

10th Anniversary History Project

*Dorene Rudy-Snyder
and Scott Shantz
behind the Centre St.
building on a windy
day!*



Plan to Celebrate With Us!

AGM and 10th Anniversary Celebration

Monday, November 21, 2011

Elmira Mennonite Church

7:00 p.m. Annual General Meeting

7:30 p.m. 10th Anniversary Celebration

Affordable Housing Champions, Supporters, Donors,
and former Board Members will be recognized.
MennoHomes History Project will be introduced.
Refreshments will be provided.

An offering will be taken to help cover the cost of the 10th
Anniversary History Project

MennoHomes gratefully acknowledges the following grants for the
Elmira Build:

The Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation

Community Fund \$20,000

Motz Family Fund \$5,000

Woolwich Community Fund \$1,335

Marian and Jim Erb Fund \$500

NEWS FLASH!

\$400,000 HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO MENNOHOMES UNDER THE REGION OF WATERLOO'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY. THE GRANT IS FOR FOUR ELMIRA UNITS, (FOR TWO UNITS ON STILLWATER AND THE TWO UNITS ON CENTRE STREET, ELMIRA).

THIS WILL ALLOW MENNOHOMES TO SPONSOR SEVERAL MORE UNITS FOR LARGE RURAL FAMILIES!

“The Happiest Time in Our Family’s Life”

Maria and her family are living in a townhouse unit in Elmira owned by MennoHomes. She reports that the home and neighbourhood are a great place to live. The neighbours have been exceptionally friendly. One has invited her to use their backyard for additional play area; also to use their washline. The appliances are in good condition, she says, and the unit so easy to keep clean. Summing it up, Maria shared with us that this has become the happiest time in her family’s life in Ontario.

Seated are David and Maria with daughters Mary, Helen & Nelly, tenants of this MennoHomes rental unit with Martin Buhr – President and Brenda Gingerich, St. Jacobs Family Support Centre Worker. Photograph by Nick Driedger.



*I remember the days of old,
I think about all your deeds,
I meditate on the works
of your hands.
Psalm 143:5*

Ten years ago, a body of people came together and with prayer and foresight decided to respond to the lack of affordable housing in this Region.

As the ten years of MennoHomes has unfolded, families, seniors, and newcomers have found safety, security and support as they settled in housing built with faith and generous funding.

The prayers of many have been answered and in faithful response, the Board has commissioned a Ten Year Publication to celebrate the hand of God in planning, building and funding and the friendship of many in churches, government and, city departments to make affordable, supportive housing available to many.

Susan Fish*, a well-known and respected author has begun to interview and scope the telling of this remarkable story of God's grace among us.

We look forward to this publication as we anticipate and lay the foundation for our future.

We celebrate Ten Years, 100 Units and over 10 Million \$'s of affordable housing!
Halleluia!

Margaret Nally

**Susan has worked with InterVarsity and also was Director of Communications for Habitat for Humanity. Susan specializes in writing for non-profit organizations and charities.*

Note to readers: If you are interested in helping to sponsor this project, please contact Martin Buhr, 519 578-5546 or, pama@sympatico.ca.

At this 10-year interval, MennoHomes wishes to publicly thank Mike Litwiller and Waterloo Printing for looking after our newsletters and fundraising posters during our first decade.

A similar thank you to Larry Shantz of www.webdzines.com, for creating and maintaining our website.

A Mini 10-Year History

In January 2001, MCC Ontario, led by Rick Cober Bauman, convened a Working Group to explore the need for Affordable Housing, a concern that constituents regularly shared with MCCO. Local Mennonite and Brethren in Christ pastors, together with members of their churches who were community leaders involved in health and social services met to discern viable initiatives to undertake as a collective response to the need. They were joined by other advocates of housing in the MCCO constituency. By September of that year a new entity was created: **MennoHomes Inc.** It was registered as both a non-profit and charitable organization with its own Board of Directors. Before the end of the year MennoHomes responded to a call for funding proposals from the Region of Waterloo. Early in the following year, MennoHomes received its first allocation with which to develop affordable housing units. Next is a chronology of each project

1. The Village 2004 located on Village Road, Kitchener, consists of eight duplexes (16 family units) each with three bedrooms. Initially marked by strong resistance, a compromise was reached in which the number of units was reduced and the location of the units was restricted to facing the street in one row. An appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board was averted when all objectors signed off on the agreement. One couple needed to be located in New Zealand. They faxed their signature to make it a 100% resolution of the disagreement. A swap of land with the City of Kitchener also was involved to create the necessary frontage. Tenants moved in during July and August of 2004. Significant in the very first project was the role played by Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. First, it gave an interest-free loan of \$30,000 to help with initial expenses. Then, members together donated \$80,000 in support of the Village Road undertaking.

2. Refugee House 2005 located on Stirling Avenue N., Kitchener, was sold to MennoHomes by First Mennonite Church at a greatly reduced price. Then, volunteers from the church also helped renovate the house. The church appointed a Refugee Support Committee to work with the refugee families that came to live here as this house is dedicated for the use of refugee families.

3. Camelot 2005 located at Fisher-Hallman near Keatsway in Waterloo, came about as the result of a partnership between Blaze Properties Inc and MennoHomes Inc. MennoHomes had an allocation to construct affordable housing in Waterloo but could not find suitable land. Blaze had land but no allocation. By sharing its allocation with Blaze, 25 one-bedroom units were built in the complex of townhomes known as Camelot. Blaze is the owner and operator. MennoHomes was the facilitator. Whether Blaze or MennoHomes, the exact same agreements with government bodies are in place to designate these units as Affordable Housing. Occupancy began 2005.

4. The Rockway Gardens Village 2007. When Eastwood Mennonite Community Homes chose to surrender its charter, it needed to decide what to do with its remaining three-quarters of an acre of land on King Street East, across from Rockway Gardens. Ultimately, it selected the proposal of MennoHomes to develop 50 units of affordable housing for seniors on the site. It gave the land as a gift, worth about half a million at the time. Being the former location of the Kitchener bus yards, it was discovered that a storage tank lay below the surface and that this was a soil contaminated site. Through the City of Kitchener's Brownfields remediation program, MennoHomes qualified for around \$150,000 in grants to pay towards the cost of \$200,000 in transforming the site to residential usage. Tenants moved into their units by the Spring of 2007.

5. Pond View in Wellesley 2009. Two semis were built in Wellesley, on Pond View. Each of the four units has four bedrooms to meet the needs of larger rural families. Distinguishing this build was a Labour Day Weekend Barnraising Christian Service project undertaken by 30 Old Colony Mennonite Church volunteers who met to frame, roof and shingle the buildings. Murray Leis Construction served as Project Manager. Local trades and businesses were active in supporting the project.

6. Stillwater Towns 2011. Because of urgent need, MennoHomes purchased two townhouses in Elmira, on Stillwater, each with three bedrooms. The initiative was undertaken with donations from the constituency of MennoHomes as no government funding was available at the time. Two low income families were greatly assisted. One was a mother-led family with four dependents who had been sharing space in a one-bedroom apartment.

7. Centre Street Semis, Elmira, 2011. The Elmira Build commenced in June of 2011. A semi-detached building is going up, each with three bedrooms. We have a partnership with EDSS, our first such arrangement. Under the supervision of teacher, Scott Shantz, students are framing, roofing and shingling along with installing insulation and doing prep work for sub-contractors. Project Managers are Clare and Bonnie Brubacher. We expect new tenants to move in at the end of February, 2012. The project on Centre represents the achievement of a remarkable milestone, that of **100 units provided in 10 years.** The affordable housing stock has a market value of over \$10 million.

Throughout its first decade, MennoHomes has felt the strong and guiding hand of God and God's people.

Martin Buhr

Thank You Stories

• Kevin Shantz of the *Drayton's Community Mennonite Fellowship* called several months ago to ask how many bundles of shingles would be needed to cover the roof of our new Elmira Project. At church, he set up a table where people could sponsor a bundle or two. He knew things were looking good when fellow members asked how the numbers were shaping up or gave him encouragement to make more announcements about the project. Well, Kevin and his church friends have covered every square inch of the roof!

• Not only is the *Elmira District Secondary School* participating through its trades program, the student body also is fundraising \$1,000 to sponsor the two front doors.

• The *Elmira Branch of MSCU* is featuring the Elmira Build in its lobby. At a recent estate planning workshop, led by the branch, the participants chose to make donations to MennoHomes in place of a workshop fee. We were greatly thrilled to receive a cheque of almost \$3,000, as a result.

• *Menno Singers* dedicated its Spring Concert as a fundraiser for our Elmira Build. Floradale Mennonite Church generously donated their facilities for the event. \$14,000 was raised through ticket sales and additional donations!