

Shalom Updates:

10,000 Steps for Mental Health

We look forward to taking *10,000 Steps for Mental Health* on

**Saturday morning,
September 18, 2021**

If we are able to safely gather in person, we will endeavour to do so.

**Register Online or by calling
Shalom.**

10,000 Steps



Mental Health

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Towards a New Normal



*By Susan Schwartzentruber, MSW, RSW
Executive Director*

The COVID pandemic has challenged all of us over the past 15 months. We've adapted to virtual meetings, at home schooling, newly created home offices, smiling with our eyes over our masks, and maintaining 6 feet from others as we walk through the grocery aisles. We've navigated ways to maintain vital connections with our family, friends, colleagues and church communities. Many people have demonstrated their resilience to adapt and change quickly and make the best out of these strange times.

At Shalom we are learning about how the pandemic has impacted mental health for many people. Those who were already vulnerable to depression and anxiety have experienced increased symptoms and struggle to function well. Social isolation, reduced social supports, fear of others, and fear of illness, has impacted individuals who have never struggled previously. The need for mental health supports in Waterloo Region continues to be high. Even as things become more normal, I expect the need for service will continue.

Recently at Shalom, we have been pondering what our new normal will look like. How will we deliver counselling services face to face again? What will people consider safe? We have discovered counselling can work virtually, but when will we use this going forward? What will our clients want? How do we ensure a safe counselling space for client and therapist? We know that face to face counselling is still our preferred mode of service delivery. But the new normal will have to include flexibility. Flexibility to accommodate needs, options, and support.

As I grow into the role as the new Executive Director, Shalom as an organization is entering a new normal. What that newness looks like is still to be determined, and will emerge as I learn, listen, respond, and advocate, and we will continue to be grounded in our values of peace, wholeness, compassion, respect, accessibility, affordability, accountability and excellence.

Shalom has demonstrated its stability and flexibility over the last year, providing counselling services without disruption. Our donors have remained supportive and have kept Shalom financially healthy. Service has been made available and clients are courageously reaching out for help. I express gratitude for a strong team of therapists, a dedicated Board of Directors, and committed donors who allow us to do our work of "*Helping People Grow Toward Peace and Wholeness*." I look forward to meeting many of you in this "new" normal.

Get to Know Executive Director Susan Schwartzentruber

Where are you from?

I grew up on a dairy farm in Tavistock, Ontario. I currently live with my family in Waterloo.

When did you start at Shalom?

I began as a therapist at Shalom in May 2010. I transitioned into the Clinical Director role in 2016.

What are some of your formative volunteer experiences?

Following graduation, I participated in Voluntary Service for 2 years based in St. Louis Missouri working as a foster care case manager. I also volunteered with World Vision South Africa for a year in 2007.

What are some of your other interests?

I have been singing with Da Capo Chamber Choir for the past 10 years. I also attend Erb Street Mennonite Church.

What is your education background?

I did my undergraduate Social Work degree at *Eastern Mennonite University* in Virginia, and my Master of Social Work degree at *Wilfrid Laurier University*

Where did you work before Shalom?

I worked for 14 years at Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County as a Children's Services worker and then a Supervisor.

Saying Shalom to Wanda



"Inside the walls, you created a 'home.' You created a home by infusing the mission of Shalom, helping people grow toward peace and wholeness, into all that was done. It became a living reality under your direction."

These reflections began the June 6th celebration, as the Shalom community gathered virtually to "Say Shalom to Wanda."

Colleagues, Board members and community members shared the ways that Wanda has supported and encouraged them. With many noting that Wanda was one of the first people who reached out and welcomed them.

A continually emerging theme of the afternoon was Wanda's care and encouragement. Reaching out to community members who needed support, and ensuring that Shalom was an accessible and affordable place for all.

Wanda also had the opportunity to reflect on her 24 years as Executive Director of Shalom. She highlighted the many dedicated people who encouraged and inspired her in leading the work of Shalom. She named her appreciation for

all those involved in the growth of Shalom, from its infancy at Erb Street Mennonite Church, into the church house at 9 Avondale, and then to the complete renovation of the current space.

Wanda noted the community of care that has long surrounded Shalom, and the many people who believed in Shalom's commitment to affordable and accessible counselling and helped make it a reality. To honour Wanda's commitment to Shalom's mission and vision, the Board of Directors officially recognized the renaming of the Counselling Care Fund to Wanda's Counselling Care Fund, helping to offset the cost of counselling for the 80% Shalom clients who benefit from a counselling subsidy.

Thanks to the very generous community that supports Shalom, \$15,000 was raised for counselling subsidies through Wanda's Counselling Care Fund.

In the words of Shalom Board Chair Kaye Rempel, *"It is hard to say Shalom to you, Wanda, to say farewell to someone who has been so trusted, so competent, so wise and generous. And yet we must. Wanda, may peace, harmony, and well-being fill your life, knowing that your work at Shalom has been complete, that you have been valued, and respected, and indeed, loved by all."*

Moving to Remote Service: Changing Quickly in a Time of Uncertainty

*By Steven Reesor Rempel, Business & Operations
Administrator*

Sitting in a circle of chairs, arranged 6 feet apart, we gathered as a Shalom staff to discuss how we would function during the State of Emergency that had just been declared. It was mid-March 2020, and little did we know that this would be the last time for more than a year that we would gather as a full staff team inside Shalom. Yet here we are, in June 2021, offering services in a remote world, providing counselling to individuals that counsellors have never met in person, and responding to more requests for counselling than Shalom has ever experienced.

Shalom is not typically a place where change happens quickly. This is by design. Shalom seeks to be a place of stability and consistency. A safe, comfortable, grounding space for the work of counselling. A place where changes are made deliberately, and with significant planning. This is a strength of Shalom, but in the face of a global pandemic, our normal way of approaching change was not possible.

In March 2020 we were thrust into a rapidly changing unknown, needing to quickly adapt to a new reality, with services being offered virtually, and counsellors working remotely. Making the transition to remote service, being provided by counsellors from home, was a significant change for Shalom. At the time, we did not have a regular system in place for online or phone counselling. We needed to quickly determine a system to provide services that protected confidentiality, ensured our systems were compliant with privacy and health legislation, and was as simple as possible to use for everyone needing to access the service.

Through strong teamwork, planning, creativity, and resource sharing between community agencies, Shalom was able to develop a remote service delivery process and policies, and train staff on their use before the move to working from home. This allowed Shalom counsellors to continue providing counselling throughout the transition to working remotely, not missing a single day of service.

The ways in which Shalom provides services in a virtual context have continued to evolve over the past year. We implemented secure online forms to reduce the need for printing, scanning and mailing. We implemented a new phone system for phone sessions, and we determined new ways to collaborate and connect with other staff.



Working in a remote setting, we also quickly identified the need to connect with each other as a staff team at Shalom. We have not had the opportunity to stand in a doorway and check-in with each other, a regular occurrence when we were together in-person, so we set aside additional structured time each week to connect as a staff team.

Throughout this transition, Shalom has maintained a consistent focus and priority on how to best serve and support the individuals, couples, and families coming to Shalom for counselling. Making the virtual process as comfortable and simple as possible.

I would also like to praise the work of each counsellor and staff person at Shalom. The move to remote service happened in the midst of significant change, uncertainty, and discomfort. Shalom staff entered into the unknown, stretching themselves and learning as they went. And yet, Shalom's dedicated staff were able to make this complicated transition seamlessly, from being in the office one day, to working from home the next. Counsellors have developed skills in providing counselling through online video and phone methods that were new to them. In this time, the quality and heart of Shalom's counsellors has been on full display.

Through this last year, Shalom has demonstrated the ability to change rapidly when needed. We have developed new processes, procedures and policies that we will continue to use as we begin to plan for a return to being together again in the office.

Much has changed since we last sat in that circle of chairs, arranged 6 feet apart, and we look forward to the hard work of determining a safe way to someday be together in those chairs again.

Seedlings

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*The editorial team is
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Susan Schwartzentruber.*

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*Helping People Grow Toward
Peace and Wholeness*

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United Way
Waterloo Region
Communities

Get to Know Shalom: Staff and Board



**Maria Geleynse, MSW
Counsellor**

Maria began as a counsellor at Shalom in January 2021. Maria completed her Master of Social Work degree at Wilfrid Laurier University. Prior to joining Shalom, Maria was a counsellor at the Delton Glebe Counselling Centre.



**Ingried Regier, Reception
Coverage**

Ingried joined Shalom in October 2019 doing Evening Reception work. In April 2021 she began as a Coverage Reception staff. Ingried retired in March 2021 from her role as Administrator at Erb Street Mennonite Church.

You Can Help

Shalom clients come from all walks of life, and many require a fee subsidy to be able to afford counselling. Every donation supports Shalom in providing services now and into the future. This mutual aid, supporting others in a time of need, is central to Shalom's mission, "Helping People Grow Toward Peace and Wholeness."

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 donating to the ongoing work of Shalom Counselling, you can donate in the following ways:

Cheque

Cheques can be made payable to:
Shalom Counselling Services Inc.

Credit Card

Credit card donations can be made
online or by phone:
shalomcounselling.org/donate
(519) 886-9690

Legacy Gifts

Legacy gifts (estates and wills)
can be made through
Abundance Canada