



May 2023

Dear Friends,

Confession: writing a new “Dear Friends” letter has been on my to-do list for weeks, but life here at Nancy’s House and Restorations continues to be busy, with every day looking different than the one before! My day-to-day life here as Executive Director ranges from what you might typically expect (like writing grants, meeting community partners, checking in with programs, etc.) and also the not-so-glamorous jobs like dealing with a surprise sewage issue or (*just this morning!*) chasing away a huge garden snake while conducting a fire drill with staff and residents! I am so fortunate to have a team of staff and volunteers surrounding me, all united by our common desire to see survivors of human trafficking supported in our community.

Earlier this year, I made a quick (2 minutes, 45 seconds) [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVqcJz4HhE) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVqcJz4HhE>) to provide an update for (and thank you, too!) congregations that support my role at Restorations. The video highlights some fond memories from 2022 and shares what excites us about 2023. I emailed the video link to churches, but I want to [provide it here, too](#). Please feel free to share far and wide in your congregation – whether it is during a worship service, an e-newsletter, or through your social media channels.

Nancy’s House

This month, we welcomed a new resident to Nancy’s House. Welcoming her was special to us because we have already been connected with her for nearly two years through our Survivor-Led Peer Support program. We have been blessed to be in a position where we could provide support to her as she progressed through other programs and then welcome her here at Nancy’s House for her next steps toward independent living.

One of our residents has discovered a real love of gardening. She carefully planned which vegetables and herbs she wanted to grow this year and then together we went out to purchase all the supplies we would need for a summer garden. She has been caring diligently for them, and I often find her outside watering them and inspecting new growth. She is intrigued by the idea of gardening as a form of therapy or, at the very least, a form of self-care. She has ideas for flowers for our gardens and I look forward to seeing the outcome and beauty of these spaces.

Earlier this spring, one of our residents celebrated a big milestone in her life. Here at Restorations, we certainly love celebrating people! So,



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we gathered around for a meal where we reflected on where she has been and what she has overcome, and we looked ahead to dream of what she will continue to accomplish. We told her that once the weather got a little warmer, we would go on a trail ride on horseback! Finally, a couple of weeks ago, the residents went with Sascha (Peer Advocate) on a trail ride, and they all exclaimed how amazing the experience was for them. One of the residents shared with me recently how important it has been for her to tap into her “inner child” and participate in activities that bring fun and joy. The survivors we support have not always had opportunities to participate in activities that some of us take for granted. At Restorations, as part of holistic care that addresses physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health, we try to provide opportunities for “play.” Activities don’t always need to have a learning purpose or productivity element attached to them. Sometimes the act of play and the experience of joy has a greater purpose of contributing to our overall efforts to promote growth and healing. And sometimes it doesn’t – sometimes it’s just playing and fun for the sake of simple play and fun!

“

*A cheerful heart
is a good medicine,
but a downcast
spirit dries up the
bones.*

Proverbs 17:22 NRSV



Peer Support Program

Our Survivor-Led Peer Support program, led by two staff members (“Peer Advocates”) who have lived experience of human trafficking, continues to provide support and resources to survivors living in our wider community. One of the most beautiful aspects of our Peer Support program is that individuals are welcome to participate as they can and they are understood by their peers who have had similar experiences. As such, attendance at our programs sometimes ebbs and flows. I am so proud to see that Book Club, an activity that I started before my maternity leave in 2020 (and stemming from my profound love of reading!), continues. One survivor who received books throughout 2020 but was not in an emotional place to attend virtual meetings at that time, recently sent us a picture of all the books she had collected from us over the years. Despite a few years of turmoil in her life and the various moves she has gone through, she still has our books and is now in a place where she wants to rejoin the group and become actively engaged. Our Peer Advocates are women who provide a consistent presence in the lives of their Survivor peers who often experience uncertainty and disruption. We are here when individuals find themselves in a place and time ready for our support and care.

In April, the Peer Support program hosted a self-defense workshop for survivors. The positive feedback was overwhelming. We are already fielding questions about when we will host another one. One participant said, “The self-defense night exceeded my expectations. It was an empowering event. I left feeling powerful and more prepared for potentially dangerous encounters.” We are grateful to be in a position where we can offer opportunities for survivors to feel empowered, strong, and confident. The self-defense workshop is an example of how we try to provide opportunities that 1) bring survivors together as a community of people with shared lived experience; 2) develop skills and resources; and 3) are *fun*!

Last fall, [I shared](#) about a retreat for our Peer Support participants. In June, we will host our second annual retreat, and we are grateful to Global Mission for providing a special project grant for this activity. Last year’s retreat was a major highlight of the year. This year, we added a night and prioritized finding a place with kayaks since it was the top activity from last summer. I am excited to share stories with you in a few months!



RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.

Partnership in Mission

At the end of April, I had the opportunity to travel to Iowa to speak at a Pleasant Prairie Classis women's conference and visit Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City which is one of my [Partners in Mission](http://www.rca.org/pim) (www.rca.org/pim). This was my first time in the United States since the Mission 2020 event in Florida in January 2020! The pandemic and having Malcolm prevented me from traveling the last few years, and it was so nice to be back visiting partners and supporters again.



Most congregations who have decided to leave the RCA have decided to maintain their support for RCA missionaries and partner personnel through Global Mission, but, unfortunately, some have decided to withdraw their support. During last year's General Synod, there were robust conversations about the long history of Global

Mission and the strong relationships that have been formed between churches, RCA Global Mission, and ministries around the world. Global Mission continues to serve as a conduit between churches and ministries around the world, even for congregations that decide to leave the RCA. If your congregation is in the process of leaving the RCA, I appeal to you to consider how you can continue your relationships with and support of Global Mission missionaries. These relationships and support are crucial to the ongoing activities and work of ministries around the world, including my own here in southern Ontario.

Unfortunately, I have had some churches withdraw support, and I am in the process of seeking additional funds to ensure that my budget is fully funded for 2024. One way to do this is for me to develop new relationships with churches that do not yet support me. Another way to ensure that my budget is fulfilled is for existing PIM share churches to increase their support. I ask that your congregation prayerfully consider increasing your support to continue the work of serving survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

Family Life

Amy has nearly completed grade 4, and Mark's semester teaching carpentry at a nearby college has completed. Malcolm continues to be our wild guy (terrific twos!) and keeps us all on our toes. Expecting another busy summer at Nancy's House and limited by too much extended travel because of our wild guy, our family is planning some fun local day trips this summer.

On behalf of everyone here at Restorations who benefits from your support, encouragement, and prayers—thank you! We hope you have a beautiful summer that also includes some rest and restoration!

Prayer Requests

- For the residents of Nancy's House, for this time in their lives as they work towards greater independence and achieving their goals.
- For the survivors we support through our Peer Support Program.
- For the survivors who participate in our second annual Peer Support retreat in June—for safety, well-being, and rejuvenation.
- For our leadership team as we hire a new staff member at Nancy's House.
- For Jennifer as she seeks out additional funding for her ministry.



With gratitude,
Jennifer & family

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