

March 21, 2001

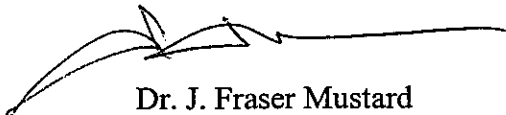
To Whom It May Concern:

Brenda Northey founded Beatrice House in 1995 and served as the first Executive Director from the date of its incorporation in September of 1996 until her resignation on May 31, 2000. During that time Brenda moved Beatrice House from a concept to an operating reality, creating Canada's first Residential Family Education Centre for homeless single mothers and their children. She developed an integrated and staged process that began with a high school education and ended with a job for the Moms, while their children were attending an on-site child development programme. As well, all families that were participating in the programme were also provided with free room and board.

Brenda demonstrated considerable creativity and resourcefulness in starting Beatrice House. She travelled to New York where she learned about the operation of Homes for the Homeless and to Denver where she learned about the Montessori infant toddler programme. She took the best of these organizations and designed the organization and programme that became Beatrice House. In addition, Brenda recruited the initial directors and advisors for Beatrice House.

Due largely to Brenda's tireless efforts and tenacity, and with the full support of its Board of Directors, Beatrice House opened its doors for client service in May of 1999. In the year that followed, under Brenda's leadership, Beatrice House reached an operating level at which its revenues covered its basic operating costs and, with Brenda's resourcefulness in soliciting donations of goods and services in kind, reached a point where a surplus was achieved. In its first year of operations, the Beatrice House programme introduced by Brenda produced "graduates" who have achieved success in terms of economic and social self-sufficiency, attributable to the job development and training programmes instituted by Brenda. Their success is also attributable to Brenda's ability to forge links with the corporate sector for the provision of internship and permanent employment opportunities.

Yours truly,



Dr. J. Fraser Mustard  
Chairman, Board of Directors

# Hope is on the house

**Beatrice House will provide child care and education to singlemothers**

"Many ask when they see an abandoned mother with an infant, or with three young children, 'Why doesn't she work?' And I say that a young, single mother with an infant and other small children who has fought to keep her family together, who has resisted giving up her children to foster care, it's worth it. Even if you don't agree with me, I ask, 'Are the children to blame?'"

— Leonard Stern, chairperson of the Hartz Mountain Corporation and founder of Homes for the Homeless, the largest single provider of transitional housing and services for homeless families in New York.

BY JANICE TURNER  
TORONTO

Brenda Northey wants to provide homeless mothers and their children with an education, a roof their heads and the skills these women need to find work and live independently.

Northey is as determined as she is passionate, and she has some powerful healthy family advocates, a host of private, public and non-profit players on her side.

In November, the first of 10 families will begin moving from various hostels into a temporary site for Beatrice House, a residential family education centre. The pilot project is a personal tribute to Northey's late maternal grandmother.

The concept is modelled after Leonard Stern's New York's Home for the Homeless, established in 1986. Its program of intensive and sustained assistance boasts a 94 per cent success rate of moving families out of hostels and into apartments.

The New York project has moved well beyond the emergency mentality surrounding homelessness to provide a long-term strategy, with the leadership and commitment of all levels of government, as well as the non-profit, foundation and corporate worlds.

Similarly, Beatrice House will fill the gap between affordable housing and the hostel systems, says Don Richmond, an urban affairs consultant, former head of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority and former Metro social services

## Beatrice House

Services and programs of Beatrice House, a residential family education centre:

- For moms:**
- Counselling
  - Home management (family finances, nutrition, etc.)
  - High school education
  - Job internship
  - Job placement
- For children:**
- Good nutrition
  - Health maintenance
  - Stable lifestyle
  - Montessori preschool
  - Structured after-school program
- For families:**
- Parenting courses
  - Family literacy
  - Family counselling



**ALL IN THE FAMILY:** Margaret McCain, far left, is vice-chair of Beatrice House and Brenda Northey, at right, is executive director. They hope to help children like Kevin Chaw, a resident of the agency's temporary shelter. Below left, Don Richmond says the project will fill a gap between homeless shelters and affordable housing.

commissioner. "That's a huge problem that's been sitting around for years," says Richmond, a director on Beatrice House's board. "It's time to do it."

Emergency shelters are vitally important, but can't do all that needs to be done, Richmond says. "The system ain't broke," he says. "But it only does part of the job. What Beatrice House does is take the next step."

The registered charity bills itself as a "comprehensive living, working and learning environment." Beatrice House will provide adult education, job training and placement help for mothers and access to a Montessori preschool program for their children. The preschool program will also be open to the community.

After "graduation," every family will be monitored through monthly home visits for 18 months.

A major study guided by the Families Network of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research will follow the first 80 families to go through the residence for 15 years.

Single moms need a strong social support network, says eminent medical researcher Dr. Fraser Mustard, president of the Founders Network and chair of Beatrice's board.

"If you do this," he says, "you can turn adverse circumstances around for both mother and child. It offers both immediate and long-term benefits. It makes good sense."

Most, if not all, of these women are products of earlier problems that weren't addressed, Mustard says — such things as poverty, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol dependency, child abuse, homelessness and illiteracy.

"They're products of their pasts, but you can turn the cycle around for them and their kids if you invest in turning it around."

Beatrice House recognizes the crucial importance of early childhood, notes Northey — those first three years in which a child's brain forms the neural



Don Richmond says the project will fill a gap between homeless shelters and affordable housing.

connections that will shape his or her skills for a lifetime.

Much of the centre's operating budget will be funded through existing government programs. The temporary site, in the downtown core, may prove suitable as a permanent one, but Northey says time will tell.

A permanent home will require about \$10 million, Margaret McCain, former lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick and vice-chair of Beatrice's board, is leading the fundraising campaign.

McCain, who is trained in social work and is widely known for her work against family violence, was approached by Northey late in 1996. She didn't hesitate.

"This isn't just treatment, but

prevention," she says. "For me, it's a chance to get involved in a hands-on way and to implement what I believe in."

McCain believes that single moms don't get nearly enough help.

Without intervention, they and their children are doomed to bleak futures.

"The loss of human potential increases exponentially" with each decade, she notes.

Don Richmond says Beatrice House is not a duplication of existing programs, but rather an extension. "Lots of shelters have bits and pieces, but not a whole package."

The goal of Northey, founder and executive director, is for the house to be 50 per cent funded by the private sector within 10 years.

Corporate partners include the Unihost Corporation (owner of Journey's End hotel chain), which will manage and help design the permanent residence, at cost, and help develop intern positions.

Sharon and Steven Hudson are Newcourt Credit Group Inc.'s chief executive and chair of the Toronto Community Foundation; she is a Beatrice House director.

Others describe her as a social entrepreneur, someone who thinks and acts like a business person, but strives for a social, not financial reward.

Northey's background is not social services, but event production and fundraising. "I'm not a do-gooder," she says. "I just see this from a very practical viewpoint. The research and models prove its success. It made me ask, 'Why aren't we doing this from just a people perspective? Why are we snatching people out?'"

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## Toronto badly needs a Beatrice House

A stable home environment and the opportunity to learn skills, find housing and find a job will be a "godsend" for struggling single mothers and their children, Toronto's director of hostel services says.

At present, homeless single moms are "pretty much left to their own devices for a lot of things," John Jagt says.

Emergency shelters are crucial for families in crises. But they are just that — temporary arrangements designed to help people survive.

Without the means to obtain housing, education and adequate incomes, homeless people may be able to survive homelessness, but never to escape it, warned the United Way in a discussion paper last fall.

Linwood Barclay will return

And just last month, the interim report by the mayor's task force on the homeless, entitled Breaking The Cycle on Homelessness, noted that the fastest growing groups without permanent shelter are youth under age 18 and families with children. Single mothers head 37 per cent of homeless families.

About 1,080 women and children — or about 300 families — are in Toronto shelters at any given time, says Jagt. An estimated 1,500 families move through the system over the course of a year staying, on average, just over three months.

Families headed by single mothers represent 27 per cent of the total Toronto shelter population — more than double the percentage just five years ago, he notes.

More alarmingly, the number of women and children in the shelter system on any given day has more than tripled over the same period.

For the vast majority, a stay in a shelter is a one-time deal, with only about 10 per cent returning. Over time, about half of mothers who are being abused relationships end up going back to those situations.

Most single moms and their children will move in with friends or relatives. A very small number will find housing of their own.

The wait for subsidized housing for small families is now more than 12 years. Today, even middle-income earners are having tremendous difficulty finding affordable rental units.

Since Queen's Park and Ottawa have stopped investing in

housing for people on low incomes, none is being built. And cuts of nearly 22 per cent to welfare rates have forced many of the province's poorest citizens out of apartments and into shared accommodations and hostels.

Child care and job-related programs to assist them are just now coming on stream, Jagt notes.

There will be no shortage of suitable candidates for Beatrice House.

"We could easily pick out 20 or 30 mothers who are ready" to move into the temporary residential sites, says Jagt. These are women who are motivated and serious about taking their lives in new directions.

Offering a host of services and opportunities under one program is bound to pay off in the long run, Jagt adds.



**WELCOME:** John Jagt, director of Toronto's hostel services, says Beatrice House is a "godsend" for struggling single mothers.

For more information, call (416) 979-0132 or fax (416) 979-5957.

## The Founders' Network

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401 Richmond St. West, Suite 281  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3A8  
Tel 416-593-5999  
Fax 416-593-9093  
[www.founders.net](http://www.founders.net)

November 9, 2010

Ms. Brenda Northey  
Integrated Outcomes Ltd.  
753 Srigley Street, Suite 200  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 1X6

Dear Brenda,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of November 2 in respect to Beatrice House and our careers. I appreciate very much your points about Beatrice House and our relationship. I particularly appreciated learning from your perspective about the difficulties we had with Beatrice House.

We both should be pleased that the YWCA has taken your concept and adapted it for their residences for homeless mothers with young children. You were brilliant in recognizing what could and should be done. Without your persistence in the importance of doing this, the concept would never have been put in place. Thank you for your creative energy that was key in establishing Beatrice House.

Kind regards,



J. Fraser Mustard