



O U T R E A C H

A Newsletter for Friends of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin

The Mission of Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is to enhance Individual, Family and Community life in a manner that reflects the values and traditions consistent with the Catholic Faith. Our services are available to all people who live or work in the Region of Peel & Dufferin County.

• WE SERVE PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS AND CREEDS •

Peer Mentor Profile

My children and I are alive today because of the work done over fourteen years ago in an agency funded by ShareLife, Catholic Family Services... I was frightened to talk to anyone; the repercussions at home were immense. But Catholic Family Services felt safe. Safe enough for me to start talking. Safe enough for me to know my secret stress—that I was being abused physically, emotionally and sexually.

I was first introduced to CFSPD when I went to my parish priest in 1987 to ask for Last Rites. The wise man that he was explained that I couldn't receive this sacrament "a head of time". My problem, I thought, was that I was slowly dying. I had developed severe asthma that past year and every hospital admittance was becoming more and more serious. I realized my next attack could very well be my last and I was terrified for myself and my kids. I was a mother of six children, ages 3-13, working full time and not understanding what was happening to me. Well this priest said that he understood asthma could be stress related and gave me the number for CFSPD. He told me to try and talk to someone there.

I worked up the nerve to give them a call. Thank goodness there was no waiting list back then or I'm sure I would have lost my nerve and would be dead now. I was immediately given an appointment with a therapist and I went to talk to him. It was somewhat of a relief to talk to someone about what was really happening in my life. I could no longer take care of my husband. We had been trying to get some help for him but his dependence on alcohol and his excessive mood swings with the other responsibilities I had were making life very difficult. I was also afraid to talk to anyone because my husband had threatened that this was no one else's business and I was afraid of what he may do. I thanked the therapist for seeing me and decided I felt a little better. But the therapist didn't stop there. I got a call from him once a month for a number of months asking how I was doing and if I wouldn't like to come back and talk to him again. I finally agreed but explained I would like to speak to a woman because in my own mind men were very threatening. That's when the journey began for me and the realization I was living with abuse not unlike what I had grown up with.

Meeting other women from abusive relationships, individual counselling, prayer, and many dedicated people, made it possible for me to leave a dangerous situation. Difficult because there were threats, physical and verbal abuse and stalking; difficult because I believed in marriage; difficult because I still loved him; and difficult because 6 kids needed me. CFSPD offered counselling for the kids to help them understand what was happening, why they felt as they did, and how to protect themselves from someone they also loved but who continually crossed boundaries.

It was in meeting other women that the idea of "mentoring" first became born. Having someone there who had been through the same pain you were experiencing, fought the same or similar battles, only wanting to live free of abuse, offering hope that this situation could be changed and holding your hand so you didn't have to feel so alone and isolated. I was very excited by the opportunity that presented itself, to give back to an agency that had saved my life, and to offer other women the support and validation we all so desperately need.

The dedication by the staff at CFSPD was inspiring. To set up the program, provide a year training to 7 women who had come along in their own healing, in a climate of very little funding and support by the community was truly a "God experience". (That's my own term for moments I see God in people or events that surround me). Matching us with women and walking with them in their own journeys for a time has shown me the true strength of the human spirit. I myself have had 6 'sisters' in the past 10 years, some relationships lasting 5-6 years. I have watched women protect their children, return to school to support themselves and strive for life with hope and courage. This program does not promote "blaming" anyone. There is no bad guy, there is only the striving for a life that's free of abuse, in a climate of caring and sharing, of coping and encouraging, inspiring and empowering.

I've seen benefits in my own kids as they have gone out into the world without a chip on their shoulder but with an understanding that set goals can be accomplished, that hope and courage bring success and happiness to themselves and those around them. By helping just one person the ripple effect takes hold and the community is made better.

My hopes for this program is that more women can be trained as sisters and that the inclusion of "Wellness Workshops" and similar programs can reach more women to empower them. The benefits to the community can not be measured accurately because the multiplying effects of one contact, one spoken word, one smile, one "God experience" to change the life of one person, or one family, who passes that on to those around them becomes too big to even fathom!

Special Acknowledgements

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin would like to give a special thanks to the many individuals, organizations, businesses and Knights of Columbus Councils that kindly made donations this year! Your contributions have enabled us to continue to provide exceptional services to our clients and to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding and diverse community.

From The Board Chair

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Board of Directors has initiated a Long Range Planning exercise for the Agency. We are coming to the end of the leases in both our Mississauga and Brampton facilities. It is an opportune time to reflect on the future needs of the community and our unique capabilities to service those needs. The high regard that the community has for Catholic Family Services right now, is certainly an encouragement for us to strive to 'be all we can be'.

With the help of a professional facilitator, the Board and a broad cross-section of staff members gathered together on a Saturday in late November to generate ideas about the direction of our future. It was a very stimulating day! The ideas created were exciting and imaginative and the cooperative spirit between Board members and staff members was inspiring.

Over the next few months the Board will develop these ideas further with the intent of producing by spring, a draft of a 5-Year Plan. After that we will take some time to consult with the various stakeholders of Catholic Family Services. The next few years is promising to be an exciting period for CFSPD and friends of the agency.

Adrian O'Connor
Chair, Board of Directors

We Welcome!

Marion James, Daphne Lok, Agnes Attakora
Jan Nevins and Ajay Royan as members of our **Board of Directors**



Preeya Rateja joins the **HEAL Network** as the program's
new outreach worker



The **Intake** staff welcome Natalia Khan as the
newest member of their team



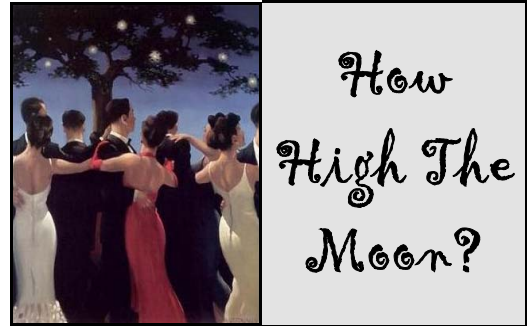
Hello Students & Interns!

Thanks for accepting placements with us this year.
We hope your experience at CFSPD is challenging and
fruitful.

Fundraising

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Fundraising remains an important focus for 2003! This year the fundraising team is working enthusiastically to achieve a \$10,000 goal by hosting our first-ever special event!



Our 1st Annual Dinner Dance & Silent Auction will be held on Saturday February 1st, 2003 at the Mississauga Convention Centre beginning at 6:30 pm and continuing to 1:00 am! Tickets are \$75 per person or reserve a table for 10 at a special rate of \$700! Call 905.450.1608 X114 to purchase tickets or donate items for our auction table.

We are looking forward to an exciting evening that features the award-winning *Toronto Mega City Swing Band*, great food, fabulous auction items and lots of fun!

Help us be successful in reaching our \$10,000 goal!

The Fundraising Team continues to explore other possible sources of revenue including donations from individuals, businesses, service clubs and school initiative programs.

The Fundraising Team would like to thank the Board and staff members for their encouraging support!

Sandy Faux
Chair, Fundraising Committee

To Find Out More About Volunteering On The
Fundraising Committee

Please Call 905.450.1608 X114

Funders

ShareLife

United Way of Peel Region

Ministry of Community, Family & Children's Services

Ministry of the Attorney General

Staff Focus

SUSAN HARRIS, M.S.W., R.S.W.

*Clinical Program Manager
Program Coordinator Sistering Group*

A pioneer in the field of woman abuse in Canada, Susan Harris joined the counselling staff at Catholic Family Services in 1986. She brought with her 10 years of experience working extensively in the areas of woman abuse, domestic violence and trauma that also included a long history of involvement and advocacy for women's rights.

During the social ferment of the mid-70's, feminism articulated the connection between woman abuse and the oppression of women and brought the pervasiveness of domestic violence to the attention of the media, the judicial system and the general public. In 1978 Susan co-founded the *Domestic Violence Project*, the first comprehensive counselling program for abused women in Ontario. Prior to the establishment of this program, victim services for women and children was limited to the support provided by shelters and Women's Centers. Despite the best advocacy efforts of social service providers and women's groups, male batterers could not be charged in cases of partner abuse until the mid-Eighties.

Susan continued her work with abuse survivors in Ottawa and Winnipeg. She was involved in many community initiatives regarding issues of concern to women including *Education Wife Assault* and participation on the *Manitoba Committee On Wife Assault*. Upon joining Catholic Family Services Susan initiated a domestic violence program that would eventually grow to include a group program for women, programs for children and a group counselling program for men. By the late eighties, Susan expanded services for trauma survivors further to include group programs for adult survivors of childhood abuse.

Involved in the genesis of the Sistering Program 10 years ago, Susan remained indirectly involved with the group providing supervision and consultation to the program coordinators. However, two years ago in addition to her responsibilities as Clinical Program Manager, Susan assumed the coordinators role for the program bringing her back full circle to the group she helped foster.

As she guides the Sistering Program into the future, Susan continues to work with the 'Sisters' to expand the program by speaking to the need to operationalize spirituality in work with trauma survivors.



Sistering Group

Program Feature

The Sistering Program is a volunteer group of women who support others who have experienced woman abuse, childhood abuse and trauma. The group began in 1994 with a small grant from the Ministry of Health. The idea for a peer-mentor program grew out of the needs expressed by women attending a trauma recovery group. They described peer support as a beneficial way to reduce the isolation felt by survivors of abuse by connecting with women who had similar experiences. Women who had been through the woman abuse and childhood sexual abuse counselling programs and were at a stage to expand their ongoing healing process by giving back to others, were recruited and trained to provide one-on-one mentoring.

The first group of Sisters was trained in 1994 and a second group recruited in 1996. The two groups met separately every month but finally met for the first time in late 1997 and were integrated into a single group by the end of 1998 with a combined membership of 8 women. The newly merged group experienced a process of integration that involved re-visiting the issues of trust and acceptance.

Early in 2000, the Sisters attended a weekend retreat that not only galvanized them together personally and emotionally, but also fostered a spiritual dialogue that would center the group and coalesce its vision the following year. The Sisters began to organize wellness workshops geared towards survivors of violence and trauma and open to the wider community.

The group's involvement in a series of workshops that explored a new cosmology based on the story of the universe had a profound impact on the Sister's way of thinking. Pondering the interconnectedness of all life and human/earth relationships, they recognized the restorative value of participating in the web of life as a way to re-establish wholeness; to help mend the feelings of fragmentation and isolation experienced by trauma survivors.

The Sisters will be continuing with their workshop series "*Mind, Body, Spirit*", to promote wellness and connection on all levels—individual, environmental and community. The Sisters hope to expand their program and their capacity to validate, listen, support, educate and offer guidance to women who have experienced violence and trauma by providing one on one mentoring that encourages personal growth and empowerment.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SISTERING PROGRAM:

905.450.1608 X115

Scattering The Seeds of Hope

Counselling Programs

INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE AND FAMILY PROGRAM

Through individual, couple or family work, this program strives to improve relationships, reduce emotional distress and enhance personal well-being by providing assistance to the following:

- Individuals experiencing loneliness, low self-esteem, anxiety, episodic depression, work concerns, bereavement and other life stressors.
- Couples experiencing relationship difficulties including poor communication, lack of intimacy, affairs, extended family pressures, or contemplating separation/divorce.
- Families coping with developmental transitions, cultural adjustment, parenting, step-family concerns, separation, divorce or other issues.

WOMAN ABUSE

Comprehensive services to families experiencing woman abuse:

- Support groups for women who have been assaulted by their partners.
- Psycho educational groups for men who have assaulted their partners.
- Individual and family counselling.

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN EXPOSED TO WOMAN ABUSE

Catholic Family Services is the lead agency for the HEAL Network. Services include:

- A group program for mothers and their children (newborn to age 12).
- In-School groups for children.
- Workshops and groups for adolescents.
- Public Education and outreach workshops for parents.

ADULTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Counselling services to adults who have experienced trauma through childhood abuse:

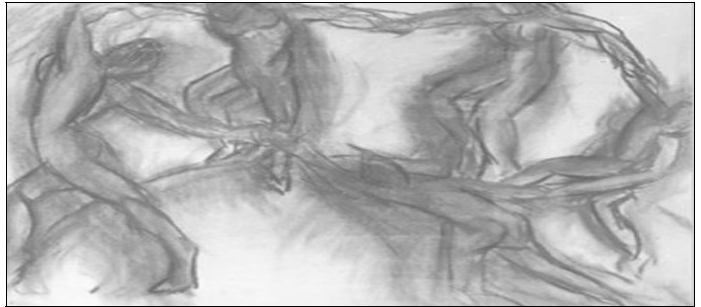
- Support groups for women who have experienced sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence.
- Individual counselling for women and men to explore the impacts of childhood abuse.
- Couple and family work to support the healing process.

SISTERING PROGRAM

Sistering is a volunteer program for women who, having participated in our family violence programs, are at a stage in their own healing process whereby they wish to give back by offering support to other women in crisis.

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Parish Social Ministry is the empowerment of the parish to respond in an organized way to societal and individual human needs. Its mission of love, justice, freedom and peace calls forth the gifts of the parish community in service and celebration. Parish Social Ministry is involved with other churches/congregations, agencies, community groups, and in community development programs. Agency staff assists the parish with organization, training and formation programs and ongoing resources and support.



Circle of Healing

A Mindfulness Based, Therapeutic Group For Women Survivors Of Childhood Abuse And Trauma

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Identifying and managing triggers
- Body awareness and feelings management
- Loss and grieving
- Exploring the role of spirituality
- Reclaiming sexuality

These topics will be integrated within a foundation of mindfulness practice to significantly reduce trauma related symptoms, increase the ability to relax and shift experiences of overwhelming thoughts and feelings.

14 WEEK GROUP MEETING

Beginning Monday January 27th, 2003

Mondays 6:00-8:30 PM

2 Saturdays 9:00 AM-3:30 PM

PLEASE CALL BY DECEMBER 13th, 2002

905.450.1608 X115

Donations

Invest In Your Community

**YOUR DONATION DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE
TAX RECEIPTS ARE ISSUED FOR ALL DONATIONS!**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Offices

BRAMPTON

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**TOLL FREE DUFFERIN & WELLINGTON COUNTIES
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