food

Community Outreach

services are provided to clients visiting the shelter

Safe and Warm Shelter has had another busy year with 408 unique individuals attending with 12,525 visits in total. People come to the shelter for a variety of reasons like food insecurity, we saw 927 visits for people accessing food. We also see people coming to the shelter because they have been released from corrections into our community despite being housed in a different community. Safe and Warm had 214 visits related to discharge from corrections. Funds related to diverting people from the shelter to locations that are more appropriate are difficult to find in our community. Watching people become entrenched in homelessness has prompted us to look at ways to find funding for diversion purposes. Another way clients are being supported in the community is through a Coordinated Access system which is a more formalized way to ensure clients have a fair and equitable way to enter into supported housing. This is part of the HIFIS database that we and other community partners use to support anyone experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness.

We are always extremely grateful to the community, helping us out when we ask for mitts/socks/toiletries/blankets as well as any other items we might need. We are also very grateful to the Food Bank for all the beautiful food, to Crocus Plains Culinary Arts program for preparing the food. Glacier Wash for washing all of our bedding, and for our volunteer Cyril who picks up and delivers that bedding. We are grateful to our community partners who show up to support our clients like 7th Street HAC, Community Paramedics and staff from Community Living disABILITIES Services.

Mostly I am grateful to the team at Samaritan House Ministries and Safe and Warm shelter for their genuine kindness to all who are hurting, trying their best to make a tough day feel a little bit lighter. 🙂

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Heather
Safe and Warm Shelter Manager

ADULT LITERACY AND LEARNING

Welcome to another school year! We are excited to be back and hope to have another successful year!

We had 71 students last year: 33% achieved their goals; 21% are still working on their goals; 23% worked on upgrading in a few areas, and 23% left the program for a variety of reasons.

We start the program with an evaluation to determine their level of English. In most cases, they start with an introductory package of reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking. After they complete this package, they move to the next level. This level is focused on their goals and is divided into the following areas:

1. Preparation for the Mature High School Certificate.igh School Certificate.
2. Obtaining a CAEC certificate (formerly GED)-Math English, Social Studies, and Grammar
3. The Manitoba Stages Program is a program that develops critical thinking skills at three different levels.
4. Preparation for further education and/or employment.
5. Helping newcomers to increase their English benchmarks.

"We strive to have a warm and welcoming class that encourages friendship and community."

We also do general activities with the students, such as Friday EAL class with special topics such as Canadian History, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Truth and Reconciliation Day, games, potluck lunches, etc.

Helping students with other matters, such as driver's licenses, filling out forms, the Canadian Citizenship test, etc. is also an important part of our program.

BLESSINGS,

Margaret
Literacy Coordinator

Tim
Literacy Instructor

MARY'S HOUSE

Mary's House continues to provide support through a dedicated team that includes a Women's Counsellor/Coordinator, Children's Counsellor, Outreach Counsellor and Child Care Worker. Together, the team works to provide counselling, resources, advocacy, and support to women, children and families in the community.

During the 2025-2026-year, Mary's House supported a total of 7 women and 15 children. The length of each client's stay depends on their individual circumstances and needs, with an average stay of approximately 6 months. Throughout the year, Mary's House recorded 901 bed nights for women and 1183 bed nights for children.

Including both inhouse, follow-up and outreach clients, the Women's Counsellor provided 221 counselling sessions, the Children's Counsellor provided 118 sessions, and the Outreach Community Counsellor provided 169 sessions.

Counselling is individualized to reflect the needs and experiences of each client. Some of the common areas addressed include the effects of domestic violence, PTSD, childhood trauma, anxiety, financial and budgeting concerns, and assistance with navigating Child and Family Services (CFS) and other legal matters. Creative approaches such as art and journaling are also used as therapeutic tools. Clients are encouraged to share their experiences and reflect on how past events have influenced their lives.

Storytelling can also be an important part of the counselling process, allowing clients to talk through significant experiences in a supportive environment. Once clients have had an opportunity to process and deco press, counselling also focuses on helping them identify goals and move forward. Mary's House continues to celebrate client's successes, including finding employment, returning to school, pursing education, and building greater independence. Support can also continue for up to one year after a client leaves the program, when needed.

Mary's House also continues to offer group programming for children and women in the community. Groups are offered regularly and focus on topics such as anxiety and depression, budgeting, healthy boundaries, healthy relationships, communication with teenagers, grief, anger management, and self-care. These groups provide and opportunity for participants to learn new skills, connect with other, and develop healthy ways of coping.

Support extends beyond counselling. Mary's House continues to provide families with practical resources such as craft and art supplies, children's books, games, and other tools. These resources give children hands-on ways to express themselves and develop coping strategies related to anxiety, body safety, and bullying, and emotional well-being.

Mary's House remains committed to create a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment where women and children can access the resources, counselling, and encouragement they need as they work toward healing, stability, and a positive future.

GRATEFULLY,

Brittany
Women's Counsellor/Coordinator

508
counselling sessions were offered to women and children

Group Support
available to women in our community

7 women, 15 children
were supported in-house through our program this year

6 months
average length of stay for families

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

The Employment Resource Centre is a space where individuals can come to view a job board or meet with one of our 3 Employment Officers. The program has been highly successful in assisting 544 distinct clients this past year.

The ever-changing job market creates an additional challenge for many of our clients who have not been in the work force for some time. Our Employment Officers have worked hard at making sure they keep appraised of the market changes and help the clients to the best of their abilities.

Our organization is committed to working alongside clients through their journey to obtain long-term employment within the community.

The Employment Officers who work in the program focus on a few specific areas to improve clients' understanding of the modern job search along with refreshing some of those skills:

- Creating personalized and effective job search plans
- Assisting with the development of professional resumes and cover letters
- Preparing clients for job interviews through coaching and mock interviews
- Providing one-on-one coaching, encouragement, and ongoing support
- Facilitating engaging and informative employment workshops

544 clients

secured meaningful employment or enrolled in further education or training

An important part of the work is also providing one or two options to clients who may not have an outfit to wear to an interview or their first day of work. Our staff continuously refresh our Fit for Work clothing to help clients feel confident and professional when showing up at their new workplace.
We also offer a job board for individuals who may not have access to a computer, and laptops for clients to submit online application.

THANK YOU,

Gracie & Jacquie
Employment Officers