

**Women's Place
of South Niagara Inc.**

(Nova House & Serenity Place)

2009-2010

annual report

Our mission is to **end abuse** and violence by **empowering women** and their children through the provision of safe shelter, counselling, education and community partnerships.

Changing Lives

President's Message

Fran Gregotski

There are many words that relate to the word collaboration; teamwork, partnership, association and alliance just to name a few. These words clearly define collaboration but words cannot appropriately express the commitment of everyone involved who supports Women's Place of South Niagara. (WPSN)

It is not until you begin to work with dedicated employees and volunteers at Nova House and Serenity place, that you realize how we are all interconnected, performing different functions yet working toward the same goals. Each group, whether it is employees on the front line, management working to lead the organization, volunteers working to raise funds or the board of directors charged with the responsibility to govern the corporation, everyone involved is instrumental in our success. The Board of Directors would like to extend our deepest appreciation and thanks to everyone who works and gives their time to support such a valued organization.

As President on the Board of Directors my role has been a rewarding challenge. All efforts of the board are truly geared towards the success of WPSN and the efforts to support all members so they in turn can support the women and children who have reached out to our shelters to escape violence and rebuild their lives. Our Vision "*Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. envisions a community where women and children live free from abuse and violence*" is our primary goal. I would personally like to thank all board members for their dedication and support.

The Board of Directors would like to acknowledge Ruthann Brown, Executive Director of WPSN. We consider it a privilege to work with Ruthann and respect her experience, knowledge and devotion to her role as Executive Director. Ruthann is a driving force with strong leadership skills who has provided continuous improvement and guidance throughout her career at WPSN.

All of the management team work closely with Ruthann and their commitment and hard work is evident in the results that have been achieved.

This is where collaboration and team work begins to shine and the Board of Directors is very much aware of your efforts and we thank you for all of your contributions.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the front line workers who, on a daily basis, deal with women and children of abuse. Your core values and commitment are crucial to their success and we recognize the complexities you are challenged with on a day to day basis. Words cannot express the sadness and sorrow you must cope with to enable these women to begin a new life.

Our focus for the future is on *change*. The world was challenged with difficult economic times in 2009 which is resulting in a paradigm shift around the globe on how we do business. For us it means complying with new legislation that impedes our decisions. It has also forced us to look at our standard practices, eliminate some "tried and true" fund raising events and introduce and implement new events to capture new supporters. Our community depends on us and we recognize the evolution of the changing times and are adjusting to meet these changes.

As we reflect on our collective achievements throughout this past year, we should all be proud of our contributions. The Board of Directors will acquire some new members. Collaboration will be important to deal with the many changes we are all faced with. I look forward to another year serving WPSN and working with everyone to empower the women and children we support to begin to live violence free lives.

Kindest Regards,



Fran Gregotski
President



Our Event Committees and Volunteers are *changing LIVES!*

Cares Foundation Strike Out Violence Bowling Tournament

Tammy Hollard (Chair)
Cecil Bradley
Cathie Green
Mark Lightfoot
Bill Muir
Guy Norio
Joe Talarico
Anthony Tofano
Deborah Toth

Nova House Book Riot

Tania Fera-VanGent (Chair)
Rhonda Armstrong
Rita Eastman
Wendy Kuhn
Bea Greenizan
Millicent Owens
Cheryl Scott
Gail Woodruff
Marilyn Woodruff

Craft Show and Market Place

Cathie Green (Co-Chair)
Assunta Piccini (Co-Chair)
Lori Conte
Maggie Gelka
Virginia Gillan
Dotti Lanthier
Kathy Moccio
Christine Neamtu
Dorothy Smith



8th Annual



Strike Out Violence
Bowling Tournament



NOVA HOUSE 33rd ANNUAL
BOOK RIOT



23rd annual
craft show
... AND ...
market place

Special Thanks to our Bingo Volunteers

Jean Cardilli
Kim Davis
Bruce Dennis
Barb Duncan
Linda Liddle
Mary Merry
Angela Pijl
Pat Thomerson
Ethel Trombley

Fundraising Committee

Our special events committees are governed by a dedicated group of volunteers made up of Board Members and community leaders.

Cathie Green (Chair)
Jamie Burdon
Linda Booth
Tammy Hollard

Assunta Piccini
Tom Snodgrass
Tania Fera-VanGent

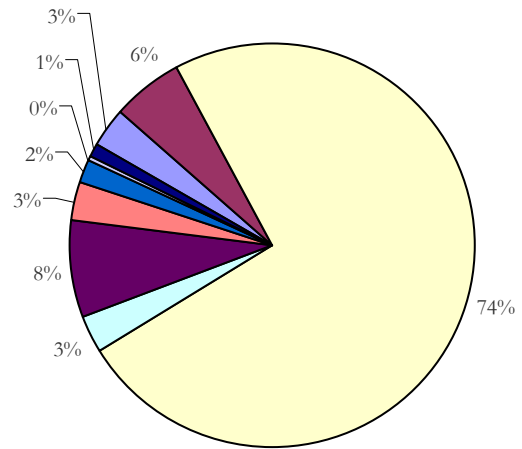
Revenue & Donations

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. is primarily funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the remaining funds are generated from donations, bequests, grants, special events and United Way funding.

Women's Place relies heavily on the financial support of individuals and corporations to keep our programs and services available to women and children who require them.

The downturn in the economy has had a significant effect on funding from some of our major donors. Financial support is down approximately 20% in 2009 from 2008.

Revenue for 2010



- Trillium Grant
- Fundraising Revenues
- MCSS
- United Way Funding
- Donations
- Book Riot Revenues
- Regional and Municipal Funding
- Special Project Funding
- Investment Income

*Volunteers do not necessarily have
the time; they just have the heart.
~Elizabeth Andrew*

Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration Volunteer Service Awards

Volunteers play a vital role in our agency. In 2009, our volunteers donated more than 10,000 hours to our two shelters - the equivalent to 6 additional full-time employees. These individuals are committed, experienced, dedicated and passionate about our cause and share our vision. We have had a successful year in fundraising, due in large part to our 300 plus volunteers.

15 years

Andy Dwornik

10 years

Shawn Bates

Lynne Coull

5 years

Rhonda Armstrong

Debra Beaulieu

Cathie Green

Beatrice Greenizan

Kathryn Swayze

Bill Muir

Diane Sanderson

Thomas Snodgrass

Deborah Wiebe

Executive Director's Message

Ruthann Brown

“**CHANGING LIVES**” is a wonderful way to appraise the results of the work of Women's Place of South Niagara's two shelters Nova House and Serenity Place over the past year. It is both an honour and a privilege to work together with our staff, board, volunteers, community partners and donors to facilitate change in the lives of the women and children who use our services each day.

This past year presented significant financial challenges. Niagara has the second highest unemployment rate in Canada and the domino effect has meant that we have experienced the true impact of the economic downturn. Many businesses and individuals that have been regular donors in the past were not able to do so this year, as they tried to meet their own financial hurdles. Nonetheless, we do have cause for celebration! We continued our education and prevention efforts by continuing to act as the lead agency for the Stop Family Violence, It's Everybody's Business project. This initiative was made possible through funding received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation which ended in June 2010.

We are proud of the Collaboration Agreement and working relationship we engaged in with our sister shelter, Gillian's Place and the Niagara Regional Police Services, as well as the volunteers who served on the Advisory Committee and the Task Force for this project. Further, we are pleased and proud of our contributions, albeit small, which supported the implementation of Bill 168.

The Stop Family Violence, It's Everybody's Business Task Force, invited and met with The Honourable Peter Fonseca, Ministry of Labour to discuss Bill 168. He was very complimentary of the work this project had produced and undertaken. Minister Fonseca requested and received permission to utilize the projects toolkit and to share this information with various health and safety associations.

Further, at the time Bill 168 was under review, Minister Fonseca's office advised and encouraged Task Force members and the Project Coordinator to attend a Standing Committee Meeting on Social Policy to present Niagara's domestic violence data and statistics. The Task Force's presentation made a strong case for the need and requirement of Bill 168.

Shortly thereafter, a milestone was achieved for the Violence Against Women Sector. Bill 168 received Royal Assent on December 15, 2009 and went into effect on June 15, 2010. This bill amended the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace. For the very first time it took it one step further by prescribing what employers must have in place when “an employer becomes aware, or ought reasonably to be aware that domestic violence that would likely expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace” and to “take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker”.

Community partnerships have been key in our agencies ability to affect change. An excellent demonstration of this has been the work achieved this past year by the Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW). Through the efforts of many, the first Domestic Violence Report Card for Niagara and Supplementary Report to the Report Card were written, published and publicly launched at a two day conference attended by over 175 people. The reports made a series of recommendations to help break down systemic barriers and to improve the availability, accessibility and effectiveness of services. These two reports can be downloaded from the CEVAW website which is www.cevaw.com. My two year term as the Chair of CEVAW expired in June 2010, however our agency continues to be an active member of CEVAW and looks forward to working collaboratively to improve the response to domestic violence in the Niagara Region.

As we begin a new year of service, please join me in embracing the theme of this annual report. I can think of no better reason to partner with us than a goal of seeing change happen in the lives of all the women and children who come through our doors!

Thank you for working with us. You are making a difference and ...changing lives.

Respectfully submitted,



Ruthann Brown
Executive Director



CEVAW Conference

The Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW) is a collective voice of organizations that are working toward ending violence against women in the Niagara Region. In her term as CEVAW Chair, Ruthann Brown, Executive Director of Women's Place of South Niagara participated with this incredibly dedicated group through the completion of Niagara's First Domestic Violence Report Card (DVRC) and Supplementary Report. Introduced at a two-day conference held in June 2010, the report outlined the strengths and weaknesses in dealing with domestic violence and violence against women in the Niagara Region.

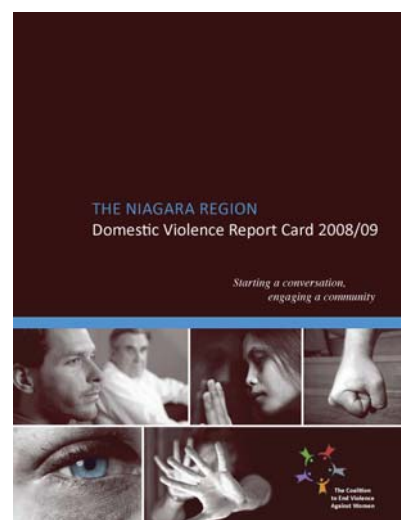
Several strong themes emerged from this report including an emphasis on the importance of collaboration between all agencies in the Niagara Region to ensure that our clients needs are met but not duplicated. The report also emphasized the shortcomings of our transit system and lack of affordable housing for clients.

The DVRC was written by Ian DeGeer, a therapist working with abused men and child welfare for 12 years. In an excerpt from the report Ian states that his perception of domestic violence in the Niagara Region was skewed. "Abused women continue to be at risk of poverty, experience authoritative agencies as domineering, have little or no access to affordable housing, have difficulty traveling in the region, lack access to legal services and do not feel safe for a long period

of time after leaving their abusive partners. This report and subsequent supplementary report reaffirmed that there is still a great deal of work to be done for VAW agencies working in the Niagara Region."

We congratulate CEVAW on the publication of the first Domestic Violence Report Card for the Niagara Region. In the coming years, CEVAW's executive committee will examine every opportunity to improve the circumstances for women in our community who have experienced abuse and violence and they will challenge the agencies involved to do the same so that we are assured that women have every opportunity available to them to safely leave an abusive relationship or survive the trauma of abuse.

Copies of the Domestic Violence Report Card and Supplementary Report as well as a list of contributing agencies can be found at cevaw.com.



Thank you to our generous donors
We are able to keep our programs and services free and confidential
thanks to the generous support of our donors.

The Branscombe Family Foundation
Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort & Casino
Niagara

The Fowler Family Foundation
Maid of the Mist Steamboat Company
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Independent Order of Foresters
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Drs. Huq & Danial
Retired Teachers of Ontario District 14
McDonald's Restaurants of Niagara
Zonta Club of Niagara Falls
Royal LePage Shelter Foundation
Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
Canadian Women's Foundation
United Way of South Niagara Inc
Cytotec Canada Inc
Niagara Peninsula Energy
Zonta Club of Fort Erie

CAW Social Justice Fund
Niagara Regional Police Service
City of Niagara Falls
Boggio Pharmacy
Ontario Power Generation
Notre Dame Catholic High School
Niagara Falls Lions Club
Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association
Chapman Murray Associates Architects
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Morgans Point United Church Women
Walker Industries Holdings Ltd.
Beverles Holdings Inc.
Saint-Gobain Ceramic Materials
Bissell Canada Corporation
Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
Niagara Community Foundation
6 anonymous donors

We thank all of our donors. Without their support, by whatever means we could not continue our level of service. The donors we have acknowledge contributed \$1,000 + between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010

*"The greatest use of life is to spend it on
something that will outlast it."
~ William James*

Development Department

Special events have been our saving grace in the past year. The uncertain economic conditions of 2009 have pushed us to be creative in our fundraising efforts. We relied heavily upon our 3 signature fundraising events and with the support of our outstanding committees, we examined every opportunity to improve the overall event and increase attendance—reaching more people in our close knit communities.

With the continued support of The Cares Foundation and Casino employees our 7th Annual Strike Out Violence Bowling Tournament grossed over \$28,000 in 2009. Our Nova House Book Riot grossed an incredible \$50,000 for a second consecutive year. We will continue to bring change and further develop our fundraising program, setting new goals for our department and our agency. With the support of our Board of Directors, our Fundraising Committee has decided that 2009 was the final year for our beloved Craft Show. The Craft Show has served the agency well bringing tens of thousands of dollars in revenue to support our programs and services. This has allowed us to introduce a new fundraising event - *Cut it Out*. Salons from across South Niagara will be donating the proceeds from their services on Sunday, October 3, 2010 to our shelters and vow to promote our programs and services to their clients in our community. What started as a third party fundraising event in 2009 has grown into a movement involving many local high schools and Niagara College

who has added information about violence against women and domestic violence to their curriculum in the coming school year.

Also new this year, we have partnered with Kathryn Gibbs photography on our Cards with a Cause initiative. Kathryn, a local photographer, donated her several of her finest photographs of Niagara landscapes which will be used as the face of our own greeting cards. 100% of the funds generated from these sales will go to support the programs and services at Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.

Although our individual donations were down, we recognize that it has been difficult year for Niagara residents and we could not continue the programs and services without our donors. We are grateful for their continued support through in-kind donations, financial donations and planned gifts. Thank you for your continued contributions, good will and assisting us spread the word that our programs and services are available to women in our communities who have experienced abuse.

Coming in October 2010!

**visit www.womensplacesn.org
or call 905-356-3933 ext. 241
for more information.**



Stop Family Violence *it's everybody's business*

2010 marked the completion of the Stop Family Violence *it's everybody's business* workplace initiative program. Susan Speck, Project Coordinator, reached approximately 20,000 people and 140 businesses. This two year initiative which began in 2008 was the result of about four years of planning and was funded through a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

With representation from Government, Health, Education, Legal/Justice, Media and Business and Labour, Task Force members worked within their specific sectors to increase awareness about family violence and its impact in the workplace. Workplace toolkits were then developed to assist employers with address any issues of family violence in the workplace.

Women's Place of South Niagara was heavily involved with the community consultations that took place regarding the implementation of Bill 168 (violence and harassment in the workplace). Late last year, Task Force members had an opportunity to meet with Minister of Labour Peter Fonesca who brought this bill forward.

On June 15, 2010 Bill 168 was given Royal Assent and changes were made in Ontario's Health and Safety Act which will further strengthen

protections for workers from workplace violence and harassment.

Although the Stop Family Violence Program has ended, the work continues. Toolkits and Information for employers and workers is still available on their website www.stop-family-violence.com.

In the near future, Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF), a public education program designed to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that those close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help, will launch its workplace training component to its existing training. The NFF Program covers Southwestern, Central, Eastern, Northern Ontario and the GTA.

For more information please visit the NFF website at neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca.



Programs and Services

The programs and services offered by Women's Place of South Niagara were designed to give women the opportunities that have eluded them for the duration of their abusive relationship. Our staff provide residents and outreach clients with free and confidential counselling, safety planning, legal advice, services and support, assistance with transitional housing, as well as child and youth programs.

Emergency Shelter Service

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc. provides 24 hour emergency safe shelter to women and their children who are fleeing violent and abusive relationships and assist them in taking the necessary steps to rebuild their lives. Our staff are trained to provide crisis phone counselling, assistance with safety planning, information on rights, options and available services, referrals, etc., to assist women to manage an immediate crisis situation. Because each woman's situation is different, we build an individual safety plan that reflects her immediate personal circumstances, needs and choices. The plan is comprehensive, concrete, includes safety strategies and referrals to appropriate services. Both Nova House and Serenity Place shelters are equipped with large kitchens, private bedrooms, quiet areas for personal space, teen rooms, laundry and secure outdoor play areas for children.

Enhanced Employment Program

Our Enhanced Employment Support Worker assists women to secure and retain employment to foster financial independence and increased self worth. Program elements include assessments of skills and job readiness, solution focused counselling with individualized action plans, linkage and referrals to employment and training opportunities and the development of an employment skills profile. The criteria for the program is women who have experienced domestic violence and are currently on Ontario Disability Support Program or Ontario Works. This programs duration is for one year through funding from Niagara Region, Community Services.



Child & Youth Program

Our Child and Youth Advocates provide services and support programs to children who have experienced abuse who are shelter residents and through our outreach programs. Our Advocates work with the children to assist with emotional support, problem solving skills, and awareness and prevention information. In addition to these critical services provided to children, assistance is provided to mothers for their children to cope and adjust to a life of optimism and confidence.

Transitional & Housing Support Program

We offer transitional and housing support services for women and their children who have experienced abuse to help them establish violence free lives. We offer community referrals, emotional support and help women find and maintain housing suitable for their needs and the needs of their children. Our Transitional Housing Support Advocates provide each women seeking assistance with an individual transition plan that identifies short and long term goals and identifies the steps necessary to achieve these goals. Each woman receives assistance in developing an individual safety plan that reflects her personal circumstances and needs to stay safe during her transition.

Legal Support & Advocate Program

Our Legal Support Program Advocates provide legal information, referrals and options for women who are dealing with proceedings in criminal and family courts. Our staff also provide assistance to women in our community (who have experienced abuse) through outreach programs. The support given to women by our staff is on-going and fosters a woman's self-esteem and confidence when she is dealing with a complicated legal system. Our Legal Advocates are members of Ontario's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Committee comprised of Police, Crowns, Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff, Probation Services, Partner Assault Response (PAR) staff and other community agencies that service abused women. One of the most significant changes that occurred in the past year is how women can access legal aid. Additionally, the Law Foundation, a primary funding source to Legal Aid, suffered financially over the past 12-18 months resulting in less money being available to fund Legal Aid. This has created barriers for women who are applying for Legal Aid.

We want to acknowledge the women we serve – *those who have the courage to dream of a different life and who come to us to find ways to achieve that life. You may not realize it but these women are amongst you – a business associate, co-worker, friend, sister or mother.*

Program and Services numbers

Programs and Service Statistics	2009/2010		
	Nova House	Serenity Place	Agency Total
Women Serviced in Shelter	64	88	152
Children Serviced in Shelter	54	36	90
Crisis Calls	1,269	708	1,977
Legal Support & Advocacy Clients	160	162	322
Transitional Support Clients Served	111	115	226
Women and Children Referred Elsewhere Due to Lack of Space	8	14	22

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve themselves."

- Anne Frank

Our vision is a community where women and their children **live free** from abuse and violence.

Board of Directors

Fran Gregotski, President • Leigh Whyte, Vice President • Assunta Piccini, Treasurer • Tracie Bussi, Secretary • Linda Booth, Director • Tania Fera-VanGent, Director • Cathie Green, Director • Tammy Hollard, Director • Diane Marcoux, Director • Aggie Tarnoy, Director • Ruthann Brown, Executive Director

Our Value Statements

Respect – we treat every person with respect and recognize each person’s unique abilities and choices.

Dignity – We affirm that every person has the fundamental human right to be safe and free from violence and abuse.

Excellence – We promote leadership in achieving quality and continually pursue new ideas and opportunities.

Collaboration – We pursue and build effective partnerships and relationships with the members of our community.

Integrity – We ensure effective stewardship of our resources through transparency and accountability.

Women’s Place of South Niagara
Inc. is generously supported by

