

CONGRATULATIONS SWC!!!

Excerpt from remarks made by The Honourable Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, MPP for Scarborough-Guildwood at our 2017 AGM celebrating 35 years of service.

It is my pleasure to join you today for SWC's Annual General Meeting. 35 years of excellence in Scarborough! Many congratulations to the 15 Shoppers Drug Mart Stores based in Scarborough on being recognized as SWC's Volunteers of the Year!

Scarborough Women's Centre is a very special place where women can find support, rediscover their confidence and self-esteem and nurture hope, awareness, resilience and trust. You promote positive change for women and girls, and create a secure, comprehensive and accessible environment.

There is a quote by Melinda Gates - "A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman." This, exactly, has been, and continues to be, the role of the SWC - you help women find their voice. To empower them and help them lead a fulfilling life.

You have made a tremendous difference in the lives of countless women, including those in Scarborough-Guildwood. Not only do they discover a new lease on life, they also build a supportive network and develop long-lasting friendships. Truly, they are never alone in their journey.

You prove time and again that there are no limits to what women can do. By creating stronger empowered women, you are in turn providing hope and a means for them to empower their families and children.

Congratulations on 35 years of advocating for and addressing the needs and concerns of the women of Scarborough. I wish you many more years of success as you continue your powerful work!



L to R: Lynda Kosowan (SWC ED), Joanna Noble (SWC Board President), Barbara Jamieson (SWC Founder) and The Hon. Mitzie Hunter (Minister of Education, MPP for Scarborough-Guildwood)

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES: AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE IN THE LABOUR POOL & OUR COMMUNITY

Did you know that one in seven people live with a disability and that number is expected to increase as the population continues to age? Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than their male counterparts or than women without disabilities. When they are employed, they are more likely to be in precarious forms of employment that increase their risk of experiencing poverty and staying in violent situations. Some reasons for this:

- Women with disabilities are more likely to experience barriers to achieving the post-secondary education required to obtain employment
- The rise in contract positions forces women with disabilities to rely on social assistance because they cannot afford to take on positions where they will lose the medical benefits needed for their medication or assistive devices
- A lack of appropriate accommodations in the work place make it difficult for women with disabilities to become employed and/or advance in their chosen fields

We have received funding from the Status of Women Canada to implement a three year project to promote the economic empowerment and security of women with disabilities in Scarborough. In partnership with RBC, YWCA Toronto Employment Programs, Centennial College Centres for Global Citizenship, Education & Inclusion and Students with Disabilities, Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre, East Scarborough Storefront and Springtide Resources we will:

- Complete community consultations to identify systemic barriers to stable employment for women with disabilities
- Develop tools to promote the inclusion of women with disabilities in the workforce
- Share the project learning and tools

We are committed to learn more about the barriers that prevent women with disabilities from becoming economically secure. This knowledge will help us in our mission to empower women to become economically and emotionally independent for future success, and to strengthen their local communities, free from violence.

- Melissa Simas, MSW, RSW
Program Coordinator, Expanding the Reach: Outreach to Women with Disabilities

A LETTER SHARED AT THE AGM TO CELEBRATE OUR 35TH ANNIVERSARY:

“I am a child, I like to think, of Scarborough Women’s Centre (SWC), like all the other children whose lives were changed, even saved, by the efforts of the heroes of the Centre. I speak for them, and the following story is why.

My story with SWC is a story of life-changing kindness. It was 1998, I may have been a year old or younger, and while at the Victims Witness Assistance Program waiting to testify in court, my mother saw a brochure for a program offered to victims of domestic violence. The program was called Economic Self Sufficiency and it was offered by Scarborough Women’s Centre.

The program was local and provided free childcare. As a single mother of twins this was one of the first programs that she could bring her daughters to. Two days a week we attended Burroughs Hall Community Centre, where my sister and I played with other little kids and were caringly supervised.

While we were in the daycare, playing as kids would (and should), my mother, our mothers, were attending the ESS program. Participants were there to heal and understand the abuse they survived and find strategies to go forward with their lives. For some, this meant re-entering the work force, upgrading their education, or even simply finding childcare.

SWC gave my mother, and others like her, our future through that free childcare and those classes. The facilitator, a coordinator, the personal mentors participants were matched up with, as well as the speakers ranging from lawyers, credit counsellors, yoga instructors, nutritionists, college counsellors and a WENDO self-defence instructor were the stones laid down towards a better life; SWC provided the map.

My family was in the program during the Christmas season and there were donations of toys for the mums to bring home to their kids. This was very appreciated as most of the women did not have the resources to give their kids presents. When my mother and I were discussing this time in my life, she said: *“My two little girls got wonderful little dolls and a Pianosaurus. There was also a large table with wrapping paper, and clothes that we could choose from. It may sound funny but being able to wrap your kids’ toys meant a lot. My kids were only two years old at the time and do not remember, but I do and it meant a lot to me.”*

I do remember subsequent holidays. Small things that seem to mean so little, were the little holiday miracles that would make a sad time happy for the mums, and normal to the children. Those things gave us dignity and joy, to be able to celebrate a holiday as my Mom had celebrated in her childhood, and that wrapping paper in particular is of indescribable worth to us.

In following years there were other parties for the kids

which also reunited participants. To meet other mothers, and for my sister and I to meet children in similar situations, helped us to feel welcome, not just there, but also in society. No one looked down on us for our situation.

My mother’s mentor helped her get into college, went to court with her, and attended her scholarship awards ceremony. When the Centre received tickets for events, Dorothy and my mother attended some very enjoyable events. She also knew how terrifying it was for my mother to have to bring us to a supervised access centre to visit our father.

ESS was a wonderful program for my family. My mother attended college and my sister and I, who were about to start kindergarten, saw our mother graduate. This moment is one of my very first memories and pushes me every day to work towards that same moment for myself. All that came before does not matter, as we were given by this Centre everything that came after; our lives.

In a few years, I will walk across the stage in Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto, surrounded by thousands of people, my mother likely so far in the crowd that I won’t be able to see her, but I will see her still as I remember where this all began for us - with two little girls, clutching identical graduation Barbie dolls, watching one incredibly strong, incredibly inspiring woman, walk across a small stage into a big future she would make for her kids; a moment that you gave to us, and all those like us, the children of Scarborough Women’s Centre. Thank you.”

This letter has been edited for length and to protect the confidentiality of the writer and her family.



CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS

One of things to keep in mind is while emotions and their expression are generally good things, controlling emotions can be just as important. Should we express everything we feel all the time? Should we be guarded or open? Do the circumstances where we express emotions matter? What if your expression of emotions scares me or causes me excessive pain, should you stop expressing that emotion?

Some of us learn to express our emotions first, then learn to control them after. Some of us have not learned to control our emotions so we may express uncontrollable anger, cry all the time, show signs of chronic moodiness, or speak loudly all the time. Learning to express emotion in control is important. We need to be aware that we can be dangerous to ourselves and others. Listen to your body. It will indicate what you are feeling. Watch for the warning signs that you are getting out of control. Take time out from the situations or people who are influencing how you want to express yourself. Note: they do not control your behaviour. You do. Decide what you want to do about the intense feelings you are experiencing. Focus on calming down. Remove yourself from the situation either

temporarily or permanently. Pay attention to other peoples' right to make decisions for themselves as well as your right to make decisions independently from them.

Choose what type of person you want to be. Erratic and unstable, calm and controlled, happy and free or any combination you can think of. Pay attention to the effects and if that style is working for you. If not, work on changing it.

- Jacynth Fennell, Counsellor

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Thank you to the Ministry of the Status of Women Ontario, City of Toronto and many other funders and donors for making the Counselling program possible.

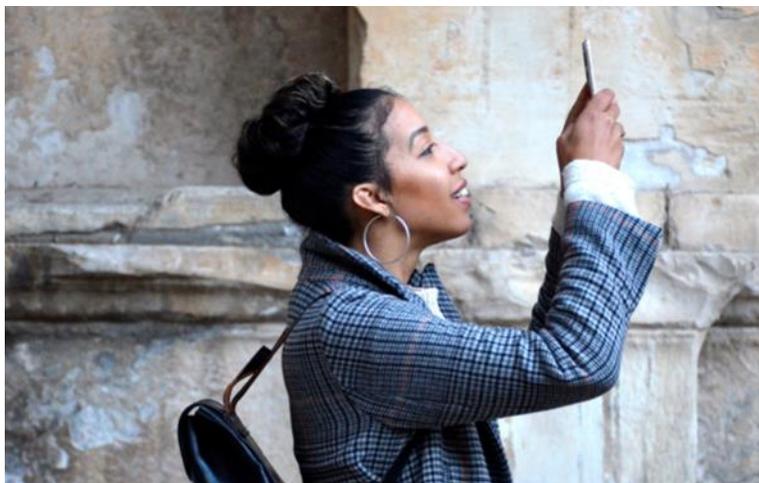


USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO FIGHT VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT

It's become a little easier to speak up against violence and connect with community support systems. Mobile apps can be used to report sexual harassment and other troubling behaviours, and provide support features during situations where safety may be at risk. Just to name a few free apps available for smartphones and androids:

Always There App

Some things can be hard to say out loud. If you need a little time with someone who gets what's going on in your life, you can connect directly with a Kids Help Phone counsellor five days a week using the free chat app. It's anonymous and confidential.



SafeTTC

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) public awareness campaign targets sexual harassment, racism, homophobia and other troubling behaviour on the system. It allows transit riders to use their smartphones to report harassment, safety issues and other incidents.

Toronto Police Mobile Service

A Toronto Police and Crime Stoppers app lets users anonymously report crimes, includes interactive features that enable residents to alert police in real time about a crime or potential crime through photos, video, emails, text, and a button that autodials Crime Stoppers.

Circle of 6

Designed specifically to combat sexual assault and interpersonal violence, this app allows users to select six friends to form a trust circle. It uses GPS location and comes with automated messages - including "Come and get me. I need help getting home safely" and "Call and pretend you need me. I need an interruption" - to provide interference in a potentially distressing situation. There are also built-in hotlines and links to helpful info on sexuality, relationships and safety.

-Priscilla Arias, Program Coordinator,
Building Strong Futures: Young Women's Outreach

Thank You to Mackenzie Investments Charitable Foundation, Kiwanis Club of Toronto Foundation and TELUS for your continued support in the empowerment of young women!!

WOMEN AT THE CENTRE IS A PUBLICATION OF SCARBOROUGH WOMEN'S CENTRE.

LETTERS AND SUGGESTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. PLEASE FORWARD TO: **LYNDA KOSOWAN**, MSW, RSW, EXECUTIVE

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DESIGN AND LAYOUT: KALUM PERERA

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THIRD PARTY EVENTS

Canadian Federation of University Women (Scarborough) Fashion Show, Music at Starbucks - 43 Milner Ave, Rotaract Art Gala (University of Toronto), Scarborough Toyota 150 Campaign, Shoppers Drug Mart Growing Women's Health Campaign



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Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____ payable to **Scarborough Women's Centre**.

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WINTER 2018