

TURNING — YWCA TORONTO — POINTS

ISSUE: WOMEN'S SHELTER MOVEMENT

- *Answering the Call to Action*
- *We Still Have a Long Way to Go*

COVER ART | BY KATHERINE RIKOFF, BREAKTHROUGH'S EXPRESSIVE ARTS PARTICIPANT



YWCA TORONTO TRANSFORMS LIVES.
 AS CANADA'S LARGEST WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION, WE HELP WOMEN ESCAPE VIOLENCE, MOVE OUT OF POVERTY AND ACCESS SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. WE WORK TENACIOUSLY TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS THAT HOLD WOMEN BACK FROM ACHIEVING EQUALITY.

ywcatoronto.org



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Manager of
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Marika Motiwalla

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Jasmine Rezaee

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 Production Coordinator
Kim Quashie

Production &
 Design Coordinator
Lucy Sterezlyo

YWCA Toronto
 87 Elm Street
 Toronto, ON M5G 0A8
 Charitable Business
 #10822 9865 RROOO1
 Publication Mail Agreement #40932523

**FROM THE DESK OF
 OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



We have now experienced the first snow of winter in our city. This seems an appropriate time to let you know that the YWCA will be opening a new 56 bed shelter for homeless single women toward the end of December. You may know that the city has promised to open 1,000 new shelter beds by the end of 2020. Our new shelter is a first step in this commitment. These new beds are really needed. For years our homeless women's shelter in Rosedale has always been full to capacity. There we increased our numbers in this year from 44 to 50 in response to the city's call for all shelter providers to add to their beds.

A sad fact is that now we have four emergency shelters across the city: two for homeless single women and two for women and children fleeing violence. By the end of the year we will have 106 single women and 59 women and children sheltering with us every night. And what is the answer to this homelessness? Permanent affordable housing and caring support is the long term answer. This is what we need to keep in mind as we provide a short term solution.

At this time of year when the weather is turning colder, I am shaken by the realities of people who do not have

the security of a permanent home. And too often I hear the myths and misconceptions by members of the community who either do not understand or do not feel the need to seek the compassion necessary to address this issue. Many women face homelessness and a housing crisis not because of so-called bad choices or reckless lifestyles, but because of family breakdown of all sorts, poverty caused by unemployment, or as a result of flight from their home country where war and violence have traumatized them.

Just the fact that you are receiving this newsletter means that you have an idea of the scope of the problem. I thank you for your support and intelligent understanding. Do continue your commitment to love your neighbours. Working together, we work for hope knowing that positive change can triumph.

As ever,

Heather M. McGregor,
 Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Toronto

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WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO

When talking about Toronto’s homeless crisis, Carla Neto does not mince words: “Isn’t it sad that we still need shelters in a wealthy city like Toronto,” she says. “The demand is huge. It means that we still have a long way to go. We all have a responsibility to stand against gender-based violence and homelessness.”

For a decade, Carla has served as Manager of YWCA Toronto’s Women’s Shelter, a violence against women (VAW) shelter serving women and children. In total, the Association currently operates four shelters – two VAW shelters and two homeless women’s shelters. This winter YWCA Toronto will open our second 56-bed homeless women’s shelter.

When asked what keeps her going, Carla replies “I have always had an acute sense of justice, it is how I was raised.” Her approach combines direct service delivery and feminist activism. She explains, “At the shelter, we support women and their children to cope with the impacts of violence and trauma.

We provide a safe refuge so that women can re-establish themselves. At the same time, being part of advocacy efforts in the sector allows us to step back, look at the big picture and push for changes.”

Sporting YWCA Toronto’s ‘Vote Safe, Affordable Housing’ button, Carla stresses that the focus must be on investment in a continuum of housing options. “Women’s shelters are crucial to keeping women alive, but they are temporary. We also need to think about where women go after their stay in shelter. We need to raise our voices and advocate for safe, affordable housing. It is a human right.”

As an active member of many networks, including the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto and the Transitional and Housing Support Program Network, Carla is proud of the sector’s efforts to increase supports for survivors of violence. Together, we have collaborated with provincial politicians to advance paid leave for survivors of domestic violence, introduced the first-ever award to recognize frontline staff in the VAW sector and service excellence, and forged new partnerships to ensure seamless support for children in care impacted by violence.

Yet Carla is always conscious of how the sector can improve – especially in serving single homeless women, the target population for the new YWCA Toronto women’s shelter. She says, “Single women seeking shelter, especially those with addictions or mental health challenges, face barriers. We know that many single homeless women have experiences of violence, but they are often the last ones to get spaces in VAW shelters.” Carla also has big ideas around increasing wraparound services to enhance women’s income security.

In the work ahead to support YWCA Toronto’s new women’s shelter, Carla envisions a role for the entire YWCA community – especially donors and supporters. She says, “Our fight for social justice is not done yet, not by a long shot.” ■

Carla Neto worked at YWCA Toronto for 13 years. She started as a placement student in the Association’s Advocacy and Communications department and served ten years as Manager of the YWCA Toronto Women’s Shelter.

PHOTOS (TOP) | CARLA NETO AND DINNER AT ONE OF OUR SHELTERS.

THE WOMEN’S SHELTER MOVEMENT

OUR IMPACT

\$3.7 million invested in violence against women shelters and programs.

427 women and children found safety and support at a YWCA Toronto shelter.

56 additional beds will be created in YWCA Toronto’s new homeless women’s shelter. It will grow to 80 beds in phase two.

25% of National Housing Strategy funds will be dedicated to projects and services for women, girls and their families. YWCA leaders successfully advocated for this action.

32 YWCA Member Associations

across Canada are advocating for government investment in a continuum of housing options for women.

ANSWERING THE CALL TO ACTION

'Do you want to help women in distress?'

- This sign headline captured Darlene Lawson's attention and forever altered her life. The year was 1973, and Darlene was a 24-year old feminist inspired by the women's liberation movement. The sign was a call-out to launch a shelter for women escaping violence. It was a radical act at a time when domestic violence was widely considered a private affair.



Darlene answered the call to action. Together with a group of young feminists - including Lynn Zimmer, the current Executive Director of YWCA Peterborough Haliburton and Billie Stone who worked for YWCA Toronto for many years - she made history by co-founding Canada's very first women's shelter in Toronto. They called it Interval House.

"We were committed to concrete action," says Darlene. "At the time, we were not aware of the extent of connection between violence against women and homelessness, but when women and their children began arriving in droves to escape abuse, we began to understand the magnitude of the issue."

The group was committed to creating a safe space where women could rebuild their lives. There was no government funding available, no guidelines, and little public support. "We did not know what we were doing but as women we knew how to build homes...we figured out [how to operate a shelter] as we went along," Darlene fondly recalls.

Slowly, in the 1970s, more women's shelters began to crop up across Canada. The women's liberation movement understood that violence against women is connected to larger systemic issues like economic inequality and sexism - and fundamentally changed the discourse. A critical issue once shrouded in stigma and secrecy was forced into the public arena, demanding political action and government attention.

Today, domestic violence remains a serious problem in Canada. On any given night, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters to escape violence. YWCA Toronto shelters supported 427 women and children last year - our beds are always full. Thanks to the legacy of a brave group of young feminists, it is now widely understood that greater investments are needed in shelters and housing options to ensure that women can find safety, support and justice.



At the time, we were not aware of the extent of connection between violence against women and homelessness...

For her pioneering contributions, Darlene was awarded a YWCA Toronto Woman of Distinction Award (2007) for social justice. Looking ahead, she urges a focus on feminist advocacy, "Until the root causes of violence against women are addressed in much

more comprehensive ways than they have been so far - through affordable child care; access to decent and affordable housing for women and children; equal pay for work of equal value, and the \$15 minimum wage, women will continue to need and rely on shelters to keep themselves and their children safe." ■

Darlene Lawson is a co-founder of Canada's first women's shelter and a 2007 YWCA Toronto Woman of Distinction award recipient in the category of social justice.

TORONTO "THE GOOD?"

92,452 households are on the waiting list for social housing.

VOTE FOR ACTION OCT. 22



VOTE TO END POVERTY:

For YWCA Toronto's municipal election campaign, we kept our focus on gender equity and demanded full funding of the city's poverty reduction strategy.

TORONTO "THE GOOD?"

37% of women-led families live in poverty.

VOTE FOR ACTION OCT. 22



Our **Trauma Informed Development Education (TIDE)** project is supporting an organization-wide shift towards trauma-informed practice. To date, TIDE has been promoting trauma-informed education, developing new internal resources and advancing new perspectives on how to think about and interact with people who may have experienced trauma.

Now entering its second phase, TIDE is excited to launch a range of training programs to engage staff and service users at all levels of the project. There will be a **'Train-the-Trainer'**

program where nine staff members will gain the skills and knowledge to co-facilitate Association-wide training on trauma-informed practice. There will also be a **Participant Curriculum program** supporting interested program participants to enhance their personal, organizational and community leadership skills. The curriculum focuses on five leadership themes.

Follow the progress of this important project here: <https://www.ywcatoronto.org/tide> ■

YWCA TORONTO AT-A-GLANCE

NEAR & FAR

■ Our **Building Sustainable Futures: Essential Skills for Employment** project is making a national impact. Strong essential skills are the foundation for learning all other skills and help people to find and maintain employment. For over a decade, we have been pioneering Essential Skills for Employment training to women jobseekers. This project is unique because it facilitates the sharing of new promising practices among nine YWCA organizations across Canada. We will publish two new learning products in 2019. Learn more: www.ywca-toronto.org/ese.

■ In Scarborough, our **Mobile Application Development** training from the Women in Trades and Technology programs is in full swing. This is a free, accelerated Information Technology training program for women. It is the perfect bridge for women trained abroad as system engineers, programmers or data analysts requiring skills upgrading and links to the Canadian labour market. Now in its third year, it boasts an 80% employment success rate.



CELEBRATE



■ We are grateful to the **Garden Club of Toronto** for transforming the gardens at our **Julia M. Ruby Leadership Centre** and **1st Stop Woodlawn** into beautiful urban landscapes. This past summer, volunteers donated and planted 750 plants at both sites, and they returned in the fall to plant blue allium bulbs that will bloom in the spring. To recognize their generous contribution, YWCA Toronto installed a plaque in one of the gardens.

■ YWCA Toronto **staff and supporters** participated in the **Take Back the Night** march, sending a strong message that women deserve to live their lives without fear. The 2018 theme of Housing Justice echoes our continued call for government investment in safe, affordable, accessible and dignified housing.

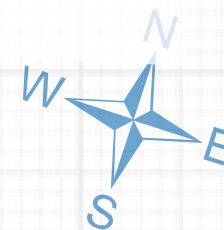
■ 2018 marks the 10-year anniversary of our **settlement programs** for newcomer women: Join, Unify, Motivate and Participate (JUMP), and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). Over the years, we have supported women from all over the world. We honour the resilience of newcomer women, and recognize the gifts and skills they bring to Canada.

PHOTOS | (ABOVE) STAFF FACILITATING AN EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SESSION; CELEBRATORY PLAQUE AT 87 ELM STREET RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE GARDEN CLUB OF TORONTO; (FACING PAGE) LYNN ZIMMER.

GENDER MATTERS

■ **Gun violence is a feminist issue.** As a federal government review on gun control begins, YWCA Toronto's message is clear: ban all hand guns and assault weapons in Canada. We are speaking out about the deadly intersections of guns and domestic violence. We are standing with mothers who have lost children to gun violence. And, we are calling for action to build the social safety net and address root causes of violence.

■ **'Toronto the Good?'** YWCA Toronto had a strong call to action during the recent municipal election: Vote to End Poverty. Special thanks to Naomi Sayers from our **Board of Directors** for writing an op-ed on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit People, a critical election issue.



YWCA leaders from across Canada joined the **Advocacy Day on Parliament Hill**. In meetings with 68 Members of Parliament and Senators, we called for \$75 million in core funding to scale up existing YWCA employment and training programs across Canada. These investments will support women to move out of poverty, build confidence in their skills and abilities, increase their financial independence and build strong economic futures. In the lead up to the 2019 federal budget and election, we will continue pressing for action. Advocacy works!



PHOTO | YWCA leaders from across Canada in Ottawa.

You have to be hopeful



"I have come to the conclusion that you really don't have a right to do this work if you can't be hopeful. It is part of the job. Women have to show such courage to deal with [violence] in their lives. And we can't just stand there at the side and say we are there to help them if we can't be hopeful too."

Lynn Zimmer is the CEO of YWCA Peterborough Haliburton and a co-founder of Canada's first women's shelter.



PHOTOS | HARRIET AND JONATHAN GOODMAN; 1ST STOP WOODLAWN SHELTER

HELPING BUILD FUTURES ONE BED AT A TIME

In 2007, Harriet and Jonathan Goodman, long-term supporters of YWCA Toronto, were moved by a visit to one of our shelters. They wanted to help to support women moving out of shelter and into the community.

Women on a minimal budget have to make difficult decisions about buying food, clothing for their children and other essentials, and often cannot afford basic furniture for their new home. In response, Harriet and Jonathan decided to fund a program to provide new beds for women as they left shelter.

“I put myself in the position of a woman or family moving out on their own,” says Harriet. “I wanted them to have something that’s new, and clean, and theirs.”

Over the past decade, in partnership with SleepKing/ Crown Design, the post-shelter bed program has provided hundreds of women and children with a new bed to call their own, representing both the first step in their new life and an investment in their future.

We thank Harriet and Jonathan for their ongoing empathy and generosity.

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

The inaugural ‘Home is Where the Art is’ art auction was hosted on November 8 by HOK, a global architecture and design firm. The event, spearheaded by Diane McQuaig and the ‘Home’ Committee, raised an incredible \$155,000 towards an extensive renovation of YWCA Toronto’s 1st Stop Woodlawn. Thirty pieces of art, generously donated by local artists, were auctioned at the event, and funds raised will help to create a welcoming environment for the women living at our homeless shelter. Thank you to the Home Team for their months of planning and hard work and everyone who supported the event!



PHOTOS | (TOP ROW) L TO R: SUSIE BELTON, PHOEBE WONG, COURTNEY HOGAN, SHARRON MOLLENHAUER, TANYA NEWMAN, DEBORAH SPERRY, (BOTTOM ROW) L TO R: ANGELA SMITH, DIANE MCQUAIG, JACQUIE MARTINEZ, AN RICHARDSON



YWCA TORONTO
WOMEN OF DISTINCTION

PRESENTED BY

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 23, 2019

Be Inspired!

For more information, contact
**Phoebe Wong, Manager of Events,
 Sponsorships and Volunteers**
 at pwong@ywcatoronto.org
 or 416.961.8101 x361

www.womenofdistinction.ca

SPOTLIGHT ON PHILANTHROPY

ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Since its inception 16 years ago, the Adopt-A-Family fund has helped thousands of women and families to enjoy the holiday season by supplying gift cards that support warm and joyful family gatherings and help women to provide for themselves and their children throughout the winter season.

We would especially like to thank the staff and management at the Elmwood Spa (former home of YWCA Toronto) who have donated a total of nearly \$50,000 towards the Adopt-A-Family program since 2012. “We are happy to be part of the Adopt-A-Family program which supports women to make their own choices of holiday meals and gifts for their families,” says Marie Picton, Executive Manager.

We are so grateful for the generosity of all our donors in the holiday season. Your support allows us to extend the Adopt-A-Family program through the whole year, so that women and families can enjoy other holiday events and festivities in special, meaningful and memory-making ways.

THE TRUST COLLECTIVE

YWCA Toronto is thrilled to announce our involvement in a new collective movement to place the issues facing women at the forefront of Canadian and global agendas.

The Trust Collective, a coalition of 18 women-focused organisations led by the Toronto Foundation, will engage 100 women donors on a three-year philanthropic learning journey, supporting partner organisations in Toronto and establishing an endowment that will champion women-led initiatives across Canada and worldwide.

This is a unique opportunity for committed philanthropists to be part of a bold new partnership to amplify women’s voices and contributions to make a real and lasting collective impact on the lives of women and girls.

To learn more about this exciting initiative please contact **Carol Wladyka, Manager of Major Gifts and Stewardship**, on 416.961.8100 x365 or at cwladyka@ywcatoronto.org.

MAKE YOUR VALUES YOUR LEGACY AT YWCA TORONTO



A gift in your will has the power to transform the lives of women and girls in our community.

To learn more about our planned giving program, please contact Katherine Verhagen Rodis, *Major Gifts and Planned Giving Officer* at kverhagenrodis@ywcatoronto.org or at 416.961.8101 x327.



Celebrate the Women in Your Life this Holiday Season.

CHANGE A LIFE.

Honour someone special in your life with a donation in their name for the holidays or throughout the year. There are so many occasions, milestones and deserving friends and family worthy of inspired giving! Your thoughtful gift is a life-changing gesture for women and girls in need. Visit ywcatoronto.org or call Julia Haylock at 416-961-8100 x352.

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
YWCA TORONTO | 87 ELM STREET TORONTO, ON M5G 0A8

