

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Service Animals Save Lives

2026

www.cornerstonewomen.ca

Meet Wild and Goose

Hello and happy summer!

My name is Wild, and with my lovely cat, Goose, we are excited to bring you Cornerstone's Summer Newsletter.

In these pages, you'll see how **your kindness provides more than shelter**; it creates a safe environment for women and gender diverse individuals to **rebuild their lives**.

Not long ago, I was looking for that safety.



Shelter and Safety

In April 2025, I **escaped a really rough family situation**. With the help of my therapist and victim services, I came to Cornerstone's shelter. I don't know what would have happened to me if I didn't get out of there.

I **arrived at the shelter with only a few belongings, supplies for my then service dog, Gomez**, and some sentimental items. I was scared and nervous. I had never stayed in a shelter before and didn't know what to expect. But over time, Cornerstone became a place where I could begin to feel safe.

Not long after arriving at the shelter, I **made the heartbreaking decision to give up Gomez, my service dog for adoption**. I wasn't in the best place and felt I couldn't care for him the way he deserved. Letting him go was one of the hardest things I've ever done.

I am 20 years old, non-binary, and I grew up in the Ottawa Valley. I was born prematurely with retinopathy of prematurity.

I have severe vision loss. I also needed open-heart surgery and multiple eye surgeries as a baby.

Then, when I was eight years old, I was in a bad car accident that left me with a traumatic brain injury and a broken shoulder. I had to learn how to walk and talk again, and I still have chronic fatigue, memory challenges, headaches, anxiety, and PTSD.

There were many times in my life when I didn't think I would survive - or ever be able to live independently.



“Without Cornerstone, I don’t know where I’d be.”

I’d like to thank you!

Because of donors like you, Cornerstone gave me more than emergency shelter. **You gave me safety, stability and a chance to heal and rebuild my life.**

After several months of living in Cornerstone’s shelter, I moved into Cornerstone’s Booth housing residence in September 2025. For the first time in my life, **I had a safe home of my own.**

At first, living alone felt overwhelming and isolating. I stayed in my apartment a lot and really stayed to myself. I had never lived on my own, so I was nervous about it and I no longer had my service animal.

But staff encouraged me to join activities at the residence. One of the case managers invited me to the coffee crew and I slowly starting making friendships with other residents.

I started making crafts for the upcoming Art Sale this summer where I’ll be selling one-of-a-kind key chains. I am now able to focus on my healing and rebuild my confidence.



Goose is my companion

In February of 2026, I felt I was ready to welcome another animal into my life. I knew a dog was too much for me to care for, so I decided to get a cat and that’s where Goose came in!

He brings me comfort and unconditional love.

Together, we like to explore the city. I’ve taken him to the park (which he loves), pet smart, and coffee shops. **Goose is half Bengal and half Main Coon, a perfect mix of my two favourite cats.**

One of the first things I noticed about him was that he was very smart. I have begun training him as a service cat.





A new beginning

Goose represents a new start for me.

A start where I am living on my own in the city I was born in and always wanted to live, and where I can finally be free and safe.

Goose uses buttons to talk, and he can tell when I'm struggling with anxiety or about to have a panic attack, often before I realize it myself.

I wasn't supposed to live after being born so early with complications, and after the car accident expectations were incredibly grim, then I couldn't see myself ever turning 18, and once I did, I never thought I'd realistically be able to have any form of independence.

Today, I am healing. I'm building my community. I'm creating a life at Cornerstone I never thought would be possible.

Because of your support, I am no longer just surviving.

I am safe. I am free. And for the first time, I truly feel at home.

Building Community and Resilience



As summer arrives, we at Cornerstone look forward to all the exciting things it brings. I find myself reflecting on the quiet, powerful role that community plays in our lives. **For the women at Cornerstone, that community feeling is not just meaningful, it is a lifeline. It is essential to healing, stability, and hope.**

To each of you who stands alongside us, thank you. Your presence and support create a community where women and gender-diverse people feel valued, seen, and uplifted. Over the summer, we have so many events that focus around the residents who live in our programs: BBQs, art sales, and other community gatherings. While these gatherings are small, they are full of vibrant, meaningful moments for our residents.

When you attend one of our events, **you offer something deeply human to our residents- connection, and a reminder that no one is alone.** It can be difficult to fully capture the impact of these moments. A piece of artwork sold at an art sale is not just a transaction; it is that human connection coming alive, it is recognition. It is telling our residents that their voice matters, their creativity has value and that there is a long beautiful future ahead of them.

These shared experiences help us bring community and build resiliency outside the walls of Cornerstone- showing them this is possible. Thank you for your support. It continues to light the way forward.

Anne Marie Hopkins,
Executive Director



Success Story



From Shelter to Staff

Meet Mary*



I was new to the country, I didn't have any family here, I was pregnant and I needed a safe place to stay.

My name means gratitude. I am very grateful for the staff at Cornerstone who helped me when I needed it most.

In 2006, I moved to Canada from Nigeria. When I arrived, I was referred by a social worker to go to Cornerstone Housing for Women's emergency shelter.

I was scared the first few nights of staying at the shelter, but after a while I became more comfortable. The staff were incredible, very helpful, non-judgemental and kind.

I don't know how I would have gotten through my darkest days without Cornerstone.

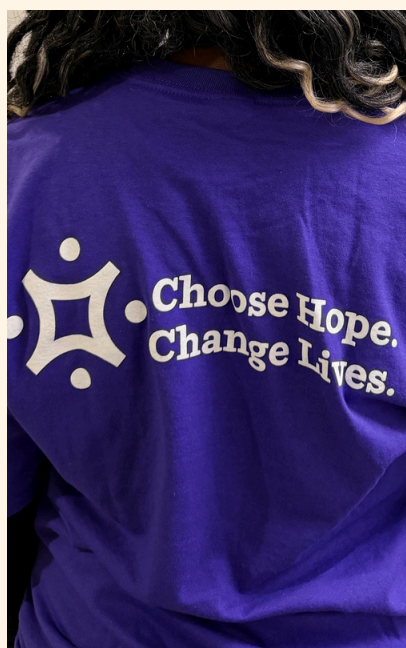
A New Country

Being new to the country, **having a baby with labour complications**, and having no home or family, I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for Cornerstone Housing for Women.

Cornerstone not only provided me with all of my basic needs such as a bed, toiletries, and meals each day - they also helped me access community resources, counselling services, and **support to healthcare and housing**.

After a couple weeks at the shelter, I was **admitted to the hospital due to my high-risk pregnancy** and from there Cornerstone never gave up on me. The staff helped me to find a place of my own, access to baby clothes, and essential items for my new place.

Since then, in 2009, I was able to get my **diploma to be a Personal Support Worker**. I had odd jobs but also had a baby at home with no family and help. I would take my baby to classes with me. It was tough, but I knew I had no other option.



Paying it forward

It's because of donors like you who help women like me find supports and housing that I am able to rebuild my life in Canada.

In 2014, I got my degree in **Sociology and Women's Study** at University of Ottawa.

Now, I am working for Cornerstone on the frontlines. It's very rewarding. I am able to connect with residents in a unique way as I have been in their shoes. I love working here and feel grateful that I can give back to the place that helped me when I needed it most.

I am grateful for your support – thank you for giving me a second chance, a new beginning.



*Name Changed

Community In Bloom



ECCLES COMMUNITY GARDEN

Our Eccles Community Garden is blooming thanks to vision and dedication of our Young Professionals Advisory Board (YPAB). This outdoor space helps residents connect with nature, enjoy time outdoors, and watch beautiful flowers and vegetables grow.



PRIDE DAY BBQ

To celebrate Pride Month, we hosted a special BBQ for residents from Eccles and Booth to celebrate the strength, diversity, and resilience of our 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

Thank you to the team at **SERVPRO** for generously donating the food and volunteering their time to man the grill.

PAINT NIGHT WITH OTTAWA SCHOOL OF ART

Thank you to the Ottawa School of Art for hosting a special Paint Night for our residents this spring. Residents met at Wallack's Art Supplies and enjoyed an evening of creativity, delicious meal, and connection.



OTTAWA SUMMER FOOD DRIVE

We received over 500 pounds of fresh produce through the Ottawa Summer Food Drive. Huge thanks to Khalsa Aid Canada, Odd Bunch, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, participating schools, families, educators, community partners, and dedicated volunteers who came together to support our food program.



A Taste of Ireland Garden Party



Our **A Taste of Ireland Garden Party** was a huge success. Thanks to everyone who help raise substantial funds we need to help women and gender-diverse individuals in Ottawa. We are proud to say **we raised \$50,000** to provide more support to the women we serve.

Upcoming Events

Join us for these special upcoming events as we continue to provide shelter and supportive housing for women and gender diverse individuals.

**JUN
28**

Community BBQ and Art Sale

Our Community BBQ & Art Sale at Princeton is back! while you browse one-of-a-kind handmade treasures and meet the incredible people behind them. Come celebrate the creativity, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit of the women who call Princeton Residence home.

**OCT
28**

Purple Tie Gala

Our largest and most impactful fundraising event of the year is back for the 8th time. **Join us on October 28th** to celebrate resilience, share stories of impact, and raise critical funds that support women and gender-diverse individuals experiencing homelessness.



◆ Bringing healthcare closer
to women in need. ◆

Building Better Healthcare

For many women we serve, **accessing healthcare isn't as simple as booking an appointment.** Long wait times, transportation barriers, trauma, and isolation often **prevent women from receiving the physical and mental healthcare they need.** As a result, health challenges can quickly become crises.

**That's why we are investing in
Five Pillars of Wellness:**

Nursing Care
Mental Health Care
Indigenous Spiritual Care
Cultural Support
Peer Support

SAY HELLO TO OUR BRANDED VAN!

Food Services

We are excited to show you our newly branded van!
Be sure to say hello when you see it on the road
running daily operations across Cornerstone's
residences.

This van helps us deliver meals and fresh produce to
our shelter and housing residences.

277,000
meals served last
year

Our Food Services team serves 750 meals every day.
As food costs continue to rise across the city, having
reliable transportation means we can continue meeting
the needs of nourishing the women we serve.

If you would like to contribute, donations of fresh produce
or non-perishable food items are always welcome.

Support our
Food Program



**DONATE
FOOD TODAY**

\$4.39
for one meal

DONATE ❤️

Your gift today directly supports our food program.

To make a secure donation, visit
www.cornerstonewomen.ca or scan the QR code.



What inspires your generosity?

Share your thoughts and help shape the future of our work at Cornerstone. We'd like to know how you connect with our mission, what inspires you to give and how we can better connect with you to strengthen our impact.

Shape The Future



Thank you for being part of our community.

Thank you for helping us choose hope every day.

WWW.CORNERSTONEWOMEN.CA

Let's stay in touch!



INSTAGRAM

@HopeCornerstone



FACEBOOK

@CornerstoneHousing



LINKEDIN

Cornerstone Housing for Women