



Answering the Call

A SAFE SPACE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

The VWTH Crisis and Information Line is central to our organization. When someone calls **250.385.6611**, a VWTH Support Worker or highly trained volunteer will answer, day or night, seven days a week.

Last year we received over 3,000 Crisis Line calls. Most of these calls were from women seeking help or information regarding their own situation experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and abuse.

Sometimes calls are from the parent of an adult child experiencing IPV, or concerned relative or friend. The line also receives calls from other agencies and organizations seeking information and resources – the Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD), the police, non-profit service organizations and schools. VWTH is viewed as experts in our field, and we often provide support to a wide variety of folks in the community.

On occasion, a woman will call when she is in the middle of an abusive situation. A Support Worker explains: "We talk them through what to do, while a VWTH colleague calls 911 if necessary. We stay on the line with them. When those situations occur, and I later meet the woman when she's brought to the Shelter, I'm reminded why I do this work."

The Worker continues: "When someone is in crisis they can't always think clearly. Having a calm voice to connect to, someone who will break things down into simple steps, is sometimes all the help that's needed. And, the



staff and volunteers who answer the Crisis Line have lots of resources available for callers, who can ask questions about immediate safety."

Staff and volunteers also help the caller plan for future situations so that women can start to imagine themselves leaving an abusive relationship, and what it might look like in practical terms to do that.

In closing, the VWTH Support Worker adds: "Crisis Line staff and volunteers really can help; having a listening ear, holding space and providing a safe place for someone to tell their story in their own words. It's anonymous and we encourage the caller to direct the conversation, which is empowering for them."

Whatever the crisis, the friendly voice at the end of the line will listen to the caller, and make sure they are connected to appropriate help.

If you need help, call the 24-Hour, VWTH Crisis and Information Line, 250.385.6611.

Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH) collaborates, advocates and educates to address and prevent intimate partner violence and abuse of women and children through supportive shelter, housing, counselling and other community-based services.

Crisis and Information Line
250.385.6611

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Suite 100–3060 Cedar Hill Road
Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

 250.592.2927

 info@vwth.bc.ca

 transitionhouse.net

 @VWTHS

  @Victoriawth

Charitable No. 10817 3501 RR0001



Safety Planning

BY OUR SHELTER MANAGER

Safety planning is an integral piece of the work that we do in all programs at VWTH. It involves identifying steps that a woman can take to increase her safety and helps provide guidelines to follow if her safety is at risk.

Safety Planning is a fluid process that can span from someone living with their abuser, to how to leave their abuser, and then how to continue to keep themselves and their children safe once they have left. Research shows that the most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive situation is the point at which she leaves the relationship. The partner may feel he has nothing to lose and lash out – sometimes with violence. VWTH wants to ensure that all clients are well prepared with a solid safety plan whatever their situation.

During the process of safety planning, Transition House staff work directly with the client to put together strategies, tools and resources to enhance safety and reduce harm. We do this work with our clients, and not for them, as they are experts in their own circumstances and have been keeping themselves safe the best way they can. We focus on the expressed needs, circumstances and expertise of each individual and add our knowledge, experience and appropriate referrals to the plan.

At the Shelter and through the Crisis Line we talk with clients about safety plans that will fit a variety of different situations and circumstances. These could include:

- how to stay in the home safely until the decision to leave
- how to plan leaving safely
- what happens if mental health or substance use are factors
- how to stay safe in their new home after leaving the Shelter
- additional safety considerations for parental visitation

Safety planning is a process that is always changing and adapted for each client. VWTH staff continue to work with clients as they access our different services to support them in their safety planning.

Find some practical steps to support your own safety planning on the BC Society of Transition Houses website: bcsth.ca/safety-planning



Volunteer Spotlight

MEET DENISE – CRISIS AND INFORMATION LINE VOLUNTEER

Volunteers have played an essential role at VWTH since the organization started in the mid-seventies. Over the decades, as we've grown and expanded our supports to clients, it is thanks to volunteers that we have achieved so much despite ever increasing costs and demands on staff time. One of these important volunteer positions is answering the VWTH Crisis and Information Line.

Denise started volunteering with VWTH pre-pandemic. She was happy with her role cooking at the Shelter and supporting the food coordinator in collecting and distributing donated produce from local farms to the clients in need. After working over 50 volunteer hours, Denise knew that she was eligible and keen to undertake the specialized Crisis Line training. By that time she'd met many staff, and understood the complexities of the work they do. Crisis Line training is a significant time commitment, for a challenging role with a high level of responsibility, but Denise says the experience was "really good, really informative".



With various guest presenters from across the organization she gained in-depth understanding of the issues of intimate partner violence and the women who turn to VWTH for help. She also learned "valuable life skills that I'll use in everyday life too."

Now, in addition to continuing her food coordinator support role, Denise spends four hours every week on the Crisis and Information line taking calls. At first it

was a little intimidating to answer the phone in real-time. Before retirement, Denise ran her own management consulting business. She describes her style as being naturally solutions-oriented, but answering crisis calls has required a different approach; "Most people want the opportunity to be heard, to really feel they are listened to. It's a privilege to be the person giving that space." In addition to being a safe, listening space for callers, the training has ensured that Denise knows the community resources available for clients, how to safety plan with them, and when she needs to ask a staff member for additional help.

Denise is happy to spend this time with us; "It's rewarding to be able to help out, especially when you're on a call and can really connect to the person on the other end, and feel that you're making a difference, helping them through a tough time."

Denise, we thank you for all your time and commitment; you clearly have a big heart and we are so grateful that you share it with us and our clients.

Best Foot Forward

MODERN REAL ESTATE TEAM
PUT THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING!



On September 21st, the **Modern Real Estate Team** hosted a fundraiser at John Fluevog Shoes Victoria. It was wonderful to welcome back the **Raise the Roof for Shelter** event after several years of absence. Friends and supporters filled the store, which had been decorated with unique and elegant flowers from Bespoke Blossoms. Funds were raised from the cash bar, entry donations and a silent auction of gifts and experiences donated by local businesses. Fluevog also donated 50% of the proceeds from shoes sold on the night.

In total, Raise the Roof for Shelter made **over \$13,000 for the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation**. Victoria Women's Transition House is one of three Victoria organizations that will benefit from these funds. Thank you to the Modern Real Estate Team for your imagination, hard work, and commitment to our cause.

Fundraisers can come in all shapes and sizes – if you have an idea for a fun fundraiser that you'd like to hold for VWTH, share it with us through the 3rd Party Fundraiser form on our website. We'd love to hear from you!

transitionhouse.net/support-us/special-projects-support



The Power of Movement

Community collaboration brings so much to our organization and to our clients. Our long-running, valued relationship with **Dance Victoria** has resulted in wonderful opportunities for our clients and staff to attend international dance performances at the Royal Theatre and learn more about the beauty and power of dance.

This fall, we are very grateful to Dance Victoria for a new experience. Dancers from **Gibney Company**, who are performing at the Royal Theatre in November, will facilitate a Move to Move Beyond® workshop. The workshop is not a dance class, but rather a unique movement model created in 1999 in partnership with social workers and the survivor community for survivors of intimate partner violence.

Dance Victoria's Executive Director, Gillian Jones, explains: "Gibney Company is a world-class contemporary dance company from New York, and our first choice for opening Dance Victoria's 2023/24 season. When we learned that these artists are also engaged in social justice projects – one being the incredible Move to Move Beyond® program for survivors of gender-based violence – partnering with Victoria Women's Transition House was a natural, and exciting, choice. These kinds of partnerships deepen Dance Victoria's connection to our community and provide access to individuals who face significant barriers. Our hope is that participants in this program have a positive experience that honours each person's self-expression, and that supports their healing journey."

Up to 12 VWTH clients will participate in the workshop, which provides a confidential space to explore ways that physical movement can be a



Photo credit: Scott Shaw

powerful tool for self-expression and healing. VWTH support workers will be on-site as well, to assist the process. Yasemin Ozumerzifon, Senior Director of Community Action, shares how impactful the process is for everyone involved: "My favorite moment in a collaboration is the first time we all move together. There is something magical that happens in that second that brings everyone closer immediately."

Thank you to Gibney Company, Dance Victoria and their supporters for this unique opportunity.

Learn more about the Move to Move Beyond® program: gibneydance.org/move-to-move-beyond

“From its inception Move to Move Beyond® has been grounded in collaboration between artists, social workers and the survivor community. Gibney is honored to bring this work to British Columbia in partnership with Dance Victoria and Victoria Women's Transition House, two extraordinary organizations that are agents of change in the artistic and the survivor community.”

- Gina Gibney
Founder, Artistic Director & CEO

VICTORIA GODDESS RUN - EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION

The Goddess Run will be taking place on Sunday, March 3, 2024 at Beaver Lake and will again be raising funds and awareness for the Victoria Women's Transition House. Registration opens in November and "early birds" will receive a Goddess Toque. All registrations include a shirt, race bag and personalized race number. Join the Goddess community, raise money for VWTH and have a great time taking part! goddessrun.ca



The Holidays at the Shelter

A CHANCE TO CREATE HAPPY MEMORIES

Not everyone celebrates the same holidays or the same traditions. For those staying at the Shelter during the holiday season, Victoria Women's Transition House encourages clients to share their holiday traditions with other residents and staff, giving us an opportunity to incorporate a variety of celebrations and activities into our Shelter holiday plans.

Over the next few weeks, the Shelter children will decorate a holiday tree with ornaments and crafts and bake some delicious cookies. There is a festive Shelter dinner planned and on December 25th, each resident and child will find their name on a colourful stocking and a surprise gift under the tree.

Holidays can be a challenging and overwhelming time to stay at a transition house – some residents may feel relieved to spend the holidays in a safer place, but many others have made the difficult decision to avoid family gatherings for the safety of themselves and their children. Others may have conflicting memories from past holidays, making it emotionally



draining and challenging to participate in holiday activities.

Residents are encouraged to practice self-care during the holiday season, to set healthy boundaries with family members when they need to, and to participate in only the festivities that feel comforting to them.

Despite the challenges, the holidays can be a joyful time for families to create new memories in a safe space; to make plans for the new year in a new home; and to build connections and community with other Shelter families.



Each year, VWTH matches clients and client families with caring hamper donors in the community. Our "hampers" consist of gift cards for gifts and groceries, selected and suggested by the client and purchased by the donor. Donors forward their gift card packages to the VWTH office and we distribute these to the client, well in advance of the Holidays. VWTH transitioned to gift cards a few years ago to minimize contact during the height of COVID-19. This gift card program has proven to be very popular with our clients – giving women the agency to purchase gifts for their children, and themselves, at the stores selected.

Last year, through the generosity of 173 donors, VWTH was able to provide 230 women and 292 children, with a very special Holiday season. This year, we will continue with the Gift Card Hamper Program empowering clients to select gifts and food of their choice for themselves and their families.

Thank you to everyone who is participating in the Christmas Hamper Program this year and to those who have contributed in the past.



Scan to find out more

Shelter Needs

DONATING ITEMS FOR OUR RESIDENTS

Year-round we are grateful to the number of people in our community who offer to provide items for our Shelter and Shelter residents. At this time of year, we always experience an increase in questions about what items are needed and how people can help. It's wonderful and very much appreciated! To try to make the process of donating goods as easy as possible, we have added information to our website about the specific items that are most needed for our clients and we update this regularly. Find an up-to-date needs list plus an easy to complete donation form on this page: transitionhouse.net/support-us/donating-goods/

Please note that we cannot accept donations of used items, or travel sized toiletries.

Grateful Thanks

"I just wanted to say a BIG BIG thank you for all of these gifts. I have been having a difficult time with my mental health and had no excitement about Christmas this year. But these gifts filled my heart with love and I am really, really happy. In the future I would love to be a supporter, helping these women who are having a difficult time in their relationships and life, as I was. I can't say enough thank yous for all of this support."

– 2022 Hamper Recipient



With Our Thanks

Victoria Women's Transition House sends our sincere thanks for generous leadership gifts from **PBE Holdings Inc, Terry and Sherril Medd, the Price Family Gift Fund, Royal LePage Coast Capital Realty, L.P. Murphy Charitable Fund, Carmen Morris, Jan Galenza, Ira Hoffecker, the Hospital Employees Union, the William, Laura & Christopher Cook Memorial Fund** through the **Victoria Foundation, Gary and Susan Braley, the Soroptimist International of Greater Victoria, Fernande Harrison, Myra Johnson, Elements Casino and Robert and Sandra Beauregard.**

For their generous and continuing support, our sincere thanks to the **Eldon & Anne Foote Fund** at the **Edmonton Community Foundation.**

Grateful thanks to the **Lobstick Foundation** for their funding in support of *Shine: Girls' Group*, and to the **Provincial Employees Community Services Fund (PECSF).**

Foxy Box Laser & Wax Bar again chose to raise funds for VWTH through a Client Appreciation Day raffle. Together, staff and clients of



the Downtown, Uptown and Langford shops raised \$1,215.50. Thank you!

Thank you to the **100 Men Who Care – Victoria** for selecting VWTH as the charity recipient at their June meeting. We were grateful to accept a donation of \$7,000.

Our thanks to **Pharmasave Broadmead** (above) for donating nearly 30 boxes of hygiene supplies

for our Shelter clients, and to other generous community donors for the gift of a stroller and cosmetic bags filled with personal care items and other hygiene products. We also gratefully received armfuls of cute teddy bears from the **Canadian Border Services Agency** (below).

These are only highlights of the many generous monetary and gifts-in-kind received over the last few months. Thank you to everyone for your support!



YES! I wish to support Victoria Women's Transition House

I would like to give a gift of: ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1000 ☐ Other \$_____ A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$10

Mail: 100–3060 Cedar Hill Road Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

Online: Visit transitionhouse.net and click support us/donate now

Phone: Call 250.592.2927 to make a credit card donation

☐ Enclosed is my cheque payable to Victoria Women's Transition House

I prefer to use my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ AmEx

Card No: _____ Expiry: ____/____

Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Email: _____ ☐ Sign up for monthly E-News

- ☐ Please send me information about donating stocks or securities
- ☐ Please contact me about monthly giving
- ☐ Please send me information about making a gift in my will to VWTH
- ☐ I have already included VWTH in my will

Production of this newsletter was generously discounted by:



Winter 2023



Looking Towards the New Year

VWTH 50TH ANNIVERSARY! 50 YEARS OF NEW BEGINNINGS

A Landmark Year

It was 1974 when the first Emergency Shelter was opened by Victoria Women's Transition House, which means that 2024 is our 50th Anniversary! This milestone will be marked in a number of ways over the coming year, with opportunities to remember our history, recognize and honour the people who have ensured our continued success, and spread the word about the work that still needs to be done to create communities free of intimate partner violence. As we prepare our anniversary plans, we would love to hear from you! Do you have memories that you would like to share? Were you a past member of staff, volunteer, board member or client? Please add your contact

information to our "Alumni" list through the form on our website – you can share a story with us there too! transitionhouse.net/memory-bank

You can also email deborahr@vwth.bc.ca to share a story, memory, or to let us know what VWTH means to you.

West Shore Update

Construction work continues at our West Shore housing project. As the building slowly rises from the ground, VWTH staff are planning for the increase in clients and programming. We are all very excited and look forward to the completion of the project in late-summer 2024, and to bringing much needed services and supports to the western communities.



Gift Giving

TRIBUTE GIFTS

What to get the person who says "I have everything I need" or "please don't buy me anything"? This Holiday Season, consider giving a donation to Victoria Women's Transition House as a gift for a friend, relative, or colleague. When you make a Tribute Gift, a Holiday gift card will be sent to your Honouree on your behalf, by email or regular mail, as a notification of your thoughtful donation. And you will receive a tax receipt for the full amount of the gift with our sincere thanks.



It is with much respect to the Lekwungen and SENĆOTEN speaking peoples of the WSÁNEĆ, Esquimalt, and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories the Victoria Women's Transition House Society is located, that we make this acknowledgment with the expressed shared hope to live in communities free of intimate partner violence.

50
YEARS



VICTORIA WOMEN'S
Transition House
SOCIETY

ADD YOUR NAME TO OUR 'ALUMNI' LIST
SHARE YOUR VWTH MEMORY WITH US

SCAN TO
COMPLETE
OUR
ONLINE
FORM



Holiday Cards

A POP OF COLOUR



This year we are delighted and honoured to have a special card to send out during the holiday season, with colourful art from artist **Marion Evamy**. Marion generously gifted us the use of her art, and the cost to print the cards – thank you Marion and **Red Art Gallery**.

“We support VWTH because they offer a sanctuary for women and their children, escaping the horrors of domestic violence. I can't think of an organization that is more needed or important in our society. I have been blessed to use my artistic talents to support the charities I believe in, and I am so pleased that VWTH wanted to use one of my abstract paintings for their 2023 holiday cards.”

- Marion Evamy