

Dear friends of the Gateway Extreme Weather Shelter

I would like to begin this letter by thanking God for his love, grace, mercy and protection to all of us at the shelter, this past season once again.

I cannot begin to express my appreciation to all of you, for once again helping out at the Gateway Extreme Weather Shelter. So many of our brothers and sisters do not have a place to call home, and the shelter gives them a bit of relief during the winter months. This year we had a challenging start, as a number of our staff and volunteers decided to take some time off from helping out at the shelter. Many of them had been part of the team for a number of years, and we are grateful for them, and all that they brought to the shelter. We were very thankful that some new volunteers joined us this year from Gateway Community CRC, and a large group from Pathways Christian Church as we did not have enough people to successfully run the shelter.

I would like to thank all the many people who prayed for myself and everyone else working and staying at the shelter. Your prayers were answered and greatly appreciated.

A huge thank you to all of the talented chefs, our guests always appreciate the homemade food and would love to thank you in person. At two in the morning when some of them arrive, they like nothing better than a P and J sandwich. (Peanut butter and Jam) and something hot to eat. I know that bringing those crock pots

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up the grand staircase can be a challenge, so thank you. The buns are a little easier to carry but it is still a work out, no matter how you look at it. I would also like to thank those of you who made it possible for some of our volunteers to bring the food during the day.

Thank you to all the awesome volunteers who gave up their evenings to come and help out at the shelter. The shelter is always open when the weather is not that great, and I am sure sometimes it would have been nice to just stay at home. The volunteers make it possible for the shelter to run smoothly.

I would also like to thank the wonderful staff, for the evening and nights that you came out. At times you have had to make some tough decisions, deal with challenging situations and still be compassionate. There were also a

number clean ups that had to be done when some of our guests were quite sick which also is not a fun task.

I would like to thank Pastor Marcel for his continued encouragement and support as the shelter falls under his care at Gateway.

I would like to thank Gateway Community CRC for continuing to support and see the need for this important ministry in our beautiful city of Abbotsford.

A big thank you also goes out to our community partners.

First of all to Jesse Wegenast who makes the call in Abbotsford if the shelters are open or closed. He is also one of our support persons and organizes many different things in the community as they relate to the shelter.

Once again thank you to Al and his team at the Salvation Army, for providing a staff person in the evening to help our staff and volunteers out. Having them there is a wonderful. The SA also provided rides in the morning to pick up the folks and drop them off at various places. The staff were also available if we had questions or needed assistance.

We are also thankful that a van was available once again most evenings to pick up people and bring them to the shelter.

We saw 408 different people which is also an increase from the previous years

I would like to thank all the thrift stores who donate, or give clothes at a discount to the shelter Thank you also to the people who donate and shop for clothes for the shelter. Our guests greatly appreciate the dry clean clothes.

I would like to thank the emergency services, police, ambulance and fire fighters who always come to the clients and our aid when we call. They are an important piece of this gigantic puzzle that we are all a piece of.

Thanks to BC Housing for their encouragement, support and for covering most of the finances involved with operating the shelter.

I am sad to say that this year once again we had a staff member who was physically assaulted, and a number of staff and volunteers who were affected emotionally and mentally by this assault. The staff member is doing well and has continued to work at the shelter.

This is the 7th year that Gateway has been providing a safe, friendly, clean, warm and dry place for people to stay who have no where else to go. This is the 6th year that the shelter has run in its current format.

This past season we were open for 101 nights which is an all-time record for us. Last season we were open 89 nights which was a lot. We saw 408 different people which is also an increase from the previous years. Last season we saw was 370 which was a lot higher then the previous years also. In total

2794 people walked though the shelter doors looking for some compassion to help them in their time of need. Last season we had 1930. Some people only came once or twice, and others would come back night after night. Many people have told us that is their favourite shelter. They would say thank you in the morning, and when you told them the shelter would be open again the next night, they would sigh with relief. Some people who stay at the shelter have a part time job but cannot afford, or find a place to live so they would wake up very early in the morning to get to work on time. Others are waiting to get into treatment beds and are happy that Gateway is available. There are also others who would love to make changes in their lives but do not have the support network at this time to make that a reality. The folks who stay at the shelter come from all walks of life and have had trauma in their past that they are trying to cope with.

This year we had one young man who was only 24 years old pass away from a drug overdose. This did not happen while he was at our shelter, but never the less it was extremely sad, as he had stayed with us 33 times and some of us knew him quite well.

We also had a man who had stayed many times at the shelter for the last six years pass away this week. He was only 54 years old and very well known to us. He had a wonderful smile. He had a number of health issues along with struggles with addiction.

The same day that he passed away I was asked by someone if I truly believed we are helping these people and not enabling them with this program (the Shelter) This is a good and fair question as many people have mixed feeling about this whole situation including myself. At the end of the day I truly believe we are. As long as there is life there is hope. These people are created in the image of God just like you and me. The more involved you become with the shelter the more you see their true selves, and not the mental health challenges, the trauma and the addiction issues.

The time has come for me to step down as the coordinator of the Gateway Shelter. I have been in this position for 6 years. I have enjoyed this role over all, and learned a lot. I have meant many new wonderful people who I otherwise would not have known, and my life is the better for it. I will still be part of the shelter as I will continuing to work some of the night shifts. I will also mentor and assist the new coordinator(s) as needed. We are currently in the process of finding a new coordinator.

In closing, thanks again for being part of “the village” that is needed in Abbotsford. This is where God has placed us at this time to be his hands and feet and to let his light shine.

Jenny Vanderheide
Gateway Extreme Weather Coordinator

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matt 25:40 NIV

For those of you who like stats here they are from the last 5 years

Year	Opening Date	Closing Date	Days open	# of Clients	Total
2017-2018					
2018-2019	2018-11-25	2019-03-12	Days 80	272	
2019-2020	2019-11-20	2021-03-09	Days 50	221	
2020-2021	2020-11-30	2021-03-30	Days 73	218	
2021-2022	2021-11-09	2022-03-19	Days 89	372	1930
2022-2023	2023-11-02	2023-03-26	Days 101	408	2794