

## Upcoming Opportunities and Events:

**Celebrating Love:  
A Valentine's  
Night Out**

**Thursday,  
February 14, 2019**

**The Jazz Room  
Waterloo**

Enjoy a night of music and celebrate the importance of relationships in our lives.

**Shalom Spring  
Breakfast**

**Saturday,  
May 4, 2019**

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## Shalom says farewell to Karen



From Left: Wanda Wagler-Martin (Executive Director), Karen Huehn, and Susan Schwartzentruher (Clinical Director).

In January 1999 Karen Huehn joined the Shalom team, as Clinical Director. On September 7, 2018, the Shalom community gathered with Karen's family and friends to commemorate her move to retirement.

Karen graduated from the Master of Social Work program at Wilfrid Laurier University in 1988. Following graduation Karen began working as a social worker at Grand River Hospital, a role she held for 10 years prior to coming to Shalom.

Karen has contributed a great deal to the deepening of Shalom's good name in our community. She brought much calm and insight into the role of Clinical Director, a role that she held for 17 years before stepping into a full counselling role for the last 2.5 years of her career.

As Clinical Director, Karen's wisdom was valued by the counsellors, who trusted her capable shepherding of tricky scenarios. Karen navigated situations with incredible grace, bringing perspective and reassurance to all involved.

Karen is to be esteemed for her clinical work. Many lives have been impacted for good, by Karen's walking with people through the valley of struggle. Karen was deeply moved by the feedback from her clients, as she has wound down her clinical work. This underscores Karen's care and capability in accompanying people on their healing journeys.

Karen will be dearly missed by her colleagues and most certainly by her clients. We send Karen forth into this new stage of life with gratitude and warm wishes, knowing that she will continue to impact this world for good simply by being who she is.

*Thanks to our 10,000 Steps  
Sponsors:*

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## 10,000 Steps for Shalom



Saturday, September 22, 2018 marked Shalom's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual 10,000 Steps for Shalom. This year's event was graced with a beautiful day enjoyed by more than 60 people of all ages, who walked, biked and ran in support of affordable counselling at Shalom.

Rest stops along the trail were hubs of activity, with lots of water, coffee and snacks to go around. Refreshment donations were graciously provided by City Café Bakery, and Martin's Family Fruit Farm.

Participants and Shalom's community of support raised over \$20,000, partnering to make counselling available to everyone.

We invite you to join us at 10,000 Steps for Shalom on September 21, 2019!

## Get to Know Shalom: Staff, Intern and Board



**Mark Gedcke, Registered  
Psychotherapist (Qualifying)**

Mark began as a full-time counsellor in October 2018. Mark has a MA in Theology: Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy. Mark previously worked as a Presbyterian clergy person at churches in London, Kitchener and Stratford.



**Peter Boullata, Student Intern**

Peter is a PhD student in the Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy program at Martin Luther University College. Peter began at Shalom in May 2018.



**Amanda Geiger, Board Member**

Amanda joined the Shalom board in October 2018. Amanda is an Associate Lawyer at Giffen Lawyers in Kitchener. She previously worked at Shalom in 2013-2014 and is excited to engage with Shalom in a new capacity in her role as a Board Member.



**Andrew Yantzi, Board Member**

Andrew joined the Shalom board in October 2018. Andrew is Branch Manager at Kindred Credit Union (Waterloo branch). Andrew and his wife and daughter reside in Waterloo.

# Navigating the Holiday season

By Joëlle Martin-Root, MSW, RSW

In thinking about the complexities of the Christmas season, I recall a formative experience I had as a young adult, when I spent a year abroad in Chad, Africa. I remember being surprised (and a little disappointed) as the holiday season came and went with very little notice. I noted the lack of decorations, lights, Christmas carols and presents. It was in this experience that I found the need to be intentional about those parts of the season that held meaning for me, like time spent with friends, music, and calling home.

I contrast this experience in Chad with the holiday experience in Canada in 2018, where Christmas advertising and products seem to come earlier every year. For some, this is a welcome fanfare to what feels like a magical season, a season of fond memories and family traditions. For others, it is a reminder of difficult times and unmet expectations. It is important to remember that even good things can bring about feelings of stress and angst.

There are many reasons why the holiday season can bring difficult feelings. It is a time that magnifies challenges in our lives:

- Grieving the loss of a loved one.
- Changing traditions after separation or divorce.
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Holiday stress can increase symptoms of mental health concerns, including depression and anxiety.
- The hustle and bustle - gatherings with friends or family near and far, presents to be bought, meals to be prepared, kids out of routine. It can feel overwhelming.
- Financial strain can make the expectations of gift-giving and special holiday meals particularly stressful.
- Difficult family dynamics or estrangement from family.
- Addictions can be particularly difficult during this season of get-togethers, when stress can lead to unhealthy ways of coping.

The Christmas season can often bring mixed feelings and competing demands. At times it can feel like a runaway train that we are trying to keep on the rails.

But, perhaps it does not need to be this way entirely. Perhaps there is a way to enjoy the scenery and ambiance through the train window. Perhaps there are some well-chosen stops along the way to savour parts of the journey more fully.

The following are some thoughts about navigating the holiday season:

## **Explore your hopes and fears about the holidays**

Take the time to reflect on what is in store for you and those around you, exploring what are your best hopes and worst fears for the season. This may include acknowledging both what is within your control and what is not. Then consider reaching out to others in your life for support. Invite honest conversations with people you trust about how you are feeling. Ask others about their experiences or words of wisdom. Perhaps you are not alone in your feelings.

## **Decide what is important**

Collaborate and communicate with loved ones. Where things are predictable and within your control, work together to make decisions about what is most important to you. Could some material gifts be replaced by the “gift of time?” Decide your negotiables and non-negotiables, in both activities and gifts. You might choose to make decisions about holiday spending in advance. Perhaps some invitations are declined. Maybe you and your partner prearrange a time-limit at gatherings that feel like obligations and work as a team to honour your time.

## **Practice self-care**

As best you can - make a plan for self-care during the holidays! Taking care of oneself can reduce stress within yourself and your relationships. Self-care looks different for each person. Perhaps it includes: taking quiet time to yourself with a coffee or tea; going to the gym or for a walk outside on your own or with your partner; playing in the snow with your kids; taking time to write in a journal or read for leisure; spending time in nature; getting enough sleep; eating nutritious food; listening or playing music; finding things that make you laugh.

## **Be present**

Challenge yourself to be more present in the season. Try to bring awareness to what you see, hear, smell or feel around you at moments along the way. It can allow you to more fully experience those moments that hold beauty and cope with that which feels stressful.

The holidays often bring a range of emotions. It is important to remember that there is no perfect way to ‘do’ the holidays. It is up to each of us to discern what we need to survive and/or thrive during the festive season. If the challenges in people’s lives become too much, counselling can provide a space for problem-solving about how to thrive in this season.

## Seedlings

The Bi-Annual Newsletter of  
Shalom Counselling Services Inc.  
Volume 8 Issue 2

Seedlings is published twice annually.  
The editorial team is  
Steven Reesor Rempel and  
Wanda Wagler-Martin.

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Helping People Grow Toward  
Peace and Wholeness

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## Ways to support counselling

### Counselling Care Fund: Shalom partners for mental health

Shalom clients come from all walks of life, and many require a fee subsidy to be able to afford counselling. The Counselling Care Fund at Shalom was launched in the spring of 2018 in recognition of 35 years of counselling at Shalom. Our goal is to raise \$70,000 for counselling subsidies, allowing people to access affordable counselling services.

At this point \$58,790 has been given in support of this fund. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to date. We invite you to help us reach our Counselling Care Fund goal, making possible the continued provision of affordable and accessible counselling services.

### Partnership Fund: Counselling for years to come

It is estimated that 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental health crisis or illness in any given year. This means that mental health concerns impact us all. The Partnership Fund at Shalom is a long-term option for supporting counselling for people in the midst of struggle. The Partnership Fund is an endowment held by Abundance Canada, whereby earnings provide ongoing funding for people receiving counselling.

Including Shalom in your will and long-term financial planning will allow people to access counselling when they need it, knowing that Shalom will continue to provide a place of hope and healing. For more information on leaving a legacy gift, contact Shalom or Abundance Canada directly at (519) 745-7821.

Shalom is grateful for every gift that is received, and this reminds us of the community of care that surrounds our work. Thank you!

If you are interested in supporting counselling at Shalom, you can donate in the following ways:

#### Cheque

Cheques can be made payable to:

*Shalom Counselling Services Inc.*

9 Avondale Ave. S.  
Waterloo, ON N2L 2B5

#### Credit Card

Credit card donations can be made  
online or by phone:

[www.shalomcounselling.org](http://www.shalomcounselling.org)  
(519) 886-9690

#### Legacy Gifts

Legacy gifts (estates and wills)  
can be made through

Abundance Canada at (519) 745-7821  
or [abundance.ca](http://abundance.ca)