



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In Canada, a woman is killed by her partner every 2.5 days. Each night across the country over 6,000 women and children seek refuge in shelters because home is not a safe place to be.



COMING UP
SOON



Foodie Fundraiser Kits
35th Anniversary



At the beginning of the pandemic, shelters across the nation reported “an eerie silence” as women were trapped at home, unable to call for help because their abusers were always present, always watching. As ever, we women were resourceful and created solutions like Unsafe at Home, a line to text for support and assistance in staying safe under lockdown. We were creating safety plans to run or to

stay, all while scared for our own lives, fighting an invisible enemy that turned us all into prisoners in our own homes.

Now, there is a light appearing over the horizon and a new day is dawning. Slowly life is returning, not to normal, but reforming itself, reinventing the world we used to know. And it is up to us to have a good long look in the mirror and think about the world we want to create together. A world where everyone feels safe in their home, a world where children know only love and happiness in the adults they rely on and a world where equality is the rule, not the exception.

Here at Harmony House, we are celebrating this new world. We are welcoming back in-person programs including female empowerment sessions, self-esteem workshops, movie nights, resident led programs, communal meals, art classes and even play therapy for our youngest residents. New friendships have been formed, new strengths are being revealed and old talents are being shared. Love abounds as hurts heal.

I have watched the team breathe life back into broken hearts, set tiny feet on new paths and soothe tears. Their tireless efforts to lift women up steel me to wade into the fray outside the shelter’s safe walls. I have been busy throughout the pandemic,

advocating with grassroots and community groups across the city to bring this new world into being. Together we link arms and demand change. Housing for all, a basic income, sick pay, fair wages, nationalized daycare, changes to the banking industry and Indigenous reconciliation are no longer issues waiting on the side to be dealt with at another time. We are standing tall, front and center, proud and unashamed to demand what is rightly ours. Safety, peace, freedom and a good education for all our children, an honest look at history and how we got where we are.

Canada need not be a country of terror for thousands of women each night. It need not carry a death sentence for loving the wrong person. Together we can weave a new understanding, one based on kindness and support and not on competition and scarcity. We know it’s possible.

We experienced an overwhelming amount of love as the community pulled together to support Harmony House during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your donations ensured that families were able to stay safe and connected, that units could be improved and made to be comfortable as women were trapped at home, to open an Outreach Office to offer additional supports to community members and ensured that the team could tackle this unprecedented challenge. We can’t thank you enough for all the light you brought into the darkness of the pandemic.

Come with us into a new world, won’t you? Invite the dawn and celebrate this new chance to do life right. Then join us in the fight by donating, volunteering and advocating in your community for the rights of women to celebrate a new way of being.

Love & Rage,
Ray Eskritt
Executive Director, Harmony House

SOS, HARMONY HOUSE OUTREACH

By Trysh Smith

Violence against women happens all over the world, and it is probably a lot more common than you think. It happens in our communities, albeit very often behind closed doors.

For us at Harmony House, outreach involves moving outside the walls of the agency to engage with the women and children experiencing violence. We help individuals understand their rights in abusive situations and what measures can be taken to heal from the trauma of abuse and get out of abusive situations.

Testimonial from a woman that has used Outreach services –

“ When I started participating in the outreach program, I really needed help figuring out the whole family law and custody stuff. I needed to be safe with the kids. So, I worked with the worker and she had no other agenda – it was all about me, my children and our safety. - Jessica

This fall we are embarking on a new partnership with a housing agency in Ottawa (Ottawa Community Housing), and starting up a women’s support group for those that received social housing, however, are needing some additional transitional support as they embark on their new journey. It is called **Project Impact** and will help women to navigate the complexities that come from being housed on their own for the first time, while healing from the impact of violence.



EMPOWERING WOMEN, SISTERHOOD, THE WOMEN OF HARMONY HOUSE

By Mariam Farah

Facts show that Domestic Violence has increased since the onset of Covid. Forced isolation also meant that we received less calls for help and applications to come to Harmony House, as victims were home with their abusers. Thankfully the pandemic has changed its course and we are seeing more women access our services. With restrictions lifted we are also able to get back to the in-person programming we offer, to give women trauma informed support and resources needed to heal. We even started a new initiative called EmpowHER Hour, which is a resident-led program. In this program, women living at the shelter run a program for their fellow residents twice a month. In this program women have complete control over the program they would like to run, they build a budget and work with a staff member to create and deliver a program. This new initiative was meant to inspire women to inspire one another, and we have seen amazing results.

The pandemic has taught us all resilience. The immense strength and courage shown by the women living here at Harmony House, the strength that they show in impossible situations never ceases to amaze me. My hope for this upcoming year is that we can continue to support women and children overcome adversity and struggles.



SUMMER FUN AT HARMONY HOUSE

By Jade Lickers

Without accessible or affordable childcare, a mother can't work, can't go to appointments and can't heal. At Harmony House we are able to offer FREE daily childcare to all our residents, and even some evening care to give the women a reprieve and to help them on their journey.

This past summer we hired our first ever male staff – two of them actually! Both men once lived at Harmony House as young boys when their brave mothers left abusive situations. The children absolutely adore them and so do the staff. It's been wonderful to have some positive male role models around the house and it's been a very positive experience for the young men as well.

Another exciting venture was moving and renovating our old boardroom into a new childcare space! With a private bathroom, and 2 separate entrances the space is much more practical for the kids and for the rest of the office. We had a beautiful mural painted on it and have added a few items (like a sand table) to make it more interactive and inviting for all our children here.



IF YOU CAN DO IT THEN I CAN DO IT TOO!



My name is Nadia and I'm the Peer Support Worker here at Harmony House. It took me a while to get here and it is thanks to the amazing staff and the community that my life turned out the way it has. I was a resident here once upon a time. Twice in fact! And I wasn't always the easiest resident, but I had my share of demons to overcome.

Once I was finally on my feet and living with my 4 boys in the community, I came back to volunteer and I loved it. Then I started getting invited to speak at events in the community about my perspective as a resident in the shelter and how it helped me and my boys.

Today I'm grateful and privileged to be back here to provide emotional support, share knowledge and to provide practical assistance to the woman who walk through our doors fleeing violence and are seeking

a safe place for a fresh start to begin their healing journey.

I am joyfully committed to supporting women to break the vicious cycle of violence and abuse. I'm grateful when the women trust me to walk along side with them on their toughest days. I show up as an example of success and use my personal experience to foster meaningful relationships. In my work, I emphasize through the telling of my story that recovery is possible.

Sometimes I sit and listen to the women, sometimes we go for walks in the community, and sometimes I help them cook or clean as they get overwhelmed. Meeting them where they are at and going from there is what makes this role so important.

The best part of being a Peer Support Worker is that the women get to witness that change is possible. The woman will often say to me "if you can do it, then I can do it too".

HOME IS A HAVEN, A PLACE OF SAFETY, SECURITY, AND THE BUILDING OF NEW MEMORIES

By Lee-Anne Lee

What exactly does affordable, safe and accessible housing mean to our community and to women fleeing abuse? EVERYTHING! If a woman can't support herself and her children on her own, it doesn't leave her with many options (if any), which often means she stays in an abusive and scary place. It's not always about affordability either. She could be new to Canada and not have status, therefore not qualify for any housing. Perhaps her abuser has done damage to their unit and her name was on the lease and she is now on the hook for those repairs. Sometimes it means she needs additional resources which also creates hurdles for her in fleeing. At Harmony House, we are able to assist women, no matter what their situation. We can assist in finding her resources, building her skill set, providing on-site childcare, all while giving her a safe place to live which also gives her time to heal.

Home is a haven, a place of safety, security, and the building of new memories. Harmony House is here to support women and children to do just that.



A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE, MEET MARIA

– A VOLUNTEER IN MANY WAYS!



“ My volunteer journey at Harmony House began in the winter of 2018 when I joined two Board committees - fundraising and governance. Since then, I have facilitated two sessions on good governance and best practices for the Board of Directors and raised over \$1000 through two birthday fundraisers and \$700 through outdoor Zumba classes this summer.

Over the years and pre-pandemic, I was fortunate to spend some time with the women, children, and staff at Harmony House in person on several occasions. I volunteered for childcare, attended the Red and White Gala, and organized a Zumba class in the courtyard. During one of the Sisterhood nights, I was able to share photos and videos of my experience ocean canoeing off the coast of Vancouver Island with Outward Bound Canada's Women of Courage Program in 2018. As a recently certified writing facilitator with the Writers Collective of Canada, I am looking forward to starting to facilitate exploratory writing workshops for the current and past residents of Harmony House.

I am honored to be spotlighted as a volunteer and grateful to the Board, staff, and residents of Harmony House for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful community.”

Volunteers have been the backbone of Harmony House since its inception 35 years ago! It was a group of dedicated volunteers who created the shelter, got us registered as a charitable organization and have maintained the shelter for the last 3 decades. Thankfully, we are back up and running and welcoming existing and new volunteers back to the house. We even set up a better Volunteer form online to help manage applications! To learn more about getting involved, visit our website at www.harmonyhousews.com.