



Interval House of Ottawa Spring Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2011

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Reflections: 35 Years of Service

As we enter our 35th year in operation, I can't help but reflect on the history of our organization and the dedication and tenacity of its founders.

In 1976, Interval House of Ottawa was created as a safe haven where women and their children fleeing domestic violence could find solace, security and peace. We are grateful for our founders unwavering commitment to ending violence against women: one woman and their children at a time.

I wish that our services were no longer required in 2011. I wish that violence against

women no longer existed and that our communities were safe from this silent but deadly disease.



Unfortunately we are still struggling to find space for the women and their children fleeing violence in Ottawa. The demand for

our services has not subsided.

However, we are making a difference—with every woman and child that comes through our doors we are offering a new beginning. We are offering a life where violence is not the answer, where self-respect is essential and where love can begin to heal wounds, both past and present.

Violence against women is not an easy subject to discuss—but we cannot afford to stay silent. Far too many lives have already been lost in our community.

Karen MacInnis
Executive Director

Making Our Dream a Reality

Our new house is one step closer to becoming a reality! In January we received final confirmation that our project has been approved to move forward. The plans for our new house are fully developed, our property is purchased and our permits are approved. We are excited about the future of Interval House of Ottawa!

The next year will be a very busy time for our management team as well as staff, especially as we get closer to the move-in date early next year. However, everyone is looking forward to making our new house a home—one that is fully accessible, family-friendly and, as always, welcoming.

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Children at Play

The children residing with their mothers at Interval House of Ottawa recently created a bird house, decorating it with bright colours and much love. During this fun exercise, the children shared their experiences and feelings living in our home. One 9 year-old girl expressed that when she saw the playroom for the first time “it made [her] heart beat.” She was especially excited when describing our March Break activities, stating that she “had a FANTASTIC week” (her own emphasis)!



Others noted that they enjoyed “sharing a room with their family” and the friends that they made during their stay. Movie night and children’s yoga were both cited as activities that were well loved too. One 7 year-old girl lamented the fact that she was unable to take part in the weekly women’s group meeting, stating “I don’t like that I’m not allowed to go into the meetings with the women. They don’t know how mature I am”!

We are truly delighted by our children’s voices—they are grounding, inspiring and interesting. We are lucky to be able to share their insights with you and proud to provide a safe home for them to express themselves freely and tenderly. One of the children who recently arrived on our doorstep said to his mother (who shared this moment with us): “Thank you so much for bringing us here.”

Interval House of Ottawa strives to reach out to each child who walks through our doors—connecting them with the appropriate resources and tools to help them to find their own voices and to speak with courage and clarity.



Thank you for your continued support! We are grateful for your generosity and compassion.



Survivor’s Story: “Wings”

I am a bird without wings / Don’t ask about my story / I fell in the cage. / Don’t ask about my hunger / I am a dry leaf.

Don’t ask from my spring and my fall / I closed my lips so my enemy / Supposes that I am dead. / I am alive in the grave of silence.

Don’t ask for me to speak / I am a bright candle, but / I burn in the assembly of the blind. / Don’t ask from me and my weeping eyes.



-Ex-Resident

Making Our Dream a Reality

(Continued from page 1)

Our new home will have 10 fully accessible rooms to accommodate women and their children. Additionally, there will be a large kitchen, dining area and a comfortable living room in order for residents to relax together. We also plan on having a play area, education room and quiet space for all of our residents and their children to enjoy.

Although the construction costs for our new home were covered, the grant will not cover start-up costs (i.e., moving expenses, furnishings, finishing details, etcetera). We are relying on supporters like you to help us to fully realize our dream! Please contact us at 613-234-8511 for more information.



While we begin construction on our new home, we are actively seeking support in order to keep our current location open as well. Ideally we would like to be able to offer tailored services to women without children in order to better meet their diverse needs. Whether it be to assist women who have been trafficked navigate the complicated legal landscape or helping a young woman flee her abusive boyfriend, we firmly believe that Interval House of Ottawa can further help to reduce the stress on the already over-burdened shelter system in the Ottawa region. We need your help to make this a reality—contact your local representatives and let them know that one Interval House of Ottawa is not enough, that we need our current location to stay open after our move in order to better serve the women of our community.

Domestic violence knows no bounds and it is up to all of us to create safe spaces tailored to the diverse realities of women in Ottawa.



Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses

Interval House of Ottawa recently hosted the *Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses (CNWSTH)*. Delegates from shelters across the country came to Ottawa as part of a three year project meant to “facilitate the exchange of innovative, promising and model shelter practices across Canada and make new advances in the development of high quality services for women experiencing abuse.” It was a very informative visit and we look forward to continuing this valuable dialogue.

Step It Up!

On October 6, 2011, Ontarians will be going to the polls. As we head into this election, we are asking our supporters to let each political party know how important ending violence against women is to ensuring our communities are safe

and healthy. The “Step It Up Ontario” campaign has launched and they are asking everyone to join them “in action to bring a new women’s anti-violence ‘platform’ to political party plans. Let’s put our ‘platform’ on their platforms!”

For more information, please visit stepitupontario.ca.





GRATITUDE



We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all of our supporters, both old and new. We would not be able to provide the important services to assist women and their children fleeing violence without your continued generosity. Interval House of Ottawa would also like to thank our wonderful volunteers—your contribution to our organization is very much appreciated. Whether it be our lovely friends at Radha Yoga who offer weekly in-house yoga lessons to the children of Interval House of Ottawa or our watercolour artist and teacher, Jennifer Nicol, we are grateful for the support of our community. Additionally, we would like to thank Soup Sisters of Ottawa for their monthly donation of delicious soup for our residents.

If you have a special skill or service you would like to offer to Interval House of Ottawa then we want to hear from you! You can reach us by phone (613-234-8511) or email (ihouse@bellnet.ca). Thank you!

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

A Teacher's Perspective

I have been teaching high school students in Ottawa for the last five years—in that time I have never had one day go by where the impact of domestic violence was not felt by at least one of my students.

What many people fail to realize is that violence against women is violence against the family. Many of my students have spoken to me of troubling experiences at home—school is often the only place where they feel safe to express themselves. As an educator, I make every effort to keep my students safe but when home is the enemy it is very difficult.

We try to change negative behaviours and encourage our students to open themselves up to the possibilities of life. However, it is difficult to hope for a



better future when all you know is violence, fear and intimidation.

Interval House of Ottawa saves lives. We need to help them help us. We

need better protections in place for survivors of domestic violence—restraining orders do not work. We need a greater discussion in our community as to the tragic consequences of domestic violence—I have been to one too many funerals for children and parents who fell victim to family violence, either directly or indirectly.

I hope that my students continue to reach out to me about their experience with domestic violence—and I hope that we will be able to help them before it is too late.

-Ms. S

Established in 1976, Interval House of Ottawa is a non-profit twenty bed residence that provides safe shelter for women and children fleeing abuse.

Interval House of Ottawa is committed to ending the cycle of violence and to empowering women and children who are victims of family violence. We provide emergency shelter for women and their children fleeing abusive relationships, and offer crisis intervention and prevention services, advocacy for victims and education about family violence for both victims of violence and the community at large.

Charitable Registration #: 107513145RR001



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