

#WhatIReallyReallyWant

Over the summer our Building Strong Futures: Young Women's Outreach Program took to social media in support of a United Nations video campaign. Part of their gender equality initiative called "The Global Goals", the video samples the song "Wannabe" by Spice Girls, and went viral with the support of Victoria Beckham.

The video features women and girls celebrating while drawing attention to several notable women's rights issues such as "End violence against young girls" and "Equal pay for equal work". The video remake ends with a prompt for viewers to get involved by sharing their own picture of what they "really, really want" for women's rights on a global level, with the hashtag #WhatIReallyReallyWant.

When we saw the video, we instantly shared it on social media because 1) we love Spice Girls and this is such a cool feminist remake to a catchy throwback song and 2) we are so passionate about raising awareness on young women's issues, how could we not get involved and create a dialogue through this campaign?!

We invited our summer placement students and staff here at Scarborough Women's Centre to participate in creating their own signs and to share them on our social media platforms (of course they said yes!). Below is a collage of some of the pictures.

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



Self-Care for the Caregiver

If you spend lots of time caring for and nurturing other people, you may want to think about what energy you put into caring for yourself. Lots of people are so focused on another's needs that they are unable to offer an opinion on what they like, need, or want. Their identity gets so merged with others that they can forget to focus on the individual feelings of their own body. For instance, they may ignore or not pay attention to signs of distress in their own body because they are so focused on the needs of someone else.

Setting appropriate boundaries means that you can learn to care for yourself. Nurture yourself as well as help others. Proper boundaries would also empower others to learn to take care of themselves so they are not totally dependent on one person to meet all their needs. Self-care will create a balance in focus so that proper limits are placed around work, home-life, relationships, exercise, sleep, nutrition, and even spiritual pursuits, in order to prevent burnout. Overdoing even a good thing can make you sick and worn out. Know when to say "no"! If this is not your strong point, start practicing or stay away from those, as much as possible, who do not respect your "no". It is important to start to discipline yourself in the areas you want to grow in. Do something that develops or interests you on a daily basis, however simple that thing may be. In this way you keep your identity and values while caring for others.

- Jacynth Fennell, Counsellor

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30 Years at SWC: An Interview with Lynda Kosowan



Lynda Kosowan grew up knowing that she wanted to help women. As a little girl, Lynda loved to sit with adult women and listen to them talk about their lives. She took inspiration from their strength and challenges to join SWC as an Executive Director. 30 years later, she continues to make an impact on women in Scarborough with her passion, dedication, and strong leadership.

In this special interview to commemorate her 30th anniversary with the Centre, Lynda talks about joining the Centre, her influences, running a nonprofit as an ED, and today's changes in Scarborough.

30 years ago, what made you say, "SWC is the organization I want to work in"? What makes you say this today?

Prior to joining SWC, I worked with young offenders and emotionally disturbed youth for 5 years. It was challenging work, and I left the position and took time off to live in the countryside. I learned to appreciate nature and recover from the stress of constant crisis. After 6 months, I knew it was time to go back to work.

I first heard about SWC in 1986, through Cynthia D'Anjou, who was the ED of the local social planning group that had recently formed SWC. I was fascinated with the possibilities of a women's centre and always knew I wanted to work with women. I had lunch with the Board at Fabian's Café to discuss the feasibility of continuing the Centre, as it was in danger of closing. After 3

months of research and consultation, I made a presentation on the community they served, its issues and trends, and how SWC could be built. They then asked me if I would like to implement my strategy.

Thirty years later, I am still excited about the possibilities of a Centre like this which can work with a wide variety of women to help them achieve economic and emotional independence, free of violence, while strengthening their communities.

Who is your mentor and what kind of impact have they had on you as a leader and woman?

I have had the good fortune to work with many wonderful women who were volunteers, staff, Board members, students and service users who have become valued friends and colleagues. I learned something special from each one of them.

My family and my partner have always been supportive of my work at SWC and understand the many hours that go into doing this successfully.

There are 3 women I think of as mentors, who provided support and inspiration earlier in my career: Aysan Sev'er (author and Professor Emeritus at UTSC), Lynette Spence (former Equity advisor at University of Toronto) and Vicki Bismilla (author and former Vice President, Academic at Centennial College). These women are talented, hard-working, and passionate about their issues, with a long history of working for equality, equity and social justice. They know how to have fun too!

What is one big challenge facing nonprofits in Toronto right now?

Adequate, reliable, and diversified funding to create sustainable and innovative programs, responsive to current community realities.

What is one thing people don't know about when running a non-profit as an ED?

You have to spend way too much time thinking about money to keep the non-profit open. The relationships that you build with donors, community partners, government, service users, staff and volunteers are the foundation for

success. Without their support and willingness, nothing would work out.

What are some important decisions you have to make as an ED for the Centre?

Finding the right mix of people to make the Centre effective, and to provide them with both the independence and support to help them shine.

What advice do you have for a woman aspiring to become a leader in her community?

Surround yourself with supportive friends and wise mentors, and give yourself time to reflect.

What changes have you seen in the Scarborough area over the years?

Scarborough has developed a renewed sense of pride in its diversity, talent, and vibrancy.

What are some major feats the Centre holds pride in achieving?

Offering programs and services which reflect the needs and interests of a growing diversity of women, including newcomers, women with disabilities, young women, senior women and LGBTQIA individuals. Working in community to improve women's safety, access to support, and ability to participate actively.

I am also deeply touched by the impact we've had by training and launching so many amazing, wonderful women to shine in a variety of agencies, institutions and sectors across Canada.

At our AGM in September 2016, a short video of images from the past 30 years was shared. Chair Mary Heinmaa, Past President of SWC, said, "What distinguishes Lynda, in my mind, is her understanding of the power of working in partnership with other groups – in different spheres, different sectors, and organizations, as well as understanding the power of the media in bringing about social change. Above all, she fully engages volunteers, donors, service users, and community partners to help facilitate a world for women where there is freedom from violence and abuse, access to full partnership in the community, and opportunities for economic equality and independence."

**- Fathima Nizamdeen,
RBC Career Launch Associate**

Young Women Contributing at SWC

In August 2016 as we said thank you and good bye to our 4 summer students, we asked them about their time at the Centre.

Sana, a UTSC student, was “able to contribute to a program [Young Women’s Outreach] that I wish I could have had growing up. As a young woman, nothing makes me happier than to support other young women.”

Margarit, who is currently attending law school, spoke about how the Centre helped her step outside of her comfort zone, “I have really begun to see myself as a feminist and what that can mean.” She plans to revisit often and volunteer when she can.

Thurka worked with the Expanding the Reach program and described how her time at the Centre gave her “a better insight into specific issues that women with disabilities face, particularly within Scarborough. Accessibility being a huge one.”

Damindra worked on a research portfolio that focused on the needs of senior women. “I couldn’t have imagined a better and more productive way to spend my summer, so I’m incredibly grateful for this work experience.”

We are grateful to the Canada Summer Jobs Program for giving us the opportunity to hire such great young women and wish them the best as they continue their studies. We hope to have a similar grant in summer 2017. If you know a talented young woman eligible for the program, we’d love to hear from her.



- Alexandra Leigh, Communications Coordinator

Expanding the Reach: Defining Success

What does success mean to you? As Project Coordinator of the Expanding the Reach Program at SWC, part of my role is to monitor and evaluate the success of our program’s activities. I have learned that success can be found in small moments that can be difficult to capture in funding reports.

To date, the success of the Expanding the Reach program has included:

- Providing women with disabilities with access to leadership development opportunities and educational workshops that have addressed topics such as: self-esteem, body image, healthy relationships, violence, human rights, social networking, and recreation
- Increasing the accessibility and capacity of SWC to support women with disabilities through improved access, policy review, consultation, training, and updates to our website.

Through these activities, I have witnessed women learning new things that they otherwise would not have been able to. I have witnessed the community that is created when one learns that they are not alone in their experience of oppression. I have witnessed an ongoing commitment and struggle to understand and address ableism. I have witnessed women being vulnerable and have shared in that vulnerability, too. Participants have expressed that these moments of transformation can be hard to articulate on an evaluation form. Again I ask, what does success mean to you?

Thank you to our funders for their support and to our project partners for their ongoing commitment.

- Melissa Simas, MSW, Expanding the Reach Program Coordinator

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

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THIRD PARTY EVENTS

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