

Spring

# Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter Newsletter

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### My experience as a child staying at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter - Holly's Story

Every year around the holidays, I bring donations to the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. It's a cause that's very near to my heart as I used to be in the same shoes as the children at the Emergency Shelter. Although my experience is now a bit of a blur, I remember that time as a child as a pivotal moment in my life.

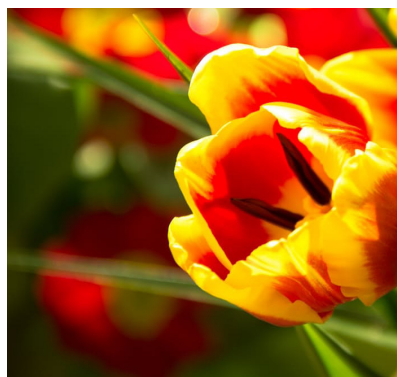
**It happened so quickly.** We were taken into a Shelter in the small town where we lived after my step-dad physically abused my mother and ended up in jail. She was badly hurt. It was hard to see my mother that way, with all the bruises on her body.

Shortly after being moved into this shelter, we were informed that my step-dad was getting out of jail, and my mom was his target. For our safety, the police rushed us from our small town to Calgary, where we moved into the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. Once we moved in, I felt accepted. Even more importantly, I never felt like people looked down on me or my family, and I started to feel safe and secure.



During our stay, the other women and their children also in the Shelter became friends with us, and the community we found while living there produced lifelong friendships my family continues to enjoy. **I still remember all of the fun programs in which we participated and the joy of just being a kid. I am forever grateful for the new beginning the agency gave to me and my family.**

My family was very fortunate to receive this support in the past and so it has become a natural response in my adulthood to give back to the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter every year. I know that it was the generosity of others who gave to the agency that helped shape a better future for me, and I can't hope for anything less for the women and children impacted by family violence and abuse, receiving the same support I did so many years ago.



## Message from our Executive Director: Kim Ruse



**Spring** is certainly on its way.... Well, hopefully it is finally here. It is a time for renewal and growth. Organizations also need to refresh, renew and recommit to their direction. The team at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter has spent the last year working through the strategic planning process and the board has recently approved the new strategic plan for 2017-2020.

The vision remains to see "A community free from family violence and abuse".

And we will accomplish this by targeting four main strategic goals.

The first goal is to deliver effective services with an expanded focus on diverse and marginalized populations. This means our focus will broaden to engage those who we have not been able to reach in

the past. Our staff will be working more intentionally and strategically at a community level to connect with those who need assistance but are unlikely to connect with formalized resources.

Our second and third goals are to increase community engagement and change the public conversation about the issue of family violence and abuse. Our staff will be working to connect in meaningful ways with our stakeholders to create more community champions.

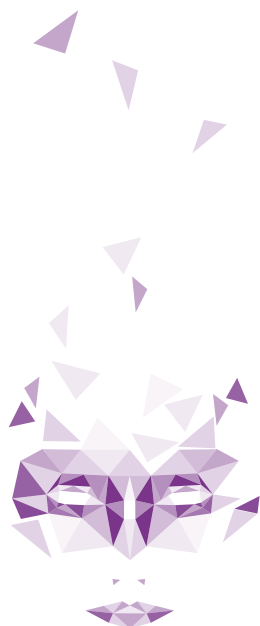
We will be focusing on building community capacity to respond effectively to family violence and abuse. We recognize that no one agency or organization can do this work alone and collaboration and connection are critical to making a difference.

Our final goal is to continue building a healthy, accountable and sustainable organization to continue serving the Calgary community well. We will continue to monitor our outcomes, learn from our successes and challenges and invest in our staff and systems to ensure our continued, positive impact.

While organizational strategy is certainly helpful and an essential way to guide our work, it takes all of us in our community to bring our passion and skills to solving this issue. I encourage you to think about ways you can challenge the myths of family violence and abuse, or share your time and talents to tackle this issue.

Thank you for all you do to support the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter in working towards our vision.





## UNMASKING FAMILY VIOLENCE & ABUSE TURNING POINTS 2017

The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter hosts the 23rd annual Turning Points Fundraising Gala, on Thursday, April 27th, 2017 at the TELUS Convention Centre.

Turning Points, *Unmasking Family Violence and Abuse*, will celebrate individuals and families in our city striving to live free from violence and abuse. The gala will unmask the myths, stereotypes and stigmas to reveal the true picture of this issue, as well as bring awareness to the important work of our agency in the community.

This social and fundraising event, featuring Dave Kelly, is an elegant evening with dinner, silent and live auction prizes, and inspiring stories. Proceeds will fund much needed programs and services which help women, children and men impacted by family violence and abuse.

Tables of 8 are \$2,400 and individual tickets are \$300. For information or to purchase tickets, call 403.290.1552 ext. 410 or visit: [www.calgarywomensshelter.com](http://www.calgarywomensshelter.com).

### Live auction items include:

A private fully equipped **Calgary Flames Suite** for a hockey game during the 2017-2018 season. Invite your family and friends and enjoy food and refreshments in your own box while cheering for the Calgary Flames. Generously donated by Qualico.

A 7-night stay at Seven Stars Grace Bay Resort in the beautiful **Turks & Caicos**. This resort is set on a white sand beach dotted with palm trees. This ocean front suite sleeps up to six people. Generously donated by Shelly and Alan Norris.

A relaxing week at Grand Luxxe Villa in Nuevo Vallarta, **Mexico**. Guests will be able to enjoy top of the line accommodations, fine dining and activities for the whole family to enjoy. This package includes \$1,000 towards airfare. Generously donated by Gary Nissen.

## The YYC Do-Gooders: Stepping up for Calgary

In 2016, we were honoured to be supported by a new and unique fundraising group called the YYC Do-Gooders. They are a dynamic team of Calgary-based professionals, committed to promoting awareness and raising funds for critical social issues affecting Calgary.

Michelle Moon and Nishka Gupta founded the group after feeling the strong desire to give back to the community. “We chose to support the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter because it was a cause that really felt close to home for a lot of our members,” Nishka Gupta states. “Calgary was facing some hard times and we recognized that this impacted our community in more ways than one.”

The group eagerly and energetically set to work with the support from many different organizations in the community. They hosted a Mothers Day flower sale, an online campaign, and the grand finale event: a hugely successful stampede party titled “Roundup for Her.”

“Roundup for Her” brought the community together through live performances, a silent auction, and a speech by MLA Maria Fitzpatrick. The evening was hosted by X92.9 radio station hosts Beckler and Seanna.



**“We loved that this cause is local, and we were directly benefitting Calgarians in our community who are struggling,” states Gupta. “This was the right time to get involved.”**

The YYC Do-Gooders brought the community together in support of those impacted by family violence and abuse. Thank you for taking a stand with us.

## CTV’s Toy Mountain 2016

Toy Mountain returned and was more successful than ever this holiday season! From November 21 until December 23, CTV Calgary, CJAY92, Virgin Radio and the new Funny Radio hosted the annual campaign presented by Aaron Acceptance.

The campaign raised awareness around family violence and abuse, and collected items that we need to support our clients. With this help, we are able to provide essential items year round.

In total, the campaign raised \$379,000 in cash, toys and basic essential donations.

Thank you to all this year’s sponsors and partners: CTV Calgary, Aaron Acceptance, CJAY92, Virgin

Radio, Funny 1060AM, Brookfield Office Properties: Bankers Hall, Fifth Avenue Place, and Suncor Energy Centre, AMJ Campbell, Castle Toys, Kaizen Group Dealerships: Shaw GMC, Sunridge Nissan, CMP Auto, Country Hills Hyundai and Okotoks Chevrolet Buick GMC.



A HUGE thank you to all our donors and everyone who participated in CTV Calgary’s Toy Mountain.





## A Day in the Life of A Community Services Counsellor

*"If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive."*

*-Brene Brown*

Community Services Counsellors are a pivotal part of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter and the work we do. Over ninety percent of our clients are served through this program.

Community Services Counselling is a client centred program delivering short-term crisis orientated counselling as well as long-term counselling for clients, experiencing family violence and abuse, who continue to live in the community.

This is a very rewarding position that can often come with unique circumstances. One

Community Services Counsellor shares what a day looks like:

"Prior to starting my position, I like to start the day off with a little time to myself to relax and prepare for the upcoming day. I find the best way to do this is to meditate every morning. After my meditation practice, I am balanced, centred, and ready to start my day.

I usually see two to three clients a day who are each facing unique issues and obstacles. For my first client, I drive to a safe space in the community as she is unable to meet me at our offices and prefers to stay close to home. I order us tea, I know which kind she prefers, and we take a seat in the corner. To others in the establishment it looks like we are out for a casual visit, but in reality we are creating a safety plan for her to use when she feels threatened in her own home. She loves him and does not want to leave him, she wants to make it work for their children, but is scared that the verbal abuse she faces could one day escalate to physical violence. I support her and we go over her options - making sure that the safety of herself and her children are the most important thing.

After meeting the client I head back to the office where I set to work on session notes right away. I then speak with my Team Lead and we discuss where we can further support the client and what other support networks are available. There are times where we will

contact other resources and agencies. This ensures the client is receiving the best possible care. Prior to meeting my next client, the outdoors beckon to me, and I go for a short walk then eat lunch with my colleagues in the lunchroom.



It's time for my second and final client of the day. I am so proud of the woman I am about to see. I have been counselling her for over a year and she has taken so many steps forward – all on her own – to achieve freedom and peace of mind. When I first started counselling her she felt trapped and hopeless. She saw no way out for herself and her children and was overcome with fear. When I meet her today, she is glowing.

**She has reviewed her options, made the decision that is best for her and her children and surrounds herself with individuals who support her. This client recognizes her journey has changed immensely and she is now on her own with children to support; however, she is free from abuse and violence that she has endured for many years.**

I watch her walk into our offices, her head held high, with an air of confidence as she sits down for our session. It's been another extremely fulfilling day. I head home and make myself some dinner and then head to my workout class to de-stress.

Tomorrow is another day where I will continue to help those on their journey to live free from family violence and abuse."

## Volunteering at the Children's Activity Centre

The Children's Activity Centre within the Emergency Shelter facility provides a blend of structured and child-led play, where the focus with the children is on keeping oneself safe, identifying emotions and socialization.

Volunteers in the Activity Centre help our staff carry out activities for a child's journey and wellbeing. Over the last few months, our volunteers have shared some thoughts about their experiences.

Here's what they have to say:

*"I feel comfortable volunteering here. I like to give back to society and I always feel better when I leave. I feel like I have helped make someone's day brighter and I realize how fortunate I am."*

*"If you decide to volunteer with the Children's Activity Centre, throw all your preconceptions out the window. I have learned not to make assumptions while volunteering. Every person's situation is different. Family violence and abuse can happen to anyone – I have met people from all backgrounds here."*

*"People tend to assume I am always sad when I volunteer at the Children's Activity Centre because it is an Emergency Shelter. I often have to explain to people that while I'm with the kids, I am not constantly thinking about the violence they have experienced. These kids are strong and I treat them like they are."*

*"I look forward to volunteering at the Children's Activity Centre each week. I thoroughly enjoy spending time with the staff and the families. They are all such wonderful people, and I have enjoyed getting to know them. I feel very lucky to be able to play even a small role in helping out, and I often leave at the end of my shift feeling like I gained a lot from it. I also really appreciate the wonderful things that the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter does and stands for."*

If you are interested in volunteering with our Children's Activity Centre or in learning more about other volunteer possibilities – please e-mail us at [volunteer@cwes.ca](mailto:volunteer@cwes.ca)





## Data for Good Calgary - Weekend Datathon to Inform Practice



Data for Good Calgary and the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter teamed up in November 2016 to complete a special project during a weekend long "DataThon" at the University of Calgary. Over 50 data analysts from different parts of Canada worked with Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter's data including 59,000 helpline calls, over 2,500 client comments, and over 1,000 reports of danger faced by clients. The data spanned all the way back to 2011 and was entirely anonymous, ensuring full confidentiality of our clients.

**"Analyzing data in this way is an opportunity the agency has not had previously" states Jeff Halvorsen, Manager of Research and Evaluation at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. "With the analytics and visualizations, the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter hopes to learn ways to better serve clients."**

The weekend was extremely beneficial as it was the first time our agency has had the chance to analyze our data from a five year period. Examples of the things we were able to pull from the data include: helpline caller types and services, information on older adults experiencing challenging outcomes, analysis of crisis calls and more.

Many generous and wonderful people came together to support the mission of supporting women and children to live free from family violence and abuse, and we could not be more grateful. Thank you to Data for Good Calgary.

You can follow Data for Good Calgary on Twitter: @DataForGoodYYC.

## 2016: Year in Review

**11,993** calls to our 24 Hour Family Violence Helpline

**241** women and **339** children stayed at our Emergency Shelter

**1,672** women and **395** children served through our Community Counselling program.

**491** individuals served through our Court Program

**40** children and **40** parents served through our Children's Program

**413** individuals participated in our Healthy Relationships Program

**226** men and **84** women participated in our Men's Counselling Service

**6,423** hours of service from our incredible volunteers





## Tulip Awards 2016



The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter hosted its 8th annual Tulip Awards at Fort Calgary on November 9, 2016. The ceremony, hosted by Angela Knight from CBC Calgary's *The Eyeopener*, honoured those who dedicate themselves to making a difference in the lives of victims experiencing family violence and abuse. Tulip Awards are the highest honour presented by the agency, celebrating the gifts of time, money, energy and caring the recipients exhibit towards the organization and the people served in the community.

Tulips are hardy flowers that bloom through the snow each Spring, and this strength and perseverance is why it is used as a symbol for the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. The tulip serves to denote the many Calgarians who push through the darkness of family violence trusting that, with a little support, they too will bloom again in lives free from abuse.

The awards took place during Alberta's Family Violence Prevention Month, a time in which to celebrate those working to end abuse and create a conversation around this issue, as well as highlight the resources available for people seeking support. Congratulations to all recipients!

## 2016 Tulip Award Winners

**Philanthropist of Tomorrow:** Jaden Kim

**Philanthropist Award:** Gary Nissen, ATB Financial/Alberta Private Client, and Calgary Flames Foundation

**Community Partnership Award:** Alberta Human Services – Alberta Works Program, Data for Good Calgary, Gordon Carter, Rob Dougherty, Joelle Persram, and P.E.A.R.L. Foundation

**Telling Our Story Award:** CTV Calgary, and Brookfield Office Properties: Bankers Hall, Fifth Avenue Place & Suncor Energy Centre

**Taking A Stand Award:** BP Canada and Rob Carpenter

**Sustainability Award:** Shelly Norris (Individual) and Newalta (Corporate)



*Shelly Norris, Recipient of the 2016 Individual Sustainability Tulip Award and Kim Ruse, Executive Director of the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter*





## Upcoming Events

Visit [www.calgarywomensshelter.com](http://www.calgarywomensshelter.com) for more information on these exciting events

### Women Leaders Speakers Series

**Monday, April 3, 2017**

Our Executive Director, Kim Ruse, will be speaking at the University of Calgary on Leadership in Human Services.

[www.ucalgary.ca/women](http://www.ucalgary.ca/women)

### University of Calgary Sustainability Speakers Series

**Thursday, April 6, 2017**

Our Executive Director, Kim Ruse, will be speaking on community health and wellbeing.

[www.ucalgary.ca/sustainability](http://www.ucalgary.ca/sustainability)

### Calgary Woman's Show

**Saturday and Sunday April 8 & 9, 2017**

BMO Centre

Come visit us at the Calgary Woman's Show along with many other vendors.

[www.calgarywomansshow.com](http://www.calgarywomansshow.com)

### Genesis Health Resources Fair

**Saturday, April 8, 2017**

We will be participating in this Health Fair featuring rotating speakers on a healthy lifestyle.

[www.genesis-centre.ca/canada150.php](http://www.genesis-centre.ca/canada150.php)

### Turning Points 2017

**Thursday, April 27, 2017**

TELUS Convention Centre

The 23rd annual Turning Points fundraising gala - "Unmasking Family Violence and Abuse."

[www.calgarywomensshelter.com](http://www.calgarywomensshelter.com)

### Healing Hands Massage-A-Thon

**Friday, April 28, 9am to 9pm**

MH Vicars School of Massage Therapy

101-200 Country Hills Landing NW

\$35 for 1 hour massage donated to us.

[www.mhvicarsschool.com](http://www.mhvicarsschool.com)

### International Women's Golf Day

**Tuesday, June 6, 2017**

Silver Springs Golf & Country Club

Silver Springs Golf & Country Club will be supporting us by wearing purple.

[www.womensgolfdays.com](http://www.womensgolfdays.com)



### Save A Stamp

We have moved to an electronic version of our newsletter. To be added to our distribution list, please send your full name and e-mail address to [info@cwes.ca](mailto:info@cwes.ca). Please specify E-NEWSLETTER in the subject line.

### Share Your Stories

Tell us your story. Inspire others.

Change lives. We would like to reach out to past clients, volunteers and staff of Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter.

We encourage you to share your story and would love to hear from you! For more information: please contact Caitlin at: [caitlins@cwes.ca](mailto:caitlins@cwes.ca)

### It's fast, easy and convenient

Donate online:  
[www.calgarywomensshelter.com](http://www.calgarywomensshelter.com)

### Text to Donate

Text ENDABUSE to 587-800-1588. You'll receive a link to complete your donation of any amount by credit card.

Stay in touch by following us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn!

