

A photograph of children on a carousel ride. In the foreground, a child in a red shirt is on a light blue horse-shaped seat. Another child is on a green seat. A pink hat is visible in the lower right. The background shows other carousel structures and lights.

Fall/Winter Newsletter 2010

Violence Against Women Forum

Central West Region Ontario

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Dear Colleagues,

We are very pleased to bring you our first Violence Against Women Central West Region Forum Newsletter! We hope this newsletter will inspire and validate you in the important service you provide to women and children who have experienced violence. When the Forum gathered three years ago to articulate a strategic plan we envisioned a future in which our service system would embody the following:

- **Shared Responsibility:** The prevention of domestic violence is the shared responsibility of citizens, communities and governments, leading to inspired leadership, commitment and action.
- **Responsive Service System:** The uniqueness and diversity of women and their children are valued and celebrated by the partners of the service system. The service system responds in an integrated and client-directed manner, demonstrating compassion towards a woman's reality.
- **Service System Capacity:** The VAW service system reflects a continuum of supports that are accessible, affordable, flexible and effective, resulting in a positive difference in the lives of women. Collaboration among VAW service system partners is embraced, and quality is promoted.
- **Resource Sustainability:** Adequate, equitable and sustainable resources are available to enable communities and the service system to prevent domestic violence.
- **Accountable Relationships:** Accountable relationships are characterized by open communication, transparency, integrity and the capacity to demonstrate results achieved.

We have been proud and honoured to be part of the journey of the Forum as we strive to embrace this vision. This newsletter seeks to celebrate our triumphs in this journey and provide a vehicle for effecting change in the Central West Region (CWR). We hope you find it useful, informative and stimulating and invite you to continue to submit updates from your agencies and local committees to be featured in future issues. Warm Regards from your Co-Chairs

Ilda Gizas and Leslie Josling

Celebrating Innovations in VAW Work: Challenges and Perspectives

Symposium Summary

On June 11th, 2010 a symposium on Innovations in VAW work was hosted by the Social Innovation Research Group at Wilfrid Laurier University. The symposium brought VAW professionals from across CWR together in conversation. The event included panel discussions on the topics of under serviced communities, services for children and youth and practices in VAW work. Based on the feedback we received here are some highlights:

- **Brooke Younge (KW Counselling Services- OK2BME):** talked about working with people who identify as LGBTQ, gendered services and the need to make shelter and counselling services more inclusive to LGBTQ users. *For more information on initiatives surfacing out of OK2BME, as well as KW Counselling Services please refer to page 5.*
- **Ian Degeer (Doctoral student FSW/WLU):** Ian talked about his research challenging the existing psycho-therapeutic interventions for men who engage in abusive behaviours. He explained how a mandated PAR program for men is beneficial but how engagement with men is crucial. He emphasized a need for evolving approaches to working with men.
- **Jennifer Davies (Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis):** Jennifer talked about serving older women in domestic violence work. She emphasized that older women are subject to a set of challenges unique to their population in accessing services including: differing definitions of abuse, cultural and generational stigma in accessing services, traditional gendered roles, and financial issues. Jennifer reflected on the need to educate older women around issues of abuse. *For more information about Jennifer and her work see page 6.*

Many more engaging and inspiring speakers participated in the panel discussions. Feel free to contact one of the VAW Forum co-chairs if you would like a copy of the full report

2010 Victim Services Awards of Distinction

Two agencies/programs in CWR were recipient of the 2010 Victim Services Awards of Distinction:

Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis for their leadership in the field of domestic violence and their services geared towards both sexual abuse and domestic violence, meeting a wide range of women's needs in one agency.

Waterloo Region Family Violence Project for their innovative model of collaboration between 14 agencies dedicated to domestic violence prevention and intervention.

Other recipients included Julie Craven, who visited the region last December to talk about her experience with domestic violence and Jared's Law.



For more information visit: <http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/news/2010/20100421-awards-bg.asp>



Rebuilding of Anselma House in Kitchener, Ontario

Women's Crisis Services (WCS) of Waterloo Region is building a new shelter in Kitchener to replace Anselma House. The new shelter will expand the WCS bed capacity to 35 with a potential for 45 beds operating in the future. The shelter will offer children's play areas, recreation areas, study space, and rooms for children's programming. The new 35,000 square foot facility is being constructed on Ottawa Street North between Heritage and Oldfield Drive. The location provides easy access to transportation, recreation and shopping facilities. In the past, the location of the shelter has been kept confidential. Releasing the address will facilitate access for women and their children and help bring the issue of violence against women to the forefront in the minds of the community.

For more information:

http://www.rebuildanselma.com/?cms_action=view&cms_id=29

Family Transition Place Celebrates New Satellite Office



On October 21st, **Family Transition Place** celebrated their new permanent satellite office in Bolton, Ontario. They have been committed to providing counselling and transitional support services to the people of Caledon for 25 years and now have their own private, accessible office to see more people in need. The following services will be offered from this new location:

- Counselling for women that have experienced physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, financial and/or spiritual abuse;
- Counselling for men that have experienced sexual assault/abuse;
- Outreach services, which include transitional and legal support, to women that have experienced abuse; and
- School based programming to the Caledon area schools through their Violence Education Program.

In addition, the Dufferin/ Caledon Domestic Assault Review Team (DART) Coordinator will be working out of this office one day per week.

For years, the **Family Life Resource Centre** VAW shelter located in Brampton has been using a cramped room in their basement to offer programming to its residents. After four years of planning, the agency has finally been able to start building their new 3,000 Sq Ft multipurpose room. *“The room will be a place where mothers will be empowered to put their lives back together and children will learn how to be children again”*, says Marilyn Field- Director of the centre. The room will host a variety of programs and groups such as parenting, life skills, yoga, self defense and self-care classes for the mothers, as well as sports programming for the children. *“The multipurpose room will be a place that will allow the children in the shelter to have fun, to learn that people really care, and for us [Family Life Resource Centre] to hear the wonderful sound of their laughter. This would not have been able to happen without the support of funders and the residents of the City of Brampton. Thank you again for helping us make a difference in so many lives”*, says Field.

Family Resource Centre’s New Multipurpose Room



The Innovation Spotlight: **KW Counselling**

KW Counselling Services and two of their community partners are in *The Innovation Spotlight* this issue because of two unique initiatives: **LGBTQ OutLoud** and a report called **Money and Making it on Your Own: A Guide Towards Financial Independence**. Both pieces address issues related to violence experienced by women and children by using education and understanding.

OK2BME & Waterloo Region District School Board Present:

LGBTQ OutLoud



Photo courtesy of OK2BME.ca

Recently OK2BME and the Waterloo Region District School Board joined together to promote equity and inclusion for LGBTQ youth in the school system through the creation of a new training DVD. The video showcases the voices of youth as well as professionals working to make the school environment safe and nurturing. You can view clips from the video at: <http://ok2bme.ca/video>

Additional videos and educational material can be found at OK2BME.ca

KW Counselling and Mosaic Counselling and Family Services of Waterloo Region Present:

Money and Making it on Your Own: A Guide Towards Financial Independence

Money and Making it on Your Own is a financial resource book and group programme for women leaving abusive relationships. Money and Making It On Your Own equips women with financial, legal and social supports and resources. This initiative increases the opportunities for abused women to pursue independence and to participate fully in the economic, social and democratic life of Canadian society by increasing their knowledge about the financial, legal and social supports available.

“This program empowers women to gain confidence to enforce their rights and to make decisions that are in the best of them and their children. I am honoured and proud to witness this remarkable life changing experience.” Cindy Hare, Program Coordinator .

One participant writes: “This program has been eight weeks of discovery. Discovery of myself – showing me what power I have. It showed me how to be and feel alive. I am empowered, alive, free...I am finally ME!”

The Innovation Spotlight: Research on Survivor Engagement

ANGELA NIJHAR

What motivates you to sustain your enthusiasm with VAW work? My motivation is that violence against women is wrong. It is embedded in our culture, media and our society and the root causes are patriarchal. I have a passion to uncover those systemic roots and eradicate them.

Tell me about the research you are involved in: The committee I work for (Peel Committee Against Women Abuse) had been grappling with this idea for years. It is about how to meaningfully involve women who have survived violence. The question was how to honour the voices of survivors without being tokenistic. We need to provide things like honorariums and offer services like childcare for their expertise. In this research we started to explore power imbalances and how they are structured in agencies. We did focus groups with key informants and came out with a report including findings and best practices.

How can people apply your research results to their work place? This is just step one. It is a long process. Service providers have to change their thinking from “*we are the professionals*” and work to eradicate the power imbalance that occurs between service provider and user. More information about Peel Committee Against Women Abuse can be found at: www.pcawa.org/



JENNIFER DAVIES

What sustains your enthusiasm for VAW work? Possibilities, hope, change! I continue to be awed by the capacity of the human spirit and its ability to see possibility, hope or change through a traumatic lens.

Tell me a bit about the research you were involved in: We conducted four focus groups in Guelph Wellington with the objective to identify strengths and gaps in services and the service recommendations of victims of sexual violence and/or domestic violence in Guelph Wellington. Fifty-eight women, speaking 7 languages between the ages of 18-91 participated. Three major themes emerged: 1) Service providers need to be better educated on the various systems linked to domestic violence and sexual assault, 2) Confidentiality and respecting women’s rights to privacy is critical. Systems need to work more collaboratively to avoid women having to retell their crisis over and over, and 3) there is a need to evaluate justice based services (policing, victim services, lawyers) to address processes that are felt to be triggering or revictimizing.

What is something interesting about yourself? I am one of eleven mediators in Canada that does mediation of serious crime within the Federal Prison system between victims and offenders. More information on Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis can be found at: www.gwwomenincrisis.org/



Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence

Dr. Jeff Edleson (Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse)



On Sept 28th, 2010 Jeffery L. Edleson from the University of Minnesota came to CWR and did a presentation entitled “*Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence.*” Dr. Edleson is the director of the Minnesota Centre Against Violence and Abuse and is recognized as one of the world’s leading authorities on child exposure to domestic violence. He has published over 100 articles and 10 books on topics ranging from domestic violence, group work and program evaluation. The Sept 28th session was an effort to bring together child welfare and VAW staff from across the region to identify effective practices to improve responses with families who have been impacted by domestic violence. This is part of the work being carried out by the VAW/CAS Central West Region Working Group which has been established by the VAW Forum Service System Collaboration & Accountability Implementation Team. At the session, Edleson reviewed research on parents involved in domestic violence situations and how

domestic violence services can be structured to help parents in these situations. He provided an overview of supportive interventions with mothers who have experienced partner abuse and discussed parenting by men who engage in abusive behaviours, including deciding which men should be engaged and what interventions may be helpful. Lastly he discussed how child welfare and domestic violence agencies can collaborate more successfully. The presentation was attended by 86 people and received good review with 94% of survey responders stating they could use the information in their workplace. Participants responded favourably to it being an evidence-based workshop rooted in research. Highlighted in many responses was the need to have better systems of collaboration between services throughout CWR. For additional resources on the particular topic presented by Dr. Jeff Edleson, i.e., parenting within the context of domestic violence, we invite you to explore resources available at the Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse (MINCAVA) website

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jedleson/>.





Oct 27th VAW Forum Meeting Recap

On October 27th, the VAW Forum held a meeting in Milton. The agenda included discussions about Bill 168- Amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and survivor engagement. Here are the highlights:

Bill 168: Margaret MacPherson facilitated a presentation and discussion regarding the implications of Bill 168. MacPherson is a provincial Neighbour, Friends and Families trainer & workplace violence trainer. Bill 168 requires employers to develop policies and programs to help prevent workplace violence and harassment, including domestic violence. Workplaces are being required to build policies and procedures around violence and are encouraged to provide their staff with training. It was suggested that there may be opportunities for the VAW sector to take a lead in developing and providing training to businesses regarding domestic violence. There is a particular need to ensure that the safety and confidentiality of a victim are maintained and that personal autonomy is of center focus. In light of this, the Service System Capacity working group, in partnership with SIRG, is developing a position paper outlining the possibilities for response to Bill 168 with the VAW Forum of Central West Region. More information on developed training through the Neighbourhood Friends and Family program can be found at: <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>.

Survivor Engagement: The second half of the day was dedicated to presentations from members of the DV Community Coordinating Committee on survivor engagement initiatives and the preliminary results of research surrounding survivor experiences in services that is currently being conducted in Waterloo Region.

Susan Jewett, member of the Halton Violence Prevention Council and Executive Director of Burlington Counselling and Family Services: Susan talked about Halton Violence Prevention Council's survivor engagement initiative. The council is in the initial stages of working with "Women at the Centre" around engaging the voices of survivors in Halton. For more information on Women at the Centre visit: <http://www.womenatthecentre.com/>.

Lyn Allen, Chair of Dufferin/Caledon DART Committee & and Family Transitions Manager: Lyn talked about the unique challenges to engage survivors in the Dufferin-Caledon area due to its rural nature. DARTS's membership and the size of the community dramatically increase the possibility of a survivor sitting with the people who supported her through her crisis. This reality made it hard for survivors to speak freely and was a discouragement to participation. In response DART created a website with a survivor panel area where survivors can e-mail DART confidentially to share their thoughts and opinions. For more information please visit: <http://dufferincaledondart.com/survivor-feedback.html>.

Ginette Lafrenière, Professor, Faculty of Social Work at WLU, and Director of the Social Innovation Research Group: Ginette talked about the preliminary results of her research with Women's Crisis Services (WCS) in Waterloo Region. She has found that women who were newly arrived in the Region responded most favourably to services dispensed by WCS as they were made aware of services and supports which they did not know existed within the community. She has also found that women from cultural communities, present in Canada for five years or more, were generally pleased with services although did express experiences of marginalization and/or oppression particularly if they were from Muslim communities. Lastly, women who were born in Canada expressed an interest to remain connected to WCS in some capacity after leaving the shelter.

Other presentations included Jennifer Davies (Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis) and Angela Nijhar (Peel Committee Against Women Abuse). More information on their work can be found on page 6.

Making the Grade: Evaluating VAW Forum Activity

REPORT CARD

Strategic Goals		Accomplishments	
VAW FORUM Implementation Teams	Service System Capacity	<p>April 2010 – Enhancing VAW Service System delivery in the Central West Region: Building Bridges between Theory, Practice and Action. This research was conducted by the Social Innovation Research Group (SIRG). Out of this research came 10 recommendations for consideration by the VAW Forum</p> <p>June 2010 – Symposium “Celebrating Innovations in VAW Work: Challenges and Perspectives.”</p> <p>In progress – Position paper by SIRG on how the VAW sector may best meet expectations for delivering training and education in response to Bill 168 and the workplace violence legislation.</p>	A+
	Service System Collaboration & Accountability	<p>2009 – Two forums held, “<i>Holding the Big Picture: Reflections on Intimate Femicide & Lessons Learned from the Experience of Ontario’s Domestic Violence Death Review Committee</i>” & “<i>Domestic Violence & the Community’s Response – Missed Opportunities.</i>”</p> <p>June 2010 – Symposium “Celebrating Innovations in VAW Work: Challenges and Perspectives.”</p> <p>Sept 2010 – Parenting within the Context of Domestic Violence, with by Dr. Jeff Edleson.</p> <p>Ongoing – VAW/CAS regional round tables focusing on effective practices, what can be learned from each other, and enhancing VAW/CAS collaboration agreements – feedback paper submitted for consideration by policy branch. CAS/VAW Group to organize two more regional training sessions for CAS and VAW staff in 2011: Custody & Access Issues & Violence & Working with High-Risk Families.</p>	A+
	Service System Excellence	<p>April 2010 – Child Witness Effective Practices Project: Central West Region. Out of this research conducted by SIRG came 10 recommended next steps for consideration by the VAW Forum.</p> <p>June 2010 – Symposium “Celebrating Innovations in VAW Work: Challenges and Perspectives.”</p> <p>Nov 2010 – Literature review (SIRG): <i>The merits of models of psycho-social supports versus recreational supports for children in shelter services.</i></p> <p>In progress - Pedagogical approach for new Child Witness facilitators based on interviews with a number of experienced facilitators from across Central West Region & Evaluation of existing evaluative tools for the Child Witness Program and formulation of recommendations for the use of a particular approach (both research projects conducted by SIRG).</p>	A+

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SIRG is a research and training incubator, operating out of the Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty of Social Work, whereby researchers and community groups/agencies as well as individuals can collide socially and professionally in order to engage in mutually satisfying work. Our work honours a critical examination of community development and micro, mezzo, macro research initiatives on a local, national and international level. SIRG is proud to collaborate on the development of this newsletter.