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10 YMCA DRIVE  
PENDALE PLAZA

## 'WRAPPING THEM UP IN A HUG'

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When women and children seek the help of YWCA, they often arrive from a past life of feeling continually unwanted and unwelcome.

So while a gazebo and chairs, or a handcrafted quilt may seem like a small deal, it makes a very big impact on the clients at YWCA.

"It just sends the message to the women who stay here that they're valued, and that the community wants to support them," said Elisabeth Zimmermann, executive director of the YWCA of Niagara.

She was referring to a small deck area at the agency's King Street location where women using the shelter can get some fresh air. It's been built with com-



**IMPACTING YOUR COMMUNITY**

The Niagara Heritage Quilters' Guild donated 48 quilts to the YWCA's Oakdale Commons facilities. From left: Guild member Jennifer Dyck, YWCA executive director Elisabeth Zimmermann and board member Laurie Andrews.

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### COMMUNITY

## SUPPORT SHOWS CLIENTS THEY'RE NOT FORGOTTEN

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munity support, most recently from the Home Depot, which donated a gazebo, patio chairs and tables, some flowerpots and other amenities to spruce up the area. There's also going to be a barbecue brought in and a few other patio comforts.

The Niagara Community Foundation helped provide some funding, and volunteers from Home Depot did all the installation and manual work to get it up and running.

"(We're) happy to partner to donate something that's going to have an impact in the community," said Jason Galasso, from the Home Depot.

Improving the outdoor space at the shelter is doubly important in these days of COVID-19. Under current rules, there are restrictions on how many women can congregate in-



Luke Edwards/Metroland

The clients of YWCA have a nice new gazebo and backyard space to get some peace and quiet, fresh air and to socialize with others. It was built in part with the help of Home Depot volunteers (in orange). From left: Kari LeGrand, Niagara Community Foundation executive director Bryan Rose, YWCA executive director Elisabeth Zimmermann, Brandon McIntee and Jason Galasso.

side the shelter. The new gazebo gives them a space to socialize and protect them from the hot summer sun, or when it rains, said Maj-Britt Kannegieter, director of operations for

the YWCA. At the same time as the clients at the King Street location were getting an upgraded outdoor space to cool down and congregate, those at the new YWCA fa-

cility on Oakdale in St. Catharines were receiving something that will keep them warm and cosy this fall.

"It's like wrapping up in

a hug," said Jennifer Dyck, community outreach coordinator for the Niagara Heritage Quilters' Guild.

The volunteer group donated 48 quilts to be distributed to the women living at the Oakdale Commons, a recently built family shelter and permanent housing facility run by the YWCA.

Zimmermann said those coming to use the YWCA's services can often arrive feeling like they're unwanted, which is what makes the personal touch of dozens of one-of-a-kind handmade quilts so important.

"It's the community saying, 'hey, we see you. You're important too,'" Zimmermann said.

"You're not forgotten. You're not hidden," added Arienne Good, who does fundraising and donor relations for the YWCA.

The quilters' guild donates throughout the region, including to hospices,

other service agencies and even individuals they hear of who could use a little bump. She said the volunteers jumped at the opportunity to support YWCA and were thrilled to give the clients a little piece of comfort.

"Every individual gets their own unique quilt," she said.

While they provide their own materials, Dyck said they accept donations to help offset the cost, including the batting, which can get expensive. For more information on the guild email jenniferk2p2@gmail.com or 289-690-1625.

**STORY BEHIND THE STORY:** Families coming to use the shelters have often had to do with isolation and feelings of being unwanted. Luke Edwards spoke with the local YWCA to see how, with the help of the community, they're making those individuals feel welcome and wanted again.