

Fall 2021

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

A newsletter from The Women's Centre Grey Bruce



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reflecting on what has been a year unlike any other, I am thankful for our community of supporters, including staff, volunteers, agency partners, and donors. Thanks to our stakeholders' commitment to supporting women who've experienced gender-based violence, we were able to make great strides in addressing service gaps within the community, despite the extra challenges presented by the pandemic.

The spring was a busy season with our International Women's Day event, the launch of OUR Place, an anti-human trafficking program for youth aged 12-15, as well as the hiring of a Clinical Counsellor who provides trauma counselling to women and children who've experienced violence or abuse. This summer, we developed a partnership with Keystone, Child, Youth & Family Services, where staff from both agencies work together to ensure women and children receive the mental health supports that they need. More recently, we started a collaboration with Saugeen First Nation #29 that will help foster positive relationships between local Indigenous communities and off-reserve agencies, with the goal of reaching more Indigenous women who may need our services.

Despite these service enhancements, women and children continue to be impacted by gender-based violence, and as such, they continue needing somewhere safe to stay. In fact, on any given night, more than 6,000 Canadian women and children sleep in shelters because home is not safe.

Because of your generosity, The Women's Centre remains a safer place for local women and children who are fleeing violence and abuse. Your support means that we can continue to be a symbol of hope, providing support during a woman's most vulnerable time, so that she may look forward to a brighter and safer future.

Best wishes for a healthy 2022. With much gratitude and appreciation,

HEATHER SHELDRIK

Executive Director

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THE
WOMEN'S CENTRE
GREY BRUCE

LAURA'S STORY

NAME CHANGED TO PROTECT PRIVACY

The hardest part was to leave and take the actual step of going to The Women's Centre.

I knew the way that I was living was not ideal for myself or my children. I was afraid to stay where I was living, but at the same time, scared of the unknown and living somewhere I wasn't familiar with. I was worried about how my children were going to handle not being in their home. I was also afraid of the repercussions of leaving my abuser. He was and continues to be, unpredictable. I was completely dependent on him, and I had lived in fear of him for so long.

For years, I wasn't able to be the person I am, for fear of upsetting my abuser. Living at The Women's Centre gives me the freedom to become the person I know I am deep down. I don't have to walk on eggshells. It is helpful having the staff available when you're in a crisis or need to talk. It's been great just knowing they are here without judgement and to help me identify the way I should be treated by my partner.

I want others to know that if I was able to leave my abuser, anyone can. Taking the first step and leaving an abuser is by far, the hardest part. I know that I still have a long road ahead of me and that there will be difficult days, but at least now, I have hope for the future and I haven't had that in years. My life can be whatever I choose for it to be. I have choice and nobody can take that from me. I wish I had made this step a lot sooner as it would have saved a lot of hardships for myself, my children, and my family.

There have been a couple of times that I felt like leaving the shelter to go home to my comfort zone, but staff gave me the courage to recognize in those times of crisis, that I am worthy of, and deserve to be treated with respect. They helped me respect myself and put my safety and mental health first. Also, having all the resources at my fingertips makes the unknown a lot easier and more comfortable. It takes away a lot of worry when you have someone to help with housing and other needs. The Women's Centre has been very accommodating with visitations with my children's father during the pandemic. I feel that they hear my concerns and address them appropriately. I am forever grateful.

"I know that I still have a long road ahead of me and that there will be difficult days, but at least now, I have hope for the future and I haven't had that in years."

OUR PLACE

OUR Place, our anti-human trafficking program for youth who have been, or are at-risk of being, trafficked, launched this past April. Youth have been housed in a temporary location as renovations were occurring at our soon-to-open new shelter. Youth programming includes counselling, shelter, and an educational component for local schools.

A big thank you goes out to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Bruce Grey Child & Family Services, Grey County, Grey Birch Foundation, and United Way of Bruce Grey for their investments in this program.





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

More than 100 guests joined us virtually for our International Women's Day event on March 8.

Attendees networked in small sessions hosted by various community groups, before "gathering" to hear Keynote, Ashleigh Weeden, who delivered a powerful speech about the need to address systemic sexism in our society.

Combined with our inaugural online auction, the event raised an astounding \$16,000 that will allow us to continue providing services to more than 1,500 women and children who need our services every year.

Join us for our 2022 event when Lani Elliott, domestic violence survivor and advocate, will speak about her personal story of an unspeakable act of violence that left her with broken legs, homeless, and with two small children to raise on her own. Watch for event details on Facebook and Instagram.



HOLIDAY REGISTRY

To address our limited storage and a desire among clients to choose their preferred styles, sizes, and brands, we invite you to support women who are fleeing violence by purchasing gift cards from our registry. Allowing them the opportunity to select items for their children and themselves, gives women the independence and dignity they so deserve.

thewomenscentre.org/registry



SAUGEEN FIRST NATION PARTNERSHIP

We are delighted to be partnering with Saugeen First Nation #29 through the creation of a Liaison Officer role.

Aimed at improving services between Indigenous communities and off-reserve agencies, the Liaison Officer will help build cultural competency by training our staff so that they are better equipped to serve our Indigenous neighbours.

The role will identify best practices and share expertise while helping us provide services to women and children in nearby Indigenous communities.

With the shocking discovery of thousands of children's remains at former residential school sites across Canada, building inclusive relationships with the Indigenous community is more vital than ever before.



OUR NEW WEBSITE IS LIVE!

Need help or want to know how to support us?
Visit www.thewomenscentre.org

WE'RE RENOVATING

For more than thirty years, women with children who have experienced abuse, have been able to stay for up to one year in our Second Stage Residential Program town homes.

Thanks to funding from Grey County, we are currently converting two units to four individual units so that we can extend the program to include single women who have experienced abuse or violence.



Give today and help end
gender-based violence.

thewomenscentre.org/holiday



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