



Join Us!

This Saturday tune in for 'An Hour To Give', Hosted by Sam Laprade, April 20th at 7am. Join us for inspiration, empowerment, and ways to make a difference in the lives of women and children! Don't miss out!



Beyond the Box: Reflections from the Therapy Office

By Jessica Breault, MA, RP

This time last year I was just starting my work with Harmony House, and I wasn't sure yet what to expect from this new position. The year has flown by, and I've had the privilege of working with women who have inspired me, challenged me and expanded my perspective. Clients have allowed me to witness some of their inner thoughts, emotions, fears and hopes during a vulnerable time in their lives. I don't take this lightly, and it's given me the opportunity to provide clinical support to people who may not otherwise have access to it.

There is a lot of categorization that happens in the mental health field, and with good reason. However as a therapist, it is my job to see the person in front of me first and the diagnosis, label or category second. This past year I have constantly been reminded that even when women have gone through very similar experiences, their strengths, their struggles and their perspectives are going to be their own.

Every "victim", every "survivor", every "abused woman" contains multitudes.

These terms can be useful descriptors, but they don't define someone. I've gotten to know many current and former residents over the past year, and each one of them has helped remind me of this lesson that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. I can bring my training and my experience into a session, but I also have to come with humility and with the awareness that I am seeing this person in just one chapter of their lives.

I feel honoured to have watched women make changes in their lives, push themselves out of their comfort zones and work hard to unlearn old ways of thinking. I've seen women build friendships, reclaim their voice to advocate for themselves, ask for

help, set boundaries in their relationships, and fight against phobias and fears. I've seen women face huge challenges and yet continue to be there for their kids, reach out to their neighbours, and continue moving forward after countless set-backs and obstacles.

These women have allowed themselves to pause their busy lives and tune into themselves and their own needs during our sessions. This can be an incredibly difficult task when you have been stuck in survival mode for years. It's been encouraging to see women and mothers prioritize themselves in this way, and I hope to continue providing supportive spaces for women in the coming year.





Meet Julie!

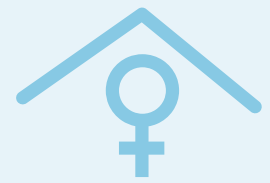
By Julie P. Mohanna

My name is Julie Mohanna - I started volunteering at Harmony House in 2008 and have loved it ever since!

My favorite role was being able to assist in the childcare of so many kids to support our residents. The kids love playing tag outside, watching fun movies and playing games together!

I was involved in volunteering at the amazing Annual Red and White Gala fundraiser where local chefs do food demos, tons of local vendors share food and beverage samples and HH hosts a live or silent auction. These events were tons of fun and raised awareness of all the incredible acts of HH for women and children in the Ottawa community. Of utmost importance - the safety coordinator and I were also able to secure the security of the residents by testing the emergency systems continually.

The volunteers made cleaning the units for new families fun and ensure to create welcoming and safe spaces for them complete with beautiful welcome baskets.



I am now a lawyer by trade and look forward to collaborating with HH to support the residents with more community legal education on wills, family and landlord and tenant areas!

HH is such a warm and positive environment with an amazing team of women - I like to refer to it as my safe second home!

Sincerely,
Julie



Igniting hidden treasures and rediscovering purpose!

Harmony House isn't just a shelter—it's where dreams take flight and hearts beat as one! Recently, we experienced something truly extraordinary, and we couldn't wait to share it with you.

The CGI volunteers, armed with boundless enthusiasm and ready to rock our world, didn't just show up; they became part of our superheroes. With sleeves rolled up and smiles bright, they turned our shelter into a haven of warmth and love. And oh, did they spoil us! Not content with just cleaning, they showered us with brand-new kitchen treasures, transforming our space into a true home.



The impact of their generosity? It's nothing short of awe-inspiring. If we were to put a price tag on their incredible work, it would exceed \$1,200. But let's be clear—it's not about the numbers. It's about the profound sense of community and connection they've helped us build. Together, we've woven a tapestry of support, where everyone is a hero, and every act of kindness ripples out into the world.

But our journey doesn't end here. No, it's just the beginning of something truly remarkable. We're reaching out to you, our cherished supporters, to join us in this adventure. Together, we'll continue to dream bigger, reach higher, and make an even greater impact. We're calling on more organizations to step forward, to lend their time, their talents, and their hearts to our cause.

Are you ready to be a part of something truly special? Reach out to [Sherri Ryan, our Volunteer Extraordinaire](#), at volunteercoord@harmonyhousews.com.

Let's come together and make magic happen—together!

“When someone shows you who they are believe them the first time.”

— Maya Angelou



Outreach

When the clocks move forward 1 hour, that is a sure sign that spring is near. Yet today, it is just another day for the 1 in 4 women who will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime.

I am so privileged that I get to witness families leave our shelter and move forward into their new lives free from violence. When a family moves on and all areas of support have been met, something quite magical can happen. They have an opportunity then, for their basic human rights to be met, and it is our hope they will be. These are the outcomes that motivate me and keep me inspired to keep delivering services and support.

Our outreach services are also offered where we can touch base over emails, texts, or chat, can meet women conveniently centrally located at our outreach office space, or at a place in their community that's safe.

Leaving abuse is a process. Whatever point you are at in your journey to safety, our outreach support can offer strategies to help you and your children keep safe.

Ways to connect with our outreach worker [Trysh at outreach@harmonyhousews.com](mailto:Trysh@harmonyhousews.com) or 613-608-1499.

Words from a survivor

I fell for him, I packed my life up and moved across the country for him. I got on the plane looking forward to start our life together. Got off the plane, he told me the job he wanted had been cancelled, he was stressed and angry, no mood to celebrate our new beginning.

He used this, to control our new life together. Looking back at the 11 years he always blamed everything on me, took his anger and aggression out on me. Yet he never Hit me. he controlled me, controlled all our money.

I had to beg just to be able to buy new socks. He refused to let me have more than 1 pair of shoes. He stopped me from going out for walks time after time and other times, because

my shoes were so worn, I could not walk in them and he would not let me get new ones.

I broke down, I told him I could no longer live like this, cause my only thought was to jump off a bridge. I told him exactly what I needed, he promised, yet he did the exact opposite, he did not care about the over 1000 times I went to bed sad, as long as I cooked, cleaned and was quiet. I was supposed to make my escape, but covid happened. Then a couple years went by, and a member of his family passed, he had to return to his country for the final arrangements.

Then, I had 7 days to pack, say goodbye, to ask for help, and help I got! Yet I had been Afraid that no one would believe me. Why was I so afraid, cause I am strong and seen as a strong

person. Cause how can you be strong and controlled at the same time? Trust me, you can! I reported to the police that I was escaping, so there was no way he could report me as missing. I escaped.

Now, later, I have been waking up with a smile every day, my mind and body so relaxed, I have no regrets, I got new friends and I am signing the papers for my new home now and I smile. I am in physical pain, but I smile. I still got worries, but I smile.

I cannot wait to clean my new home, dancing and smiling.

So please Do Not be Afraid, Ask for Help, they will believe you, they will support you, you will be happy and free.

I am Free!