

# Forget Me Not House unveiled

➤ Newly renovated Alzheimer Society of Oxford is designed to soothe

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Soft pastel hues, hand-made quilts and paintings of changing Oxford County seasons by local artist Cathy Groulx soften the fresh paint and modern decor.

At the newly renovated Alzheimer Society of Oxford, located on Peel Street, the idea is provide a tranquil environment where those with Alzheimer's disease and their families can come for help.

"When people visit our office, often times it is a difficult thing to do," executive director Shelley Green said. "We try to put people at the ease. We tried to make it homey and calming."

The new facility, named Forget Me Not House, was on display to the public during an open house and ribbon cutting on Wednesday.

"We've been looking at a space crisis for a long time. We looked at, and carefully considered, a number of different options," Green said. "It was found that an addition

to the building was the most affordable option and would not jeopardize our programs and services."

The society's capital campaign raised a total of \$376,000. The extra \$26,000 over and above its goal allowed the society to complete extra projects, such as landscaping and retrofitting their porch.

The addition now means more offices and space for volunteers, a larger workroom, and a small kitchen, meeting room and storage room in the basement.

"We were at a point we only had one room to meet with clients. There were times we had to have people come back to meet with us," she said. "We welcome scheduled visits, but also welcome people walking in to get support and information."

The Alzheimer Society relies on fundraising efforts such as January's tri-city Walk for Memories because only 61% of its budget comes from the South West Local Health Integration Network.

Because the new facility

is free and clear of a mortgage or rent, Green said "the money we now raise goes to client services."

The road to the new and improved Alzheimer Society began in 2009 when the society was approved for a government grant of \$1 million for an entirely new facility.

But with just 10 days to put the proposal together, the society began to have second

thoughts about the new building after it was approved.

"After a few months of careful analysis and assessment, it was clear we couldn't take on the project without jeopardizing our program and services to our clients," Green said when the capital campaign ended last year with a grant of \$30,000 from Toyota Motor Manufacturing

Canada. "We went back to the drawing board to look at possible solutions. This was one we could afford."

The capital campaign, which began in late 2012, also received a \$113,000 contribution from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and \$50,000 donation from Dennis and Joan Vollmershausen.

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Summer student Katie Holmes and community development co-ordinator Jan Vicars stand in front of the newly renovated Alzheimer Society of Oxford building during their open house Wednesday.