

**Dear Friends of Fresh Start,**

As we are nearing fall, we have been busy preparing for a new season. Here at Fresh Start it is not only the season of “back-to-school” for some of our client’s older children and the children of our staff, but also a new season of drop-in programs at our Haven location on Talbot Street.

Looking back, we can count many of God’s blessings. This spring, we reintroduced a Spiritual Care group, doing an Alpha course with some of our moms. Facilitators, volunteers and participants alike were really moved during these sessions, and we could see God at work. I invite you to read more in Tammy’s note below.

Our other programs attracted 47 unique families. Together, they brought 68 young children to Haven, and stayed with us for approximately 4 months. These families participated 365 times in a drop-in playgroup, 234 times in self-care, and 83 times in our parenting programs. That is a total of 682 interactions, on average 14 per family. We are so blessed to have the opportunity to support the women in our community and cannot wait to see our new building finished and in use.

Drop-in play groups continue to be very popular, and really help us to make the first connection with moms, listen to their stories, be an example and show what healthy parenting looks like, register them for our parenting programs, and take them in for family navigation if they need more help.

These needs can be diverse, but what they have in common is that they stem from broken relationships. Broken relationships with family of origin, with the father of the children, with employers, landlords, or school boards. Through family navigation, we support our clients to mend relationships, or if not possible, work on other solutions. By doing so we can bring hope into hopeless situations.

We also offer development assessments for all children coming through our door. Through close collaboration with community partners, our team has been able to refer to speech and language therapy, to hospital, to community pediatricians, or we have set up counselling to deal with various developmental delays.

We are happy that we again have moms participating in the Baby Love program, which is a parenting program about developing a healthy attachment between baby and parent. Our staff is not only running this group in St. Thomas, but also in London South as we were met with similar needs down there.

Looking forward into Fall, we will continue to support our women to develop healthy relationships with their little ones, while working through some of the childhood problems they had to endure themselves. We will therefore introduce off-site individual counselling with registered therapists to help them work through traumatic adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) so they can re-regulate themselves, which will strengthen their parenting.

We are also eager to start the building of our new house. We have been so blessed by you, and have already received over \$1,100,000 in donations towards the new House of Homes. We cannot express how much this has encouraged us. Currently, we are submitting for the site plan approval after which the building permit submission will follow, and, God willing, we break ground this fall. The number of calls seeking housing for pregnant moms continues to be high, so we hope and pray that our house will be move-in ready soon.

This leaves me to thank you again for your ongoing support to our work, and above all our heavenly Father, from whom all blessings flow.

**Sincerely,****Suzanne Flier**  
**Executive Director**FOR MORE UPDATES FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK  
@FRESHSTARTSUPPORTSERVICESVISIT OUR WEBSITE TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Please pray for the Board of Directors, as they have the responsibility to oversee our organization and ministry.
- Pray for our clients, that in all our interactions they will see Christ's love for them.
- Pray for the babies and children, that Fresh Start can support the early years emotional and cognitive development.
- Pray for our staff, for guidance as they continue to lead and build relationships with the families at Fresh Start.
- Pray for the House of Homes, that the permit application process will go smoothly, and pray that we will qualify to receive the CMHC grant we are applying for.
- Pray for new volunteers to help with childminding during programming.



## MEET TAMMY FEHR

A little about me, I love Jesus and want all to have faith in Jesus and know Him personally. I am also a wife, mother of three children (ages 17, 18, and 22), and mother to one fur baby. I enjoy being in nature, on the beach, or anywhere with palm trees. I thrive best with one-on-one time, but God has pushed me out of my comfort in more ways than one over the years. I have been involved in some kind of volunteer ministry ever since I became a Christian because I knew if God could turn my life around and heal my trauma, He could do that with anyone. I work at Fresh Start because I believe in the mission and vision of Fresh Start by "supporting families through housing and programs while putting Christ's love into action."

I was hired in January 2020 and finished my bachelor's degree in ministry in April 2020. As you all know, this is when the world shut down because of Covid19. Yet, together with volunteers from Fellowship Church, we ran an Alpha course online in 2021 and saw people have real, honest heart conversations and some even became Christians for the first time. Praise God!

This year, together with Faith Church and Fresh Start volunteers, we ran an in-person Alpha program. Week after week we saw our participants encouraged, challenged, and spurred on in their faith, at times even emotional as they shared vulnerably. My hope and prayer for spiritual care within the Fresh Start organization is to run more programs, Bible studies, and to offer times of prayer, so that we can grow together as we take one obedient step toward Jesus at a time. Please pray for us as we seek God's direction.

At the beginning of March, I jumped into planning and organizing our Baby Bottle Drive and had the privilege of being able to contact and connect with many of you. As this was my first year overseeing the Bottle Drive, all of you were so patient and kind as I tried my best to help you have an enjoyable fundraiser in your different locations. One bottle or e-transfer at a time and, together, we raised \$24, 232.85! I look forward to working with all of you next year!

If you, or your church, would like to get involved in any way, please send me an email at [tfehr@fsms.ca](mailto:tfehr@fsms.ca) and let's try to work something out.

## DONATE TODAY!

- By e-transfer to [financials@fsms.ca](mailto:financials@fsms.ca)
- Online through our website at [www.fsms.ca/ways-to-give](http://www.fsms.ca/ways-to-give)
- By cheque or cash in the mail







## A STORY OF A FRESH START

Before I came to Fresh Start, I was homeless, addicted to drugs, in and out of jail and in a very abusive relationship. When I found out that I was pregnant with twin boys, I got sober. But I became totally dependent on their dad and within a couple months of their birth, the abuse got worse. I was locked in the house, and I was constantly fighting to protect my babies. We weren't safe. I had no other choice but to take my children and leave. I ended up at a shelter. And then another shelter and another shelter. Due to my instability, there was talk of apprehension from CAS. I knew if I lost my kids that I wouldn't survive.

And then a friend of mine told me about Fresh Start and in December 2021, when my twins were 2 years old, I received a spot. When I arrived at Fresh Start, I was angry, scared, living in fight or flight, and totally dysregulated. I was so focused on survival that I didn't know what my kids needed, and I didn't know how to build a connection with them. The women who worked with me were so loving and understanding. I attended the Self-Co Regulation and Circle of Security Parenting programs and I learned how to regulate myself and how to build better connections with my twins. I was provided with clinical therapy, and it helped bring me out of fight or flight mode. When we arrived at Fresh Start, my boys were out of control. With the help of Fresh Start, I was able to provide my kids with a safe space and be the safe hands they needed. I was able to pay attention to their cues and help them regulate. Within six months of arriving at Fresh Start, my CAS file was closed. I no longer had to worry about my boys being apprehended because I now had the tools to provide them with stability.

After leaving Fresh Start, we moved into Second Stage Housing but continued to attend programming at Fresh Start Haven. In August 2023, we moved into our very own house with a backyard. I've never had my own place or anything to my name. I had never paid a hydro bill and had always stayed with others or in shelters. My mom died when I was 10 so I had been in foster care and constantly bounced around. I am now able to provide my kids with stability, which is something I never had.

I truly didn't think I would make it alive past 25. Getting pregnant saved my life and Fresh Start was literally that for me... a fresh start!



## TRIP TO CLOVERMEAD



In July, we were blessed with an opportunity to take our Fresh Start families on a field trip to Clovermead Adventure Farms in Aylmer. The kids had so much fun exploring, petting animals and jumping in the splash pad. We are so thankful to Clovermead Adventure Farms and First Student St. Thomas who kindly provided us with a bus for our field trip.



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

## OCTOBER 2022 - JULY 2023 (10 MONTHS)

Donations	\$313,348.12
Baby Bottle Drive	\$24,232.85
Other Revenue (Grants, Funding, Misc.)	\$241,283.76
Total Revenue	\$578,864.73
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$410,394.47

## FINANCIAL UPDATE HOUSE OF HOMES (ALL TIME)

Donations + Grants	\$814,214.75
City of St. Thomas Pledge	\$100,000
St. Thomas Community Improvement Plan	\$210,000
Total Funds Raised	\$1,124,214.75
TOTAL EXPENSES TO DATE	\$314,835.36

Please prayerfully consider making a one-time donation towards our new building so that we can continue providing safe housing for moms and give them a chance at a fresh start! To donate, please scan the QR code or visit [www.fsms.ca/ahouseofhomes](http://www.fsms.ca/ahouseofhomes)



**Canadian Centre for  
Christian Charities**  
ACCREDITED MEMBER



## FRESH START SUPPORT SERVICES

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