



## *Holiday Cheer at the Shelter*

Christmas can be a stressful and challenging time for many, but for a woman living in a violent and abusive home, the Holidays can be particularly difficult.

Some abused women decide to wait until after Christmas to consider leaving their abusive partner. They don't want to disrupt their family over the Holidays and think that their children will have bad memories linked with Christmas from leaving the family home. The reality is that most women who come to the Victoria Women's Transition House Emergency Shelter from an abusive relationship, experience an overwhelming feeling of relief, of safety and support. For the first time in a long time, they feel safe, valued and cared for—and the Holiday period is no different.

The Holiday Season can be an exciting and festive time at our Shelter. The VWTH staff set-up a large Christmas tree in the living room and invite the women and children residents to decorate. Children make gingerbread houses with their moms or an activity worker and there are Christmas books, holiday activities and crafts to share with the little ones. Volunteers bake seasonal cookies and Christmas music fills the air. For Christmas dinner, a delicious, home-cooked meal is prepared by the house

manager and volunteers and is served on festively decorated tables, with homemade centrepieces, individual menus and Christmas crackers—always a favourite with the children. The meal is topped off with a variety of delicious desserts like apple pie and chocolate mousse.



"As a team, we strive to make all of our clients and children happy here and as comfortable as possible. Women and children have left their homes during this time of celebration. Women are dealing with the fact that they've left a partner...We want them to feel loved, cared for and supported," shared the house manager.

**"The Shelter is adorned with decorations and festive drawings created by children at the Shelter. The beautifully decorated tree, will always hold a gift under it, for every woman and child."**

"Everyone in our community is experiencing isolation due to the pandemic. Residents have the compounded barrier of experiencing abuse and violence in their lives. As a client-centred organization, we support the women and children to enjoy their Holidays in a safe space and in a way that is appropriate for them. And residents who do not celebrate Christmas are still invited to

partake in the festivities if they wish," shared the shelter programs manager.

With the onset of COVID-19 and the ballooning need for emergency shelter and support, VWTH has added a second Shelter location where clients can stay and receive on-site counselling and resource supports. Both Shelters will have a beautifully decorated tree with a gift for every woman and child. They will have a nourishing dinner and make new positive memories for themselves. "All of our services, including women's and children's counselling and childminding support, will remain open and available throughout the Holiday period," emphasized the shelter programs manager. We will make it work, as will everyone this Holiday season.

### 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**

**Community Office**  
Suite 100 3060 Cedar Hill Road  
Victoria, BC V8T 3J5



## Tara's Story\*

My name is Tara. I am 35-years old and have been married to my husband for 15 years. We have two children and recently immigrated to Canada from the Middle East. I have been experiencing abuse, physically and psychologically, throughout my marriage.

The abuse started slowly, mostly insults, putting me down as a parent, what I wore and the way I looked. Then it became aggressive. He threatened to hurt me, blocking me from leaving the room, escalating to physical violence. I was a young bride and I tried to be a good wife, but nothing I did was good enough for my husband. Things got worse and he started hitting me. He thought he could do anything to me. Separation or divorce in my family and culture was out of the question, so I felt I had no choice but to endure this.

With our arrival in Canada, I hoped that a new country could be a new start for us and that things would get better. But my husband just continued the beatings. I never felt safe. One night, my husband became furious with me and a neighbour heard my screams and called the police. The police came to our apartment and tried to talk to me about the assault, but I was cautious. I was mistrustful of police—they had never helped me before and what could they do now? And if I told the truth, what would change?

That night, the police made notes and took photographs of my injuries and my husband was arrested. He was later charged with assault and something called a No Contact Order was put in place to protect me and my

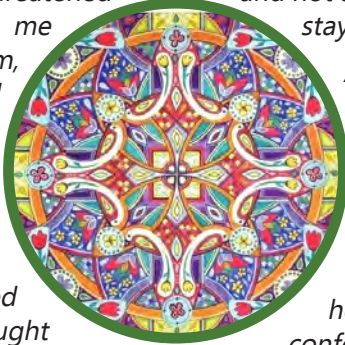
children, so that he would not have any direct contact with us.

I was immediately relieved, but scared at the same time because I have no family in Victoria and no friends. I didn't know what to do next. The same day that my husband was arrested, the police connected me to a counsellor at the Victoria Women's Transition House. Since he was arrested and not a threat to me, I was able to stay in our home.

Although we couldn't meet in person because of COVID, the Transition House counsellor talked to me and my children every day over the phone. Transition House also helped set me up for video conferencing for face-to-face conversations. This was so comforting. My English is not very good, but we used Google translate to help with the more difficult words. The counsellor helped me to communicate with the police, the children's school, immigration resources, the Justice Access Centre and the Crown Counsel. The counsellor dropped off a care package for me and for the children—books, snacks, small toys and games and other items.

Every day, I feel stronger. The support I got from the Spousal Assault Victim Support Program through Transition House was the reason I finally felt able to leave my abusive marriage. I am now on the waitlist for housing and am more confident that I will be able to testify at my ex-husband's trial. I will always be grateful to Victoria Women's Transition House and all the workers for their help, their kindness and understanding.

*\*Name has been changed for confidentiality*



*Creative self-portrait by participant from previous session.*

## Healing Through the Arts: Ceramics Program for Older Women—REGISTRATION OPEN!

Join a small group of women for a free, eight-week art group through our Older Women's Outreach Program. The Winter Group will focus on self-expression and inner reflection through ceramics.

**Date:** Jan 22–Mar 19, 2021

**Duration:** Two hours, every Friday

For more information and to register, call **250.385.2103**

VWTH thanks the **CRD Arts Commission** and **individual donors** for support of this program.

## COVID-19 Note Regarding Programs and Services:

All VWTH programs and services are offered in a safe, indoor or outdoor space with ample fresh air and ventilation and with protocols regarding physical distancing, mask-wearing, sanitizing, health checks and hand-washing procedures. Participants in group programs receive their own personal materials and supplies.

Women fleeing intimate partner violence and abuse can access our secure Emergency Shelter located in a confidential location. While at the Shelter, all the client's basic needs will be provided—meals, accommodation, clothing, toiletries etc. Counselling and supports are available on-site for women and their children. Residents can stay for up to 30-days. For more information call the Crisis and Information Line at **250.385.6611**. Women in immediate danger should call **911**.



## Older Women's Program Update

VWTH offers programs for older women to socialize and connect with others while giving health and wellness benefits and contributing to overall well-being and personal empowerment. Participants are often women who are rebuilding their lives after suffering the effects of trauma from domestic violence and abuse, and VTWH programs help build healthy habits into their daily activities. Here are some details on our STRETCH and STRIDE programs, each offering different goals but both benefiting clients with innovative partnerships, dedicated volunteers, expert facilitators, and special guest speakers.

**STRIDE: Active Living for Senior Women** incorporates weekly fitness and physical activity into clients' lives through guided hiking and walking excursions, fitness classes designed specifically for ages 50+, as well as self-paced water fitness conditioning classes. Our program partners, Sole

Sisters Victoria and Frontrunners, ensure women have opportunities to be involved as participants or as leaders throughout the program, and past participants reflect that through the program, their social connections increased, with improvement in their overall mental health and self-esteem. VWTH thanks **Island Health and individual donors** for support of this program.

**STRETCH: Money Management for Senior Women** gives women practical and engaging tools to manage their money, and make limited dollars "stretch." Engaging with supportive like-minded older women, volunteers and skillful facilitators help women stay involved and connected, and when they are confident and ready, to be active in the community and pursue whatever goals they choose. VWTH thanks **New Horizons for Seniors and individual donors** for support of this program.

**"COVID-19 has increased the personal isolation of many women at risk or who need our services, and I am so happy we found a way to safely continue our STRETCH and STRIDE group programs,"** said, the VWTH Community Programs Manager. "More than ever, these programs have been a lifeline for these women."

*I believe the overall well-being of the [STRETCH] participants was enhanced by this opportunity. On behalf of Sole Sisters Victoria and the leaders that participated, we truly enjoyed every step and were inspired by the strength of the women. Thank you.*

- Mena Westhaver, Creator and Founder of Sole Sisters Victoria



## Suffering in Silence: 10 Signs a Person May Be Facing Intimate Partner Violence

Globally, three in ten women are estimated to experience intimate partner violence. Identifying signs of violence and abuse and recognizing patterns of abuse could be the first step in providing needed support, breaking the cycle of abuse and in some cases, saving a life. Here are ten warning signs someone you know may be facing intimate partner violence and abuse. The survivor:

1. Seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is fearful
2. Becomes aggressive and angry
3. Appears scared or intimidated after a phone conversation or is nervous talking when the partner is around
4. Offers apologies for the partner's actions when belittled or put down

5. Shows changes in performance at work/school: poor concentration, mistakes, inconsistent work quality
6. Seems to be sick more often and misses work/deadlines
7. Makes last-minute excuses about why she can't meet you or tries to avoid you
8. Has a partner that tries to keep her away from work and other activities
9. Tries to cover bruises or other signs of trauma
10. Uses drugs or alcohol to cope



If you recognize these signs in someone, a loved one, neighbour, colleague or community member, there are ways you can help. Talk to the person about what you have

noticed and express your concern for them. When reaching out, it is important to offer support in a manner that is respectful, calm and non-judgemental. Never blame the survivor and recognize that the violence is not the survivor's fault. If she denies the abuse, assure her that you are there to listen to her anytime she wants to talk and encourage her to reach out to resources like VWTH when it's safe to do so. Our staff can help her create a safety plan and alert her to local resources.

For support and information, call our 24-hour Crisis and Information Line at **250.385.6611**. For women or children in immediate danger, call **911**.

## Territory Acknowledgement

It is with much respect to the Lkwungen and SENĆOŦEN 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.



## Shelter Wish List

Toiletry items are needed for our Shelter clients! We kindly request that regular, full-sized items (not travel size or jumbo size) be donated. Fragrance-free items are always appreciated.

- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Body Wash
- Make-up
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste

Please call our Community Office at **250.592.2927** with questions or to organize a safe drop-off. Thank you.



## Children Who Witness Abuse/ PEACE Program Update

### Violence is Preventable (VIP) Video Series

The pandemic has led to many changes in all our programs and the Children Who Witness Abuse/PEACE children's counselling program is no different. From modified, individual Summer Camp sessions for children (tremendously popular) to safely restarting individual and group counselling sessions with COVID-19 protocols in place—this has been a year to embrace change.

Pre-pandemic, VWTH's PEACE counsellors and community education coordinator visited local schools to facilitate VIP youth workshops and inform students and educators about the impacts of witnessing abuse and dating violence. Due to COVID-19, these workshops are on hold.

Now, VWTH has adjusted delivery of the VIP program. With the help of Lambrick Park Secondary School, we have created a five-part VIP video series. "The PEACE team came up with the idea of VIP videos as a way to continue distributing important information about preventative violence and abuse to kids in our city, in a format that is still engaging," shared one of the PEACE counsellors, who is also leading the project.

Earlier this year, the team produced a short video for young children that shared key messages on safety and what to do if abuse is witnessed in the home. Three of the five videos will be part of a Q & A series that will

feature counsellors replying to questions submitted by student actors. The videos will target middle-school and high-school students. The two remaining videos, intended for youth and young adults, will feature actors bringing awareness to the cycle of abuse.

When asked about thoughts for the future, the counsellor reflected, "Next steps will be sharing the videos and hearing the feedback. We could have produced more videos, but we had to limit ourselves to five. If the community believes in the project, then we can do more in the near future. For now, this is a really good start, with resources that we can use for a long time."

Keep an eye out for our VIP video series on the VWTH website and social media.

This video project was made possible with the support and contributions of **Roll.Focus Production** and **Ms. Martin and her Fine Arts class at Lambrick Park Secondary School**.

The VIP Program is funded by the **Viveka Foundation Fund** through the Victoria Foundation; **Pilot Fund for Gender Equality**, a collaboration between Community Foundations of Canada and the Equality Fund, with support from the Government of Canada; the **Silver Gummy Foundation**; **BC Society of Transition Houses**; and **Newman's Own Foundation as well as individual donors**.



## International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

**"Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today." – UN Women**

Every year, November 25 marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. To learn more and get involved, visit [www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday](http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday)

## Volunteer Spotlight: Sue

Sue began volunteering with VWTH about a year ago. As a valued volunteer, she has already provided support in various ways, including participating in and supporting fundraising events, delivering resources to clients and assisting with the Christmas Hamper Program.

### What inspired you to volunteer with VWTH?

*When I retired a few years earlier and found that I had time available for other things, I knew I wanted to find a way to support women who are working to rebuild their lives. I contacted VWTH and learned during their very professionally-structured volunteer training program that the organization offers (in) several ways, to make that contribution; they really try to match the volunteer with tasks that feel like a fit.*

### What has been most rewarding about your volunteering experience so far?

*Over the last year, I helped with pre-COVID fundraising events and assisted with deliveries, including delivering 2019 Christmas hampers (so heartwarming!). I have also*



*taken on some administrative projects in the community office and even had the opportunity to participate in a sponsored shopping spree with the food going to women who are served by VWTH.*

### Have you engaged in any other VWTH initiatives or programs?

*I have been participating in a fitness program, called STRIDE which engages women who are 55+. The motto for the group is 'no one is left on their own'. Every week we walk together on one of the many easily-accessed Victoria trails, and when the weather is not so nice, we attend aqua-fit or osteo-fit or some other indoor program. After our exercise, we sit together over a coffee and enjoy 30-minutes or so of chatting, camaraderie and laughter. I really enjoy this part of my week and I look forward to seeing everyone.*

We give our sincere thanks to Sue and all of our wonderful and dedicated VWTH volunteers. For more info on the VWTH Volunteer Program, please email [info@vwth.bc.ca](mailto:info@vwth.bc.ca) and put "Volunteer" in the subject line. Thank you.



## Shelter Wish List Gift Cards Needed

Your donation of a grocery or pharmacy gift card is greatly appreciated!

When a woman leaves our Emergency Shelter, VWTH offers her a care package of essentials—including a grocery gift card to help her and her family purchase groceries, fresh produce and other essentials. This season, when you are out grocery shopping or Holiday gift buying, please consider adding a gift card to your list as a gift for a Transition House resident. Gift cards from Fairway Market, Walmart, Thrifty Foods, Shoppers Drug Mart, London Drugs, or other grocery stores and pharmacies, in increments of \$25 and \$50, are most practical.

To organize a safe drop-off during office hours, please call **250.592.2927**. Gift cards can also be mailed to our community office. Please include your name, return address and value of the gift card so that we can send you a note of appreciation.

## Christmas Hampers

2020 has been a challenging and unpredictable year for everybody, and all the more so for the women and children who have visited our Emergency Shelter or who have accessed our counselling and support services. Although the recommended safety precautions around COVID-19 prevent us from running our regular Christmas Hamper Program, we truly hope our modified version will serve to provide our clients with the same joy and relief others have experienced in past years.

### NEW THIS YEAR: Gift Card Hampers

We will be matching individuals, families and corporate donors with a VWTH clients—either a single woman or a family. Each donor will be provided with a gift card wish list from a woman/mother so that she can purchase Holiday groceries, gifts for her children and some special gifts and treats for herself and her family.

We invite community members to join the program and become donors. For more information, please email our program coordinator at



[christmas@vwth.bc.ca](mailto:christmas@vwth.bc.ca) or visit our website, [www.transitionhouse.net](http://www.transitionhouse.net) and click on Support Us and Christmas Hamper Program. We thank all generous donors for their heartwarming contributions.

# With Our Thanks

Thank you to the **100+ Women Who Care Victoria**; the **Eldon and Anne Foote Fund** at the Edmonton Community Foundation; **A & S Murphy Family Fund**; **National Bank Financial**; the **Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem "Angels of Victoria"**; **Community Recovery Program** at the Victoria Foundation from the **Elizabeth Russ Fund**; and to **Lowe's Tillicum Victoria** and **Boxcarsix Artist Collective** for fundraising events and campaigns in support of Transition House shelter and support services. Thank you to the Chefs at **The Victorian, Atria Retirement Residence** for preparing 50 individual Thanksgivings dinners and delicious pumpkin spice muffins, delivered to enthusiastic VWTH shelter and residence clients. And thank you to the dozens of folks who continue to contribute toiletries, face masks, farm produce, quilts, knitted blankets and more.

Each month from September until April, VWTH will receive a beautiful bouquet of flowers created and safely delivered by **Foxglove Flowers**. Thank you to a generous community donor for this thoughtful and heartwarming gesture.

Victoria Women's Transition House is deeply grateful to the Estate of **Walter Charles Cownden** for his generous bequest.



## Why I Give

*I believe women have the right to be physically and emotionally safe. It is what I want for myself, my daughters and my granddaughters. It is every woman's right.*

- Long-term VWTH donor

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

### I would like to give a gift of:

\$1000    \$500    \$100    \$50    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](http://transitionhouse.net) and click on Donate

**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): \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send me information about making a gift in my will to VWTH

I have already included VWTH in my will



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