



I've been feeding people all my life – and I have no plans to stop anytime soon! In fact, thanks to House of Friendship, I'm going to be feeding people for a long time to come.

Let me back up here so you know what I'm talking about. I was born 82 years ago into an Amish Mennonite community here in the Waterloo area. That means that I am exactly one year older than House of Friendship! I guess by today's standards it was an unusual upbringing – no TV, cards, dancing or even musical instruments.

But in many ways our lives were the same as most other folks at that time – maybe even yours. We were poor, dirt poor. But we didn't see it that way, because we had everything we needed. As farmers, we produced all our own food – meat, dairy, grain, fruit and veggies.

When you grow up on a farm, you know the meaning of hard work. Maybe you know what I'm talking about. It was one of those values instilled in me from a very early age, and one I really appreciate when I see how well organizations like House of Friendship are run and how hard everyone there works.

What are some of the values from your own childhood that you still hold close today?

Of course, even though I worked my tail off, I also knew what it was like to have fun. For the first ten years of my life I was an only child, but my

parents both came from families of 10 children, so there were always plenty of cousins to play with, and an endless supply of aunts, uncles, second cousins and friends from within our community.

Which brings me to the food! I can't remember a time I wasn't cooking. In fact, by the time I was 14 years old I was in charge of cooking meals for the men boarding at our house or working on the farm during threshing season. I bet not a lot of 14-year-olds today could make a dinner for six hungry men!

Of course, Sundays were visiting days, and that meant lots and lots of food. Every Friday, I'd help my mother start cooking. We'd make at least 10 pies, then on Sunday after church everyone – and I mean everyone – would come over. It was nothing to have 25 people just show up, even without an invitation!

Let me tell you, I loved every minute of it. Our lives were very simple, but there's nothing better than sharing love and kindness with others through a meal. That's another value that's stuck with me all my life. We didn't have much, but whatever we did have was for sharing.

As a supporter of House of Friendship, you likely share the same value of helping others. It doesn't matter if you have a ton of money, the important thing is that you share with people who have even less. It's just the right thing to do, isn't it?

I met my husband Floyd when I was 10 years old, if you can believe it. He sat behind me at our tiny country school. We started dating when I was 15, but my parents said I couldn't get married until I was 21. So the weekend after I turned 21, we tied the knot. I didn't have a cent to my name, and he had 12 dollars – so I told him I married him for his money!

Floyd and I left the Amish community and joined a Mennonite church in town. After our three kids were in school, I started a catering business with one of my cousins –because if there was something I knew how to do well, it was feeding people. We ran that business for 20 years. It was hard but gratifying work, and I just loved putting smiles on people's faces with the meals I'd make for them.

After that, I thought I'd help out in another way, and became a

personal care support worker for another 20 years. Sometimes it was a tough job emotionally, especially with my palliative clients, but it was very meaningful as well, and gave me ample opportunity to reflect on what is really important in life.

I guess it was all these shared values that made me really click with House of Friendship. I joined the board as the representative from our church and stayed on the board for 10 years. The only reason I had to stop was because I didn't feel comfortable driving on the winter roads at night – otherwise I'd still be there!

Being from out in the country, it always shocked and saddened me what some people went through in the city. Families going hungry, people trying to find work, mental illness, addictions ... well, I just thought that if there was anything I could do to help those in need, I should do it. I not only joined the board but I was a regular volunteer as well.

It's likely no surprise that my favourite part was helping put together the food hampers. Have you ever felt that rush of joy that comes with knowing you've helped another human being in a real, practical way? That's how I felt every time I donated to House of Friendship or packed food into baskets for hungry families. It just goes to show that when you give from the heart, you get back even more.

Maybe packing food hampers doesn't sound like a big deal, but I think all the little things in life add up, don't you? It's like that proverb says: "If you think little things don't count, try spending the night with a mosquito."

It's all those little things that House of Friendship does that add up to making a huge difference in people's lives. Whether it's food hampers, addiction counselling, a safe place to stay, or programs for kids, every little bit goes toward rebuilding lives that have fallen on hard times.

In many ways, I broke the mold of what it meant to be an Amish girl. But I still cherish those values of family, faith, community and helping others. That's why, years ago, Floyd and I decided to leave a gift to House of Friendship in our Will.

Floyd passed away earlier this year, but he was pleased as punch to

know we'll still be feeding and caring for folks who need it even after he and I are together again.

I know you believe in the work of changing lives, too. And I hope you'll take a few moments to think about the values you hold dear and how they can be part of your legacy. If you can, consider leaving a gift to House of Friendship in your own Will.

Of course, you'll want to talk it over with your loved ones. But if you decide it's the right thing to do, let House of Friendship know what you're thinking, like Floyd and I did. Along with this letter, there's a card enclosed that you can send them, or just pick up the phone and give Margaret a call at 226-972-4390. I know that she would love to hear from you and can answer any questions you might come up with.

House of Friendship is a great organization that has done a lot of good for a long time, and I hope – with help from people like you and me – they'll be around for many years to come.

With thanks,



Anna Mae Steinman  
Legacy Gift Donor and Volunteer