

Message from the Director

2015 began under a great load of snow; we dealt with ice, frozen locks, leaking roofs and delayed deliveries as the roads shrunk to near-impassable. That winter was hard for everyone, but as always was even harder for those who already suffer from marginalization. Having to walk everywhere is hard enough, unplowed sidewalks and icy streets added extreme challenges - especially for those who need to find a meal.

Yet even at its most challenging, there was always laughter. And as is so often true, people pull together to overcome adversity. Our amazing volunteers made heroic efforts to get through blizzards because they knew people depend on us. Supporters recognized the need, and sent more coats, boots and socks than we've ever seen (maybe more socks than there are feet in all Halifax!). And as is so often true, it is those we serve who showed the greatest resiliency and generosity - they helped dig people out and pushed stuck cars, they formed bucket-brigades to get food deliveries into our food bank, and they came to us for coats and food to take to others who could not get out of their homes.

This past year the weather has been gentler but our work continues. We helped a lot of people (as you'll see in this newsletter), and a lot of people helped us. Hardship balanced with resiliency. We haven't solved the problem of poverty (yet), but we made a difference and that's no small thing.

Sandra A Nicholas
Executive Director

GOODBYE UNITED MEMORIAL, HELLO HOPE

After 95 years serving the north end of Halifax, United Memorial Church held its last service in January 2016. The congregation merged with Edgewood-Oxford United Church and together they created the new entity - Hope United Church.

Following the sale of United Memorial property, the new Hope United congregation held a special service highlighting Brunswick Street Mission's work to alleviate suffering and poverty. During the service, they presented the BSM with a cheque for \$49,330.97, representing 10% of the sale of the old property!

Thank you so much Hope United!



The Brunswick Street Mission seeks to inspire a better quality of life through a ministry of care that addresses physical, emotional, practical, and spiritual needs for those experiencing poverty.



BRUNSWICK STREET MISSION

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2016

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2015 ACHIEVEMENTS

Food Bank

The Food Bank provides basic grocery support for those who have a home (i.e., kitchen).

- Feed Nova Scotia donated food valued over \$100,000, plus other donations est. \$10,000
- 251 households served, 30% with children



Benevolent Program

The Benevolent Program provides short-term crisis support, often of a financial nature. As poverty is often chronic, it doesn't take much for a person's budget to fail. A broken fridge, a minor accident or illness, and rising costs can add tremendous pressures. Our goal is to seek opportunities to invest in change - can we help the person find ways to solve their issues, for example, we provided travel costs for runaway youth to return home, work boots for employment, and relocation help for battered women and children.

- Approximately 500 individuals were provided support, including assessment, connecting to other programs, advocacy and budgeting
- 64 individuals were supported financially, including 32% with rent and 14% with power or heat



Trustee Program

Under a grant from the Department of Community Services, the Trustee program helps people by receiving their income and directly paying primary expenses (usually rent and power). For individuals who are challenged to self-manage their income, this helps people move from shelters to homes and reduces risk of becoming homeless.

- 179 clients in 2015 - avg 150 active in any month

Tax Returns

The Tax Returns Program completes tax returns for low-income individuals. This is often critical for people who are homeless as they cannot access many government services until they resolve years of unfiled returns. The program has grown dramatically each year since beginning in 2008.

- 867 clients and 1246 returns
- The number of clients is up by 21% over previous year
- The return count (reflects number of unfiled back years) is up by only 1.7% - we seem to be reducing the backlog of returns that clients haven't filed

Clothing Bank

The Clothing Bank provides free clothing and household necessities to persons in need.

- 20,000 kg donated
- 3500 visits. Many visit more than once, and many pick up clothing for others in their family and community

Breakfast Program

The Breakfast Program serves breakfast 6 days a week.

Guests include persons who are temporarily homeless as a result of a crisis (i.e. family breakdown), those who struggle with chronic addiction or mental illness, and many who are housed but struggling to make ends meet. In serving breakfast, we also have the opportunity to establish relationships and provide bridges to other supports and programs that help a person transition to housing and self-sufficiency.

- 18,946 breakfasts served
- \$19,500 in purchased groceries = just over \$1/plate
- An additional donated food value of \$10,000 (estimate) and the combined efforts of over 100 volunteers

