



Nellie's Newsletter

Nellie's Mission

Our Mission is to operate programs and services for women and children who have and are experiencing oppressions such as violence, poverty and homelessness. Nellie's is a community based feminist organization which operates within an anti-racist, anti-oppression framework. We are committed to social change through education and advocacy, to achieve social justice for all women and children.

Message from Executive Director

May 2004 , Issue #12

Happy Labour Day and Mother's Day to all our friends! It's very appropriate that these two dates happen during the month of May. Labour Day marks the struggle of workers to achieve rights, and while women contribute in both paid and unpaid work, they continue to remain trapped in poverty. There have been a number of recent reports that highlight the issues facing poor women and make recommendations for change.

I would like to highlight these reports and encourage you to read them. They include: Report on the Death Rate of Homeless Women, Canadian Medical Association Journal www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/170/8/1243; Walking on Eggshells: a Report on Abused Women and Welfare by OAITH at www.dawn.thot.net/features.html; If Low Income Women of Colour Counted by Punam Khosla www.socialplanningtoronto.org; and Poverty by Postal Code, a report released by the United Way www.uwgt.org. Please join us and mark Mother's Day by writing a letter to your MPP and asking her/him to take action to address the issues of poverty in the lives of women. Poor mothers mean poor children.

We have also recently become involved in a new initiative called "Toronto Women's Call to Action" which met to discuss the growing invisibility of girls' and women's voices and issues from the political agenda in the City of Toronto. The group advocates anti-racist, anti-poverty, gender mainstreaming for Toronto. Gender mainstreaming is part of the Beijing Platform for Action to empower women and requires gender analysis of institutions, policies, and programmes, including control over resources, budgets, decision-making, benefits and rewards. For more information visit www.unesco.org/women.

During the month of March, Nellie's participated in International Women's Day Rally & March and the IWD Mayor's Proclamation and Information Fair at City Hall. We also marked the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination by participating in a press conference to highlight the need for interpreter services for homeless immigrants and refugees at Queen's Park as a matter of human rights.

For the month of May, we will be selling daisy pins for the Daisy of Hope Campaign to raise funds and awareness on the issue of violence against women. Please help us by offering to sell daisy pins to friends, family, coworkers and your community and/or faith groups. The funds will help support our programs for women and children. Plans are also well underway for Pride Day. Once again, Nellie's will be marching in the Dyke March on Saturday June 26th, and we'll have a booth in the Community Fair on Sunday June 27. Please drop by and visit our booth for treats and fun!



Alin, aged 11, participated in the IWD March

This issue of Nellie's newsletter is dedicated to youth and children. The articles explore the issues of racism in the lives of youth and children. Our children are our future leaders and we have a responsibility to invest in them. We need to work to create a world free of racism and oppression for the children, youth, their mothers, families and all communities. We need to listen to our young people and learn.

In the words of Itah Sadu, a Toronto-based professional storyteller and children's author,
"If you *talkee, talkee, talkee*, while I talkee, talkee, talkee, then you won't hear a thing,"

In Sisterhood,

Cindy Cowan

Our Youth, Our Future *By Asha Harris, Child/Youth Advocate, CSO Program*

At Nellie's we recognize and support the contributions of youth in our society. Toronto's youth population is over 300,000 and growing. They are an invaluable resource to our city. Although our society is a prosperous one, many of the benefits do not filter down to its youth population. ***Systemic racism and oppression results in a disproportionate number of youth from Aboriginal and ethno-racial groups living in poverty.*** These youth are more likely to be unemployed, not finish high school and at risk for contact with the criminal justice system. Visible minority youth make up almost half of Toronto's youth population and nearly 40 per cent of youth were born outside Canada (City of Toronto, Children and Youth Advocate Report 2003).

A disproportionate number of our city's youth are likely to be marginalized in at-risk neighbourhoods like Flemingdon Park, St. Jamestown, Jane-Finch, and Malvern; densely populated, low-income areas that are home to many newer immigrant communities. Systemically our city's youth have been placed at a disadvantage. Many of the communities in which they live are underfunded, and lack recreational facilities and programs that cater to their needs. We do not value or invest in our youth. Instead, we negatively stereotype and blame them for larger social problems.

Many of the youth we service are young women between the ages of 16 –24 years old. Many of them are mothers, students and workers. Many have courageously fled violent relationships and are re-establishing themselves into their communities. In their daily lives they encounter many barriers due to their age, race, gender, ability and class. They fight constantly to have their needs met and their voices heard.



We work with young women to provide individual supports such as counseling and referrals, and advocacy with regards to income security, child care and child welfare. As advocates we struggle to connect young women to services that meet their specific needs as they face many obstacles, especially in the area of affordable housing. We also support youth by hosting placement students from Ryerson University and George Brown College at both our shelter and community support and outreach program. Youth are active participants and leaders in our programs, including the Students Educating Against Violence (SEAV) project that specifically targets youth in high schools across Toronto and provides a peer-to-peer anti-violence education program.



The Toronto Youth Cabinet is a forum that provides our city's youth with the opportunity to have their voices heard and to affect systemic changes at the local level of government. The cabinet comprises over 120 youth from across the city from diverse communities. It engages in numerous civic action initiatives – through community workshops, outreach, political forums and advocacy campaigns it is affecting real changes for youth by youth. Under the leadership of the City's Child and Youth Advocate, Olivia Chow, the Youth Cabinet is ensuring that the many voices of youth are heard at City Hall.

SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH ADVOCATE MADE IN HER REPORT FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO WERE:

- Reconfirm the important advisory and advocacy role of the Toronto Youth Cabinet and ensure that the cabinet receives adequate funding and staff support
- Move towards allocating a minimum of 10 per cent of affordable housing developed under City programs to youth
- Support the creation of a youth-led advisory committee on youth-police relations
- Actively promote night-based programming for youth
- Extend child nutrition programs to youth
- Show leadership by developing new pilot projects and other sustainable initiatives to respond to specific needs of youth at risk
- Institute anti-oppression training for all city staff working directly with youth
- Better co-ordinate Toronto's youth employment services

2003
REPORT

For more information on youth issues in Toronto www.torontoyouth.com

Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression work with Children

By Maureen Caines-Comrie, Chair of Nellie's Staff Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Committee and Child/Youth Advocacy, Shelter

The children who come to Nellie's face poverty, violence, homelessness and oppression. In Canada, women of colour and aboriginal women have the highest poverty rate as a result of systemic oppression. Poverty for mothers results in child poverty.

Race-based systemic oppression is present in the lives of many of the families who come to Nellie's. Concrete examples are: the legacy of the residential schools; the theft of aboriginal children and the experience of aboriginal families within the child welfare system; and new immigrants' experiences of poverty, homelessness, limited access and no legal rights within the immigration system. The impact of racism is huge and very present in the lives of too many children.

Racism hurts children by creating negative self-identity, self worth and self-esteem. Racism limits their access and opportunities in all areas. Whether it is childcare, education, immigration, child welfare, and/or income security, the evidence of systemic racism is very much present in the lives of mothers and children coming to Nellie's.

At Nellie's, we believe every woman and child is unique and must be treated with respect and equity. We believe that racism can and should be eradicated. We recognize, understand and respond to differences within an anti-racist/anti-oppression framework while working towards systemic change.

What this means practically in my work as a Child and Youth Advocate at Nellie's, is that I counsel women and children in a manner that understands and recognizes the systemic oppression they face.

It means helping mothers affirm who they are, celebrate their accomplishments and gain access to what they need for themselves and their children. This approach enables women to be in a better position to provide for their children and address the issues in their lives.

It means providing culturally appropriate services, programs and community referrals. It means working with women to challenge racism within systems that affect themselves and their children. It means educating myself continually and others on the issues and working on projects that further gender and racial equality.

In our organization, Nellie's Staff Anti-Racism and Oppression Committee works to ensure that our programs and services are reflective responsive and delivered within this framework. Our staff team reflects racial, cultural and linguistic diversity. Women and children are able to receive all services in a manner that is racially and culturally appropriate. We provide on-going training to staff and education to women and children in our services. We post pictures and posters to reflect fully the racial and cultural diversity of women and children. We have strong policies related to anti-racism and anti-oppression. We ensure cultural and dietary needs are met and that cultural holidays are acknowledged and celebrated. We work to ensure that the social, recreational and educational programs reflect the diversity of the women and children who rely on our services.



Program Updates - The Shelter; by Irene Jaakson



Steel Band performance for the celebration of Black History Month

We celebrated the Lunar New Year at the beginning of February. Women and children at the shelter ushered in the Year of the Green Wood Monkey by attending the festivities at the Exhibition. At the CSO, kids in our after school program learned about their Chinese Zodiac signs, and played a raucous game of Pin the Tail on the Monkey.



Cindy with our community friends Beth and Huong at the IWD's Dance

In February, the CSO program honored Black History with a feast and an evening of music performed by a steel band. As always, our place was the place to be! Juno Award-winner Lillian Allen joined us for an incredibly moving Black History Month celebration. Ms. Allen performed her political dub poetry at the shelter, to the accompaniment of laughter and tears. The celebration of poetry and history was profoundly moving for everyone.

Women from our programs attended both the Nellie's annual fundraiser, Jazzy It Up and our first annual IWD dance. The Opera House was a funky venue for a group of charming women, such as we are! With three DJ's to help, we moved all night long, and met the wee hours of the morning when we finally left. The next day we rallied with our sisters and marched through the streets in honour of our day, International Women's Day. The march ended at Ryerson where we enjoyed the market, which was filled with energized women and happy children.

As always, March Break was a hoot! The shelter's annual outing to Chuck E. Cheese left

everyone with an attack of serious giggles! It's certain that Chuck E. Cheese will never be the same again after the women and children of Nellie's took over the place to celebrate the freedom of March Break. The children of CSO met up with the shelter to see Agent Cody Banks, and came back happily debating on the best scenes of the movie. Was it Cody's first kiss or was it the cool special effects? The shelter finished March Break with a bustling junk food party, complete with games and music. (Well, it wasn't all chocolate and chips; there was fruit, too!)

The shelter has welcomed all sorts of visitors lately, like Jake and Monica from the Meal Trans program at the 519, who offered training to our residents on making sure our space stays trans-positive. We also welcomed an anti-bullying workshop, the AIDS committee of Toronto, and Coping in Tough Times, which helped women prepare their income tax.



Board member Renu answering questions at Nellie's IWD information fair booth

Program Updates - cso

Our CSO program is growing, these days. Our food access programs, Supper Surprise and Lavender Stew (Monday and Tuesday respectively), provide food and community to more and more women each week. The social recreation drop-in on Wednesday evenings leaves everyone gasping for breath and Thursdays are crammed with Her Share in the morning



"Pin the tail on the monkey"



Kids participated in ice skating day sponsored by Bell Mobility



Kids showed off their Chinese calligraphy in the celebration of Lunar Chinese New Year

Stay tuned, because from July 12 to 19, 2004, at Toronto City Hall, we will have a display and exhibition of student's work from the Students Educating Against Violence of Women (SEAV) Project. Students are wrapping up the project now, so plan to drop by and visit.

In April we took our banner and participated in the March for Dignity where we joined many other people who marched 150 miles from Sarnia to Queen's Park in Toronto to demand social policies that are fair and equitable.

It's messy but fun to make Chinese dessert with flour



An Invitation to our friends...



"I cry out for order and find it only in art" - Helen Hayes

1st Annual "Great Art/Glad Heart"
Art Exhibition and Silent Auction
At Gallery 1313 at 1313 Queen Street West
On Monday June 14, 2004 from 6—9pm
Cash bar/Complimentary h'ors d'oeuvres

Students Educating Against Violence of Women Project

By Jiin Yiong, SEAV Project Co-ordinator



The Students Educating Against Violence of Women Project, (SEAV), was a one-year pilot project generously funded by The Donner Canadian Foundation. This project was an expansion of the current Nellie's Community Support and Outreach Programs.

The SEAV Project targeted awareness of students at the secondary school level about violence against women. This initiative aimed to foster understanding of the target group on the goal of ending violence against women and children, and also to produce beneficial spin-offs, such as developing prevention strategies and encouraging the participation, contribution, and support by students on the issue.

The targeted schools for the SEAV Project were Riverdale Collegiate Institute and Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute in Toronto, Winston Churchill Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, and North Albion Collegiate Institute in Etobicoke. The students participated in eight education sessions: Introduction and confidentiality; Gender differences; Woman abuse; Racism and oppression; Community-identity and health; Healthy relationships, Communication and leadership; and Civic responsibility, community development and action.

Following the education and training component, students incorporated their learning in the development of education and civic action initiatives within their school.

Riverdale Collegiate Institute held an assembly for both the junior and senior students on the issues of violence against women. The assembly was both informative and interactive, and led by the student organizers.

Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute planned an awareness day event during lunch hour in the cafeteria, where information on violence against women and community resources were displayed. Key chains, designed by the organizing students, and information were handed out. Students were encouraged to participate in a fun and interactive forum with trivia questions and prizes.

North Albion Collegiate Institute and Winston Churchill Collegiate Institute both organized an awareness week campaign during lunch hour. Information on violence against women and community resources were displayed at the front foyers and in the cafeterias. The awareness weeks started off with the announcements of winners from the art contests held in March. The entire student population was encouraged to participate in the contest by designing an image that reflected on violence against women or promoted ending violence against women. The design of the first contest winner was reproduced into key chains and magnets to be handed out to fellow students. Students were also encouraged to participate in a fun and interactive forum with trivia questions and prizes.

As The SEAV Project concludes, most of the core group of students from the training prepare for post secondary education. The learning and experiences that came from being a part of this project will remain with them into adulthood.

Some of SEAV's other civic participation activities included selling the Daisy of Hope buttons to promote public awareness and raise funds for women's shelters in the community; having the civic action materials available for youth (key chains, magnets, and pens) in the local community agencies; and fostering public education and awareness by displaying the educational materials from the SEAV Project and the artwork from the contests.

Special thanks and appreciation go out to: Malathy Manoharan from Canadian Tamil Youth Development; YukYung Kim-Cho from Education Wife Assault; Polly Leung from South East Asian Services; Susana Rivera from Rexdale Women's Centre; and Nicole Pietsch from Thorncliff Neighbourhood Office. They have contributed their valuable time to the SEAV Project as part of the Community Advisory Group.



A Salute to Nellie's

Volunteers make valuable contributions to Nellie's. Without their commitment of time, energy, skills and resources, we would be unable to provide the supports and services to vulnerable women and children in our community. Nellie's would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all these wonderful women, who have been with us for two years or more. We also welcome our new volunteer members Elda Bylykbashi, Karen Holland, Trupati Patel and Rikha Sharma who have joined our team.

Noreen Abbas

Noreen has excellent interpersonal skills. She came to know Nellie's first at the age of 10 when she stayed at Nellie's shelter with her mom. Noreen generously volunteers her time with us and is a customer service representative.

Julie Allin

A graduate of Ryerson University's Faculty of Journalism, Julie really likes words and correcting other people's spelling, even on sidewalk chalkboards. She is currently a working journalist and volunteer editor for Nellie's Newsletter.

Marcia Beck

Marcia has been volunteering on the fundraising committee for almost three years. When she isn't tracking down free prize vacations or pricing candy, Marcia can be found at the Social Work Department at the Hospital for Sick Children or in her private psychotherapy practice. Marcia has a wonderful four-year-old son and a loving, patient partner.

Michelle Brunet

As the Global Director of Sales for Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, Michelle is responsible for a team of key account sales executives, while also managing a portfolio of her own key accounts. Her job takes her to wonderful destinations such as Banff, Hawaii and New York, to name a few. Michelle has a passion to help women in distress and their children. She has assisted Nellie's fundraising committee and special events for the past two years.

Jamuna Gurung

Jamuna has lots of experience working in not for profit organizations from New Zealand, Nepal and Canada. Since she moved to Toronto, she worked as a Customer Service Representative for the Ontario Ministry of Health and currently for an advertising company. She has a 6 years old daughter and will be expecting another one this summer. Jamuna has been helping us in our administration work area for the last 2 years.

Kate Lawton

Kate is National Research & Policy Coordinator at SEIU Canada (Service Employees International Union). She is passionate about social justice for women and children. She also serves on the Toronto Social Forum Coordinating Committee, an offshoot of the World Social Forum. Kate has been volunteering on Nellie's Social Justice Committee for two years, and believes "Another World is Possible!"

Naima Sherman

Currently Naima is working as a customer service representative. She is taking sometime off from school, where she is pursuing a B.A. in Psychology. She has been volunteering with Nellie's for over a year now, and looks forward to contributing more of her time in the future. Naima is originally from Kenya, and has been in Canada for six years.

Helen Tam Stalker

Helen is our volunteer web mistress. She graduated from Ontario College of Art and Design's Communications, Design and Illustration Faculty. She has a B.A. in English from the University of Guelph. Currently Helen is a part time receptionist at Casey House. She is also a freelance writer, graphics, multi media, web designer for IEFranchise web portal. She has two rabbits and one gerbil.

Volunteers are so important to us. If you want to join our volunteer team, please check on our website www.nellies.org . Recruitment will start in August, interview in September and orientation in October.

Don't Hurt Me in Anyway

By Dong Ling Chen

*Don't hurt me in anyway,
Treat me properly,
Don't destroy the person that I am,
Or the person that I'll be,
Having me is a privilege, not a right,
So you better treat me with respect.*

*Don't put me down cause I'm different,
Don't yell at me cause I made a mistake,
I don't need your abuse.
I am strong and I am independent,
If you want to be with me,
Create a strong bond between us,
A loving, peaceful relationship,
Not a controlling, violent one.*

*And don't use me cause you think I'm weak,
I'm not.
Don't tell me I'm not beautiful,
Cause I am.
And don't tell me I can't live without you,
Cause I assure you I can.*

*I am strong and I am independent.
I will survive cause I'm surrounded by people who
love me,
The people you tried to keep me from,
But that was then and this is now,
Now I'm free,
I can think for myself, cause I can be me.*

*So don't hurt me in anyway,
Don't call me names or tell me I'm not good enough.
Treat me properly,
Don't destroy the person that I am,
Or the person that I'll be.
I deserve respect,
I deserve love, life and trust, just like everybody else.
I deserve to be free,
So don't hurt me in anyway.*

Grade 9, Riverdale Collegiate Institute, SEAV Project

Nellie's Calendar of Events

May	Daisy of Hope Campaign Selling Daisy pins at subway stations to support ending violence against women & children
May 23	African Liberation Day
May 24	Victoria Day
May 26	Shavuot (Jewish)
May 29 & May 30	Open House – CSO Program At 754 Queen St. East from noon – 4 pm
June	Gay & Lesbian Pride Month
Jun 4	International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
Jun 5	World Environment Day
Jun 14	Nellie's Fundraiser - "Great Art/Glad Heart" Art Exhibit and Auction at Gallery 1313 on Queen St. W. from 6-9 pm
Jun 20	World Refugee Day
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day
Jun 26	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
Jun 26	Dyke March
Jun 27	Pride Community Fair
Jun 27	Multiculturalism Day
Jun 28	Stonewall Rebellion Day
Jul 1	Canada Day
Aug 7	Caribana Parade
Aug 12	International Youth Day

Nellie's Contact Information

Mailing Address:

970 Queen Street East, PO Box 98118
Toronto, ON M4M 1J0

Shelter

Tel: 416-461-1084
TTY: 416-461-7561
Fax: 416-461-0976
E-mail: programs@nellies.org

Community Support

Tel: 416-461-3404, 416-461-2052
Fax: 416-461-0970
E-mail: outreach@nellies.org

Administration

Tel: 416-461-8903 Fax: 416-461-0970
E-mail: community@nellies.org
Website: www.nellies.org
Program, Volunteers, Students: 416-461-0739
Financial Donations: 416-461-0769
In Kind Donations: 416-461-0521
Charitable No.: 11930-2727-RR0001

Thank you to Nellie's volunteer editor, Julie Allin for her help.

