



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.



Dec 2010 , Issue #30

Message from the Executive Director



The renovations to the program space at our Community Support and Outreach site were finally completed. On July 27 we had an open house to celebrate this achievement, we also took this opportunity to thank all our donors for their generous contributions that made the space welcoming and accessible for all the women and children.

With assistance from Human Resources and Development Canada, we had four summer students lending a hand. Awo Abokor, Erin Callaghan, Sarah McKee and Natalya Stephens contributed greatly to our programs and services.

We completed recruitment of students and volunteers for the term running from fall 2010 until spring 2011. Thanks to Rebecca Rogers, Sarah Hull and Cecilia Paul for their facilitation on the volunteer orientation.

Welcome volunteers Rachel Guha; Janet Maher; Andrea Kutz; and Suzan Poyraz; and student placements Candice Walker; Erin Callaghan; Monica Meireles; Taneisha McKenzie; and Christina da Costa.

Nellie's 37th Annual General Meeting was held on Sept. 21 at 519 Church Community Center. Alana Courtright, Sienna Leung, Fran Odette and Vera Voroskolevska were confirmed by the membership as new board members for the organization. Sadly we have to say good bye to our Treasurer, Mary Byberg. Mary served at the board for a total of six years. During her terms, she held the positions of Treasurer, and Chair of the Fundraising Committee. She was always ready to represent Nellie's. Mary's strong leadership and commitment will be greatly missed.

We are happy to see Mary continue to serve as a member of the Capital/Fund Development Committee. This committee is the one that will oversee and provide leadership to the campaign aimed to secure the necessary resources to build our new shelter, a shelter which will be better suited to provide accessible and dignified living to the diverse women and children we serve.



Nellie's Community Support & Outreach Open House Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

November was Wife Assault Prevention Month and for the second year in a row, Nellie's hosted "WAAM!: Survive This!" on November 25 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Cabaret. This event marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children. See pictures of the event at our website.



This issue of Nellie's newsletter is dedicated to raising awareness of the myths regarding violence and abuse against women with disAbilities and deaf women. The articles also highlight some of the barriers for self determination and access to services that women with disAbilities and deaf women have to face as part of their daily life.

If you haven't already made a gift to Nellie's, please see Lisa's story on page 7.

Justice and equity,

Margaita Méndez



Disability Does Not Create Vulnerability: Ableism Creates Vulnerability

by Lynda Roy, the Outreach and Education Mentor of the Women with DisAbilities Program at Springtide Resources; member of Nellie's Social Justice Committee

Historically, little was known about how violence and abuse affected women with disAbilities, including deaf women. This lack of awareness can be attributed to myths associated with women with disAbilities and deaf women, our lack of inclusion within the community, as well as a lack of resources and supports. We were kept segregated and our stories went unheard. Despite our invisibility, studies suggest we are more vulnerable to domestic abuse and yet services to support us remain scarce. (Cohen, et al., 2004; Kaufman, Silverberg & Odette, 2003; Todd & Lundy, 2006)

We face the same forms of gender discrimination as our non-disabled peers. We are mothers, daughters, sisters, intimate partners, care providers and mentors. Like our non-disabled peers these roles are often unseen or invalidated. Globally, we remain among the poorest members in society (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/publications/femdisabus-eng.php).

We face significant barriers to employment, housing, income support and health services.

These barriers diminish our capacity for self-determination and increase our reliance on others creating power imbalances.

Our experiences of abuse can be explicit such as physical or sexual abuse. Our experiences of abuse can also be much more nuanced.

For example, a woman who uses a wheelchair may have a partner who prevents her from walking in her neighbourhood alone for fear the wheelchair may break down. Many people see this as the sign of a loving and caring partner; perhaps a bit misguided but certainly not abuse. However, if we juxtapose this by using a similar scenario with a non-disabled woman who wants to go for a drive on her own and her partner prevents her because the car might breakdown it becomes easier to identify this as abuse. Our partners are seen as

heroic care providers, martyrs and protectors and, for this reason, some of our experiences do not get recognized as abusive.

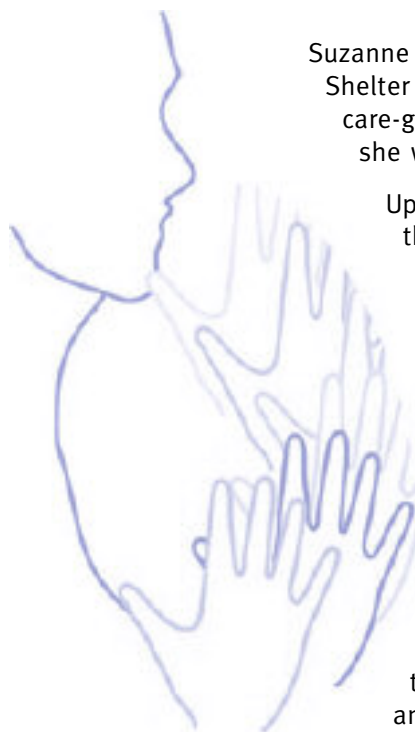
When we, as a society ignore and simplify the lives of deaf women and women with disAbilities, when we rely on old myths and stereotypes we perpetuate abuse and violence. Just as with non-disabled women, the abuse and violence experienced by women with disAbilities have a ripple effect, extending beyond the individual woman to other family members, communities and future generations (www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/situation.shtml). To continue to ignore the reality of our experiences of abuse will ensure that even more women will become victims of abuse. As an example, if the perpetrator of the abuse is a service provider, the lack of understanding will certainly ensure future women will be abused.

To support deaf women and women with disAbilities, to make their experiences of abuse and violence visible, it is important to begin to unlearn some of these myths and stereotypes. We need to develop an anti-oppressive environment and engage in a self-reflective exploration of our own biases and beliefs. We need to appreciate that women who experience abuse are not passive recipients of such treatment, but actively engage in strategies to survive and minimize the harm being perpetrated on them and their children. (Goodkind, Sullivan & Bybee 2004) We need to recognize this in order to develop supports and assistance that is individualized and that works with the strengths each woman has. We need to remember that the nature and context of disablement may mean that what appears to be a "subtle" form of abuse from a non-disabled or differently-abled perspective could actually be quite harmful. As the earlier example illustrates, restricting someone's mobility may mean that this woman loses the ability to meet her daily responsibilities, exercise her own autonomy and will result in further isolation. In the long-term this results in serious deterioration of both physical and mental health.



Voices of Women – Suzanne

By Sarah Hull, Transition Support Housing Worker



Suzanne is a woman with a developmental disAbility who came to stay at Nellie's Shelter for Women after disclosing that she was being abused by her primary care-giver. Suzanne lives with an acquired brain injury and along with the abuse she was experiencing, she was also very isolated from the outside community.

Upon coming to Nellie's, Suzanne was able to express some of her feelings to the staff and receive some support to deal with the abuse she had experienced.

Suzanne began to attend regular outings and programs within the shelter, and was able to build connections with staff and other residents, which greatly helps to break down social isolation. Staff were also able to connect with contacts in the developmental disAbility sector, in order to ensure that Suzanne's needs were being met, not only while in our shelter, but once she left as well. After talking at length with Suzanne, she expressed that she wished to live in a setting with other people who have needs similar to hers, and with regular staff support. Suzanne enjoys routine and structure in her day and the staff is very aware of how important this is to her.

After endless phone calls and hours spent navigating housing programs, the staff was able to find an appropriate housing solution that would provide Suzanne with the supports she had requested. We were able to support Suzanne through the entire referral and application process. She has now completed this step and had been placed on a waitlist for a spot in Supportive Independent Living. This program will ensure Suzanne's day-to-day living needs are met, and will also allow her to participate in community activities including Nellie's community programs.

Suzanne is very much looking forward to what lies ahead, and Nellie's will continue to support her so that she may reach her goals.

My job experience

By Karen Sterling, Relief Counsellor at Nellie's

When I first started out at Nellie's as a Relief Counselor, I was concerned that it would be difficult to fit in as a staff member with a visual disAbility. I wasn't sure if I was going to make it as a part of the team. I am delighted to say that I was so wrong. It was a smooth transition for me because of the accommodation extended by Nellie's.

On my first shift, I totally forgot about my nervousness, and I immediately became a part of the team. I am happy to say that on my first shift as a Relief Counsellor, I was all geared up with the accommodations that would enable me to be proficient in my work. It was surprising that all these accommodations were put in place within such short notice. For example, I have a computer program, Zoomtext, for large print; a magnifier for reading; and all documents are printed in large print.

There are days when I experience challenges, and obstacles do get in the way. I voice my concerns to the team or the manager, and we think it through together, creating a positive outcome that fits the situation.

Nellie's strives to ensure that it lives up to its mission statement: to provide support for women and children. Once you are identified as a woman in need, regardless of your race, gender class, sexual orientation, or disAbility etc., you will be treated with respect, and you will be given the services you require, whether you're a resident or staff. These are the values that draw me to Nellie's, and I am proud to be working with Nellie's. My experience so far has been exciting and motivating. I look forward to learning new ways of advocacy and providing support to women and children in the shelter.



Shelter Update

By Cecelia Paul and Joanna Shawana, Nellie's Counsellors



Welcome to our 2010/2011 volunteers, students and staff



Staff training on Harm Reduction



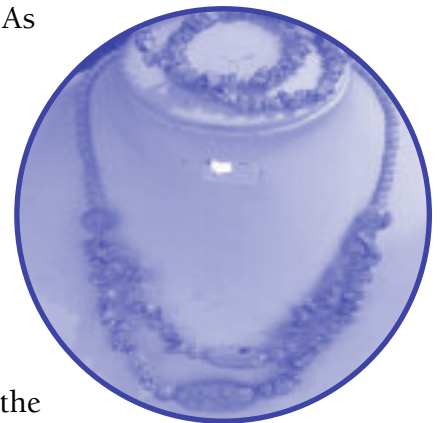
Nellie's at Pride Dyke

The women and children of Nellie's had some wonderful times over the summer and fall. They are excited to be a part of the Nellie's family and to be given the opportunity to have fun. Also to be treated with such high respect and dignity. It's amazing.

In July, we watched the Canada Day fireworks, joined the Dyke March and took in Afrofest, Lillith Fair, a Bon Jovi concert, the Beaches Jazz Festival, Salsa on St. Clair and Caribana. Then in August we participated in Prisoners Justice Day, sampled the Taste of the Danforth, Buskerfest and Green Festival, and hit the Canadian National Exhibition.

To close out the summer, the women marched in the Labour Day Parade, and on September 11th they went to a Blue Jays game. As the holiday season approaches, more celebrations will be coming up.

We will be starting our Jewellery Making Workshop soon for the women at the shelter. For the past two years, many women have created their own beautiful work and shared with their friends.



Women at Nellie's made these jewelries

CSO Update - Community Support and Outreach

By Adriana Pelayo, Community Support and Outreach Worker



T-shirts paintings

The renovation of the Community Support and Outreach Program area is finally finished. Now we have our cozy and warm place again. New furniture, a new accessible lift and facilities, and wonderful colours create a very nice atmosphere for our women and children. They are all happy to come back to the program and share not only the space but food, stories and laughs. The Open House on July 27 was full of fun, and the Lion Dance was a big surprise.



Learn planting in seeds and caring for plants

The heat of this summer brought a lot of energy. Our women and children enjoyed the activities and programs. We spent a day at the Riverdale Farm feeding the horses and goats and even learning how to milk a cow. We flew kites on the beaches with the sun on our faces and water on our feet. We had sack races and foot races, visited the water park, and had soccer matches. All the outdoor activities meant we had great sun tans! We also had plenty of indoor activities, too. Movie day was great, and we also learned to sow seeds and care for a plant, and made papier mâché objects.



Flying a kite was fun!

The regular activities at CSO are back to normal. Tuesdays we have the Supper Surprise Food Program; Wednesdays is Drop-in; and Thursdays we have the Her Share Workshops. Upcoming themes include: Living on a Budget; Living with Diabetes; and the Harm Reduction Program. We'll also have speakers from the Toronto Rape Crisis



South Riverdale Farm

Centre, Women's Habitat, and No One Is Illegal to talk about their programs.



Fun jumping in sack

Housing Bulletin

By Sarah Hull, Transition Support Housing Worker

Ontarians have been anxiously waiting for an affordable housing strategy since it was promised by the current government during the 2007 provincial election, but the provincial government has since delayed its Affordable Housing Strategy.

In spring 2009, the Government of Ontario announced that it would be allotting a significant amount of funding to improving and creating more social housing in the province. During the summer of 2009 consultation sessions took place around Ontario, with various participants including housing providers, builders, housing workers and advocates, and current affordable and subsidized housing tenants, as a means of collecting information and input on what the housing strategy should look like.

Nellie's participated in this process and provided input and feedback regarding the current state of social housing in the City of Toronto and surrounding municipalities.

Since then, we have been eagerly anticipating the release of this strategy by Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Rick Bartolucci. The initial release was scheduled for spring, however it has now been pushed back once again until this coming fall, leaving the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians in need of affordable housing without an answer. With current waitlists for subsidized housing being upwards of 20 years long, this delay is both disappointing and unacceptable.

Have your voice heard! Let Premier McGuinty and Minister Bartolucci know Ontarians are demanding an Affordable Housing Strategy now! E-mail, call or visit them, or your local MPP and express your frustration at yet another setback.



Nellie's Community Support and Outreach Open House!

By Jenna Pettinato, Development Administrative Support Worker

On Wednesday July 28, Nellie's celebrated the re-opening of our newly renovated Community Support and Outreach Space. The renovations to Nellie's included the installation of a new wheelchair lift, as well as improvements to the bathroom and front entrance to increase accessibility.

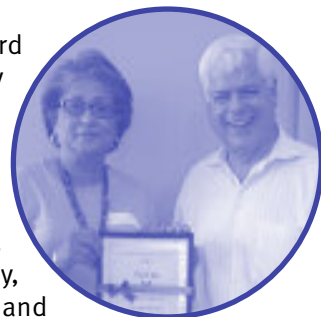


Dragon Dance celebration

During the afternoon, Nellie's staff, clients, and community members came together to enjoy food, arts and crafts, and live entertainment including a special Lion Dance meant to bring good luck to Nellie's new space. Guests were joined by local MPP for Toronto-Danforth, Peter Tabuns.

In the evening, funders joined Nellie's Board Members at a special appreciation ceremony to recognize their invaluable contribution towards making Nellie's new space a reality. Maja Repecki from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Rinaldo

Boni from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, and Elizabeth Andrew from the City of Toronto, Riverside Business Improvement Association were all present for the appreciation ceremony, which included a ribbon cutting to officially open Nellie's new Community Support and Outreach Space.



Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns

Nellie's Annual General Meeting

By Marcia Beck, Vice President of Nellie's Board of Director



Welcome to our new Board members, from left Alana, Sienna and Vera.



Mary, we will miss you!!

On Tuesday September 21, a group of energetic women met at the 519 Church Street Community Centre for this year's AGM - our 37th year! We run a business meeting, elect new board members, deal with other business, eat lots of good food, and celebrate together. The 519, offered us a fully renovated and accessible space for our gathering. About 80 women attended the event.



Fabulous performance from Aline and her band

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity to recognize and thank the wonderful volunteers who give so much to Nellie's. This year, we were honoured to acknowledge the work of Julie Allin, Sienna Leung, Kendi Medhanie, Caitlin McClung, Emily McClung, Lorraine McKellar, Lynda Roy and Rachel Power.

Finally, the evening ended with an incredible performance by Aline Morales and her band. Women were up dancing, playing instruments, and singing our hearts out. As usual, our AGM was a fabulous event. Meaningful work, good food, fun music and great people -- what could be better?

Appeal from Lisa Walters, a former resident at Nellie's

Dear Supporter,

"Everyone needs a family during the holidays..."

A few years ago, I arrived at Nellie's. I was alone, pregnant and very frightened. The man I loved ended up controlling and abusing me. He made my life a "personal hell". One day, I caught him at home with another woman. And when I confronted him, he kicked me out of my own home.



I was so scared and had nowhere to go. So a friend recommended that I call Nellie's. At first I was very anxious about staying there. But after a short time, the friendly and supportive staff treated me like family and I began feeling hopeful again. I received the medical attention I needed for a healthy pregnancy and almost everything else to make sure that my baby would get the best possible start in life.

Nellie's helped me find an affordable home and got me accepted into a local college program. Although I moved out of the shelter, I stayed connected to Nellie's through their Community Support and Outreach Programs.

I can't imagine where I would be today if it wasn't for Nellie's help when I needed it most. So when I heard that Nellie's was struggling financially to meet the needs of so many women and children in their care, I volunteered to share my story and appeal to you for support.

Please make a donation this holiday season to ensure that Nellie's won't be forced to turn away a woman or child in need.

Today, my daughter Jessica is a happy, healthy, energetic three-year-old. I graduated from college with honours and I am so excited to start a career!

During this season of giving, and generosity, and hope – won't you please help support the 166 women and 222 children who right now are relying on Nellie's? Please make a gift because everyone needs a family during the holidays...

Lisa Walters

P.S. You can make your donation by calling 416-461-8903, or online at www.nellies.org



Margarita accepting 50/50 Soccer Pool from BMW Toronto's President



Kathleen Wong delivering 70 backpacks to our Back to School Program. Thank you to St. Monica's Catholic Women's League.



Thank you to Volunteers from Canadian Tire making us storage shelves and window shades at the CSO Program

Nellie's Calendar of Events

December	Universal Human Rights Months
Dec 6	National Day for Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women – Dec 6 Fund
Dec 2-9	Hannukah (Jewish)
Dec 25	Christmas
Dec 26- Jan 1	Kwanzaa (Afro-American)
Jan 1	New Years Day
February	Black History Month
Feb 3	Chinese New Year – The Year of the Rabbit
Mar 4	Losar- Tibetan New Year
Mar 8	International Women's Day
Mar 21	International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Apr 19-26	Pesach (Passover) – Jewish
Apr 27-28	Gathering of Nations Pow Wow
May 8	Mother's Day
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day
Jun 27	Multiculturalism Day

Visit www.nellies.org for all community and cultural celebrations

Nellie's Contact Information

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In Kind Donations: 416-461-0521

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