



**Scarborough  
Women's  
Centre**

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# Women at the Centre

## Winter 2004 Newsletter

This year marks the fourth year for the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program (ESS Program), which addresses the problems women face when feeling forced to return to the abusive situation. Low self-esteem, isolation, lack of recognition of her own marketable skills, lack of support, hesitancy to utilize community services are some of the obstacles women face when attempting to become independent.

The ESS Program has three primary components: the ESS group for 20 weeks, case management services and a mentoring program. The group has three modules which focus on 1) healing from abuse; 2) building life skills necessary for economic and emotional independence; and 3) planning for the future in order to become independent.

This program is unique in offering women a long-term response to dealing with violence in their lives. We are presently in the process of fundraising for the upcoming year. The program has demonstrated success and surpassed our expectations. We are certain that this program is critical in addressing the issues and needs for women leaving

abusive relationships in a long lasting manner. A graduate of the ESS program shares her story:

### **WALKING THROUGH THE FEAR: PAULA'S PATH**

Walking through the fear ...  
the fear of my isolation ...  
the fear of being the only one ...  
the fear of never being loved and respected ...  
the fear of not being heard ...  
the fear of there not being anyone to help me.

One morning, I somehow woke up with the inner motivation, the desperation to walk through the fear, out the front door. I found my neighborhood parent/child drop-in center, walked in and released all my fears, all my tears to the first employee who sat down and listened to me.

She guided me to Scarborough Women's Centre ... the Centre which helped me to retain what was left of my spirit, my hope. I enrolled in the Centre's Economic Self Sufficiency program, which assisted me in once again finding my voice, my strength, my knowledge in believing that I,

like all women in society are worthy of love, respect, and a beautiful, safe tomorrow.

Since graduating from the ESS program, I have enrolled in part-time studies at George Brown College and have recently successfully completed my first semester in the AWCCA program; something I would not have been able to do if it were not for the many women that I have been privileged to meet through the Centre. I am grateful to you all!

To the women who may be temporarily lost in being able to walk through their own fears ... listen to your inner voice, go at your own pace. Know that although we have yet to cross paths, I believe in you ... and your ability to find your path too.

Paula

For more information, please call Rishma Mirshahi, ESS Program Coordinator at 416) 439-7111.

**WOMEN AT THE CENTRE** is a publication of SWC. Submissions and suggestions are very welcome. Please forward to Lynda Kosowan, MSW, RSW, Executive Director.  
[ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](mailto:ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca)

## WOMEN FACING CHALLENGES

Carol Timmings is Regional Director, East for Toronto Public Health. She is responsible for strategic administrative leadership in program, human resources and financial management of both regional and city-wide public health programs. She spoke at our AGM in September 2003 on the topic "Women Facing Challenges". Carol reflected on challenges faced by women both professionally, and personally, from the vantage point of her recent experience with the SARS crisis in Toronto, as well as her experience as a busy woman balancing personal, family and professional responsibilities. Here are some highlights from Carol's presentation.

There is a little bit of a leader in all of us. Having this attitude changes the way we look at our work.

Critical success factors for women as leaders include:

- having a relationship orientation towards leadership. Women leaders talk things through, hear concerns, give honest opinions and best advice. They build trust and draw strength from the trust of others. Trust leads to honesty and getting to the point.
- valuing experience and how it integrates practically and strategically into our work. We learn from others' experience, and build collective leadership by applying lived experience
- resiliency. Women leaders regroup after problems, and remain determined to achieve their goals
- mentoring. Women leaders

invest in others. They know that knowledge is for sharing and building together.

- practice self-care. Women leaders maintain a life balance, and remind each other about its importance

The audience was truly appreciative of Ms. Timmings' presentation, and had many questions to ask her during the reception. Thank you Carol, for sharing with us!

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

At our Annual General Meeting we elected five new members to the Board of Directors. For those of you who weren't able to join us that day, we know you'd like to meet them:

**Brenda Chalmers** is certified in Human Resource Management; Alternate Dispute Resolution Facilitation; and Social Service. She has held various advisory and supervisory positions in the provincial government, and is former Manager of Employment Programs for a large women's organization. Brenda had many years of experience in a children's mental health center, and has volunteered with Community Living and Redwood Shelter.

**Denise DeSousa** has a Master's in Political Science and is employed as Senior Research Consultant, Health-care and Public Affairs Division, of a Marketing Research organization. Her volunteer experience includes: Baylawn Co-op Preschool (Fund-raising Chair); Women's Executive Network and the

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.

**Kate Wicik** has an M.Ed. in Counselling and Special Education. She is currently employed as Case Manager in a mental health organization. Kate volunteers with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as a member of the Violence Prevention Initiative Committee.

**Samantha Singh, LL.B** was called to the bar in 2002. She is currently on maternity leave from her position as associate lawyer of a downtown firm specializing in litigation. Samantha's volunteer experiences include York University Legal Clinic, the South Asian Law Students Association, and the Bay Street Hoops Fundraiser.

**Terry Taosheng Liu** has a Master's in Economics and is a Certified Management Accountant currently employed as a senior financial analyst with a large Canadian insurance company. Terry has 10 years progressive accounting experience in a large bank in China. Her volunteer experience includes United Way charitable activities, and a one-to-one program for poor students in elementary school in China.

Our thanks and appreciation go to retiring Board members, Lynette Spence and Jackie Joachim, who both received the Ontario Volunteer Service Recognition Award for five years of service to the Centre. For information about Board or committee volunteering, please call Lynda Kosowan, our Executive Director.

## WOMEN & CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Centre has a special support group for women who are parenting children with disabilities. They meet every Tuesday morning at the East Scarborough Storefront (Morningside Avenue and Kingston Road). The purpose of the group is to reach women who are isolated by this responsibility. Disabilities include mobility, mental health, cognitive etc. In our support group, women are able to learn about legal, financial, community and emotional supports available to help them move forward in their own lives, and encourage their children to find their own level of independence. Women benefit from the experience of others and feel less alone, while learning about options and services which will help them create a better future for themselves and their children.

We thank Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation and the Canadian Women's Foundation for their support in making this opportunity possible. Please call Victoria Arshad at the Centre if you would like to know more or are interested in participating.



## AN INVITATION TO DEVELOP YOUR VOICE

The lives and relationships of women are formed by groups of people and

communities, which develop a shared understanding of knowledge, messages, and norms. Each individual is taught to follow these messages, and she internalizes these norms from her family, schools, media and cultural beliefs. For instance, ideas around “right” partner, “good” parents, “ideal body”, “perfect” person and so on. As one is growing up, she measures her abilities and strengths against social standards. If she finds that she does not quite fit with the norm, she develops critical voices in her head.

These voices give an individual stress because she has not fulfilled required expectations. They are constituted in one's mind and keep reminding an individual to “keep up”. Critical voices exist where comparison and evaluation are possible as well as when an individual feels vulnerable. They can be used as a basis for comparison against oneself and others. As a result, women's lives and relationships can be haunted by critical voices/thoughts which force us to position self and others as “less than” or “better than” They may get us to worry about misinterpretation of our intentions, thoughts, and behaviors by others. It may get us to put ourselves down, to believe that others are much more skilled or clever and to feel insecure or jealous. Critical voices get us to criticize one another, to remember each other's flaws and mistakes, to make assumptions about others' behaviors and to check our own assumptions less and less. They get us to be intolerant of differences and close our minds to finding alternative creative ways of being. Critical voices invite us to negativity and avoidance and they minimize our capacity for growth and change.

Developing your own voice is a compelling journey of life. Critical voices are embedded in our minds as they convince us that they are the only truth about others and ourselves. There are several ways to silence these voices.

- Recognize self-critical and socially critical messages
- Identify voices that don't originate from you (they are the product of messages from others)
- Counteract critical voices/thoughts: write out all the critical messages you hear inside your head. Try to figure out who said it first, where they come from, and how you learned about it. Write out a response that counteracts these messages.
- Make a list of things you like about yourself.

Questioning the existence of critical voices is the best route to developing your own voice. Happy possibilities!

If you would like to work with me to address critical voices which are keeping you from moving forward in your life, please give me a call.

Tahereh Barati  
Case Manager/Counsellor



### HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBSITE?

It's full of information re programs, volunteering and special events.

Visit us at:

[www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](http://www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca)

# Acknowledgements & Appreciation

**(July 2003 – December 2003)** We gratefully acknowledge the support received from Canadian Women's Foundation; Children's Aid Foundation; City of Toronto; Human Resources Development Canada; Maytree Foundation; Trillium Foundation; United Way of Greater Toronto; Government of Ontario through Ministry of Citizenship; and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Women's Directorate.

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

**Special Thanks for In-Kind Donations to:** Allan Kosowan; Art Gallery of Ontario; Bulova Watch Co. Ltd.; Cineplex Odeon; Delia Worthing; Famous Players; Gucci Timepieces (Canada) Ltd.; Haldimand Hills Spa Village; Hilton Toronto; Hockley Valley Resort; John Mastoras; Keg Restaurants Ltd.; Kodax Canada Inc.; Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People ; N&E Carew & Associates; Oasis Massage Therapy; Ontario Science Centre; Paramount Canada's Wonderland; Pizza Nova; Pizza Pizza; Radisson Hotel Toronto East; Royal Bank (Painted Post Branch); Soulpepper Theatre Co.; Tarragon Theatre; Tim Hortons; The Big Stretch Yoga Centre; The Body Shop; The Building Box; The Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre; The Fairmont Royal York; The Keg Restaurants Ltd.; Timex Canada Inc.; Toronto Maple Leafs; Toronto Raptors; Toronto Truck Theatre; U. of T. Bookstore; Vanessa Rigault; Winners.

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**Scarborough  
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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Please send an information package. \_\_\_\_\_

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