



# 2005/06 Annual Report

**THE CANVAS OF LIFE: CREATING NEW BEGINNINGS**

# Canvas of Life!

## **CANVAS OF LIFE!**

*By Mary Straub*

Every life is a canvas.  
Every motion, every thought  
Another stroke of the brush.  
Every success is a color,  
And so is every defeat,  
Raising us to new heights,  
Forcing us to do better.  
You are the artist.  
You are the painter.  
You fill the canvas with  
your dreams!  
If your vision is clear  
And your dedication complete,  
If you look inside yourself  
And know the source  
of your strength,  
If you work and you believe,  
Anything is possible!

2005/06

## Board of Directors

Terry Albrecht, *Co-Chair*  
Linda Angus  
Elaine Bobolo  
Adrienne Betty, *Co-Chair*  
Marion Davis  
Teresa Dawe  
Sheila Gallagher  
Janet Heino, *Treasurer*  
Pat Johnson  
Janet McGregor  
Barbara Strachan  
Maureen Woods

## Leadership Team

Carolyn Fast, *Executive Director*  
Parm Kroad, *Program Director*  
Elzbie Jazwinski, *Community & Children's Program Manager*  
Melodie Murray, *Director of Development*

\*Financial Statements Enclosed.

If you did not receive a copy of the financial statements, please contact our Community Office.

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“ Thank you  
...for taking me in when I needed some time alone  
...for listening to me when I needed somebody to talk to  
...for your words of encouragement and enlightenment  
that really gave me a lift.  
Your good deeds will be remembered. ”

Former Shelter resident

## MESSAGE FROM THE *Executive Director*



**I AM PLEASED** to present this year's review of our agency's accomplishments. Our theme, "**The Canvas of Life: Creating New Beginnings**", reflects how as an organization, we have approached our activities, programs and challenges with creativity and passion – from the beginning stages of construction of Harrison Place to the creation of an art class for women and children in the Shelter. Recently I was honoured to accept the YM/YWCA's inaugural *Women's Organization of Distinction Award* on behalf of Victoria Women's Transition House. It was a wonderful finale to our recent 30th anniversary celebrations!

Our organization has provided service to abused women and their children for three decades. Over the years, our agency has moved forward

brushstroke-by-brushstroke. Each staff member, board member, volunteer, donor, community partner, funder, and client has contributed to the organization that exists today. We strive towards the ultimate masterpiece of an abuse-free world. That vision has been translated into commitment and hard work.

I 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.

To all of you, thank you for your support and dedication. Together, we will continue to strive towards a world that is free of violence. ■

*Carolyn Fast*  
Executive Director

“ I gained strength in knowing that things can get better.  
And that I am capable of being a **GREAT** parent. ”

'Helping Children Heal' Parenting Group Participant

## MESSAGE FROM THE *Board*

**THIS HAS BEEN** a remarkable year for the Victoria Women's Transition House and we are honoured to share some of the highlights with you in this report. Having wrapped up our 30th year of service, it was a timely occasion to dig deep and determine the future direction of the organization. The Strategic Planning Committee worked diligently over the past year to complete an ambitious plan that includes our organizational goals and priorities that will serve as our guiding map over the next three years.

Watching Harrison Place grow from an idea to what is now becoming a physical presence in our community has been tremendous! It is proof that dreams do come true and what we do today most certainly impacts our future.

We have accomplished so much over the last three decades and have high hopes of continuing to meet the constantly changing needs of our community. We also recognize that we must map out the organization's growth and determine how we are going to reach our goals. With the vision and passion of the Board and staff, we are planning for the future to continue to provide the same high level of service and create new beginnings for women and children for the next 30 years. ■

*Terry Albrecht*  
Co-Chair

*Adrienne Betty*  
Co-Chair

## DONOR PROFILE:

# Sharon Harmer Stewart

**SHARON HARMER STEWART** has led an interesting yet challenging life. Born with anaridia, an affliction that left her with only 10% vision, her mother had difficulty accepting a child with a disability. When Sharon was only a few months old, her mother received the devastating news of her husband's death while he was serving overseas during the Second World War. "I don't think my mother ever got over that they had created an imperfect child," says Sharon sadly as she reflects on her parents who were a popular couple at the University of British Columbia in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Adapting has always been a part of Sharon's life. She remembers when she was given a small pair of binoculars to enable her to see the blackboard thus allowing her to finally attend a regular school. "With physical disabilities, you have to find other ways of doing things," explains Sharon.

As a child, Sharon had difficulties socially and needed to adjust to a chaotic home life after her mother remarried when Sharon was 11 years of age. Still a child herself, Sharon was often left to care for her two wild stepbrothers and the three children her mother and stepfather had over the coming years.

By the time Sharon began university her vision was reduced to only five percent. Sharon was certain at that point that she did not want to have children because of the risk of having a child born with anaridia. "It was too big a risk for me to take with someone else's life," she recalls. Following university, Sharon married a military man with health issues of his own, and they lived in Ottawa, Alberta, Comox, and Victoria.

Sharon's husband became increasingly unhappy with his job, taking his anger out on her. "He had a bad temper and I started feeling alienated," she admits. "He was very verbally abusive. I found that behaviour very distressing and I would withdraw. I didn't want a confrontation." Their deteriorating relationship began to seriously impact Sharon's health and she was told by her ophthalmologist that she needed to reduce the stress in her life or her vision would be gone completely within a year. In the fall of 1989, Sharon left her husband and spent the next four years freeing herself completely from their relationship.

It was in the mid-90s when Sharon began her relationship as a donor with the Victoria Women's Transition House Society. "I chose the Society because I identify with many abused women. I had a desperate need to get out of my marriage and for years, I felt trapped," she explains. "If I had known of a place like Transition House, maybe I would have been able to leave sooner."



*Sharon and Carolyn Fast, Executive Director*

Her relationship with the Victoria Women's Transition House has enabled her to work with staff to ensure vital programs can continue. Her recent gifts have supported Harrison Place, "I was glad to be able to make a significant contribution to help older women to create a more meaningful life for themselves." ■

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“Creativity  
takes  
courage.”

Henry Matisse

# Project Updates

## Harrison Place

In the fall of 2005, we began construction of Harrison Place, a 23-unit affordable and supportive “third stage” housing project for women between the ages of 45 and 65 who have left an abusive relationship and no longer require our crisis services. The facility will provide small, independent one-bedroom suites for older, single women without children. This transitional housing (up to three years stay) will support women on their journey to self-reliance and independence.

Funding for the \$4.9 million capital cost was achieved through a variety of sources. The Society committed \$1.4 million which has already been raised through a housing fund, Federal and Municipal funding, fundraising and grants. The provincial government allocated \$2.5 million to the project and the final \$600,000 is being raised through interim financing and additional fundraising. An advisory team is working on program development and is exploring ways to work collaboratively with other services and agencies in the area.



*Harrison Place Groundbreaking –  
November 29, 2005*

A small groundbreaking ceremony was held for Harrison Place in November 2005. We are very grateful for all of the support we have already received for Harrison Place. We look forward to the completion of construction and to the day we can officially open the doors!

“ {The group} helped me feel less alone. More confident in myself. The courage to keep working at myself to be a good parent and give my children the best so they can grow to be amazing and healthy adults. ”

‘Helping Children Heal’ Parenting Group Participant

## Strategic Planning

Preparing a comprehensive strategic plan and updated operational plan for the Victoria Women’s Transition House Society has been a priority for the Board and staff over this past year and leading into 2006. The long-term goal of the project is to develop a “plan book” that includes the vision statement, a strategic document that identifies goals and priorities for the next one to three years, and an operational plan that will provide the tactical details for all of the organization’s programs and services. We hope to have all of this work done by the summer of 2006.

These documents will help guide us as we continue our existing work, strive to make our services better and more effective, and create new possibilities for the future. The strategic plan will help guide the organization’s fundraising and budgeting as well as give us a framework for what lies ahead.

## Online Giving

Increasingly, more people are choosing to make their donations through the Internet. For the Victoria Women’s Transition House donors, giving online has become even easier. Thanks to a partnership with CanadaHelps.org, donors can make their contributions via a secure online transaction. Last year we received over \$1,100 through the CanadaHelps.org service.

Visit our website at [www.transitionhouse.net](http://www.transitionhouse.net) and click on the “CanadaHelps.org” icon to learn more! ■

# New Projects

## New Shelter Playground

Thanks to a grant from the Queen Alexandra Foundation, we will be moving forward with building a new playground structure at the Shelter. The current structure was constructed in 1991 and is in need of replacement. The overall project will be rolled out in two phases. Phase one, which has been funded by the Foundation, will focus on constructing a module suitable for 2 to 5 year old children. We are seeking funding opportunities for phase two, which will be for children ages 6 to 12 years. We look forward to creating a new outdoor environment for children that is safe, challenging, and fun.

## Women's Groups

The following two new women's groups have been generously funded through the Ministry of Community Services, Community Action for Women's Safety Grant.

- **Group for older women in Sidney:** In partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Beacon Community Services, and the Sidney Community Response Network, we have established a counsellor-facilitated support and education group in Sidney for older women (45+) who

have experienced or are experiencing abuse in their intimate relationships or by their adult children.

- **"Helping Children Heal" parenting group for young mothers:** This group is geared towards young mothers aged 14 to 29 years and is offered in collaboration with the Young Parent Support Network, the YM/YWCA Young Mom's Program, and Kiwanis House. The focus of the 12-week group is to equip young women who have experienced an abusive relationship to effectively support their children who have been impacted by violence within the home.

## Virtual Shelter Tour

For our Open House in January, a staff member created a slide show of photos from the Shelter and offered a "virtual tour" on her laptop. This seemed like the perfect way to give people a sense of the shelter while maintaining confidentiality. Building on this ingenious idea, we have developed a virtual shelter tour slide show on CD for anyone who wishes to get an inside peek at the transition house. We hope to make the tour available on the website by the fall of 2006. If you would like to see a copy, please let us know. ■

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“Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

Pablo Picasso



# Highlights of this Year's Achievements

- In 2005/2006, we provided over 100 presentations and workshops to schools, community organizations and professionals.
- A variety of in-service training and educational sessions were offered to our staff on topics such as substance-use, first aid, self-defense and team building.
- Our new website was launched. The site is consistently updated and will soon include an intranet for use by staff, Board and volunteers.
- Our Development Office has grown to include three part-time staff, which equals 1.5 full time employees. A primary focus is to create long-term financial sustainability to support the organization's strategic vision for the future.
- Staff members at the Shelter took the initiative to develop an informal art class called "art break" for residents. The idea was very well received and one of the women and a child submitted their self-portraits to the Art Gallery of Ontario for the "In Your Face" exhibit, opening in July.
- The Board of Directors, VWTH Leadership team and staff have been working together to build a creative and functional strategic plan for the organization.
- On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005, we officially broke ground for Harrison Place, with construction beginning early in February 2006.
- The Christmas Hamper Program put together 75 hampers for the women and children we sheltered, counselled and supported over the past 12 months.
- The Victoria Women's Transition House was chosen as the recipient of the inaugural YMCA/YWCA Women's Organization of Distinction Award.
- Our Abused Older Women's Program received the 2006 Awareness To Action Award from the Simon Fraser University Gerontology Centre in the "Innovative Programs" category. ■



*Jenni, Children's Activity Worker and Caite, Counsellor, pose with our award-winning ceiling tile. The tile, which was hand painted and included a poem written by a Shelter resident, won top prize at a community event.*

“Coming to group feels like coming home. Everyone listens to me and I felt important. I liked it a lot.”

8-year-old Children Who Witness Abuse group participant



## VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

### *Tamara Thorpe*



#### **TAMARA THORPE**

strongly believes in the power of volunteering. Upon moving to Victoria in 2003, she promptly began looking for a fulfilling volunteer opportunity in her new community. “I chose to donate my time to

the Victoria Women’s Transition House Society because I had been in an abusive relationship in the past and thought it was a good fit,” says Tamara. She has been an active volunteer at the shelter ever since.

After completing the comprehensive six-week training, Tamara chose to volunteer her time at the shelter as a cook. “It seemed like a perfect match because I love to cook!” she says. During

her weekly evening shift, she checks in with the staff and then prepares and serves dinner. “The women usually select the menu, but the most requested meal is my lasagna which I make once a month,” she laughs.

At first, Tamara anticipated that her experience would be intense but she was surprised to find it very lighthearted. “I really enjoy it. I have the opportunity to sit down and spend time with the women and children,” she says. “Dinner is a time of the day when everyone gets together and talks. It really feels like a family meal.” Tamara believes that meal times are special and the women are very appreciative that someone has come in to prepare a meal for them. “I find that my time at the shelter makes a big difference to the women and children.” ■

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- Six in 10 Canadians know or have known someone who experienced family violence. (2002 EKOS Research Associates study)
    - Last year, our crisis line fielded over 1,900 calls from abused women and children in abusive homes, and family and friends of abused women.
  - Between 50,000 & 70,000 school-aged children in BC are estimated to have witnessed their mothers being struck.  
(Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics)

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“You will have to experiment and try things out for yourself and you will not be sure of what you are doing. That’s all right, you are feeling your way into the thing.”

Emily Carr

# 2005-2006 Program Stats

## Children Who Witness Abuse Program

# of children in CWWA: 170  
# of caregivers: 116  
# of children in summer camp: 12

## Stopping the Violence Program

# of women counselled: 245  
Total # of group sessions: 70  
Total # of individual sessions: 525

## Spousal Assault Program

517 contacts

## Shelter Programs

# of women sheltered: 170  
# of children sheltered: 108

## Ages of women at shelter:

Under 19 years of age: 1  
Over 19 years of age: 169  
Nights Full/Over Capacity: 66

Number Referred to shelter but not served immediately due to insufficient space, outside of mandate, special needs, & other reasons:  
Women: 343  
Children: 205

## 24-Hr Crisis Line

Number of crisis calls: 1,915

## Older Women's Program

# of women who attended groups and accessed support: 28  
Community presentations: 26

## Public Education

Presentations to schools, community & professionals: over 100

## Volunteer Program

Total number of volunteers: 77  
Shelter: 30  
Crisis line: 15  
Special services: 18  
Board of Directors: 12  
Community Office: 3 ■

# Our Palette of Services

- 24-Hour Crisis Line: (250) 385-6611
- Shelter Services
- In-House Children's Program
- Children Who Witness Abuse Program
- Stopping the Violence Counselling Program
- Spousal Assault Victim Support Program
- Harrison Place Transitional Housing (operational in 2007)
- Support Groups
- Training and Community Education
- Volunteer Program
- Domestic Violence Emergency Response Services (DVERS)

**Please call our Community Office at (250) 592-2927 Ext. 10 if you have any questions about any of our services. ■**

“ I had so much legal hassle and appointments to keep that I couldn't possibly have dragged my children to all this without it really affecting them. With the care of staff and volunteers to look after them and three meals a day, it kept some order in their lives. ”

Former Shelter resident

# Overall Contributions for 2005/06

## By Contribution Type

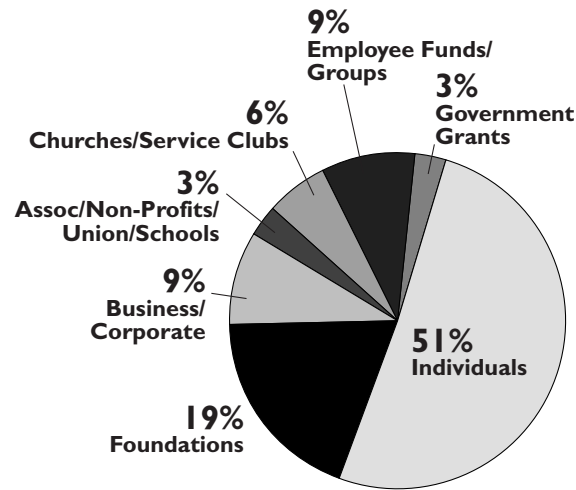
Individuals	<b>\$302,702</b>
Foundations	<b>109,657</b>
Corporate/Small Business	<b>51,857</b>
Associations, Non-Profits, Unions and Students	<b>18,590</b>
Churches and Service Clubs	<b>34,343</b>
Employee Funds/Groups	<b>53,059</b>
Government Grants	<b>14,775</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$584,983</b>

Please Note: These figures represent ALL contributions including capital gifts.

## Number of Gifts Processed

Individuals	<b>1205</b>
Foundations	<b>10</b>
Corporate/Small Business	<b>99</b>
Associations, Non-Profits, Unions and Students	<b>53</b>
Churches and Service Clubs	<b>92</b>
Employee Funds/Groups	<b>25</b>
Government Grants	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1486</b>

## Contributions by Type 2005/06



“Have no fear of perfection, you’ll never reach it.”

Salvador Dali

# Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the following donors for their generous contributions of over \$500 to the Victoria Women's Transition House Society in our 2005/06 fiscal year. Thank you!

## **CORPORATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES & FOUNDATIONS**

Accent Inns Inc  
Allen and Loreen Vandekerkhove Family Foundation  
BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses  
Bank of Montreal  
Bruce Wilkin Design  
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation  
Centre for Sustainability  
Church of St. George The Martyr

CMV Enterprises Inc  
Construction Association of Victoria  
Custom House Global Foreign Exchange  
HBC  
Illuminations Lighting Solutions  
Indigo Sky Graphic Design  
Kinetic Construction  
Knights of Columbus Gaming Account - Sidney, BC  
L.L. Brougham Inc Chartered Accountants  
Ladies Auxiliary Fraternal Order of Eagles #12  
Lin Rite Enterprises  
Maggie Thompson Open Doors  
The K & M Matheson Memorial Trust  
Ministry of Community Services – STV Branch  
Ministry of Children and Family Development  
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Honourable Ida Chong – Minister Responsible for Women's Issues

Oakdale Estates Ltd  
Pender Island Gas Service  
Provincial Employees Community Services Fund  
Queen Alexandra Foundation  
RBC Foundation  
Real Estate Foundation of BC  
Remax of Salt Spring Island  
Royal LePage Shelter Foundation  
Runners of Compassion  
Sierra Systems Consultants Inc  
Silk Road Aromatherapy & Tea Co  
St. Andrews Cathedral  
St. Andrews Presbyterian Thrift Shop  
St. Margaret's School  
St. Paul's United Church  
The Sisters of Saint Ann  
Urban Development Institute - Victoria Chapter  
Victoria Foundation and the Hugh and Helen Mogensen Fund  
Victoria Foundation – Youth in Philanthropy Program  
Victoria Golf Club Ladies Charity Tournament  
Victoria Women In Need Society  
Vivid Solutions Inc  
WCG International Consultants Ltd  
Wellington West Capital Inc

“ I was forced out of my house and onto the streets with two young children in the middle of the night by a drunken raging husband, and really found a warm and friendly welcome by the staff of the Transition House. I really don't know what I would have done without them. ”

Former VWTH Client

# Acknowledgments

## INDIVIDUALS

Gordon and Rosalyn Alexander  
Margaret R. Allen  
Adrienne Betty  
Kristina Campbell  
Elizabeth Chatfield  
Shirley Dawson  
Jim McDaniel and Sue Dier  
Odette Drackley  
Jennifer A. English  
Tilly Enriquez  
Leslee Farrell  
Dr. Charles B. Faulkner  
Sheila Gallagher  
Susan Griffin  
Janey Gudewill  
Karen Kissinger  
Ronald and May Lou-Poy  
Beatrice McCullough  
Janet McGregor  
Nancy Morison  
Bill Pascoe  
Li Read  
William and Elizabeth Riehm  
June and James Rogers  
Margaret Ruiter

Nadia Schneider  
Shields Harney  
Rob Shirkey  
Helen Stewart  
Sharon Barrie Stewart  
The Stratton Family  
Dr. Jennifer Waelti-Walters  
Dr. Kenneth J. Williams  
Anne Wortmann  
Anonymous: 14

Please Note: We have tried to make this list as complete and accurate as possible. We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions and ask that you please contact us with any questions regarding this list. ■

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“The  
strength of  
a woman  
can carry the  
weight of  
the world.”

Sarah Pezdek-Smith



# Thank You To Our Friends!

**ON BEHALF** of everyone at the Victoria Women's Transition House Society, we want to express our heartfelt thank you to our many friends who have helped us provide services to abused women and their children. Each and every one of you should be proud of the individual contribution you made last year as a:

- Donor
- Board Member
- Volunteer
- Client
- Ambassador
- Staff Member

## Major Donors & Funders for 2005/2006

- Ministry of Community Services
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- The Queen Alexandra Foundation
- Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
- The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
- The Sharon Stewart Fund
- The Vanderkerkhove Family Foundation
- The Victoria Foundation
- Victoria Golf Club Ladies Charity Tournament

Many thanks for funding, special grants and your generous donations!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed money, goods, services and time to the Victoria Women's Transition House. ■

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“Feet, what  
do I need  
you for when  
I have wings  
to fly?”

Frida Kahlo







*Crisis Line*

**(250) 385-6611**

*Community Office*

Suite 100

3060 Cedar Hill Rd. Victoria BC V8T 3J5

P (250) 592-2927

F (250) 592 9279

E [info@vwth.bc.ca](mailto:info@vwth.bc.ca)

*Shelter Business Line*

(250) 380-7527