

## **ABUSE AND PREGNANCY: PROTECTING 2 LIVES**

Many women are victims of intimate partner violence before, during and after pregnancy. Abuse during pregnancy puts both the mother and fetus at risk. Studies estimate that:

- **1 in 5 teen women and 1 in 6 adult women will be abused during pregnancy**
- **40% of women abused during pregnancy report that the abuse first began when they were pregnant**
- **63% of abused women reported that the frequency and intensity of abuse escalated during pregnancy**
- **95% of women abused during pregnancy are also abused after pregnancy**

(Statistics Canada, Johnson, 1996)

Despite its prevalence an estimated

- **85% of the cases involving abuse against pregnant women are never identified**

(Cdn Journal of Medicine, 1994)

A combination of factors account for this lack of identification. They include:

- **Fear, shame and embarrassment that an abused woman might feel**
- **Lack of information on the part of service providers about resources available and how best to use these resources**

The opportunity to identify violence is perhaps the greatest during pregnancy as it is one of the few times that an abused woman routinely interacts with the service

delivery system. A range of service providers come into contact with pregnant women, including: midwives, doulas, emergency room staff, public health nurses, dieticians, ultrasound technicians, home visitors, massage therapists, and labour coaches. Although the nature and duration of contact varies, the response that these front line workers can provide is crucial.

The Safe Motherhood Education Project is an initiative of several Scarborough based organizations concerned about the issue of violence against pregnant women. SWC is the co-chair and trustee of the project, which is funded by the United Way of Greater Toronto, Freedom from Violence Grant Program. It is designed to address the multi-faceted needs of pregnant and post-natal women experiencing abuse. Through a series of training sessions, we will attempt to strengthen the capacity of both pre/post-natal women and service providers to effectively respond to abuse. The training emphasizes the critical window of opportunity that pregnancy provides for screening, assessment and intervention on behalf of abused women.

**Early identification of battered pregnant women and intervention on their behalf can help save lives.**

*Roma Beckles*

*Woman Abuse Outreach Coord*

## **WHERE WERE YOU 20 YEARS AGO?**

In July 1982, a group of dedicated community members celebrated

the opening of Scarborough Women's Centre. Originally located on the lower level of Cedarbrook Community Centre, we offered information referral counselling and some courses where women could learn and grow together. Over the years we have fulfilled the promise of that exciting first day by growing into a vibrant organization assisting women to move towards emotional and economic independence.

Many wonderful community members have been involved - as volunteers, staff, friends and participants. You are welcome to come to our **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration on Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Scarborough Civic Centre.** Reflect on our progress and envision our future! Look forward to seeing you there!

## **RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS**

This is an excerpt from the text that Past President Vicki Bismilla had prepared for our AGM on September 11, 2001. Because of the tragic events of that day, Vicki had to be on call for her job, but we wanted to share it with you anyway ...

How difficult can it be to be kind to someone? We have so many opportunities each and every day of our lives to be kind to someone and most of you take that opportunity: at grocery stores, crossing the street, and at work. Volunteerism is simply an extension of this same concept -

the concept of kindness, but with a little more permanence.

In a book called, *Head First, The Biology of Hope*, Norman Cousins says: "There is rapidly mounting scientific evidence that hope, faith, love, the will to live, purpose, laughter and festivity can help combat serious disease... this may be the greatest force of all within the human arsenal."

As you know, volunteerism gives back doublefold to the volunteer- it lifts our own spirits, it reminds us that we are part of a community and often, it fills the need in us to be appreciated. So there is definitely payback.

How can we do our part in improving conditions for peoples who have historically suffered discrimination? One such group has been women. Still today there are many policies that exist that make it very difficult for women to participate fully in society - to earn a decent wage, to understand legislation sufficiently well in order to address their concerns of abuse or other serious issues. So organizations like SWC exist to assist women. Most of these organizations rely on volunteer help to successfully assist women. Your help is critical to these organizations, critical and fundamental. Without your assistance, these organizations will close down.

I have shared with you an article that profiles women from around the world who have volunteered to help others. Some of these women are rich and famous but others are

simply women like you and me - women who just want to help. The less well known we are the more powerful is our work.

I hope that you will be inspired to become a volunteer. Start small but dream big! Your vision of a perfect world starts with the first small step you take toward it. May you walk in peace and in the good company of people who share your dream.

Thank you for inviting me here today - being in your company is important in my walk toward my vision of helping to create a caring and compassionate world community.

*Vicki Bismilla*  
*Past President, SWC*

**CALLING ALL PAST  
SWC PROGRAM  
PARTICIPANTS.... WOULD  
YOU LIKE TO HELP THE  
CENTRE IMPROVE ITS  
PROGRAMS AND SERVE  
WOMEN BETTER?**

If you have taken part in any of our programs (Information, Education, Support, Case Management, Economic Self Sufficiency) in the last three years, but are not currently registered in a program, the Consumer Advisory Group is for you.

**WHAT IS THE CONSUMER ADVISORY GROUP?** A group of women who have used Centre services give regular feedback to the Centre's Program Evaluation

Committee to help make our programs better. The group will meet one evening during the week, every three months for about two hours.

This is your opportunity to examine specific questions. There will be an opportunity for raising other issues and making suggestions you think are important. Together we will learn to be on a committee, express our opinions and raise issues.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NOW?** Contact Lynda Kosowan, our Executive Director to discuss your interest in the Consumer Advisory Group. We are recruiting women right now, and will hold the first meeting in February.

**OUR PHILANTHROPIC  
SPIRIT IS ALIVE AND WELL!**

The Fundraising Committee is delighted to welcome several new members this year and with them has come an array of talent and enthusiasm for our continuing fundraising campaign.

For the first time, SWC sponsored a Golf Tournament in September 2001 at the Mill Run Golf and Country Club. Golfers from all skill levels ranging from first-timers to pros came out to support the centre. A great time was had and a beautiful day outdoors enjoyed. Special thanks to Triden Manufacturing, Lexmark Canada and our participants, sponsors and donors for helping to raise \$4,000.

Our winter events line up included an afternoon with five successful Women, among them keynote speaker Avril Benoit of CBC Radio, discussing their personal journeys of success, a silent auction and networking with others in the community. We are also currently busy planning for our fifth annual Bowlathon for February 2<sup>nd</sup>, at Cedarbrae Bowl-erama, and our fourth annual Mother's Day Tea on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

We are interested in hearing from anyone who would like to offer their time or talents to assist with any of the upcoming events management or planning. The Fundraising Committee will hold an Orientation to provide further information on January 15<sup>th</sup>, from 7 - 8:30 p.m. Please let us know if you would like to attend to learn more about what's involved.

The Centre also has 2002 calendars available for only \$4.00. Please call the Centre to get yours!

Our thanks to all the wonderful people, both men and women, who volunteer in various ways to raise funds for the Centre. Your support of our events through in-kind donations of product and services, attendance and direct donations are so valuable. Because of you, our services are available to assist women in their journey towards economic and emotional independence!

*Sheryl Dyke*  
*Chair, Fundraising Committee*

## WOMEN AT RISK

We recently received funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation for our new project Women at Risk: Mothers of Children with Disabilities.

Over the past several years, our ESS program has worked with a number of women who have children with disabilities. As a result, we became more informed of the barriers, challenges and obstacles that women raising children with disabilities face in leaving and staying out of abusive relationships.

Statistics show that violence among women and children with disabilities is 83% higher than within the non-disabled community and yet access and services are limited. This new project is designed to address the challenges and issues for women in abusive relationships who have children with disabilities.

We hope to better understand the support needed by these women. We will provide a variety of education workshops for women and service providers to increase the resources available and to improve knowledge regarding the effects of violence on children. We want to sensitize women's agencies on issues when assisting women who have children with disabilities', and to sensitize agencies working with children with disabilities on the impact of domestic violence on children. Our hope is that as we gain more understanding of needs and issues

related to disability, we will be better able to serve women who are in abusive relationships and those who leave the abusive relationship.

The coordinator responsible to oversee this new and exciting project is Elisabeth (Liz) Lederman. She has worked in the violence against women field for over 20 years, about 10 of those years working with people with disabilities both in the United States and Canada. Liz is herself hearing impaired and can lip-read, voice and sign (American Sign Language). She is in the office part-time and can be reached by TDD at (416) 439-7321

*Rishma Mirshahi, ESS Program  
Coordinator and Liz Lederman,  
Women at Risk Coordinator*

# Acknowledgements & Appreciation

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SWC appreciates the contributions of these **groups**: Malvern Cricket & Social Club.

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Did you know? We have four licences to sell Nevada tickets for fundraising. Thank you so much to the following businesses which sponsor this great opportunity .....Elias Restaurant, 3310 Keele St. North York, ON M3M 2H7; Greystone Trading Company, 8 Greystone Walk Drive, Scarborough, ON M1K 5J2; Henry's Bar & Grill, 1564 Danforth Ave. Toronto, ON M4J 1N4; Ozi Food and Convenience, 1169 Woodbine Avenue, East York, ON M4C 4C6

**WOMEN AT THE CENTRE** is a publication of Scarborough Women's Centre. Submissions, letters and suggestion are very welcome.  
Please forward to Lynda Kosowan, MSW, RSW Executive Director.