



June 28<sup>th</sup> 2023

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **ST JACOBS JAKOBSTETTEL GUESTHOUSE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR DISPLACED UKRAINIAN FAMILIES – June 28<sup>th</sup> 2023**

**Woolwich Healthy Communities** and **Woolwich Community Health Centre** are delighted to share with the community the happy news that the St Jacobs Jakobstettel Guesthouse will continue to operate as a volunteer-supported project led by **Waterloo Region Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis** after July 8<sup>th</sup> 2023. Intended as short-term housing for Ukrainian newcomers displaced by the war, this guesthouse opened in July 2022 and has gone on to help more than 20 families establish new lives in Canada.

**Clint Rohr**, Volunteer Coordinator from local grassroots group Woolwich Healthy Communities and **Rosslyn Bentley**, Executive Director of Woolwich Community Health Centre are both eager to express their appreciation for this opportunity to pass on the baton. “We have been so humbled to see how desperately this support is needed” states Bentley: “We have cared for more than 50 people in the past year but we know many more are looking for shelter and support as the war continues.” Rohr agrees and adds “What has been very gratifying has been the incredible kindness of local people in support of the newcomers. Bringing gifts of food, clothes, toys, household goods, furniture, dollars, and friendship but also practical help with driving to and from appointments, help looking for work, accommodation and maintenance of the house and grounds. We know this community has a big heart and it shows!”

The Guesthouse provides free accommodation for three months, English lessons and support to obtain settlement paperwork, looking for work and housing as well as help setting up home independently. Most often families have found work either locally in the Township or in North Waterloo and despite challenges in finding work and housing, most have gone on to settle satisfactorily. A recent thank-you event held on June 3<sup>rd</sup> allowed many of the past guests to express their appreciation to the volunteers and neighbors who have continued to make a difference in their lives. “We cannot believe the welcome Canadians gave us!” was the comment heard most frequently: “You truly saved our lives”.

The local Woolwich community has continued to provide generous support to operate the house throughout the past year. Grants have also provided targeted support from United Way of Waterloo Region, Walter and Jean Hackborn Fund - Waterloo Region Community Foundation and Immigration Services Waterloo Region as well as local community groups and service clubs like the 100 Woolwich Women Who Care, the Elmira Lioness, St Jacobs Lions Club and Optimist Club of St Jacobs and many local churches. Many thanks to the landowner, **Patrick George**, for the gracious permission to use the house.

**Waterloo Region Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis (WRGR)** is a volunteer-led group of local residents that help Ukrainian people fleeing the devastating war in their country. Jakobstettel Guesthouse will be the 7th house to be operated by WRGR and brings the total number of people that can be helped to 77. WRGR gets requests on a weekly basis to help Ukrainians who have recently arrived in Canada and are about to become homeless. Co-founder of WRGR, **Stephanie Goertz**, explains that, “the group has helped over 250 families and has over 186 host families, but the demand for new hosts is ongoing”.

Now that **WRGR** will continue the project, **ongoing support, both financial and in-kind is needed from the community**. Donations can be made via the **Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Centre (KWMC)**, WRGR’s charity partner, via **Canada Helps**. <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/kitchener-waterloo-multicultural-centre-inc/?mprompt=1>

*When making your donation, please remember to select “Waterloo Region Grassroots (Ukrainian Support)” under the “apply your donation to” option to ensure it is properly directed.*

If interested in volunteering for WRGR or to learn more about how impactful it can be to become a host for a Ukrainian family, please visit their website at <https://www.wrgrassrootsresponse.ca/> or contact them directly at [wrgrassrootsresponse@gmail.com](mailto:wrgrassrootsresponse@gmail.com) or 519-242-8524.

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