



A Message From Our Executive Director

Loneliness is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across all walks of life. The World Health Organization's acknowledgment of its global significance emphasizes the urgent need to address this growing concern. The U.S. Surgeon General further underscores the severity of loneliness by likening its impact on health to that of smoking 15 cigarettes daily, highlighting a startling statistic that reveals how loneliness can increase the risk of premature death by nearly 30%.

For women who have escaped abusive or violent situations, the absence of familial and social support compounds the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Without the presence of family or friends nearby, these brave individuals often find themselves navigating their healing process all alone. Similarly, children who have been uprooted from their homes and relocated to shelters like Harmony House might find themselves surrounded by others facing similar circumstances yet still grappling with profound feelings of loneliness and isolation. Even in the company of their peers, these vulnerable

children may struggle to share their experiences, further deepening their sense of loneliness.

Fortunately, the generosity of our donors allows Harmony House to offer comprehensive programs and services designed to combat loneliness head-on. Our dedicated team of experienced childcare practitioners possesses the skills and compassion needed to work with children who are sad or lonely, creating an environment that nurtures their emotional well-being, providing security, and fostering a sense of love and belonging. Meanwhile, our compassionate frontline workers and mental health professionals extend invaluable counselling and encouragement to women, supporting their journey towards empowerment and independence once they have escaped their abusive situations.

At Harmony House, being more than just a shelter is at the core of our mission. We are committed to helping these families rebuild their lives and overcome the deep-seated feelings of loneliness

and isolation that may have plagued them for far too long. Our holistic approach recognizes that addressing loneliness requires not only physical shelter but also emotional support, nurturing, and practical guidance.

Through our multifaceted programs, Harmony House aspires to usher in a sense of renewed hope for each woman and child who walks through our doors. By providing a safe haven where they can find solace, establish connections, and embark on a transformative journey toward healing and resilience, we strive to ensure that no one feels alone in their struggle. Together, hand in hand, we can combat loneliness and create a brighter future for those who have endured the pain of isolation.

Harmony House is not just a shelter. It is an organization that helps these families rebuild their lives, and hopefully overcome their feelings of loneliness, one woman and child at a time.



Marilyn Matheson, CAE
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilyn Matheson".



Welcome, Anette!

I am enthusiastic about making an impact in the lives women and families and I am currently serving as a Women’s and Family Advocate at Harmony House. Armed with a degree in Social Work and actively pursuing my Masters, my journey in the field has been defined by a commitment to supporting and empowering individuals facing challenging circumstances.

At Harmony House, I play a pivotal role in advocating for the rights and well-being of women and families fleeing abuse. This position allows me to merge my academic knowledge with hands-on experience, providing emotional support, resources, and guidance to those navigating difficult situations.

My goal is to contribute to social justice through direct intervention and advocacy.

Every day at Harmony House is an opportunity to make a tangible impact, and I am excited about the continued journey of learning, growth, and advocacy that lies ahead.



November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Harmony House staff members wearing purple on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle against gender-based violence. Violence and abuse against women have been rampant for centuries, and it is high time we stand up and demand change. This symbolic gesture not only supports survivors but also aims to raise awareness about the issue. The use of purple color has a profound significance as it symbolizes courage, strength, and survival.

It inspires hope and motivates us to work towards building a future where women feel safe and protected. It is a reminder

that we all have a role to play in this fight, and we must collectively work towards ending violence against women in all forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial.

Let’s show our support for this cause by wearing purple and taking a stand against gender-based violence.

Find out ways to get involved (www.harmonyhousews.com/16days).





Outreach Update

By Trysh Smith, Outreach Advocate

Leaving an abusive situation is one of the toughest challenges that a woman will ever have to face. Which is why we NEED your support this holiday season to assist women and their children to continue to gain access to safety through programs like ours.

One of those programs is the Outreach Program which provides support to women and children who are re-establishing themselves upon departure from HH, as well as women in the community experiencing violence, who are determining their options. I have been able to meet with women in their community, and now at the Outreach space, and refer them to needed resources, as well as accompaniments to things such as family court for support.

Let's hear from a woman who has accessed the outreach program for support.

“ I was sitting at my kitchen table, and I was looking around the room. I was looking at holes in the wall where my husband threw a frying pan full of food because he was angry with me for something. I can't remember exactly what I had done wrong this time...yet again.

I looked over at my son who was sitting in his highchair eating his cheerios that I had given him for breakfast, and I burst into tears. He looked at me with concern (as he usually did when I cried) and I looked back at him and said, "don't worry mommy's ok". In that moment I knew I was lying to him. More importantly I was lying to myself. Tears

were rolling down my face as I googled womens shelters in Ottawa, and I won't lie it was all overwhelming where to begin.

I went down the list checking all the websites for information, and I ended up sticking on Harmony House. I went to the website and clicked on the outreach section. There was a number and I called it. I have been working with the outreach worker ever since to help me and my son stay safe.

I am forever grateful that support like this is available. I am learning that it is not my fault and that I am not alone. There is help out there you just have to be brave and take that leap of faith and ask for help.

- Erin's Story



Housing

By Lee Ann Lee, Housing Advocate

There are approximately 17,000 subsidized housing units in Ottawa. As of December 31, 2022, there were 11,065 households on the City's Centralized Wait List (CWL) for subsidized housing, and only 1,230 applicants were housed from the CWL over the year.

As the Housing Advocate here at Harmony House I am troubled and concerned for the women and children who reside at Harmony House. When I started working with women and children whose lives have been impacted by violence, many years ago, Harmony House had a 1-year guideline for residency.

As I write this note today, we have several families that have been with us for over 3 years. This is not because they are not ready to move on, but rather there is nowhere for them to move on to. We are working with other like-minded agencies to lobby for more safe affordable housing options, we are constantly seeking ways to be creative in assisting women and children to access safe, affordable and long-term housing.



Home is a supposed to be a haven, a place of safety, security, and the building of new memories. Harmony House is here to support women and children to heal, to be ready to live their best lives knowing that they have rebuilt the skills necessary to enable them to do so.





A SPOOK-tacular Time!

By Deka Hersi, Childcare Worker

On October 31st, Harmony House had our annual Halloween party. Residents, along with their children, came decked out in their best costumes to enjoy the Halloween decorations and festivities, including taking part in some “scary” games and

munching on “gory” desserts. While residents socialized, the children went around to each office for some very lucrative trick-or-treating. A spook-tacular time was had by all!

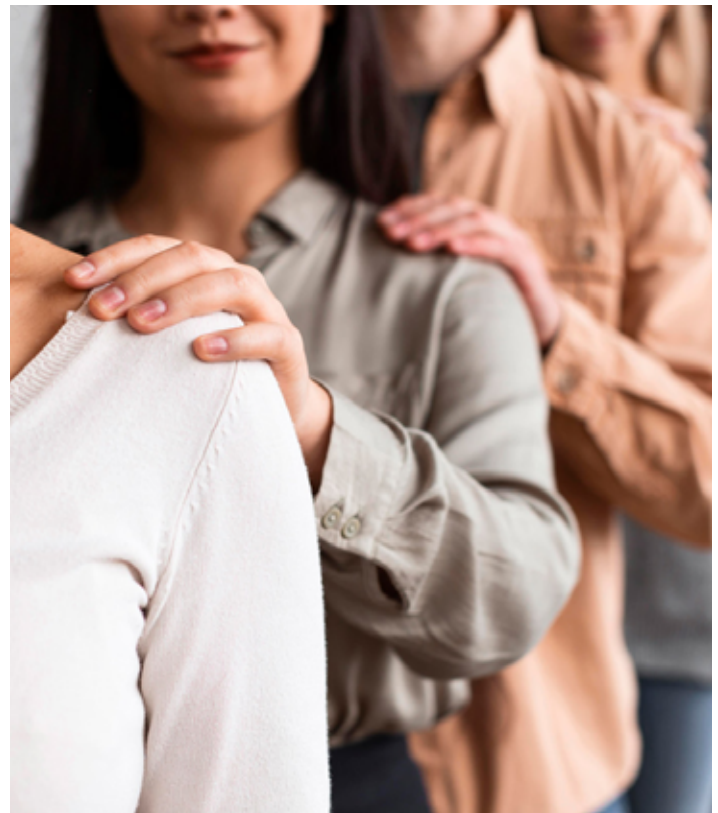


We Want to Hear from You

Harmony House is currently undertaking a strategic planning process to design our organization’s future - and we would like you to take an active part in shaping that future by participating in an online survey.

Through the strategic planning process, we intend to shed light on important issues and uncover the most promising opportunities. We are exploring perceptions about how the organization is doing, gaps, and how Harmony House can better meet the needs of its stakeholders.

- Will take approximately 10 minutes to complete
- Is available online until **December 10th at 5:00pm EST**





GivingTuesday - Amazing Results Because of YOU!

With the fantastic matching sponsorship of our friends at **Royal LePage Team Realty Ottawa Real Estate Brokerage** and **Royal LePage Shelter Foundation**, we not only met but surpassed our goal and raised over \$42,800 to go towards improving our children's play areas, both indoors and outdoors. With your help, we can create a safer, happier space for the children at Harmony House.

We recognize that the children who come to Harmony House have been through a great deal of trauma, and we want to be able to offer them a safe, supportive environment where they can relax, play, and just be kids.

Without your help, we would not have been able to accomplish what we did as a community. Thank you for your time, generosity, and commitment to Harmony House. We couldn't be more grateful.

Thank you for your continued support!



Welcome, Sherri!

Hello Everyone,

I am thrilled to join this compassionate and dedicated team at Harmony House as the new Coordinator of Volunteers and Programming.

My name is Sherri. I come to this role with a deep passion for supporting and empowering individuals within our community. Having worked in various volunteer oriented positions, I am honour to now contribute my skills and commitment to facilitating a positive impact on women in need.

I am genuinely looking forward to collaborating to create a nurturing and positive environment that fosters hope and resilience. Together, I am confident we will make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for welcoming me into this incredible community.





Welcome, Sandi!

My name is Sandi Laydu and I have always had a passion for helping people in any way that I can. I was a personal support worker for seniors with disabilities for 9 years and found great pleasure in doing this.

Here, at Harmony House, I am the Safety and Environment Coordinator and I have the great pleasure to be able to aid with the transitional housing of very brave women and precious children who have managed to flee from violence and are on their quest to a safe and independent future.

The women that pass through Harmony House are from all different avenues in life but two things they all have in common is their courage and their absolute right to live in a safe environment. I get to help with this by ensuring that their Interim stay with us is positive and comfortable.

I am honored to be a part of their big journey – Here's to women empowering women.



Empowering Tools for Survivors of Domestic Violence and Abuse

We are extremely grateful to the **Canadian Medical Association** for their generous donation of computers to our shelter. This amazing contribution will be a valuable tool for survivors, empowering them and giving children the opportunity to use it for their schoolwork and research. On behalf of everyone at Harmony House, we want to express our deepest appreciation for this contribution. Your support will truly make a significant difference in the lives of those we help.

The computers provided by the **Canadian Medical Association** have already started making a positive impact in our shelter. Survivors of domestic violence, who often arrive at our shelter with minimal resources and limited access to technology, can now utilize this computer to search for job opportunities, update their resumes, and connect with potential employers. This newfound access to technology empowers them to take control of their lives and work towards financial independence.

The impact of your donation goes beyond the tangible benefits of the computer itself. It sends a powerful message of support and care to the survivors and children at our shelter. It shows them that there are individuals and organizations in the community who believe in their potential and are willing to

invest in their future. This acknowledgement and validation can be transformative for individuals who have experienced trauma and uncertainty.

Once again, we want to express our most profound appreciation to the Canadian Medical Association for their generosity and support. Your donation of this computer has made a significant difference in the lives of those we help, and we are truly grateful for your commitment to making a positive impact in our community.

