

## CELEBRATING WOMEN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our 18<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held at the Scarborough Civic Centre was a great success! We elected two new Board members, France Brunelle and Marcela Kupfer, and re-elected Sheryl Dyke (formerly Cemovic) for a second term. There was a presentation by Board members on building membership participation in running the Centre, to ensure that we are truly community based. (See the newsletter article on this topic).

Highlights of the annual report were presented, reflecting on the impact of the Centre's programs and services in assisting women to make positive, long-term changes in their lives. We also expressed gratitude to the volunteers, staff, funders, donors and community partners who make it possible to achieve our mission.

Our keynote speaker, Betty Carr, publisher of Metroland Newspapers - The Scarborough Mirror, Etobicoke Guardian and other local papers, was inspiring to all. She discussed how women can support each other in our lives and in the work world. Because of the efforts of the trailblazers of previous decades, we can now get what **they** deserve!

We must look to each other for networking, in what can otherwise be a lonely environment. Ms. Carr told us about her own mentors over the course of her career. The common elements were their ability to inspire her; to make her laugh and lighten the moment; and to stay in contact, remembering to connect. Thinking about our own lives, Betty Carr challenges us to consider: Who could I support? Who should I ask for support? Satisfaction and success can come from working together with others, rather than in

isolation and competition.

We hope that everyone will join us at our 19<sup>th</sup> AGM in September 2001. At that time, we will tell you more about our **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration!!**

### president's Corner

I am sure that we can all remember when the subject of domestic violence was first introduced amidst laughter in the House of Commons in the late 1970's. There is now consensus that we must bring an end to domestic violence. What is being contested in political and ideological circles is how we do this. There is a saying that when the watering hole shrinks, the animals look at each other very differently. Right now we are witnessing this phenomenon. We are experiencing cuts in education and health care sectors as well as in other social services. Our Fundraising Committee continues to work tirelessly to fulfil our mission to "empower any woman wanting to leave an abusive or isolating situation so that she can implement long term positive changes with confidence". Do you have ideas that can enhance our efforts towards continuous improvement? Please share them with us. We need your support and solutions to bring an end to woman abuse.

Lynette Spence, Board President

#### SPRING TEA



A fundraising tea - **Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup> 2001, 1-3 p.m.**  
Bring your mother, neighbour, or a friend!

**WOMEN AT THE CENTRE**

is a publication of SWC. Submissions & suggestions are very welcome. Please forward to Lynda Kosowan, MSW,RSW Executive Director.

## IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE

### - Voices of women from the ESS program

When will my life ever get better? Why do I keep repeating the same mistakes over and over? Why can't I break the vicious cycle of abuse I keep finding myself in? These are some of the questions I've been asking myself over the past 20 years. I've tried in vain to get answers and to change my life from the constant merry-go-round of confusion, depression and despair caused by living in abusive environments. I didn't know how to change my situation because I lived it all my life. It started as a child and continued. I repeated my childhood in every relationship that I entered into by getting involved with alcoholic partners. I tried to live a "normal" life but it became increasingly more difficult as the years went by. I needed help and didn't know where to find it. My life started to change after the sudden death of my father, which gave me the strength and courage to leave my partner and father of my two year old daughter. I needed to break the cycle of abuse for my daughter's sake. I fled to a shelter for abused women. They helped keep us safe and directed me towards programs that would help me get through the tough but rewarding road ahead. I started a course at Scarborough Women's Centre. The Economic Self Sufficiency Program saved my life! The wonderful and supportive instructor taught me and the other women in the group how to break the cycle of abuse and start living a normal life. I have been working on my new life for the last year and I'm happy to say it is

going great. I have moved to a building for women and their children and it has become my safe haven. I have recently completed a business course for entrepreneurs which has helped me start my own video production business. I have lost my creativity over the last ten years and want to get it back. I plan on producing a series of documentaries about abused women and how they managed to break the cycle of abuse. I have recently started a videotaping business and plan to incorporate documentary producing in a year. SWC has continued to help me with confidence building and emotional support. I give special thanks to Rishma for her continued support.

Junie



I grew up in a multigenerational family home. I witnessed my Great Grandmother, Grand-mother, and Mother being abused regularly. My Great Gran said this is the way it was for her Grandmother and hers before. It is the way it is for women.

Living in our home was like walking on egg shells for women and children. I did everything I could to be "good" but the violence and abuse continued.

I married a respected man in our community, and became a good wife and mother. I exhausted myself to keep the peace. One day my daughter took her father's assault. I swooped her up and left. We sought therapy and healing. All the while I was stalked by my husband and shunned by my family who were

no longer proud of me. My lawyer

told me to pack up and run away.

I came to Toronto and heard about SWC and how I could find dignity by learning some truths in a group of women. I called and met Rishma who turned out to be an angel. She listened, treated me as an equal with respect and dignity.

In our group we explore and heal the effects of many years of abuse. I've learnt so much. We are rebuilding our lives and healing our children's lives emotionally, spiritually and physically.

**Thank you** to all who are part of SWC, all who are part of the solution.

Brenda

### **SCARBOROUGH WOMEN'S SAFETY EDUCATION PROJECT - A VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

As part of our ongoing commitment to violence prevention, we are offering a five-part seminar series called the Scarborough Women's Safety Education Project, with support from a City of Toronto Breaking the Cycle of Violence grant. We will focus on skill-building techniques (assertiveness, problem solving, prevention and intervention); help participants understand the nature and impact of violence against women, and identify important reinforcing linkages between types of violence.

For more information or to request a seminar program please contact Roma Beckles, Woman Abuse Outreach Coordinator at (416) 439-7111.

### **Roma Beckles VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - AN OVERVIEW**

Every day, women are physically, sexually and emotionally abused. According to a 1993 Statistics Canada survey, 1 out of 2 women

in Canada has been physically or sexually assaulted at least once. This statistic shows the pervasiveness, but it does not reveal the tremendous social, health and economic costs both to women who experience violence and to society as a whole. A 1995 study by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women estimated the cost of violence against women to exceed \$4 billion dollars annually, which includes providing services to victims; bringing perpetrators to justice; losing the full contribution to the workforce of women who have been abused. The costs to women who experience violence are far more difficult to quantify. Acts of violence, whether occurring in the home or in the community, instil fear in women's lives and are obstacles to achieving social equality.

It is impossible to take action to prevent, minimize or end violence against women without understanding why it happens.

To understand the causes and context of violence against women it is important to look at social inequality in our society, including the hierarchical relationships of race, class and gender in which sexual inequality and violence are tightly bound.

Women live in a social environment where, because of inequality, they are vulnerable to violence. If women continue to have unequal access to social, economic and political resources, their experiences of violence will continue. RB

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is one of the many issues the Board of Directors has been discussing because of the need to ensure that we remain a community-based program. We have taken the initiative to strike a special committee to consider the

many issues related to membership such as:

- ?? Constitutional definition
- ?? Our Access Policy
- ?? Membership fees
- ?? Benefits and responsibilities

Currently, membership is defined in our constitution as: active volunteer, or paid member. It has been suggested that in 2001 the membership fee could be waived and the membership opened to both participants and women attending our events.

Why would someone want to become a member? What would a woman get in return for becoming a member? Could it be ... the satisfaction of being part of an organization, which is pro active in empowering women to become self-sufficient? Or maybe ... being part of a network of like-minded women who promote the need for resources and services offered the Centre?

First and foremost, as a member a woman has the constitutional right to vote at the AGM where volunteer members of the Board are elected and business resolutions are passed. In the past, we've asked members to participate in focus groups to help evaluate our programs. By exploring the membership issues we are not simply looking to have more women "sign-up" but really to find ways to make sure that we have a strong and *active* membership.

What do you think? We would like to examine membership issues in depth and need to hear from you, our current members, about your thoughts and ideas for increasing membership and for making it more meaningful and participatory. We invite you to participate in a special meeting in the new year. This will be your chance to meet other women and find out why they are members. It is also your opportunity to tell us how we can make membership more meaningful

for you. We promise to have a great discussion! Please contact the Centre to let us know you are interested - Thanks!

Lynn Fournier-Ruggles &  
Dorothy Clark,  
Membership Committee

## **NEW STAFF POSITION AT SWC!!!**

We recently received a grant from the Province of Ontario Investing in Women's Futures program. In addition to paying for infrastructure costs like rent, it will allow us to hire a Case Manager until March 31<sup>st</sup>. We hope that we will be successful in securing ongoing funding for the position. What is a Case Manager? A woman who has the special training, skills and caring to meet with individual women to help them develop a plan to use the Centre and other community resources. If you are in a transition in your life (and trying to get back on track), a meeting with the Case Manager is for you!!

She will listen to your situation, help you clarify your goals, and help you decide how to reach those goals. She will encourage and support you through the process. If you are interested in meeting with the Case Manager, or just learning more about the service, call Cheryl Champagne.