



HarmonyHouseWS.com

Annual Report

2023 - 2024

Inspire. Empower. Rise

Harmony House Board of Directors



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New

Harmony House Staff

Executive Director - Marilyn Matheson

Director of Finance and Administration - Susan Hopkinson

Director of Development and Communications - Francesca Davila

Database Manager - Debbie Sprowl

Coordinator of Volunteers and Programming - Sherri Ryan

Women's and Family Advocate - Anette Quarcoopome

Safety & Environmental Coordinator - Sandi Laydu

Therapist - Jessica Breault

Housing Advocate - Lee-Ann Lee

Outreach Advocate - Trysh Smith

Childcare Worker - Deka Hersi

A Note from the Executive Director



This past year has been a year of change at Harmony House as the agency slowly recovers from the pandemic. As is the case with many charities, the loss of the extra COVID-19 funding hit hard. However, thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, and donors, we are bouncing back, and have re-started in-person programs that had been put on hiatus during the pandemic.

As you can see from the program report, the front-line staff have been extra busy this past year. The shortage of housing in Ottawa has made it difficult to transition women and children out of Harmony House and into long-term housing. With no shelter rooms available, women have been staying with their abuser, risking their safety and the safety of their children. Staff have spent many hours on the phone developing safety plans tailored to each individual woman who has called seeking help to ensure their well-being until accommodations can be found.

There is no question that more shelter space for women and children fleeing abuse is needed, along with more affordable long-term housing solutions. These are issues we will be working on with our community partners as we move forward.

We are grateful for all the support we receive from our community partners, especially our landlord, Ottawa Community Housing. Without their support, our overhead costs of running the shelter would mean less money for programming.

We are also grateful to both the Province of Ontario and the City of Ottawa for their continued funding. These ongoing grants help sustain the work we do and ensure that we can continue assisting the women and children who need our support to close the door of abuse behind them and open the door to a future free from violence.

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

Marilyn Matheson CAE
Executive Director

A Note from the President



As President of the Board of Directors, I am honoured to reflect on this past year and the collective impact our efforts have had in the community. It has been a period of significant growth and achievements for our organization, and I take pride in the progress we have made together.

Throughout the past year, our team at Harmony House has demonstrated remarkable resilience, dedication, and commitment to our goals. Despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have remained steadfast in our mission to empower and support women and children to live their lives free from violence by providing transitional housing and programs that help them realize their full potential.

In my first year as President, I am proud to share that the Board of Directors has achieved the following key milestones:

- 1) Completion of a new strategic plan, revitalizing our mission, vision, and values to better align with our organizational goals and the evolving needs of our community (please see the next page 3)
- (2) Strengthening of our governance structure through the revision and updating of our by-laws, ensuring greater clarity and effectiveness in decision-making processes.
- (3) Implementation of transformative measures in our business operations, enhancing efficiency and ensuring stronger oversight and financial fiduciary responsibility.

As we look to the future, we recognize the ongoing work needed to meet the growing needs of our community. Our commitment to our mission remains unwavering, and with your continued support, I am confident that we will not only build on our progress but also create an even more profound impact in the lives of those we serve.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our incredible community for your unwavering support, generosity, and belief in our mission. Together, we are creating a community where all families are safe, valued, and free from all forms of violence and oppression.

Thank you for your trust in us, and I look forward to continuing this journey together.

Lorena Caputo, MBA
President

RENEWED PURPOSE

OUR VISION

A community where all families are safe, valued, and free from all forms of violence and oppression.

OUR MISSION

Empowering and supporting women and children to live their lives free from violence by providing transitional housing and programs that help them realize their full potential.

OUR VALUES



Integrity



Safety



Empowerment



Collaboration



Respect

NEW STRATEGIC PATH



Strategic Re-Imagination for Sustainable Impact

We will nurture and cultivate strategic partnerships for sustainability and employ impact evaluation and measurement mechanisms to inform continuous responsiveness to women and their families.



Operational Excellence and Accountability

We will cultivate a positive work environment for our staff and volunteers and enhance our capacity as an organization to effectively serve the women who access our services.



Building Strong Relationships and Empowering Residents

We will expand programs that foster self-sufficiency while ensuring trauma-informed practices are deeply integrated in our service delivery to support the women we serve.



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.

– Therapist, Jessica Breault

Programs Report



Over the past year, Harmony House has continued to provide vital support and refuge to survivors of domestic violence. Our mission remains focused on offering a sanctuary where individuals can find solace, rebuild their lives, and reclaim their sense of worth and dignity. This report highlights the significant achievements and ongoing efforts of our dedicated team.

Providing Refuge and Support

One of the most significant achievements of the past year has been the successful assistance of women and children in finding refuge at Harmony House and women and children through Outreach services.

Providing more than just a roof over their heads, we offered a sanctuary where they could find solace and support during their darkest moments. The relief and gratitude in their eyes as they stepped through our doors reaffirmed the importance of our work and fueled our passion to do even more.

Supporting Children and Families

For many children who have experienced trauma, transitions like moving to a new school can be daunting. We made it a priority to help onboard the kids to their new schools, ensuring they felt welcomed and supported from day one. Whether it was accompanying them on school tours, meeting with teachers and counsellors, or helping them navigate the enrollment process, we were there every step of the way to ease their transition and set them up for success.

Recognizing the importance of addressing their emotional and psychological needs, we connected them with counselling services to help them process their experiences, express their feelings, and learn healthy coping mechanisms. Our team worked closely with trained counsellors to provide individual and group therapy sessions tailored to each child's unique needs, creating a safe space where they could explore their emotions and begin the healing process.



In addition to these efforts, we provided ongoing childcare to ensure stability and consistency in their daily lives. During professional development (PD) days, March break, and the summer months, we organized day camps to offer a supportive and engaging environment for the children. These camps included a variety of activities designed to foster social connections, build resilience, and promote physical and emotional well-being. By providing these structured programs, we helped maintain a sense of normalcy and fun, allowing the children to enjoy their time off from school while continuing to develop important life skills.

Our comprehensive approach aimed to support the children not just academically but also emotionally and socially, ensuring they had the resources and care they needed to thrive in their new environments.

Addressing Complex Challenges

Our residents often face complex and overlapping challenges, including post-partum depression, custody battles, substance use issues, and the stress of immigration and adapting to a new country. They may need medical support, mental health care, transportation for getting their kids to school, legal help with immigration or custody issues, and guidance around finances and taxes.

Our interdisciplinary team works together to support residents in addressing these issues on top of the traumatic situations that led them here in the first place.

Through our wrap-around services, we provide a circle of care to new and former residents and Outreach clients. Many residents want emotional support as they navigate this new stage in their lives, and others are struggling with symptoms of PTSD and need support with panic attacks, dissociative episodes, and flashbacks. Almost everyone we see is dealing with some degree of anxiety, episodes of feeling depressed and stuck, and daily struggles with self-criticism and self-esteem as a result of past trauma.

Utilizing a Trauma-Informed Approach

We use a trauma-informed feminist approach that helps us treat each client as an individual and build on their existing strengths. Over the past year, our in-house Therapist provided over 200 counselling hours, psychotherapy sessions in addition to virtual check-ins, crisis calls, and accompanying clients to meetings or appointments as needed. We have recently started a program called Common Ground that will include activities such as a Community Kitchen and cooking classes, yoga classes, paint/craft nights and much more. These groups are a way for women to feel more connected and build up their social supports while engaging in positive activities.



Maintaining Safe and Welcoming Units

We keep working on maintaining the units safe, clean, and ready to welcome a family or woman in need. With repairs and amazing volunteer support, we are able to be ready for when the women are ready. Our efforts to ensure that our living spaces are comfortable and secure are a crucial part of providing a welcoming environment. The dedication of our volunteers in helping with maintenance and repairs has been invaluable, allowing us to focus on supporting the residents.

Volunteer Coordination and Programming

Having a dedicated team member taking care of volunteers and programming gives the women and the staff the support and resources needed to provide a full circle of care. This role ensures that our volunteers are well-coordinated and that our programs are effectively managed, enhancing the overall support system for our residents. By facilitating various activities and support groups, we help foster a sense of community and belonging among the women at Harmony House.

Outreach Program

Our outreach program provides ongoing support to women and children whose lives have been impacted by violence as they move to independent living. Providing continued care and guidance through outreach with staff is critical to a person's recovery and resilience. When you're getting back on your feet, what might seem like simple everyday tasks can be overwhelming.

Navigating services, booking and attending appointments, and connecting to your local community can seem insurmountable. However, we also know that outreach works. We use this resource to provide continued wrap-around support services for women who have contacted us from the community.

Our mission and values include providing crisis support to women and children from our surrounding communities. We believe assisting families by connecting and accompanying them through court support is important to their overall wellness.

Our long-term goal, of course, is a world without an agency like Harmony House. Until that happens, we need to do everything within our capacity to assist women and children in leaving violent situations and work in our community to educate and empower them.

Housing Support Initiatives at Harmony House

In today's challenging housing market, finding safe and affordable housing has become increasingly difficult. The ongoing Housing Crisis affects a significant number of Canadian households, with one in four struggling to afford housing and one in eight unable to find suitable accommodations.

We want to take a moment and give thanks to the community partners who make moving to safe, affordable housing possible. It all starts with a referral to Shelter Movers, an organization that provides volunteer movers. Additionally, some organizations collect gently used furniture and household items. With a referral, the women can go to their warehouse and pick out the items they need. So, when you start in your new home, it really does feel like a home.

In addition to direct support, the Housing Support Worker actively participates in Transitional Housing and Support Worker meetings. These sessions are crucial in advocating for systemic change and addressing the root causes of housing insecurity. By leveraging collective expertise and advocating for policy changes, the aim is to ensure that safe and affordable housing is accessible to all.

Through these advocacy efforts, Harmony House contributes to meaningful dialogue and research that inform policy decisions aimed at eradicating violence against women and ensuring housing security for all.

The ongoing dedication and support of stakeholders are crucial to Harmony House's mission of providing safe housing solutions and empowering individuals and families in the community.

Nourishing Families and Hope

At our shelter, the food bank plays a vital role in supporting the community by providing essential nourishment to those in need. Twice of month, we are able to service between 25 and 30 families, which equates to approximately 75 to 90 individuals, including children. This assistance ensures that families facing economic hardships have access to nutritious food, helping to alleviate hunger and contribute to their overall well-being while they heal from trauma. The food bank's impact extends beyond just providing meals; it offers a sense of security and hope, reinforcing our commitment to fostering a healthier, more resilient community.

Looking Ahead

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we hope to expand our services to reach even more survivors in need. This includes increasing our shelter capacity, expanding our outreach efforts to marginalized communities, and enhancing our support programs to meet our residents' diverse needs better. We also want to celebrate the successes and milestones of the past year, from the families we've helped find safety and stability to the community partnerships we've forged. Every achievement is a testament to our team and supporters' dedication and hard work.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our mission and helped us make a difference in the lives of so many.

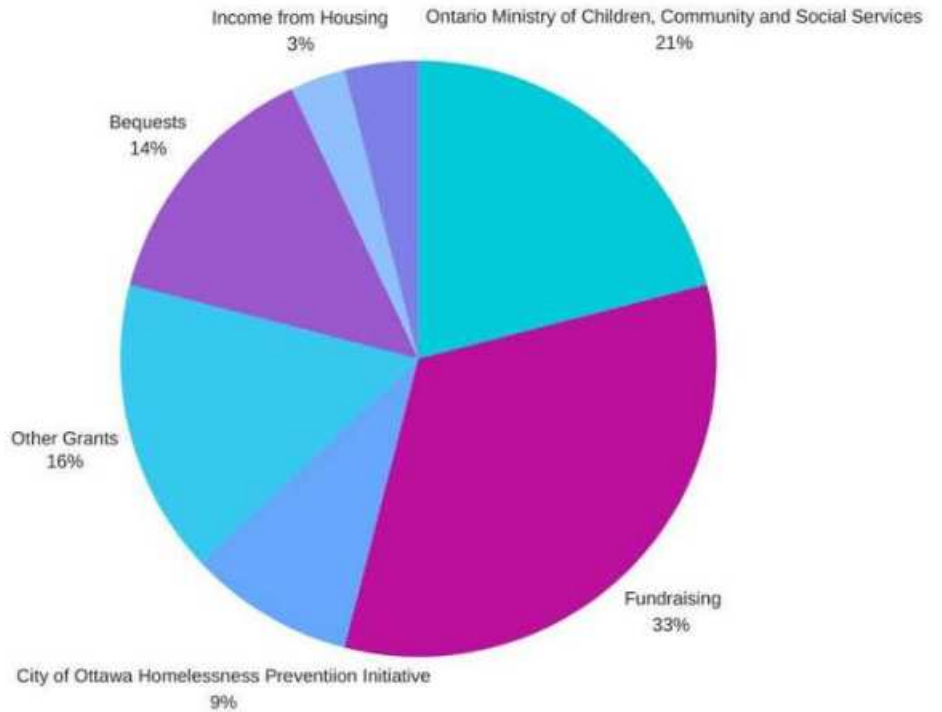


Harmony House has been a lifeline for me and my children, providing a safe place, childcare support, and essential counselling. I've regained my confidence and rebuilt my life, and I don't know where I'd be without their incredible support.

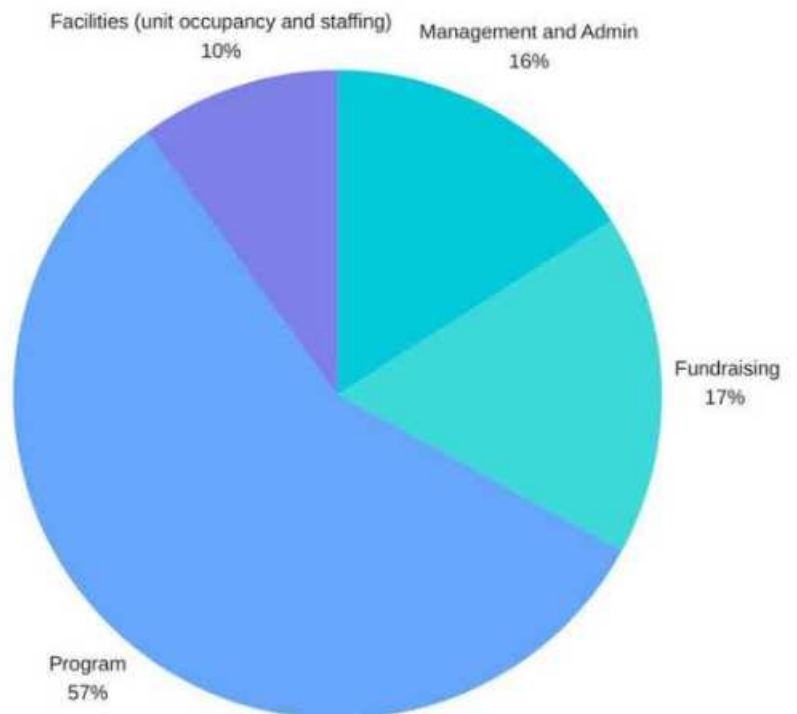
-Mercedes, Harmony House Resident

Finances at a Glance

Income 2023 - 2024



Expenses 2023 - 2024



Development and Communications



Dear donors, friends and community partners,

Over the past year, we have achieved significant milestones in our continuous efforts to raise funds for creating secure environments for women and children escaping violence and abuse. Your partnership with Harmony House has been crucial in enabling us to quickly adapt, embrace change, and develop new strategies to provide assistance, support, and save lives.

Harmony House's 2023 -2024 report reflects a year of profound transformation and progress in our mission to support women and children escaping domestic violence. Our efforts in fundraising, development initiatives, and community engagement have been pivotal in advancing our cause and preparing for future challenges.

Fundraising efforts this year were notably successful. The Annual Gala, our signature event, raised \$80,507 through a silent auction, ticket sales, sponsorship, and other fundraising initiatives.

Additionally, leveraging online platforms, our GivingTuesday campaign raised an impressive \$42,800, including substantial contributions from our holiday campaign. We also secured \$178,617 in grants and sponsorships from corporate partners and foundations dedicated to supporting women's shelters and domestic violence prevention.

In our development efforts, we've achieved significant progress in improving our programs and facilities. However, we recognize the ongoing need for further enhancements as we continue to overcome challenges with our facilities. Our commitment remains steadfast in ensuring that every service we provide is delivered with the highest level of sensitivity and effectiveness, reinforcing our dedication to delivering top-quality care to our residents.

Our goal is to continue establishing strategic partnerships with businesses, communities, and educational institutions to launch job readiness and educational support programs, empowering women toward economic independence. We want to maintain strong community engagement as a cornerstone of our outreach efforts. Additionally, we will continue planning to offer workshops to empower women through further partnerships and funding.

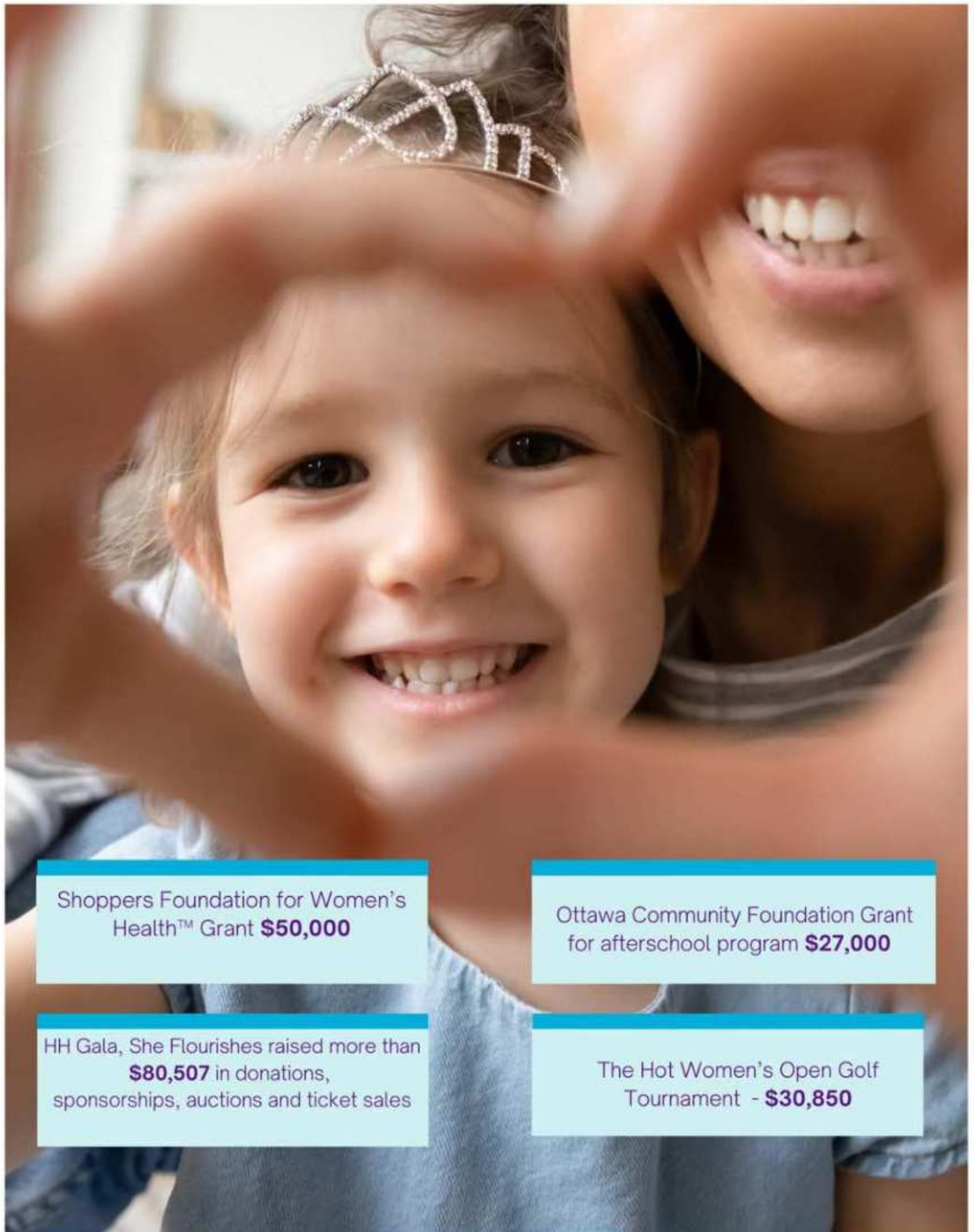
Together, we can create a world where every woman and child feels safe and protected, regardless of the circumstances they may face.

Francesca Davila

Director of Development and Communications



In 2023 – 2024 your support made this happen:



Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health™ Grant **\$50,000**

Ottawa Community Foundation Grant for afterschool program **\$27,000**

HH Gala, She Flourishes raised more than **\$80,507** in donations, sponsorships, auctions and ticket sales

The Hot Women's Open Golf Tournament - **\$30,850**

Thank you

Thank you for standing alongside survivors of domestic violence! Your grater and consistent support during 38 years are at the heart of everything we are able to accomplish.

A Body Action Health Ltd.
Adobe Inc.
Alpha Omicron Pi Alumnae
AMD
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Athletic Club (Trainyards)
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Fidelity Investments Canada ULC
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FPA, Carleton University
Gathering Event Company
Gift Funds Canada Foundation
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Mierins Family Foundation
Minto Foundation
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Movement by WH Inc
My Toy Shop
N. Harris Computer Corporation
National Aboriginal Circle Against Family
Violence (NACAFV)
Neuroscience program - University of Ottawa
Nora
Northern Off-Road Girls
Novotel Ottawa
NRML Clothing
Nuedge Communications
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OpenText
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Ottawa Academy of Martial Arts
Ottawa Community Foundation
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Ottawa Integrative Health Centre
Ottawa Lettershop Services
Ottawa Little Theatre
Ottawa Newcomers Club
Ottawa Redblacks Limited Partnership
Ottawa Region Masonry Contract. Assoc.
Ottawa South Women Connection
Ottawa Technical Secondary School
Ottawa Women Dentists Study Club
Our Lady of the Visitation Church
Panevoikon Assoc. of Ottawa and District
Parallel 45 Design Group Ltd.
Parkwood Presbyterian Church
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PBC Sweetnam Holdings Inc.
Penderfund Capital Management
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Punky The Dog

Pure Yoga Ottawa Inc
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