



# 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.*

Oct 2006 , Issue #20

## Message from the Board Co-Chair

Cindy Cowan, Nellie's Executive Director over the last eight years, resigned in July 2006. Cindy was Nellie's first ED, when the organization made the transition from collective to hierarchy in 1998. Nellie's growth and reputation is testimonial to Cindy's hard work and dedication to end violence and oppression against women and children. We shall miss you Cindy and we wish you all the very best.



*Welcome Margarita Mendez, Nellie's  
New Executive Director*

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Margarita Mendez as our new Executive Director. Margarita has an extensive background with the not-for-profit sector. She provided leadership and guidance for over 10 years in her most recent role as an Executive Director of the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre. During this time, she was able to successfully transform the organization into an agency with a budget of over \$2 million and a staff complement of over 50. We are very pleased to have Margarita join us and we look forward to working with her.

Many thanks from all of us to Acting ED Gellien Lai for her excellent leadership for the transition period of July to September 2006.

We are always pleased to provide learning opportunities for students at Nellie's. Many thanks to our 2005/2006 student placements: Judy Leung, Jennifer Ajandi, Darlene Isaac-Downey and Shan Marcus for their hard work and dedication. We wish you all success in your endeavors. We also welcome this year's student placements: Priscilla Boateng and Ayallah Greenberg from the Ryerson School of Social Work Program; and Natasha Brien from George Brown College's Assaulted Women's and Children's Advocate Program. We'd also like to express much appreciation for the countless hours of work that Nellie's volunteers have contributed to in both programs and services and administration. Thank you to our 2005/6 volunteers Janet Contah, San San Chung, Jennifer Brodlieb and Sienna Leung and welcome to our 2006/7 new administrative volunteers Kimberley White, Shahina Naz,

Jennifer Nahorniak and Nooshin Sarlati and Program Volunteer Kohilameera Nithianantharajah.

Nellie's celebrated its 33th Annual General Meeting on Sept 13, 2006 at the Ralph Thornton Community Centre. More than 90 participants celebrated the evening with excellent food with first nation drumming music by Joanna, Joni and Tracy Shawana, and music and dancing with Roula Said,

Maryem Tollar and Sophia Grigoriadis.

Nellie's strategic planning process for 2007-2009 is in motion and will be concluded by the end of this year. In September, we kicked off the United Way Campaign by participating in the Leaps and Bounds Walk. In October we plan to join the CN Tower Stair Climb Challenge. Nellie's Manager of Development Wendy Sung-Aad, and Manager of Finance Gellien Lai will join the United Way Speakers Bureau to highlight the important work of the United Way.

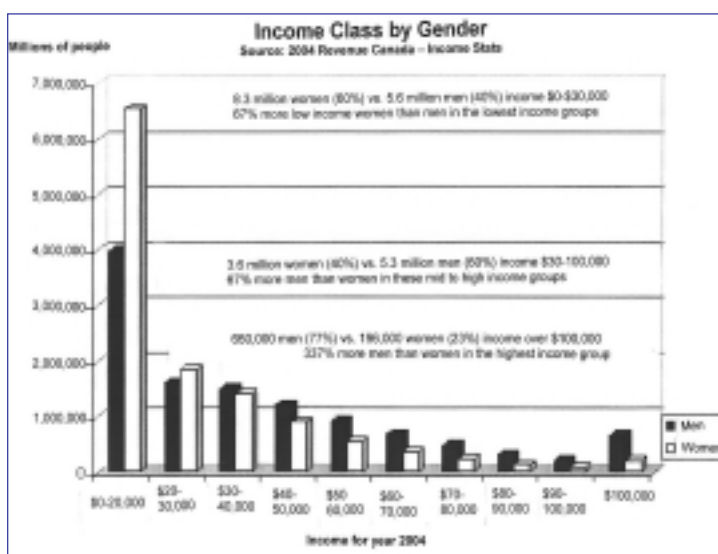
Nellie's clients, staff and volunteers participated in the Take back the Night march on September 17. This is an annual event that continues to bring awareness to violence against women in our communities. The months of November and December will be busy ones for us, as we will be celebrating different cultural and religious holidays. Check on our website at [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org) for a community calendar of these different celebrations.

The Fundraising Committee continues to organize events to raise funds and has planned Nellie's 3rd Annual Great Art Glad Heart Art Fundraising Art Auction. This year's event will take place at the Gladstone Hotel on November 22, 2006. Admission is free. Please come and see the wonderful collection of original artwork and crafts that local artists have donated in support of Nellie's programs for women and children.

Safia Ahmed

# Accessing Opportunities and Ending the Feminization of Poverty

Women make up the majority of the world's poor. **In Canada, 1 in 7 women live in poverty.** In 2004, 67% more women than men earned wages less than \$30,000. The situation is getting worse because of many factors, including the impact of globalization both at home and around the world that further causes women to suffer disproportionate loss of jobs and benefits robbing them of their rights to economic self-sufficiency. Our systems simply fail to take gender into account and financially penalize women for shouldering the enormous unpaid work burdens of giving birth, childrearing and care giving. This article looks at how barriers in our social, education and employment systems perpetuate the feminization of poverty.



Our systems are predominantly structured from a male, white, Christian-Judeo, upper class, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-aged, Eurocentric perspective. Our society revolves around a "free-market", consumption-based economy that measures progress and success through financial and economic outputs. If you do not belong to these groups, you face systemic barriers due to race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, religion, place of origin, citizenship and so on. Women who belong to multiple barrier groups face increased challenges in accessing opportunities. **For instance the average annual income of Aboriginal women is \$13,300,** compared to \$18,200 for Aboriginal men and \$19,350 for non-Aboriginal women.

**Access to education is key to gainful employment** and economic security. However, school boards and trustees appoint curriculum that are not wholly reflective of the diverse student population. This leaves many students out in the cold when it comes to education that they cannot identify with or is not relevant to them. More recently, school officials allowed Canadian immigration officers to storm, remove and detain young children from

school in order to force capture of their parents who had no status. These types of overt racism in our education system need to be changed. The rising costs on tuition fees also create a significant barrier particularly for students disadvantaged by poverty. Groups such as "The Miss G-Project" are working to promote equity in education, to combat sexism and homophobia and incorporate a Women's Studies course in the Ontario Secondary School Curriculum.

A global snapshot shows that women account for 2/3 of the world's work, but receive only 5% of the world's income and own less than 1% of property. Contrary to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Canada has the largest wage gap between women and men full-time workers in the world's 29 "developed" countries. Canadian women roughly still earn 71% compared to men and there isn't a single occupation in Canada in which women's average earnings exceed men's -not even in female dominated areas such as clerical work and teaching. Despite Employment Equity and Pay Equity initiatives, women still make up the majority who hold traditionally "female" occupations such as childcare, secretarial, and clothing production that pay much less compared to the male dominated fields of construction, trades, driving and sales. Women also make up the majority working at non-standard jobs such as contract positions, part-time or temporary employment that usually do not provide health benefits or protection by labour codes.

Workplace practices and government policies, programs and legislation need to recognize and support women in their family responsibilities. Most poor women working precarious jobs or who are on social assistance are not eligible for maternity benefits. For women who do qualify, the benefit levels are 55% of salary up to a maximum of \$413 a week for up to 50 weeks. For single mothers, this isn't enough pay the rent. After having children, women are confronted with a lack of affordable, quality childcare preventing them from returning to or finding full-time, well-paying work.

The feminization of poverty results in children who are poor. Poverty among children is strongly linked to ill health and poor academic achievement. By keeping women poor, we are also keeping children poor, making them sick, sabotaging their futures, contributing to crime, and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. We need to effect change in our systems that will establish minimum wages that reflect the actual cost of living. We need to provide adequate support for our social services, including healthcare and childcare. As a community, we need to work towards social changes that will help not just some, but all women and children to succeed.

## Cheryl's\* Story – From Despair to Delightful

*\*not real names*

I would like to introduce myself as Cheryl and I would like to tell you the story of my journey from despair to becoming a healthy, happy contributing member of society. I had several major issues in my life that were left unaddressed, and which led me further into the darkness and a world of addiction.

I was diagnosed in my early 20s with clinical anxiety depression, and since I knew nothing of these matters, I ignored it. When I became a single mother I was unable to cope and therefore turned to self-medication to alleviate the pain. I was completely isolated from both my family and society and sunk further into a dysfunctional lifestyle. I was unable to go to school, work or even properly care for my child. I finally had to relinquish care of my child and this led me deeper into depression. I stayed there until I met up with Nellie's Community Support and Outreach Program. Thanks to the social workers at Nellie's, for the first time in my life, I felt I had support, understanding and acceptance, and it led me to believe that my life could be improved.

I was feeling better and I applied for employment support through O.D.S.P., was accepted and finally returned to school. The E.S. program provides clients with a career counseling agency that can guide you into the job market that is best suited for your situation and personality. I would highly recommend this program to anyone who is on any type of assistance here in Toronto.

The counselors at Nellie's worked closely with me, and this proved to be crucial in navigating and gaining access to government resources. Without Nellie's I would not be where I am today. Now I have gained meaningful employment, in the field that I studied, at a reputable company here in Toronto.

Today I am bringing home a pay cheque and I am once again a contributing member of society. The best reward was when I picked my daughter up and we went to a nice restaurant and I told her to order whatever she wanted. Afterward, we went shopping for back to school shoes and clothes. There is no better feeling in the world.



*Cheryl is proud  
of her achievement*

I would like to say to anyone who is suffering that there is hope and things can get better. Help is available and I am the happiest that I have ever been in my life.

## Mable's\* Story - My struggle as an immigrant

I was a student of Political Science in my final year at the University of Sierra Leone. I couldn't finish my studies due to the war, financial and family issues. I had to flee home and escaped to Canada in 2005.

My first Canadian experience was the fresh air and the cold weather and snow! I only saw snow before in films and pictures. My thoughts were as if I was dreaming. I thought that it was not too far to reach God, because everything was so wonderful here. Later on, I realized I was starting life all over again. It was hard for me here, since I did not complete my education in Sierra Leone.

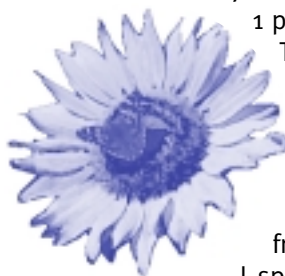
In Canada, I tried to get work but it was difficult without any Canadian experience. I didn't have a degree, or even a resume or cover letter. I really didn't know where to start, I was confused and very distressed.

I decided to volunteer, in different places like Nellie's, to gain some Canadian experience. Then I went to school to do a course, which helped my sense of belonging in Canadian society. I have a part-time job, which at first I was happy with. But a few months later, as pressure and my needs grew, I decided to try to find a full-time job, which I have had no luck in getting. My job is very hard and you

need to be available at all times before you get a few hours work. It's so hard and the struggle is tough. I'm still trying to adapt. But, it is frustrating. Now I want to become a social worker, which is my dream in Canada. I have been away from school for almost six years. I am afraid and have no confidence to go straight into college. I decided to upgrade my English first and try to familiarize myself with computers before attempting to apply for college.

Now I am studying full time, working two-part time jobs. I am only able to find work in the evenings, from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. and weekends. I start school at 1 p.m. and finish at 5 p.m. every day.

Then I come home to sleep. It is really hard to do my groceries and other things on the weekends, as I am very busy with my job and assignments. I have less time for my family and friends. I know my life is not easy; I spend most of my time studying or working. Life is stressful and frustrating in Canada, but I know I will succeed if I work hard.





## Shelter Update *By Valeska Gomez-Castillo and Hawa Bogor, Counselors*



*Demonstration for no-bake  
cheese cake*

*Summer Programming at the shelter was abundant! In July, the women and children were taken to Harbourfront Centre to experience Latin American Culture. They attended Ritmo y Color, a Mexico-focused celebration, where they participated in Latin American festivities mixed with arts, crafts, traditional music, and dance.*

*July programs included an afternoon of crafts and beading. Women and their children made beautiful necklaces and bracelets. We also joined the Toronto Caribbean Carnival's official launch at Nathan Phillips Square where they participated in the official opening ceremony and enjoyed music, dance, Caribbean foods and the crafts marketplace.*



*Yoga lesson*

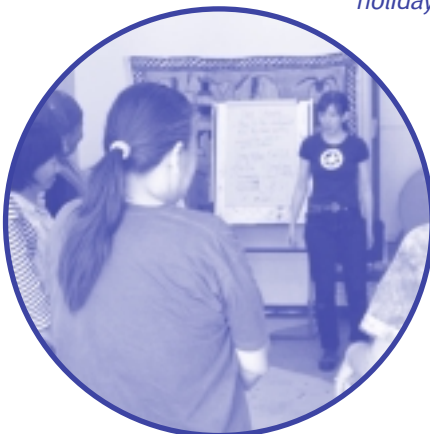
*Centre Island was another fun day away from the city for all the children and moms. The boat ride made the kids happy. In August we enjoyed participating in the Taste of the Danforth Festival, one of Toronto's busiest multicultural events. We sampled mouth-watering Greek cuisine like souvlaki and spanakopita (Spinach pie). The food at the festival satisfied all our hungry bellies, and the music and street games were entertaining.*

*In September, Nellie's participated in the United Way 4km walkathon and rally and marched at "Take back the Night," an annual event that continues to bring awareness though political activism to communities about the impact of violence against women.*



*Joanne Fisher from the  
Riverdale Employment  
Program talking to  
women*

*Fall is here. Can't wait for the different kinds of food and celebrations over this holiday season. Happy holidays everyone!!!*



*Claire the Wendo  
instructor who taught  
the women positive self-  
defense and  
empowerment*



*Asha Harris gave a anti-  
racism & anti-oppression  
workshop at Moorelands on  
"Training the Facilitators"*



*Children having fun at  
Awanda Provincial Park*

The CSO team has been busy this summer. Thanks to Kids Up Front, Nellie's has received many tickets to Ontario Place, Wonderland, Blue Jay Games and Lord of the Rings. On August 17, a group made up of women along with their children and staff rented a bus and went on a day trip to Awanda Provincial Park, located at the bottom of Georgian Bay in Penetanguishene. The group went swimming, played ball, listened to music, collected rocks and had a picnic lunch.

With an emphasis on self-discovery of body and mind, women met Joanne Fisher from the Riverdale Community Development Institute who provided diverse referrals to women living in East End Toronto. Jennifer and Kate from the Y.W.C.A also provided employment referrals but with more supports in place if needed.



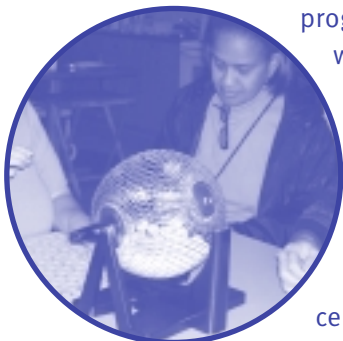
*Hello all*

On June 21, we marked Aboriginal Day celebrations with guest speaker Darlene Fisher Nadeau from Native Child and Family Services who shared Native culture and spirituality with the women. Nellie's was also invited to participate in a Native Strawberry Festival at Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Center presented by Native Elder Jackie La Valle who explained the significance of the strawberry in the Native culture and shared the strawberries with the women at the end.



*Welcome our students  
Natasha (left) and  
Priscilla*

We welcome our students Natasha Brien from George Brown College, and Priscilla Boateng from Ryerson University, who are a wonderful addition to our fall programming. Priscilla will be working with staff on a young women's program. The Young Women's Project, for those 19-24 years of age, will provide exciting activities and outings designed to promote self-discovery in young woman. Please contact Madeleine or Priscilla at (416) 461-3404 for more information.



*B-I-N-G-O*

As we draw close to the end of the year and head into 2007, please join us in celebrating the many diverse cultural celebrations, such as Thanksgiving, Diwali, Eid, Hanukka, Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year.



*Children supporting  
United Way Walkathon*



*Women receiving sweaters*



*Sandy & Funke preparing food  
for the evening drop in*

## Nellie's AGM



Co-Chair Safia Ahmed  
giving her AGM report



Music & singing by  
Roula, Mryem & Sophia



Volunteer Recognition to  
Caitlin McClung

Nellie's Annual General Meeting was held on September 13 at Ralph Thornton Community Centre. Thank you to the Board Members, Volunteers, Funders, Staff and Community Members for coming out to join the meeting and enjoy the food and wonderful music. Nellie's Annual Report is available on our website at [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org).



Thank you to the  
community members  
attending Nellie's AGM



Auditor's report by  
Massimo Siciliano

## Voices of Women

*\*from Past Executive Director of Nellies*

Nellie's has been a wonderful part of my life and it is never easy to leave somewhere that has been so important in so many ways. I have had the very unique opportunity and great honour to work with such a wonderful, talented and diverse group of women. From the women and children within our services to the staff, Board, volunteers and students I have learned so much.

Whether it is the ardor of the issues and politics, the meaningful work or the wonderful women passionate, wise, strong and caring, who have so generously shared their wisdom with me and brought Nellie's mission and vision to life. Thank you my friends for all you do.

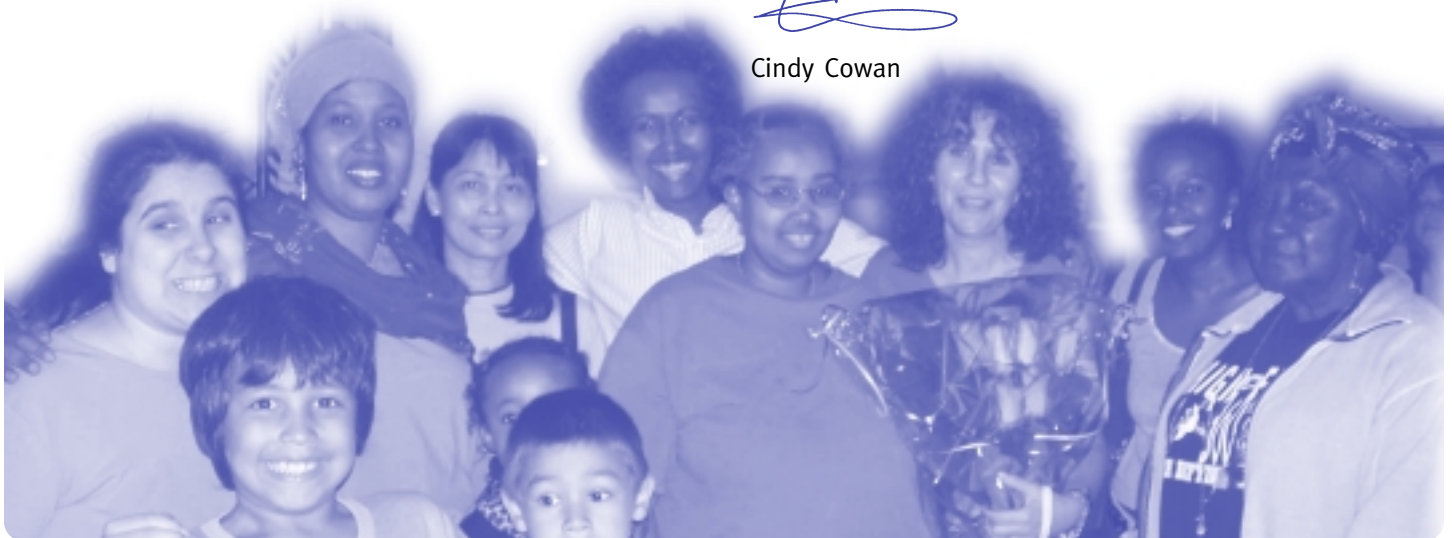
I will take all that I have learned, my wonderful experiences and memories, and bring these to my new challenge at Interim Place. I will miss you all very much! Nellie's is an amazing, truly unique and responsive grassroots women's organization and I have indeed been so proud to have been a small part of shaping it over the last eight years. I know that over the coming years Nellie's will continue in a manner that is strong and true to its mission, with a solid structure and policies that support excellence in all areas of agency operation and demonstrate a solid commitment to ending poverty, homelessness, violence and oppression in the lives of all women in our community.

With much love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink.

Cindy Cowan

***I know  
that over  
the coming  
years Nellie's  
will continue  
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true...***





## Nellie's Invitation

### Great Art Glad Heart 2006

Please join Nellie's 3rd annual Great Art Glad Heart art exhibit and auction on Wednesday, November 22 at the Gladstone Hotel from 6-9 pm. Thank you to more than 30 community artists for donating their original paintings, crafts or sculptures to raise funds supporting Nellie's programs for abused and homeless women & children. Please come down to talk to the artists and enjoy their art works. Admission is free



## Nellie's Community Events



DYKE march in June



Tattoo: raising funds at Pride

Board member, staff, women & children supporting United Way Walkathon



### Nellie's Holiday Wish List 2006



Thank you for helping a woman or child at Nellie's this holiday season. Please purchase a new gift item below or check which gift you would like us to purchase. Send your donation by cheque or credit card.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Certificates (any department store, any \$) \$ Any  | <input type="checkbox"/> Winter Coats (women's & kids assorted sizes) \$125                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing Sets (women's & kids & infants all sizes) \$125 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleepwear (women's & kids & infant sleepers assorted & slippers) \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Footwear (winter shoes/boots women, kids & infants) \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby Furniture (high chairs, cribs, playpens) \$250                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infant formula/Baby Food \$35                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Infant Care Baskets (soaps, lotions, diaper cream etc) \$75           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movie Night Out \$35                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Linen Sets (Bed & Towels) \$125                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries \$75  | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Toys (infant – 16 yrs of age) \$75                         |

Every donation helps a woman or child in need at Nellie's, please give generously:

(Please Print) Amount Donated: [ ] \$35 [ ] \$75 [ ] \$125 [ ] \$250 [ ] OTHER \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov.: \_\_\_\_\_ PO Code: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] I've attached a cheque [ ] Please charge my donation to: [ ] VISA [ ] MASTERCARD

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Mo Y Credit Card Only

[ ] Send a greeting card to the following letting them know a donation has been made in their name:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov.: \_\_\_\_\_ PO Code: \_\_\_\_\_

We appreciate every gift we receive from our community. But due to limited storage space, Nellie's cannot receive used in-kind donations from October 15 – February 1. If you have used items you would like to donate, please wait until after the busy holiday season. Thank you



*Special thanks to Nellie's dedicated board members for their excellent work from top left Safia Ahmed, Sherece Taffe, Mary Byberg & Marcia Beck; from bottom left Lynda Roy, Carol Allain, Erica Opoku and Theresa Shilling*



*Thanks to the team at LCBO Summerhill for their annual cruise fundraiser for Nellie's*



*Thank you to Vincent Kwok, Carol Che, Sarah and Mary Byberg finished the Waterfront Marathon 5K walk on September 23*



*Thank you to Second Harvest for their on-going food supplies to our program*

## Nellie's Calendar of Events

November	Woman Abuse Awareness Month
November	Women's History Awareness Month Canada
Nov 20	Universal Children's Day - UN
Nov 25	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
December	Universal Human Rights Months
Dec 6	National Day for Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women – Dec 6 Fund
Dec 16-23	Hannukah (Jewish)
Dec 25	Christmas
Dec 26- Jan 1	Kwanzaa (Afro-American)
Jan 1	New Years Day
February	Black History Month
Feb 18	Lunar Chinese New Year – The Year of the Pig
Feb 19	Losar- Tibetan New Year

Visit [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org) for all community and cultural celebrations for 2006 and 2007

## 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](mailto:programs@nellies.org)

### Community Support

Tel: 416-461-3404, 416-461-2052  
Fax: 416-461-0970  
E-mail: [outreach@nellies.org](mailto:outreach@nellies.org)

### Transitional Housing & Support

Tel: 416-461-0980  
TTY: 416-461-0625  
Fax: 416-461-0970  
E-mail: [tsw@nellies.org](mailto:tsw@nellies.org)

### Administration

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Website: [www.nellies.org](http://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



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