April - June 2026

Stepping Stones Crisis Society Newsletter

Milestones

Stepping Stones Crisis Society 780-594-3353 steppingstonessociety.ca

Message from the *CEO*

The past three months have been an exciting and rewarding beginning to my time as CEO of Stepping Stones Crisis Society. When I accepted this role, I knew I was stepping into an organization with an incredible history, dedicated staff, and important work. Like any major transition, there were many unknowns, but those uncertainties have quickly been replaced by gratitude, confidence, and excitement.

Since joining the team, I have had the opportunity to learn about our programs, connect with clients, and meet many of the staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters who make this organization so special. I have witnessed the heart of Stepping Stones in action, from sharing meals with women and families through our Collective Kitchens program to seeing our Child Development team create meaningful experiences for children. I have also seen the professionalism and compassion our staff demonstrate every day as they support clients through some of life's most challenging moments.

I am incredibly grateful to our staff for the warm welcome they have extended and for their ongoing commitment to providing safe, compassionate, and empowering services.

I have also appreciated the opportunity to begin building relationships with community partners and look forward to strengthening those connections in the months ahead.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this quarter, I am excited for what lies ahead. Together, we will continue to grow meaningful programming, strengthen our services, and ensure that every person who comes through our doors has access to safety, support, and hope.

Kim Reed

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
STEPPING STONES CRISIS SOCIETY

In the *shelter*

AT CAPACITY

In April, the shelter reached full capacity for the first time since moving into the new facility, with all 14 shelter rooms occupied. This milestone reflects the growing demand for emergency shelter services and underscores the importance of the expanded capacity provided by the new building.

TRANSITIONS TO SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

During the quarter, three shelter clients successfully transitioned into Joie's Phoenix House. These referrals provide women and their children with longer-term housing and continued support as they work toward greater independence and stability.

HOUSING CHALLENGES

The ongoing shortage of affordable housing continues to impact clients leaving the shelter. More women and families are staying 30 days or longer, with some remaining for up to 60 days while searching for safe, stable housing. These extended stays highlight the increasing barriers clients face when transitioning to the next stage of their journey.

By the numbers

April – June

75
women stayed in the shelter

59
children stayed in the shelter

550
Help Line calls received

1431
bed nights

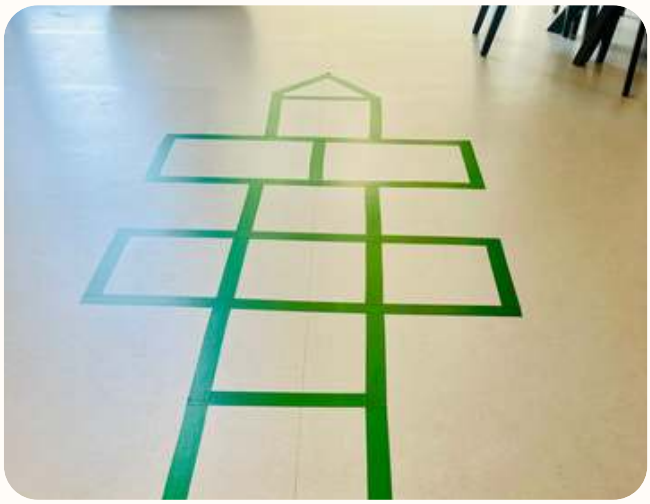
JOIE'S PHOENIX HOUSE

This quarter marked several important milestones for Joie's Phoenix House. Two clients courageously shared their stories anonymously in the Stepping Stones Annual Report, helping raise awareness of the impact of supportive housing while offering hope to others on their healing journey.

Residents also completed Discovering Beauty from Broken Pieces, a workshop for survivors of intimate partner violence that focused on rebuilding self-esteem, challenging negative self-talk, and developing practical tools to support continued healing.

The Pathways program also concluded this quarter. Over 30 sessions, 22 participants took part in culturally grounded programming that combined Indigenous teachings, safety education, healthy relationships, and personal growth, providing meaningful tools to support healing and strengthen connections to culture and community.

"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."



CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The Child Development program recently introduced **Operation On Time**, a fun morning initiative that encourages school-aged children in Joie's Phoenix House to be ready for the bus each day. Children earn stamps for being first downstairs each morning, with the top participant choosing a prize from the reward basket. The program has received positive feedback from parents, who have noticed smoother morning routines and greater motivation among their children.

To further support families, individualized morning routine and behaviour charts were developed for several JPH households. Parents reported improvements in accountability, daily routines, and behaviour, while appreciating the additional support and guidance.

The Child Development Specialist also continued facilitating monthly programming for JPH families while providing one-on-one coaching to parents on child development, behaviour management, attachment, and healthy family relationships. Throughout the past few months, Child Development became a more active partner in collaborative case management, ensuring children's developmental and emotional needs were considered alongside housing, safety planning, and family goals.

In the *community*

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Outreach team led the Empowering Women program through May and June, bringing together shelter clients, second-stage residents, and community participants for weekly sessions focused on building confidence, knowledge, and healthy life skills. Topics included healthy relationships, mental and physical wellness, financial literacy, sexual health, navigating new relationships after abuse, and personal goal setting. Participants also benefited from guest presentations by Jennifer Perepelitza (Cold Lake First Nations), Miranda Coburn, Leanne Draper (FCSS), and Megan and Laura from Above & Beyond Florist, who led a hands-on flower arranging workshop after generously donating flowers and vases.

Participant feedback highlighted the positive impact of the program, with many reporting increased self-awareness, confidence, and personal growth. Facilitators were praised for creating a welcoming, supportive environment where participants felt understood, informed, and encouraged throughout their healing journey.

I feel like I am more self-aware and that I need to give myself some grace. I learnt I am better to others than myself, and that has to change.

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

In May, members of the Stepping Stones team attended the Dragonfly Centre's Open House in Bonnyville, learning more about the organization's services while strengthening an important community partnership.

The Dragonfly Centre provides coordinated support for children and youth who have experienced abuse, bringing together multiple services in one child-friendly location to help families access care. We are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside organizations like the Dragonfly Centre to ensure individuals and families throughout the Lakeland region receive the support they need.

STEPPING STONES
Crisis Society

24-Hour Helpline
780-594-3353

Silence hides violence.

Women • Men • Children • Youth • Seniors

You are not alone. Help is here 24/7.

Call today for **confidential** support, information, and referrals.

Navigating *Healing*

Stepping Stones Crisis Society is expanding its supports with the addition of two new Navigator roles designed to help clients access the resources, connections, and guidance they need throughout their healing journey.

Leading these initiatives are Kiara Gamble, Stepping Stones' new Legal Navigator, and Jayda Maciborski, the organization's new Cultural Navigator. Both are centered on reducing barriers and ensuring clients feel informed, supported, and connected.

As Legal Navigator, Kiara provides clients with guidance, court support, referrals, and general legal information related to family violence, criminal matters, family court, and other legal processes. While the program does not provide legal advice, it helps individuals better understand their options, navigate complex systems, and access the supports available to them.

"Legal processes can be intimidating and emotionally exhausting, especially for individuals already experiencing crisis or trauma," said Gamble. "One of the biggest goals of this program is making sure people feel informed, supported, and not alone while navigating those systems."

Kiara Gamble, Legal Navigator

Jayda Maciborski, Cultural Navigator

Jayda's role as Cultural Navigator focuses on helping clients incorporate culture into their healing while strengthening connections with Indigenous communities and cultural resources. She coordinates cultural programming, connects clients with community events and services, and works to ensure culture remains an important part of the healing journey for those who wish to access it.

Jayda joined Stepping Stones in 2025 as the creator and facilitator of the Pathways Program, a 30-session curriculum blending traditional Indigenous knowledge with practical life skills. Now serving full-time as Cultural Navigator, she continues to expand opportunities for cultural learning, community engagement, and culturally responsive support.

Together, these new Navigator roles reflect Stepping Stones' ongoing commitment to providing comprehensive, trauma-informed care that extends beyond immediate safety. By helping clients navigate legal systems, reconnect with culture, and access community resources, the programs strengthen the organization's ability to support women and families as they build safer, healthier futures.

Social *Enterprises*

It has been a busy season for both Orbiting Trends and Ella's Closet, with new displays, community initiatives, fundraising efforts, and exciting promotions helping to keep both stores active and engaged with the community.

This spring, staff completed a major reorganization of Orbiting Trends to improve the shopping experience for all who visit. The refreshed layout has made it easier for customers to browse while creating a more welcoming space. Feedback from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.

It looks amazing!!!!! Lots of hard work goes into a job like that. Well done!

In June, the store launched its Travelling Toonie Tuesday summer campaign. Every Tuesday, regular-priced clothing is just $2, and customers are invited to share photos of a toonie on their summer adventures for a chance to win one of three summer prize packs.

Orbiting Trends also hosted their annual online auctions for Mother's Day and Father's Day, giving supporters another fun way to shop while raising funds for Stepping Stones Crisis Society. In total, over $6,500 was raised between the two auctions.

Staff also created displays at Orbiting Trends at at Ella's Closet for Red Dress Day, helping raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People.

Ella's Closet launched its spring collection early in April. The boutique also featured several clothing displays and promotions throughout the past few months, including a colourful Pride Month rainbow display celebrating inclusion and belonging, and a thoughtful Blind Date with a Book promotion that paired surprise books with small gifts.

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Crisis Society
JOIN
THE BOARD
Help build brighter futures for women and children facing family violence.
Join the Stepping Stones Crisis Society Board of Directors.
Apply today at SteppingStonesSociety.ca/Board

Walk a Mile *in Her Shoes*

On April 25. 2026, we hosed our annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event, raising awareness of gender-based violence while bringing together community leaders, local businesses, organizations, and residents in support of survivors.

Participants completed ten laps around the Reid Field House at the Energy Centre after finding the right pair of high heels for the walk. The event takes place in conjunction with the international Walk a Mile in Her Shoes campaign, which encourages men to take an active role in raising awareness and demonstrating that preventing gender-based violence is a shared community responsibility.

The morning began with participants gathering around a memorial display of shoes recognizing Alberta women who have lost their lives to gender-based violence.

Throughout the event, speakers highlighted the ongoing impact of domestic and gender-based violence, particularly in rural communities, and the continued need for accessible support services.

The event raised more than $6,100 to support Stepping Stones' shelter, outreach, and prevention programs for individuals and families experiencing violence and crisis.

Stepping Stones extends its appreciation to everyone who participated, volunteered, sponsored, donated, and attended the event. The continued support of the community helps strengthen awareness, encourages important conversations, and ensures critical services remain available to those who need them.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Taking it *a Step Further*

Following the success of this year's Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, longtime Stepping Stones supporter Curtis Hargrove took the message even further by completing the demanding David Goggins 4x4x48 Challenge in support of the organization.

The challenge requires participants to run four miles every four hours for 48 consecutive hours, covering a total of 48 miles. It's an extremely physically demanding challenge, and the biggest obstacles are often the lack of sleep and the mental resilience required to keep moving through the day and night. Curtis took this challenge a step further by completing it in custom-made high-heel runners.

Curtis is no stranger to endurance challenges. A long-distance runner with over 300 completed marathons to his name, he has spent more than two decades using long-distance running and endurance events to raise awareness and funds for charitable causes, helping to raise over $400,000 through his efforts.

@chargrove15

Curtis completed his 4x4x48 Challenge here in Cold Lake from May 4 to May 6, encouraging his social media audience to donate to the cause. Through their generosity and Curtis' determination, the fundraiser raised $1,427 for Stepping Stones Crisis Society.

We are incredibly grateful to Curtis for once again using his passion and community spirit to support Stepping Stones. His commitment reminds us that every step, no matter how challenging, can help create safer futures women experiencing family violence.

Thanking Our *Volunteers*

As part of National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April, Stepping Stones welcomed over 30 volunteers to our Gathering Place for a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, an opportunity to recognize the individuals who generously give their time and talents in support of our organization.

Volunteers contribute in countless ways throughout the year; assisting at fundraising events, supporting programs, working bingo nights, sorting donations in our social enterprise stores, serving on our Board of Directors, and working behind the scenes to keep operations running smoothly.

Their kindness, compassion, and willingness to help make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by our Food Services team before staff shared theour ir appreciation for the many ways volunteers strengthen Stepping Stones and our mission.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, 85 volunteers contributed more than 2,000 hours of service, representing an incredible investment of time and care. We are deeply grateful to every volunteer who helps make our work possible.

Upcoming *events*

Full Throttle Fundraiser *July 17*

Join us outside Orbiting Trends during the Full Throttle Festival for a summer evening of food and fun. Keep an eye on the Orbiting Trends Facebook page towards the end of summer for back to school sales, too!

Ella's Closet $5 Sale *July 23 – Aug. 3*

Celebrate 7 years of Ella's Closet with our biggest sale of the summer! Everything in the store is just $5, including clothing, shoes, accessories, and more.

Open House *September 16*

Join us at Stepping Stones to celebrate our first anniversary in our facility and for an open house to see the building and learn about our programs.

Witches Walk *October 2*

We are currently looking for individuals to help plan our first annual Witches Walk this October! If you're interested in getting involved, let us know!

THE FESTIVAL OF PEACE

The Festival of Peace returns this winter on November 28, and discounted early bird tickets are available now! Get your tickets now before they go up in price in September.

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY!

We are looking for sponsors of all levels for the Festival of Peace. If you or your organization are interested in being sponsor, please get in touch.

WINTER GLOW

Festival of PEACE

STEPPING STONES
Crisis Society

WINTER GLOW

A celebration of hope, because even on the coldest nights, light has the power to transform the darkness

NOVEMBER 28, 2026

A fundraising gala benefitting Stepping Stones Crisis Society

EARLY BIRD TICKETS	REGULAR TICKETS
Available July 3 - August 31	
$100	$125

Tables of 8 & 10 Available

GET YOUR TICKETS TODAY

at SteppingStonesSociety.ca

How you can *help*

There are many ways to support Stepping Stones and make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and families in our community. Every contribution helps create safety, stability, and opportunity.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Our volunteers continue to make a meaningful impact by supporting donation management, working bingos, assisting with administrative tasks, and sharing their skills directly with clients.

If you're looking for a way to give back, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch with Anita Gerwing, Outreach & Volunteer Specialist:

anita.gerwing@steppingstonessociety.ca

ATTEND AN EVENT

Joining us at community events is a great way to show your support and help raise awareness. With exciting opportunities like our Open House and Witches Walk coming up, there are many ways to get involved, participate, and stand alongside those we serve.

MAKE A DONATION

Financial contributions and essential goods both play a vital role in supporting our programs and services. Your generosity helps ensure we can continue to provide safe shelter, programming, and resources to those who need it most.

INTERESTED IN DONATING?

Visit the Donate page of the Stepping Stones Crisis Society webite, or scan the QR code to make a one-time donation, or to set up a recurring donation.

SUPPORT OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

You can also support Stepping Stones by donating goods to our social enterprises:

- Orbiting Trends – Donations of household items and everyday goods
- Ella's Closet – Gently used, fashion-forward women's clothing

Every item donated helps generate funding that goes directly back into supporting our programs.

2025–2026 ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE NOW!

We're proud to share our 2025–2026 Annual Report, highlighting a year of growth, compassion, and community impact.

From expanded programs and new initiatives to the generosity of our donors, volunteers, and partners—this report reflects what we can achieve together.

Scan the QR code or click here to read the report

STEPPING STONES
Crisis Society

We'd like to thank all our sponsors and donors for their *generous support*

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