



Birchway
N I A G A R A

Creating Safe Spaces

Expanding Birchway Niagara to meet the needs of survivors



Allied against abuse.

For decades, Birchway Niagara has been helping women and their families stay safe.

In the early 1980s, two women's shelters opened in South Niagara to protect members of our community experiencing domestic violence. Serenity Place in Welland and Nova House in Niagara Falls, provided safe spaces and support to thousands of survivors of abuse. In 1997, these two organizations came together to serve women and children across all of South Niagara.

With your support, domestic violence services in South Niagara continue to evolve:

- In 2022, two shelters became one at our expanded location in Niagara Falls. This increased our number of safe beds from 30 to 40.
- In 2023, Women's Place became Birchway Niagara, an inclusive name that is making it possible to develop programs and services for everyone impacted by abuse.
- In recent years, satellite offices have opened in Welland, Fort Erie and Port Colborne, meaning women can find help closer to home.
- Many community partnerships and programs have been formed to keep women and their children safer and healthier, and to meet their needs while in shelter and beyond.

Every change has removed obstacles for survivors and has made your community safer.

Will you help Birchway Niagara to continue expanding to meet the needs of our clients?



The project:

- Construction of seven new pet-friendly bedrooms
- Community room addition
- Separate public/staff entrance
- Generator
- Natural playground

Total projected cost:

\$5,500,000*

Total donated as of June 2026:

\$4,569,284

Fundraising goal:

\$930,716

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My pets were one of the reasons my actions were postponed for years.

-BIRCHWAY
NIAGARA CLIENT



Project Part 1: Pet-Friendly Rooms

How your support of pet-friendly bedrooms will save lives.

Right now, Birchway Niagara has 23 bedrooms. While we welcome service animals in these spaces, we are not currently able to accommodate pets.

This means that if a woman leaves an abusive relationship, she is forced to leave her pets behind, surrender them, or stay in an unsafe situation... possibly risking her life.

The addition of seven pet-friendly rooms will save lives by:

- Expanding the overall capacity of our shelter, meaning fewer women and children will be turned away.
- Not forcing a woman to choose between her safety and that of her cherished pet, who may also be a victim of violence. Pet abuse is often used to control and punish victims.

Pets can help to reduce trauma.

It has long been known that animal therapy can have positive mental health effects for people who have experienced trauma. By making it possible for women to bring their pets into shelter, your gift can make a very turbulent time easier by providing a comforting source of emotional support.



of calls/texts to the Birchway Niagara support line are from women who say they have a pet.



Project Part 2: A Community Room

How your support of a new community space will support the work of Birchway Niagara

While so much of the work of ending violence is done together, Birchway Niagara does not currently have a room big enough for our clients, staff, volunteers and supporters to gather.

The community room that would be part of the proposed expansion would be a place where:

- Clients can learn new skills and participate in activities that support their mental health like yoga, cooking classes and paint nights.
- Family members and friends of clients can gather to celebrate holidays and milestones, bringing a sense of normalcy while families are in shelter.
- Staff can meet as a whole team. (Currently our relief staff can only attend staff meetings virtually because there is not enough room).
- Members of the Birchway community, such as volunteers, can attend information sessions and appreciation events.
- Community partners can provide trainings for our staff, and our staff can provide programming to the public to build a community without violence.



Project Part 3: A New Entrance



How one more door can make a world of difference

Right now, everyone enters Birchway Niagara through the same door whether they are a client, a donor, a staff member, a volunteer or a visitor.

As part of the addition that will house the new community room, the projected expansion will also add a second entrance.

This new door will allow clients to have their own entrance, protecting their confidentiality and dignity. Whether arriving at the shelter for the first time or going about their daily business, clients will appreciate a private, peaceful dedicated entrance.

Project Part 4: A Generator


A generator will allow Birchway Niagara to remain a reliable place of safety, providing a stable environment and uninterrupted services during a power outage.

Access to electricity is vital for maintaining our security systems, food safety, emergency lighting, heat, and air conditioning, and may also be needed for clients' medical equipment.

With climate change and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, having a generator on site will help to protect against growing unpredictability.



Project Part 5: A Natural Playground

A close-up photograph of a baby's face peeking through a hole in a wooden structure. The baby has large, dark eyes and a slight smile, looking towards the right. The wood is weathered and textured, with some bark-like material visible. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the baby's features.

The final part of the proposed expansion project would be to transform Birchway Niagara's backyard into a natural playground that offers a sanctuary of healing and joy—a place where children can be children, free to play, explore, and, most importantly, heal.

For many of our clients, playing in a public playground, where they might be exposed to their abuser, is not an option. Every child deserves a safe place to play, unwind, and connect with their family.

Research has shown that play is vital for children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. For children who have experienced trauma, play is even more crucial as it offers a way to express emotions, regain a sense of control, and build resilience.

Play is not just an activity; it's a fundamental part of a child's development and healing.

For more information about Birchway Niagara's expansion project and how you can help, contact Amanda Braet, Director of Development and Stewardship:

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@birchwayniagara

WE WILL

be a shoulder to lean on, a voice to advocate for, a space to feel safe in, an ally to trust, a guide to navigate, and a counsellor to heal for everyone affected by all forms of abuse



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Charitable Registration# 131135717RR0001

Thank you to the following allies for their generous support of this project:



**The Branscombe
Family Foundation**

Carlie Smith
REALTOR

Jana & Michael Katz

The Turner Family Foundation

Hope Presbyterian Church

St. Paul Lutheran Church