

MennoHomes Inc. recognizes the generosity of Leis Feed & Supply Ltd. for their donation towards Pond View Village in Wellesley.



Greg Jantzi, Gary Leis, presenting a cheque to David Bechtel, MennoHomes Inc. Treasurer. Gary Leis offered to go public in the hope of encouraging others in the Wellesley area to assist MennoHomes in its very worthwhile venture, Pond View Village. Three other businesses, who responded in this spirit, were Kitchener Steel, Poole Electric, and the Wellesley Home Centre. Please see "page three" for a general acknowledgement of all participants!

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Footnote 1: *The six advocates who were instrumental in producing the information that demonstrated the level of need all interact daily with Low German families. MennoHomes would like to acknowledge the great value of the services of:*

- Lily Hiebert Rempel, MCC Ontario Low German Co-ordinator
- Shirley Redekop and Sue Martin, Rural Outreach Workers under the auspices of Mosaic Counseling and Family Services
- Brenda Gingerich and Esther Janzen, Family Support Workers and interpreters with the St. Jacobs Family Support Centre for Low German Families
- Peggy Snyder, nurse-practitioner, based in Linwood and Wellesley, under the Woolwich Community Health Centre

Footnote 2: *Among the many rich blessings experienced by MennoHomes in the Wellesley project, now known as Pond View Village, was the willingness of Murray Leis to serve as Project Manager in lieu of a general contractor. Under Murray's excellent leadership, involving the co-ordination of trades and volunteers, the project finished on time and virtually on budget. Assisted by his wife, Marilyn, they are the owners of Murray Leis Construction and members of Crosshill Mennonite Church. Murray also is a Director on the Board of MennoHomes Inc.*

Reported by
Martin Buhr

Feeling Great In New Homes

Large rural families are living in buildings that would be condemned if a building inspector made a visit. This was Shirley Redekop's urgent message to the MennoHomes' annual meeting in November, 2007. Shirley, a Rural Outreach Worker, was well qualified to make such a strong statement. On her caseload are mainly large Low German families many living in sub-standard housing conditions.

Two years later a blonde seven-year-old responded to her Wellesley public school teacher's question: "What do you like best about your new home?" Her immediate answer was: "I like that it is warm."

With input from Shirley and five other advocates (see Footnote on page 4) during the summer of 2008, MennoHomes was motivated to apply for governmental funding to build eight dwelling units for large rural families. A year later, in June 2009, MennoHomes received funding to build two Wellesley semis (four units) in the Pond View subdivision. Work began in August, accelerated by a barnraising blitz during the September long weekend by Old Colony Mennonite Church volunteers. It was a Christian service project by 30 men from their Virgil, Aylmer, Crosshill and Drayton churches.

Further making this a very special experience were the donors of building and landscaping materials as well as significant discounts from some of the trades. And many volunteers gave hands-on assistance during the construction period.

Was the effort worth the cost and work? By January 2010 four families had settled into their new four-bedroom homes. One of the mothers shared with MennoHomes that the day after her family had moved in all members reported a great boost to their morale. "We all feel better physically and emotionally," she reported. "We are so grateful to be living here."



"One new home for two families in Wellesley – The Pond View Village"

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Fundraising Report

- MennoHomes set a fundraising goal of \$400,000, to meet its equity contribution requirements, to qualify for Federal and Provincial funding with which to build large units for rural families in need of safe and affordable housing.
- Treasurer Dave Bechtel reports at the end of 2009, MennoHomes received \$380,000 in cash and pledges. *Left to still raise is \$20,000 over two years.*
- With your donations this year, we are hopeful of reaching the goal of \$400,000.
- As we go to press, MennoHomes is waiting to hear when we may expect funding from senior levels of government for the four units still to be built.

You can help through a one time gift or a pledge for each of the next two years.

Here is my:
Gift enclosed: _____

Pledge for 2010 _____

Pledge for 2011 _____

Gift in kind _____
(such as land, house, building for conversion to housing)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

e-mail address _____

Please return pledge & donation to:

MennoHomes Inc.
50 Kent Ave.
Kitchener, ON
N2G 3R1

For further information:
Contact: Martin Buhr 519 578-5546
Or, pama@sympatico.ca

“Reflections on Gratitude and Celebration”

For those of you who were unable to attend MennoHomes Inc. 2009 Annual General Meeting, November 25, 2009, I'd like to share some highlights of that evening. At our 5th year milestone, MennoHomes was pleased to report that our self-financing model seems to be on track. Part of our celebration focused on The Village which is now enjoying its 6th year!

Wendy Shaw's Comments on The Village

Wendy Shaw, who was instrumental in turning around the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard!) situation in 2004, came to the meeting. Here are some of her thoughts:

“We are now all part of the same neighbourhood, where people say hello to one another as they walk up the sidewalk, and take the time to talk about anything from gardening to grandchildren. Anyone who moves into our neighbourhood would have no idea of the controversy that originally existed with the idea of building The Village on our street.”

“The original MennoHomes' plan contravened the basic tenets of Kitchener's Master Plan, which outlines how infill development should reflect the existing character of the neighbourhood and blend in with the community. After many meetings, we did eventually come to a compromise with MennoHomes, and the neighbourhood was convinced that the modified plan for infill development and affordable housing was acceptable and a good use of the land.”

“The Village on Village Rd. is a good example of how working together we can accomplish something that is good for all people in the neighbourhood.”

Charles Bauman's Comments on Stirling Ave. Refugee House*

“In 2004, First Mennonite Church began a dialogue with MennoHomes about a partnership regarding the vacant former Community Justice Initiatives house, owned by First Mennonite Church. FMC would sell the house to MennoHomes deliberately at below market as an act of charity, FMC would have access to the home for refugee settlement, FMC Refugee committee would provide settlement support to the sponsored families, and MennoHomes would function as landlord and cover repair costs.”

The partnership was approved at a special congregational meeting at FMC in January 2005, and the sale went through in July 2005.

In December 2005 a family from Somalia (single mother, her sister and 6 children) moved into the house and stayed until spring of 2008.

In October 2008, a family of 6 from Colombia moved into the house under a 2 year Joint Assistance Sponsorship(JAS) program. The mother's sister and her 5 children were sponsored at the same time, were “adopted” by FMC, and spend a lot of their time at the Stirling Refugee House.

“The partnership is working well. The two organizations working together can do what each individually would have difficulty accomplishing. The other important partnership is with MCC Ontario's Refugee Coordinator – Moses Moini.”

Shirley Redekop's Comments about Pond View Village*

Shirley attended MennoHomes AGM 2 years ago during MennoHomes' brainstorming session as we searched for future affordable housing needs that MH might address.

As Community Outreach Worker based in Woolwich Township, she was very aware of inadequate and unaffordable housing in that rural area, particularly for Low German speaking Mennonites from Mexico and other South American countries.

Note: Please read the article “Feeling Great In New Homes” on page one for the information on Shirley's inspiration and connection with Pond View Village.

*Edited by Dorene Rudy-Snyder

At this time MennoHomes joyfully thanks its many cash donors, the donors of materials, those trades who gave generous discounts, the many general volunteers, the support of local Mennonite Churches, all the riders in the Ride for Affordable Housing, Menno Valley Sound for its benefit concert in the Healing Barn, and volunteers from Old Colony Mennonite Churches for the barnraising weekend to frame, roof and shingle the two buildings. We re-iterate the prayer of the Old Colony men: “To God, be the glory!”

Upcoming MennoHomes Events Calendar 2010

Saturday, September 18, 2010, 7:30 p.m.
MennoValley Sound Fundraiser
At The Healing Barn, 1433 Berletts Rd.
St. Agatha, ON

Monday, November 22, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
MennoHomes Annual General Meeting
St. Jacobs Mennonite Church
St. Jacobs, ON