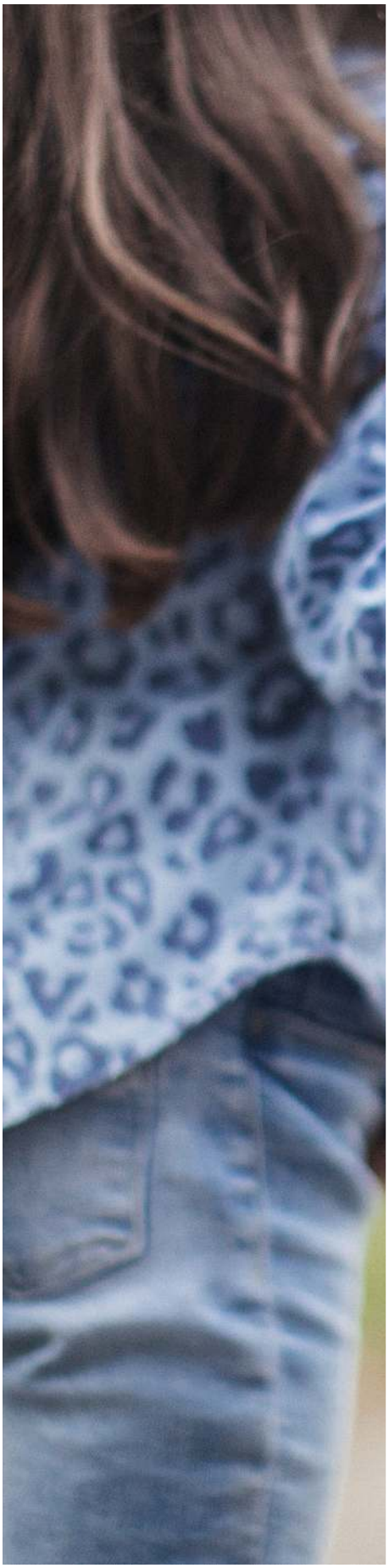

STEPPING STONES
Crisis Society

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

Crisis Society

POLICE
WALK
A MILE
IN HER SHOES

Crisis Society

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am honored to assume the role of CEO of Stepping Stones Crisis Society. The dedication and hard work of our staff have been instrumental in bringing the new facility to life and ensuring that the women and children we support continue to feel safe and cared for throughout this period of transition.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all team members who contributed to the move and the establishment of programming in the new space. I have been warmly welcomed, and it has been a privilege to connect with staff, learn about our programs, and meet clients whose resilience and stories are truly inspiring.

I have also greatly appreciated the opportunity to engage with community stakeholders and look forward to continuing to build strong relationships, collaborate, and deepen our connection with the broader community.

I am excited to contribute to the future of Stepping Stones and to what we can accomplish together in the coming year. My commitment is to ensure that our clients are safe, supported, and empowered to thrive, with access to meaningful and innovative programming. I also aspire to strengthen our position as a leader in supporting those experiencing domestic violence, while fostering a workplace where staff feel valued, proud, and passionate about our mission.

"Domestic violence is complex… but access to safety shouldn't be."

Kim Reed

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
STEPPING STONES CRISIS SOCIETY

YEAR IN REVIEW

More Families Reached Safety

275 Individuals Sheltered

Stepping Stones provided emergency shelter to 275 women and children this year, an increase of 45 individuals over the previous year. The increase reflects both growing community need and our ability to serve more families through expanded shelter capacity.

Fewer Turned Away

Turnaways Reduced by 54%

Emergency shelter turnaways dropped from 414 to 191, representing the lowest number of turnaways in a fiscal year since 2021. Capacity-related turnaways for children were cut by more than half, demonstrating the immediate impact of additional shelter space.

Growth in Outreach

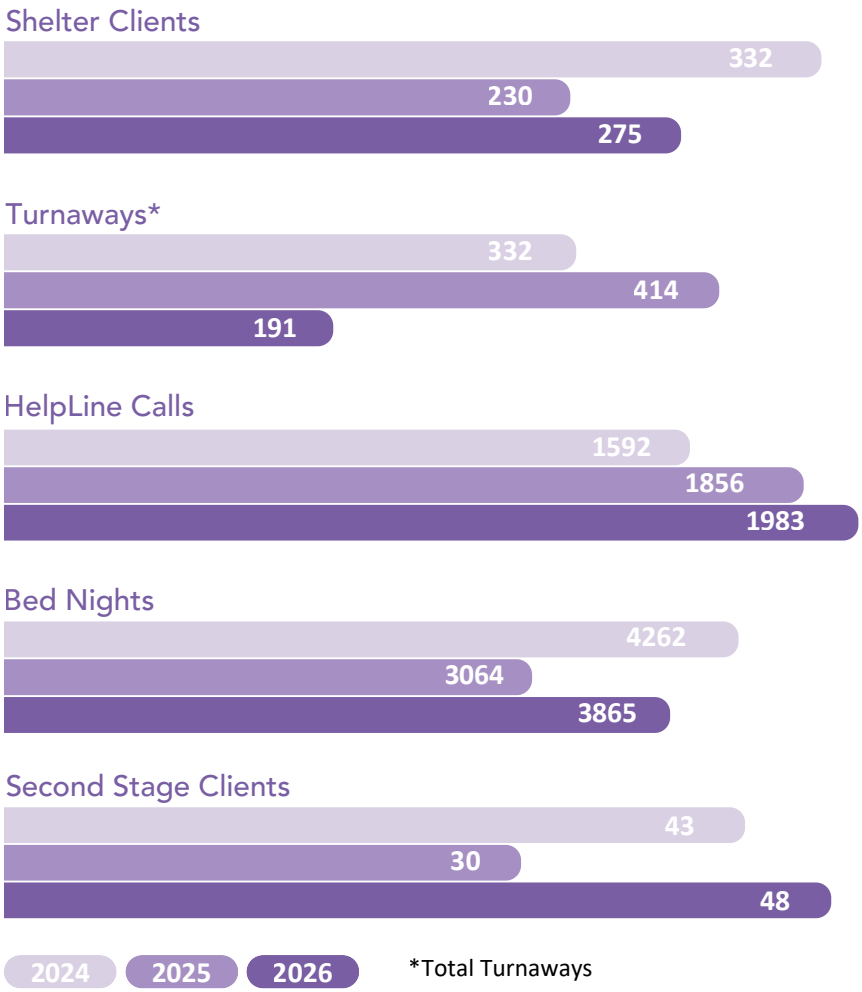
119 Outreach Files Opened

Outreach services expanded significantly across the region, with total outreach files nearly doubling compared to the previous year. This growth reflects increased awareness of available services and continued efforts to connect individuals with support before crisis escalates.

A YEAR OF GROWTH

The 2025–2026 fiscal year was marked by continued growth across Stepping Stones Crisis Society's programs and services. Demand remained strong throughout the year, with increased utilization across many service areas and more individuals and families accessing support.

The statistics presented here highlight the reach of our programs and the impact of our work throughout the region. Behind every number is a person, a family, or a community member who accessed the resources, support, and opportunities needed to move forward.



*Total Turnaways

Average Stay
13 Days

Pet Nights
151

School Days
132

Breaking the Cycle

NICOLE'S JOURNEY FROM SURVIVAL TO HEALING

For Nicole, violence was not something she encountered as an adult. It was something she learned to survive as a child.

Nicole experienced significant childhood trauma, including sexual abuse by trusted family members. The people who should have protected her instead became a source of harm. The one person who consistently provided safety, love, and stability was her grandmother. When her grandmother passed away during Nicole's early teenage years, she lost the only person who had ever truly made her feel safe.

Soon after the loss of her grandmother, Nicole left her home community at just 15 years old to attend high school. Separated from her family, culture, and support systems at a young age, she struggled to navigate a new environment while carrying overwhelming grief and unresolved trauma. The loneliness and pain she experienced during those formative years made her vulnerable to unhealthy coping strategies as she searched for ways to manage the emotional wounds she carried.

The trauma she experienced as a child followed her into adulthood. Over the next two decades, Nicole experienced multiple abusive relationships characterized by coercive control, emotional abuse, financial abuse, isolation, intimidation, and physical violence. Over time, her confidence and sense of self-worth were eroded as others controlled many aspects of her life, including her finances, relationships, choices, and ability to make decisions for herself.

The abuse became so normalized that chaos felt familiar. Years later, family violence continued to affect the safety and stability of Nicole and her children in profound ways.

In one particularly traumatic incident, a violent altercation involving a family member occurred within the family home, placing Nicole and her children at significant risk and resulting in the loss of their housing. Once again, violence disrupted their sense of safety and stability, forcing the family to rebuild.

This is the reality many survivors face. Family violence does not end with the immediate incident. It affects housing stability, mental health, parenting, child welfare involvement, education, employment, and every aspect of daily life.

For Nicole and her children, the impacts of violence had become woven into nearly every chapter of their story.

One of the most devastating moments of Nicole's journey came when her teenage daughter disclosed that she had experienced abuse by a trusted adult during her childhood. The disclosure deeply affected the entire family and became a significant part of their healing journey. The betrayal, grief, and trauma would take years to process and overcome.

Despite her own struggles, one thing never changed: her love for her children. Even during her darkest moments, Nicole was trying to protect them.

Eventually, she faced an impossible decision. Recognizing that her children needed greater safety and stability than she could provide at that time, Nicole reached out for help, knowing it could result in losing custody of the people she loved most.

It was one of the hardest decisions she had ever made. The grief, shame, and heartbreak were overwhelming, but her love for her children never wavered. Rather than giving up, she made a commitment to create a different future for her family.

Recovery was not a straight line. Nicole entered treatment more than once. She experienced setbacks. She relapsed. She returned to unhealthy environments. She went back to abusive relationships. Like many survivors living with the impacts of complex trauma, addiction, and family violence, healing came with challenges and difficult lessons.

After returning to her home community following treatment, Nicole found herself once again facing violence, substance use, and instability. As the situation escalated, an unexpected source of support emerged. A family member connected to her former partner helped Nicole safely leave the situation and access treatment services. Recognizing the significant safety risks she faced, they also helped her relocate to a community more than ten hours away from her home, creating critical distance and an opportunity to begin healing in a safer environment.

Without that intervention, leaving may not have been possible. Years of control, isolation, and abuse had created significant barriers to seeking help and rebuilding her life. That act of support became the first step toward safety, healing, and a different future for Nicole and her children.

A turning point came when Nicole entered treatment and was referred to Stepping Stones Crisis Society. This referral was only possible because a supportive family member of her abuser recognized the danger she was facing and helped her safely leave the home. Without that intervention, escaping the violence may not have been possible.

Through treatment, Nicole was referred and connected with one of our Outreach Specialists and began exploring the relationship between trauma, addiction, family violence, and recovery. For perhaps the first time, someone helped her understand that the challenges she faced were interconnected. Her experiences of childhood abuse, intimate partner violence, substance use, housing instability, mental health struggles, and parenting challenges could not be treated as separate issues.

After treatment, Nicole entered our emergency shelter before transitioning into Joie's Phoenix House, our second-stage housing program.

For the first time in years, she experienced true safety.

The safety to sleep through the night. The safety to focus on healing. The safety to imagine a future beyond survival.

Through support from our Crisis Intervention Specialists, Family Support Specialists, and Outreach Team, Nicole began rebuilding her life one step at a time.

She learned about healthy relationships, boundaries, trauma, safety planning, and self-worth. Staff worked alongside her to navigate complex systems, attend appointments, access resources, strengthen parenting skills, advocate for her needs, and work toward reunification with her children.

The journey required collaboration among many partners. Child welfare professionals, treatment providers, healthcare teams, educational institutions, and community agencies all played important roles. Throughout every stage of her journey, Stepping Stones remained a consistent source of support, advocacy, accountability, and encouragement.

There were challenges. There were setbacks. There were moments when progress felt painfully slow.

There were also victories. The first healthy boundary. The first difficult conversation. The first time asking for help instead of carrying everything alone. The first time believing she deserved a life free from violence.

Along the way, Nicole also received answers that helped her better understand the challenges she had experienced throughout her life. With greater self-awareness and individualized supports, she developed strategies that continue to help her succeed today.

Today, Nicole is often among the first to participate in programming. She actively seeks support when needed, has built healthy friendships, established strong boundaries, and developed a network of positive relationships. She volunteers in the community and has become a source of encouragement for others beginning their own healing journeys. Most importantly, she has successfully reunited with her children.

Her child welfare involvement has concluded, and her family is moving forward together.

Now, Nicole is preparing for the next chapter of her life by pursuing post-secondary education with the goal of helping others who have experienced trauma, violence, and adversity.

Her story is a powerful reminder that family violence is rarely an isolated issue.

It impacts housing, health, education, parenting, mental wellness, addiction, financial stability, and entire family systems. The effects of violence can span generations, touching every aspect of a survivor's life and the lives of their children.

Nicole's journey also demonstrates what becomes possible when survivors have access to safety, long-term support, stable housing, trauma-informed services, and a community that believes in their ability to heal.

At Stepping Stones Crisis Society, we know that recovery does not happen overnight.

But when survivors are given safety, support, and time to heal, cycles can be broken.

Today, Nicole's story is no longer defined by the violence she endured.

It is defined by the future she is creating for herself, her children, and the generations that follow.

CLIENT CARE

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS THROUGH EVERY STAGE OF THEIR JOURNEY

The 2025–2026 fiscal year marked a significant milestone for Stepping Stones Crisis Society as all client-facing programs came together under one roof for the first time. This integration strengthened our ability to provide coordinated, responsive, and holistic support to women, children, and families affected by family violence.

Throughout the year, staff from Dr. Margaret Savage House, Joie's Phoenix House, Outreach, Child Development, and Cultural Programming worked together to ensure clients received seamless support as they moved through different stages of healing and recovery. Through weekly case management meetings and ongoing collaboration, staff shared knowledge, developed creative solutions, and supported families facing increasingly complex challenges.

The move into the new facility further strengthened continuity of care. Survivors transitioning between programs were able to maintain relationships with trusted staff while remaining connected to the supports that had become part of their healing journey.

By bringing services together under one roof, barriers to access were reduced, collaboration increased, and clients experienced a greater sense of safety, connection, and community.

Together, the Client Care team continues to provide a range of support that helps individuals and families move from crisis toward healing, stability, and long-term independence.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Throughout the year, Dr. Margaret Savage House provided safety, support, and compassion to women and children experiencing crisis. From newborns just days old to seniors seeking refuge, residents found a safe and welcoming environment where they could begin to rebuild their lives.

Beyond meeting immediate needs for shelter, food, and safety, staff focused on building trust, fostering resilience, and supporting each individual's unique goals. Residents participated in meaningful programs and activities, accessed cultural and emotional supports, and developed the confidence and skills needed to move forward with hope and purpose.

At Stepping Stones, progress is recognized in all its forms.

Whether taking small steps toward stability or achieving significant personal milestones, every accomplishment is acknowledged and celebrated. This encouragement helps foster confidence, self-worth, and a sense of possibility for the future.

Feedback from residents highlighted the value of having support available around the clock, access to cultural spaces such as the smudge room, and the sense of community they found while staying at the shelter.

These experiences remind us that healing begins with feeling safe, valued, and supported. We are honoured to walk alongside each individual on their journey toward healing, strength, and renewed hope.

"I feel so safe here."

"You don't know how much that means to me, having someone be proud of me."

-Shelter Clients

JOIE'S PHOENIX HOUSE

Joie's Phoenix House (JPH) provides safe, affordable second-stage housing and individualized support for women and children rebuilding their lives after experiencing family violence. The program offers survivors the time, stability, and resources needed to heal from trauma, strengthen life skills, and work toward independent living.

The 2025–2026 fiscal year marked a significant milestone as JPH expanded from seven to twelve apartments within Stepping Stones' new facility. This increased capacity allowed more families to access safe housing while strengthening connections to the organization's broader network of supports. During the year, JPH supported 20 women and 28 children, including 12 women and 21 children admitted to the program. 11 women and 9 children departed the program.

Residents participated in a wide range of programming and supports, including financial literacy, food security initiatives, cultural programming, recovery supports, life skills development, and parenting education. In response to resident needs, twice-weekly in-house Alcoholics Anonymous meetings were introduced, helping reduce barriers related to transportation, childcare, and safety.

Throughout the year, residents achieved meaningful milestones, including securing employment, strengthening financial management skills, advancing recovery goals, and successfully transitioning to independent housing. Staff provided intensive wraparound support to help families navigate challenges, access resources, and remain focused on their goals.

As one resident shared, "I feel happy here, I'm safe, and my babies are safe, the safest I've been in over five years." For many women and children, Joie's Phoenix House provides more than housing. It provides the opportunity to heal, rebuild confidence, and create a future free from violence.

PATHWAYS

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, Stepping Stones Crisis Society proudly launched Pathways: Healing and Prosperity, an Indigenous-led program designed to support the healing, growth, cultural reconnection, and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, and 2S+ people. Grounded in the Seven Sacred Teachings, the program provides a culturally safe space where participants can strengthen their sense of identity, build healthy relationships, and develop skills that support healing from trauma and family violence. While Indigenous teachings form the foundation of the program, participation is open and welcoming to all women in the community.

"I felt understood and not alone. I started to accept and forgive myself. I am still in the healing journey."

Over the fiscal year, 28 program sessions were delivered, resulting in 211 participant visits from 22 unique participants, including both in-house clients and community members. The program's flexible design allowed women to join at any point in the 30-session journey, ensuring support remained accessible throughout the year.

Program highlights included ribbon skirt making, beading, sharing circles, cultural teachings, and presentations from guest speakers. Participants had the opportunity to hear from Inuk photographer Cora Kavyaktok, who shared her experiences of culture, identity, and empowerment, as well as Women's Building Futures, which introduced pathways to education, training, and employment.

Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with women reporting increased confidence, stronger personal boundaries, improved awareness of healthy relationships, deeper cultural connection, and a greater sense of hope and belonging. The success of the program has reinforced the importance of culturally grounded, Indigenous-led programming in supporting healing, strengthening community connections, and creating pathways toward long-term wellness and resilience.

"This program gave me hope and helped me when I was in a dark place, and I'm forever grateful to have the opportunity to be here and heal so I can gain self-confidence back and be independent."

- Second-stage Housing Resident

HOLIDAY HELPERS

The Holiday Helper Program once again brought joy and support to families impacted by family violence during the 2025–2026 holiday season. This year, 32 families, including 62 children, received assistance through the program.

Community members were invited to adopt a Christmas elf, with each elf representing a family and their holiday wish list. Through the generosity of donors, families accessing Stepping Stones services, along with a small number referred by community partners, were able to celebrate the season with gifts, reduced financial stress, and meaningful holiday memories.

Stepping Stones Crisis Society extends its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated in the Holiday Helper Program. Their kindness helped make Christmas brighter for dozens of families and demonstrated the remarkable compassion that exists throughout our community.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the Outreach Team provided individualized support to 119 individuals and families affected by family violence. Through advocacy, safety planning, court support, housing navigation, referrals, risk assessment, and emotional support, staff helped survivors access resources, overcome barriers, and build pathways toward safety, stability, and independence.

In addition to direct client support, the team remained actively engaged throughout the community, delivering education, participating in community events, and collaborating with schools, treatment centres, post-secondary institutions, and partner organizations.

Highlights included eight Healthy Relationships presentations at the Bonnyville Métis Rehabilitation Centre and the development of a new Gender, Power, and Violence in Relationships presentation for students at Portage College.

The Outreach Team also facilitated A Better Way, an eight-week program focused on anger management, healthy coping skills, and respectful relationships. Over the year, 50 individuals participated through men's groups, women's groups, and individual sessions, with participants praising the program's assistance in helping them build self-awareness and healthier relationships.

Thank you again so much for what you've done for us. I just hope you know how much you made a difference.

I got a job in downtown Edmonton, I start Monday! Good start to 2026 😀😀

Community awareness remained a priority through initiatives such as Paint the Town Purple, which engaged 129 businesses and organizations during Family Violence Prevention Month, and the annual Candlelight Vigil, which brought the community together to honour survivors and reaffirm a shared commitment to ending family violence.

Whether supporting clients one-on-one or leading prevention and awareness efforts, the Outreach Team continues to play a vital role in strengthening safety, healing, and resilience throughout the Lakeland region.

"It changed my whole perspective of looking at problems in life and helped improve a healthy lifestyle, especially in relationships with partners."

-A Better Way Participant

FOOD SERVICES

Stepping Stone's Food Services program grew greatly during the fiscal year. Following the arrival of Food Services Manager Renata Duarte in July 2025 and the organization's move into the new facility in October, the department expanded its capacity to deliver nutritious meals, educational programming, and community-focused initiatives.

The addition of a Food Facilitator strengthened the delivery of client-centred programming across both the emergency shelter and Joie's Phoenix House. During the year, the team successfully launched and completed the first cycle of the Wholesome Beginnings program, supporting women's nutritional needs from pre-pregnancy through menopause, while continuing its partnership with the Healthy Babies program through the provision of monthly family-style meals.

Core kitchen operations remained efficient and consistent, with approximately 1,400 meals prepared each month for shelter residents at an average cost of $5.00 per meal. This reflects the department's ongoing commitment to providing nutritious, high-quality meals while carefully managing resources amid rising food costs.

As food insecurity continues to affect many of the individuals and families we serve, addressing increasing food costs and growing demand for support remains a key priority. Despite these challenges, Food Services has established a strong foundation for continued growth, innovation, and responsive service delivery.

HEALTHY BABIES

Healthy Babies continued to provide prenatal education, nutrition support, and one-on-one outreach to families throughout the region, promoting healthy pregnancies and positive outcomes for both parents and babies. Clients met regularly with Outreach Workers to monitor prenatal milestones, access resources, and receive support related to healthcare appointments, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle practices.

Food security remained a core component of program delivery. Each month, an average of 84 to 96 clients received nutritional support, including milk, fresh food coupons, and other nutritional supplements, resulting in approximately 1,080 instances of food support distributed throughout the year. At peak utilization, the program served an average of 37 clients per month in Cold Lake, 34 in Bonnyville, and 25 across the Lac La Biche, Kikino, and Buffalo Lake areas.

In response to the growing concern of food insecurity, Healthy Babies received a food and nutrition grant from Pathways Alliance in July 2025, allowing the program to enhance its monthly nutrition supports with additional grocery items and expanded food assistance. The enhanced support was well received and helped address increasing food insecurity among participating families.

Healthy Babies remains committed to supporting healthy pregnancies through education, nutrition, and early intervention, while exploring opportunities to sustain and expand enhanced food supports in the years ahead.

HEALTHY BABIES WISH LIST

- Formula
- Diapers
- Breast pads
- Baby care items (Nail clippers, files, scissors, aspirators)
- Diaper cream
- Baby toiletries
- Baby mitts
- Wash cloths
- Nipple cream
- Nipple shields
- Post natal feminine supplies
- Soothers

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

As with all other departments, the 2025–2026 fiscal year brought significant changes for Child Development with the transition into Stepping Stones' new facility. The expanded space includes a dedicated playroom, indoor play structure, and larger outdoor area, creating new opportunities for children to learn, play, and engage in a safe and welcoming environment.

Throughout the year, Child Development provided 1,113 hours of childcare support to clients accessing Outreach, Joie's Phoenix House, and Emergency Shelter services. These supports help reduce barriers for parents and caregivers, allowing them to attend appointments, programs, and support services while knowing their children are receiving quality care.

In addition to childcare services, Child Development introduced weekly structured programming for shelter and second-stage housing families, creating opportunities for learning, connection, and positive family engagement. As the program continues to grow, Child Development remains committed to providing safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate supports for children and families.

VOLUNTEERS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Volunteers continue to play a vital role at Stepping Stones Crisis Society. During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, 85 dedicated volunteers contributed more than 2,000 hours of service, supporting women, children, and families throughout the region.

Their involvement strengthened our capacity to deliver programs and services, generate revenue, maintain safe and welcoming facilities, support organizational governance, and enhance the overall client experience.

Volunteers contributed across a wide range of activities, including donation management within our social enterprises, bingos, fundraising initiatives, special events, Board governance, client programming, administrative support, and facility maintenance projects.

Using Alberta's minimum wage of $15.00 per hour, these contributions represent an estimated in-kind value of more than $30,000.

The value of volunteer service extends beyond these hours alone, with many individuals contributing specialized skills, professional expertise, leadership, and community connections that helped strengthen our organization and expand its impact.

Collectively, these contributions reflect the generosity and community spirit that help make Stepping Stones' work possible.

We extend our sincere gratitude to every volunteer for the time, knowledge, and support they shared throughout the year.

LETTER FROM A SECOND-STAGE HOUSING RESIDENT

Dear Stepping Stones Team,

I would like to thank you for all the support, kindness, and encouragement you have given me and my children.

When we arrived in Canada, everything was new and difficult for us. I did not know the system, my English was very limited, and I was trying to take care of my five children while building a new life. Through your programs and support, I learned many things and gained more confidence.

You helped me understand services, connect with resources, support my children, and continue working toward my goals. Your kindness, patience, and respect made a positive difference in our lives.

My children have also benefited from the programs and activities and have felt welcomed and supported.

Thank you for the work you do every day to help newcomer families. We truly appreciate everything you have done for us.

With gratitude,

Second-stage Housing Resident

This mother's story is one of resilience, determination, and hope. After marrying and moving abroad, she found herself in a relationship marked by coercive control, violence, and isolation. As she sought help, she encountered significant barriers, including cultural expectations, legal restrictions, and systems that offered little protection or support.

Despite these challenges, she remained focused on creating a safer future for her children. When the family later relocated to Canada, the violence continued until authorities recognized the danger they faced and connected them with shelter services.

Through emergency shelter and later Joie's Phoenix House, Stepping Stones Crisis Society's second-stage housing program, she and her five children found safety, stability, advocacy, and support. With access to resources and a secure environment, she was able to begin rebuilding her confidence, pursuing independence, and creating the future she had long hoped for her family.

This letter is shared by the survivor herself and reflects her experience, resilience, and gratitude for the support she received along the way.

EVENTS & FUND DEVELOPMENT

The 2025–2026 fiscal year marked an exciting chapter for Stepping Stones Crisis Society's events and community engagement program.

As the first full year with a dedicated Events Coordinator, we expanded our fundraising and community engagement efforts, creating new opportunities to raise awareness, strengthen partnerships, and generate support for survivors of family violence.

Through a combination of signature events, community partnerships, awareness initiatives, and third-party fundraisers, our events program raised more than $145,000 while connecting with hundreds of supporters throughout the region.

Highlights included the return of our Festival of Peace Gala, which welcomed 280 guests and raised more than $83,000, as well as the Grand Opening of our new facility and Soirée celebration, attended by more than 200 community members. Other successful initiatives included the CNRL Steak and Shrimp Fundraiser, Winter Wishes Cash Raffle, Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, Share the Love takeout fundraiser in partnership with our own food services team,the RCMP Charity Golf Tournament, and our first ever murder mystery dinner theatre, “Done to Death.”

We also hosted our annual Candlelight Vigil and Walk of Remembrance, providing an important opportunity for reflection, remembrance, and community connection.

Community-led and third-party fundraising efforts continued to play an important role in supporting our mission. We were honoured to benefit from initiatives such as the Royal LePage Charity BBQ, Cold Lake Ford Charity BBQ, Imperial Oil’s Harvest For Humanity charity event and Mini Munch Mania Burger Challenge, a collaborative fundraiser involving Clark's and Images Studios.

In addition, Ageless Living continued its longstanding generosity through donations of hygiene products and pajamas. The local Bottle Depot also established a collection bin that directs bottle return proceeds to Stepping Stones.

Community members also upported us through independent fundraising efforts and donations throughout the year. We are equally grateful to the countless individuals, families, service clubs, and community groups who dropped off donations including things like: quilts, pajamas, and personal care items to food and household essentials. These gifts, both large and small, provided comfort and practical support to the individuals and families we serve.

DONATE TODAY

We invite you to become a monthly donor and make a lasting impact in the lives of women and children fleeing family violence.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 280 Gala attendees
- 200+ Grand Opening Soiree guests
- $83,000+ Festival of Peace Gala
- $26,000+ raised through raffle fundraisers
- $19,486 CNRL Steak & Shrimp Fundraiser
- $145,000+ raised through events and community fundraising activities.

Grand Opening/Open House

Grand Opening Soirée

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes

Grand Opening Soirée

Done to Death
Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre

Grand Opening/Open House

Celebrity Server

Festival Of Peace

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The 2025–2026 fiscal year brought significant operational changes to Social Enterprises, including transitions in management and staffing, onboarding and training of new employees, implementation of updated procedures, and reorganization of store operations. Throughout the year, the team maintained day-to-day operations while managing large volumes of donations, updating pricing structures, and improving store organization and efficiency.

ORBITING TRENDS

Orbiting Trends continued to provide affordable clothing, household goods, and essential items to community members while supporting several outreach initiatives.

Through the **COZY KIDS** program, winter coats and cold-weather gear were distributed free of charge to children and adults in need.

The **CARES PROGRAM** provided clothing, footwear, hygiene products, jackets, underwear, and other essentials to individuals experiencing hardship, including $2,296.75 in support to Stepping Stones clients and $1,146.50 in support to other community members.

The store underwent a complete refresh and reorganization during the year, improving accessibility, customer flow, and overall shopping experience. Pricing was reviewed and adjusted to help ensure quality clothing and household items remained affordable for individuals and families facing increasing cost-of-living pressures.

Orbiting Trends also continued its commitment to community partnerships and sustainability through donations to the Lakeland Humane Society, Assumption School, the Cold Lake Library, and Stepping Stones programs. In addition, the store participated in Giving Tuesday in support of the Cold Lake Food Bank and continued to provide donor appreciation coupons to individuals contributing items to support the organization's mission.

ELLA'S CLOSET

Ella's Closet continued to provide quality consignment shopping while generating funding to support Stepping Stones Crisis Society programs and services.

Throughout the year, Ella's Closet supported and promoted the Empower Her Program and hosted several successful fundraising initiatives.
The annual International Women's Day Clothing Drive raised $541, while online auctions generated a combined $16,879 in support of Stepping Stones programs.

Seasonal Spring and Fall Launch events continued to attract customers from across Alberta and contributed to ongoing growth in customer engagement and community support.

Ella's Closet also gave back to the community through financial contributions to the Lakeland Humane Society, Hearts for Healthcare, Assumption School, the Cold Lake Food Bank, the Palliative Care Society, the Military Family Resource Centre, and Haying in the 30's.

VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

The success of Social Enterprises would not be possible without the dedication of our volunteers and donors.

Throughout the year, volunteers contributed countless hours supporting store operations, sorting donations, organizing inventory, assisting customers, managing fundraising initiatives, and helping ensure the continued success of Orbiting Trends and Ella's Closet. Their time, energy, and commitment play a vital role in supporting our mission.

We are equally grateful to the individuals, families, and businesses who donate clothing, household goods, furniture, books, toys, and other items throughout the year. These donations help generate funding for Stepping Stones programs while ensuring affordable goods remain available to community members. Every donation contributes to the support, resources, and opportunities provided through our Social Enterprises.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES REVENUE AT A GLANCE

ORBITING TRENDS

Fiscal Year	Revenue
2025/2026	$393,340.44
2024/2025	$404,259.22

ELLA'S CLOSET

Fiscal Year	Revenue
2025/2026	$172,127.12
2024/2025	$177,043.06

COMBINED REVENUE

Fiscal Year	Revenue
2025/2026	$565,467.56
2024/2025	$581,302.28

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IMPACT

2025-2026

CARES PROGRAM

$2,296.75

provided to Stepping Stones Clients

$1,146.50

provided to community members

FUNDRAISING

$16,879

raised through online auctions

$541

raised though International Women's Day Clothing Drive

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COZY KIDS

provided 114 winter coats and cold-weather gear to children and adults in need.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Lakeland Humane Society
- Assumption Jr/Sr High School
- Cold Lake Public Library
- Cold Lake Food Bank
- Hearts for Healthcare
- MFRC
- Haying in the 30s

STORE IMPROVEMENTS

- Complete Orbiting Trends store refresh and reorganization
- Pricing review completed to improve affordability
- Improved accessibility and customer experience

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

This past year has been a massive turning point for Stepping Stones, and looking back, I am incredibly proud of how far we've come. Getting the new building up and running took years of foundational hard work and dedication. I want to give a huge, heartfelt thank you to our main contractor, Nails Enterprises. Their partnership, hard work, and dedication were absolutely vital in getting this beautiful new space built for our community.
Right after the building phase wrapped up, we entered a period of leadership transition.

I want to sincerely thank the Board of Directors for putting their trust in me to serve as Interim CEO from December through the beginning of April. Stepping into that role during such a critical bridge period was an honor.

My focus was on keeping the ship steady, supporting our incredible administrative and frontline teams, and making sure services to our clients never missed a beat during a time of great change.

Now, I am so excited to welcome our new CEO, Kim Reed, to the team as we move into the future. Stepping Stones is truly a "newer" organization now. Operating out of this modern facility means we have different goals, fresh opportunities, and entirely new challenges ahead of us. With Kim's leadership and our team's resilience, I know we are in a wonderful position to take on the future together.

Jody Hawkridge

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
& INTERIM CEO
STEPPING STONES CRISIS SOCIETY

A NEW HOME FOR HOPE

SAFETY, COMPASSION, AND DIGNITY UNITED

The opening of our new facility in 2025 marked one of the most significant milestones in Stepping Stones Crisis Society's history. The building represents years of planning, advocacy, fundraising, and community support, all driven by a shared commitment to providing safer, more comprehensive services for women, children, and families in crisis.

This achievement would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors, sponsors, funding partners, and community supporters who contributed to the Capital Campaign. Their investment has created a lasting impact that will benefit the region for years to come. We also extend our sincere gratitude to NAILS for their professionalism, dedication, and craftsmanship throughout the construction process. We are especially proud that the majority of labour and materials used in the project were sourced locally, supporting businesses, tradespeople, and families throughout the region.

For the first time in our organization's history, all Stepping Stones programs and services are housed under one roof.

Bringing emergency shelter, second-stage housing, outreach services, family support programs, administration, and community spaces together has strengthened collaboration across departments, improved communication, and enhanced the overall client experience.

The new facility has also created opportunities to expand programming, host community events, and strengthen organizational culture. During the year, we were able to hold events such as our Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon and Christmas Staff Celebration in our own space, while the addition of a commercial-grade kitchen has significantly expanded our capacity for food services, community kitchen initiatives, and food security programming.

Most importantly, the new facility more than doubled our shelter capacity, allowing us to support more women and children than ever before. While demand for services remains exceptionally high and occupancy has remained at or near capacity since opening, the additional space has already produced measurable results.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, Stepping Stones recorded its lowest number of shelter turnaways since 2021 and the lowest number related specifically to capacity limitations since 2020. At the same time, the shelter provided the second-highest number of bed nights of the past decade, demonstrating that increased capacity allowed more individuals and families to access support when they needed it most.

The impact was equally significant within Joie's Phoenix House. After recording a historic high for capacity-related turnaways in the previous fiscal year, the program experienced zero turnaways due to capacity limitations in 2025–2026, the first time this has occurred since 2018. This achievement coincided with the highest number of second-stage housing tenants served in a single year, highlighting the value of expanded housing capacity in supporting long-term stability and independence.

While the opening of the facility represents a major achievement, it also marks the beginning of a new chapter. The continued demand for shelter and housing services demonstrates the ongoing need within our region, and thanks to the support of our community, Stepping Stones is better equipped than ever to respond.

FACILITY OPERATIONS

Looking back at our facilities and infrastructure this year, the work was divided into two distinct, high-intensity phases.

PREPARATION, GRAND OPENING, AND MOVE (APRIL – OCTOBER)

By the beginning of the fiscal year, planning for the transition to the new facility was already well underway, while construction continued on the final stages of the project.

NAILS completed the first and second floors in time for the Grand Opening in September, allowing the public to experience a facility that had been more than three years in the making.

Relocating the organization's entire 24/7 operation was a significant undertaking. Throughout September and October, staff packed and transferred equipment, supplies, and resources from the legacy buildings, culminating in an intensive two-day move.

With the support of staff and the NAILS crew, the transition was completed successfully and with minimal disruption to services.

LEARNING THE BUILDING (NOVEMBER – MARCH)

The second half of the fiscal year focused on adapting to the new facility and refining operations within the larger space.

Staff worked through the challenges common to a newly completed construction project, including final elevator certification, building system adjustments, and learning the intricacies of the geothermal climate-control system.

This period was dedicated to optimizing operations, refining processes, and ensuring the facility functions safely, efficiently, and sustainably for years to come.

While much of this work occurred behind the scenes, it has helped establish a strong foundation for the future of Stepping Stones Crisis Society.

It is spectacular to see this facility open its doors, and be built in such a beautiful way that families can stay together as they flee violence."

-Layla Goodridge
Member of Parliament, Fort McMurray–Cold Lake

Dr. Margaret Savage House Common Area

Joie's Phoenix House Suite Dining Room

Paws of Hope Pet Shelter

Bright Futures School Classroom

Community Garden & Backyard Area

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Thank you for investing in safety, support, and hope for women and children in our community.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

This past year stands as one of the most transformative in our organization's history. Last fall, we were pleased to host the Grand Opening of our new facility, which has expanded our capacity to include 63 emergency beds and 12 fully furnished second-stage apartments. It was with great pride that we invited our key funders, supporters, and community members to tour the first two floors of the building. At the follow-up Grand Opening Soirée, we celebrated the successful completion of this important project and honoured our funders and supporters during an evening that was truly remarkable. This great achievement reflects years of planning, perseverance, and the generosity of those who believed in our vision. Our new home is more than a building; it is a foundation for growth, innovation, and expanded service to the community.

We were also thrilled to welcome back the annual Festival of Peace. Its return brought renewed energy, connection, and celebration, reminding us of the power of gathering with a shared purpose. The strong turnout and enthusiastic participation reaffirmed how deeply our work resonates within the community.

Throughout this year of change, our staff demonstrated exceptional dedication and resilience.

Moving into a facility of this scale brought inevitable challenges, but our team met each one with professionalism, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace new ways of working. Their hard work ensured continuity in our operations while upholding the high standards our community expects.

We are profoundly grateful for the continued support we receive from donors, volunteers, partners, and all who champion our mission. Your belief in our work sustains us and strengthens our resolve to serve with excellence.

This spring, we also welcomed our new CEO, Kim Reed. Kim brings a wealth of experience, a collaborative spirit, and a clear vision for the future. Her leadership comes at a pivotal moment, and we are confident that her guidance will strengthen our organization as we continue to grow into our new space and expand our impact.

As we look ahead, we do so with optimism and confidence. With a new building, renewed traditions, a committed team, and strong leadership in place, we are well positioned to build on this year's momentum and continue making a meaningful impact.

Leona Kolbinson

PRESIDENT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
STEPPING STONES CRISIS SOCIETY

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The work of Stepping Stones Crisis Society is made possible by the compassion and generosity of our donors and partners. We do our best to recognize everyone who supports our work. If you notice an omission, please reach out to us at events@steppingstonessociety.ca

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