



Spring 2020 newsletter

“Be Strong and Put Yourself First”

KATE'S STORY

I met my partner when I was nineteen years old and it was love at first sight. We embarked on a relationship full of adventure and wonder as we travelled abroad and spent months and sometimes even years in different countries. On paper everything was great; we were the ideal couple. For a while, I truly believed it.

Three years into the relationship I became the sole supporter and that's when the verbal abuse started. I was told “you're stupid” or “you're ugly.” I would stand up for myself and resist, but I stayed with him because I didn't think it was that bad. I didn't want people to know and figured this was something we could deal with ourselves. He told me I was his world, his everything. We moved away from our families and all we had was each other – for better or for worse.

We moved to Calgary at the start of the recent economic downturn. I was able to maintain my business but my partner couldn't find a stable job. He opened his own business but it wasn't doing well – this is when the physical abuse started. He would put his hands on me, countless times. My arms were regularly bruised, he would hit me, slap me, pinch me, and force sexual intercourse when I wasn't willing. But amongst the abuse, there were also highlights in our relationship. We still travelled together and it wasn't always bad.

After fourteen years together, while I was sitting in a presentation from the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter I realized that the victims we were learning about had a lot in common with me. I realized that I myself was a victim and broke down. This is when I reached out and called the 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline.

For the next year, I attended counselling and realized that the relationship was not safe. It was unhealthy and the situation was not beneficial for either of us. I finally had the courage to call it off.

The aftermath was a rollercoaster ride, to say the least. I buried myself in my work and would resort to alcohol to take away the pain.

He would call and beg for me to come back, and he would also threaten to take his own life. The guilt I felt was immeasurable. However, what I came to realize was that these were just words. Life would go on and we would both be better for it. I began to work on myself and regain confidence and prosperity within my own being, and he went to counselling to work on his abusive tendencies.

I finally started to accept everything and re-establish myself both personally and professionally. I realized that YOU are the only one who can truly take care of you. That you need to take care of yourself first and foremost. I am happier now, a lot calmer, and above all, am confident that everything is going to be okay.

If I could go back and talk to myself then or to any other woman who is being abused and feels trapped, I would say to be strong and to make the call to the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. You need to do it for yourself, and for your children if you have them. Above all, make sure you love yourself – no matter what.



Message from Kim Ruse

Executive Director and CEO



The COVID-19 situation in Calgary has changed things for everyone so quickly. We are actively monitoring the rapidly evolving directions of all levels of government and paying special attention to advice from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer.

We know that in times like this, incidents of family violence and abuse can increase with the changing family dynamics. We are here to help. We are encouraging those experiencing family violence and abuse to reach out. Whether you are a victim, a friend or family looking to support someone or men looking for help, you are not alone.

We have refocused our services and have added capacity to answer calls on our 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline: 403-234-7233 (SAFE). Counsellors can now also be reached via email at help@cwes.ca or text message at: 403-604-6689. We are prepared for higher demand for our services as the COVID-19 situation unfolds in our community.

During this time of isolation and physical distancing, staying connected with friends and family are important more than ever. This is especially true for those impacted by family violence and abuse. It is important for us to check in with one another and offer support if possible. We all have a role to play in helping end family violence and abuse. Our agency is also offering free Take A Stand webinars focused on supporting individuals and families during this time of crisis. You will learn how to identify family violence and abuse in all its forms, ways to respond compassionately and positively to victims, and how to connect to resources.

We are grateful for the continued financial support of our funders, donors and sponsors at this extremely critical time. I want to also take a moment to thank our volunteers and staff for their support and commitment during this challenging time.

We are all in this together and we promise to do our level best to keep women, children, youth and men impacted by family violence and abuse safe while we deal with COVID-19 in our community.



COVID-19

and the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter

At the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, we are taking every possible precaution to protect our clients, residents and staff from COVID-19. The following are the practices we have in place to keep everyone in our building safe and healthy:

- We contract a professional cleaning company to ensure our shelter is cleaned to industry standards
- Meals at the Shelter are prepared by cooks with food safety certification
- We are using a hospital-grade disinfectant and have increased the frequency of our cleaning of all surfaces, particularly high-traffic places such as door handles, kitchens, and bathrooms
- If there is any form of illness in a family member, such as a sore throat, fever or cough, the whole family is isolated immediately in their room. Meals are brought to the family on disposable dishes.
- We follow Alberta Health Services recommendations regarding COVID-19 prevention and response. We have been screening admissions to the Shelter since early February, with screening criteria that is in alignment with Alberta Health Services
- We are following social distancing recommendations, which means we have staggered meal times, and staggered use of our communal recreational space (one family at a time). Our housekeepers disinfect surfaces after one family uses the communal space before the next family uses the room. Counselling takes place either over the phone or between people who are sitting at an acceptable distance from one another.

In our community-based programs we are following the protocols advised by Alberta Health Services, and are providing support and counselling at a distance.

WE ARE OPEN and here to help. Whether you are experiencing family violence and abuse, are looking to support someone, or a man looking for help, reach out. Call the 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline at 403-234-7233. The helpline can also be reached through Text: 403-604-6689, or Email: help@cwes.ca.

During this crisis, the following programs are available:

- 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline
- Emergency Shelter
- Community Services Counselling - services through phone/virtual platform.
- Men's Counselling Service - services through phone/virtual platform. **Phone:** 403-299-9680, **Email:** mcsalgary@cwes.ca.
- Court Program - **Available in a limited capacity**; services through phone/virtual platform.
- Short-Term Crisis Support for Youth - for adolescents, aged 12 - 21 experiencing distress in their close relationships. **Available in a limited capacity**; scheduled services through phone/virtual platform.

All our services can be accessed through the 24-Hour Family Violence Helpline:
403-234-SAFE (7233), Text: 403-604-6689, Email: help@cwes.ca

For more information: www.calgarywomensshelter.com

Due to COVID-19 and related event restrictions we have postponed our annual fundraising gala. We want to ensure the health and safety of our attendees and hope you will join us on our new date. Thank you to our sponsors and donors for their continued support.

CALGARY TELUS CONVENTION CENTRE



APRIL 30, 2020 || 5:30PM

Save the Date

TURNING POINTS 2020 FUNDRAISING GALA

Changing **LIVES**,
One **FAMILY**
at A Time

POSTPONED
New Date: October 2, 2020

WOMENSSHUTTER.COM

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Scott Haggins

Turning Points Co-Chairs

Sherri Logel & Shelly Norris

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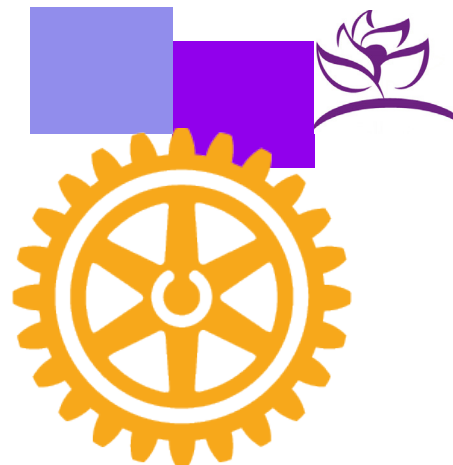
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Rotary Club of Calgary

Donor Spotlight

Rotary



With more than 35,000 clubs around the world, Rotary International is an organization which gathers together individuals for the purposes of service and philanthropy.

To embrace the ideals of Rotary International, the Rotary Clubs of Calgary contribute to a better city and a better world through significant service. It is an organization of community leaders who come together through commitment and fellowship to create opportunities and a better future for generations who follow. The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter is grateful for the generous support of the Rotary Clubs of Calgary.

Last year, we approached Christine Rendell, District Governor of Rotary District 5360 and member of the Rotary Club of Calgary East, and Stan Cichon of the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park (formerly Calgary South), about a need to build security fencing around the covered parking lot at our Emergency Shelter. We knew it was a big, costly project, and we wanted to work together with Rotary Clubs around the city to raise the funds to build it. Christine and Stan jumped at the chance to support this endeavour.

"The care and counsel given to these victims of abuse at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter who have endured some of the most damaging and yet repairable life-changing circumstances, are essential to the healthy development of their families and our communities. On a personal note, this service resonates strongly with me," says Christine Rendell.

Through their efforts we were able to bring together the Rotary Clubs of Calgary East and Stampede Park as well as the Rotary Clubs of Calgary West, and Sarcee. Thanks to their support, we received full funding for a very secure fencing system and accompanying security upgrades. All of the clubs saw the value in supporting a project that would allow our clients to feel safe at the Emergency Shelter.

"It is difficult to know that the Shelter is in such high demand. We at the Rotary Club of Calgary West are excited to join with other Rotary Clubs to help make the facility more secure. For the children who reside there as well as the women who have been disadvantaged because of their circumstances," said Bill Lawless of the Rotary Club of Calgary West.

We are fortunate to have received extensive support from many of Calgary's Rotary Clubs over the years, especially the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park. In recent years, the club has funded everything from vital kitchen appliances to upgraded security equipment at the Shelter. In fact, the Emergency Shelter parking lot is a pet project for the club, as they funded the installation of increased security lighting in the parkade just a few years ago.

"One of our club's mandates is to support the most vulnerable in our society and the clients served by the agency certainly falls in this category. Mothers and their children fleeing abusive situations need to feel safe at all times, while in and around your property," said Jim Hutchens, Chair of the Small Grants Committee for the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park.

We are grateful to the Rotary Clubs of Calgary for collaborating on this project to ensure the safety of our clients, and for all of their dedicated work in the community. Thank you for taking a stand against family violence and abuse.



Take A Stand Webinar

Support during COVID-19 Crisis

In this time of physical distancing, connections are more important than ever. Stay connected to your friends and family, and when needed, support those who are impacted by family violence and abuse. **We all have a role to play.**

The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter offers free webinars focused on supporting individuals and families during this time of crisis and beyond.

Learn about:

- Different types of abuse
- How to recognize, respond and refer
- Barriers victims face
- Myths and misconceptions
- Statistics and research around family violence and abuse

www.calgarywomensshelter.com/learn/take-a-stand-initiative

Volunteer Week 2020

April 19 - 25

In honour of National Volunteer Week, we would like to thank all our volunteers for their continued support and hard work. We cannot accomplish all the work we do without our volunteers. This dedicated group of individuals of all ages and backgrounds are an integral part of our agency.

Our volunteers are true heroes, who are willing to contribute their personal time, talents, and energy to help us succeed. The work of our volunteers reduces costs to enable us to provide better services to our clients. By volunteering for the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, you are taking a stand against family violence and abuse and we THANK YOU!

GET INVOLVED!

Volunteer with us in various roles and at different events throughout the year. For more information: volunteer@cwes.ca or visit www.calgarywomensshelter.com



Volunteer Appreciation 2019 Photo by Cathy Alfonso



Equally Safe

Interview with a counsellor

Equally Safe is a partnership between Calgary Police Service and domestic violence service agencies throughout the city.

1. What does a general call look like?

When a 911 or a Non-Emergency Call is made by an individual it is screened if it is a family violence and abuse call. The Calgary Police Service responds to the call and completes a report including a Family Violence Intervention Report (FVIR). The report is then sent to the Risk Assessment team with the Calgary Police Service. The Assessors will read and review the report including the family history and any previous contacts with the Calgary Police Service. The report will be assigned to one of the following areas for further follow up:

- Early Intervention Outreach Team. Trained volunteers who will briefly follow up and offer resource information. No Calgary Police Service action required and file will be monitored.
- Equally Safe (Domestic Conflict Response Team). Files that are escalating and chronic, and includes a Calgary Police Service officer and case manager/counsellor from a community agency. The file may also be sent to the Elder Abuse Response Team.
- Domestic Violence Team. Files that are high risk and physical violence. Calgary Police Service involvement only.

Once the file is given to one of the Equally Safe Constables, that Constable and a Community Services Counsellor will review the file and make a plan to meet with the victim. They will also discuss a plan on how they can support the whole family unit. Additionally, the Community Services Counsellor and the Equally Safe Constable will provide brief intervention for the perpetrator by providing information and referrals in support of stopping the family violence and abuse.

2. Why do you think this partnership is so important?

The Equally Safe Program consists of the following partnerships: Calgary Police Service, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, Awo Taan, YW Calgary, Kerby Centre, and Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. The partnership provides access to a wider range of expertise from a different perspective and inspires others in exploring new possibilities to enhance client service delivery. It is extremely important for the community and clients to see the collaboration between all members of the Equally Safe Program and the passion and commitment to "Taking A Stand Against Family Violence and Abuse". It has been expressed that the collaboration has helped to reduce clients' apprehension in connecting and reaching out to the Equally Safe Constables when they require support.

3. How do you think Equally Safe will change how family violence is reported?

With this unified approach, we will be able to support individuals who are experiencing family violence and abuse through education, awareness and connecting individuals to community resources that are required. One of the key functions of the Equally Safe Program is to connect families with existing community services to help stabilize the family situation over the short term and help the family increase their resiliency over the longer term.

4. What were the most significant or memorable moments for you so far?

Being part of the Equally Safe Program has been an amazing experience. I have gained further knowledge and understanding of the Equally Safe Program and the important roles each of the partnering agencies provides. It has been incredible to see how each partnering agency has come together to support the unique needs of each family. I look forward to seeing the Equally Safe Program evolve and their continued support to families who are experiencing family violence and abuse.



Ways You Can Help

In times of increased anxiety and stress, incidents of family violence and abuse can increase. COVID-19 is affecting all of us. If you are in a position to help out, please consider donating.

Your support will help us keep women, children, youth and men impacted by family violence and abuse safe during this critical time in our community. We are all in this together.

Thank you for supporting the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter.

Donate online: www.calgarywomensshelter.com

Events

For a list of community events check out:

www.calgarywomensshelter.com/events

Save A Stamp

To be added to our distribution list for our e-newsletter, please send your full name and e-mail address to info@cwes.ca. Please specify E-NEWSLETTER in the subject line.

Share Your Stories

Tell us your story. Inspire others. Change lives. We would like to reach out to past clients, volunteers and staff of Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter. We encourage you to share your story and would love to hear from you!



@end_abuseyyyc



@end_abuse



Stay in touch with us!