

Hello. (My name is Nadine Green). I'm pleased to be here this evening to tell you a story.

I had a corner store in downtown Kitchener for several years. Some people experiencing homelessness would come inside, sit at a table, have a bite to eat, and maybe play a game of pool. I knew everyone's name, and I learned most of their stories.

One winter night in 2018, I closed my store about 3am and started home. I saw people that had been in my store, now, huddled outside trying to stay warm until morning, when St. John's kitchen opened. I couldn't leave them like that, so I invited them back into my store to get warm.

Word spread, and soon I was feeding and sheltering about 30 people every night. They had nowhere else to go. In early 2020 at the start of the pandemic, I was evicted from my store for acting like a residence.

Looking back on this now, I'm thankful for the eviction, because it led to my job offer from Ron Doyle and Jeff Wilmer to live and work at Lot 42. This was the start of A Better Tent City!

A Better Tent City is a self-help tiny-home community providing a sense of belonging for some of our region's unsheltered. In the beginning, people lived in tents placed inside a portion of the unused event centre. We gradually got better.

Now, many of those who were staying in my store, along with others, live at A Better Tent City. We have 50 residents who live there in 39 tiny homes, each about 8 by 10 feet in size. There are no more tents. The people live their life on their own terms. We provide stability and community. There are bathrooms, showers, laundry, and the internet. There are meals and planned activities in our indoor kitchen and common area, which was built from school portables.

We support one another. There is a sense of family. Pets and couples live here. We have wrap-around support from community partners, volunteers and faith leaders. Private meetings with health and support workers may be held in our office. There is a methadone clinic and harm reduction services.

The people are NOT policed. There are NOT different people staying every night. Many suffer from mental illness and addiction, and cannot fit into the traditional shelter mold.

These 50 people could have been missed. But now they are healing and changing at A Better Tent City. We have more residents who are now ready to move into housing, and then their tiny homes will be available for others to move into. Tiny home communities work for some people experiencing homelessness.

Thank you for listening to my story. It's not over yet. A Better Tent City's leadership team would be happy to provide guidance in starting up and operating more Tiny Home Communities. I also invite you to refer to a new book called "A Home of Their Own". It is a guide to building a tiny home community, and was written by the first Site Superintendent of A Better Tent City.

Thank you

-Nadine Green