



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 the Executive Director

December 2014 , Issue #38

In light of the recent cases of sexual harassment at the workplace, we must continue to advocate strongly for the development and enforcement of workplace anti-harassment policies. We should also encourage a culture of safe workplace environments, with clear, user-friendly processes that support women who are ready to lodge complaints.

Nellie's 41st Annual General Members meeting was held on Sept. 17. Eighty women, including program participants, staff, funders and members of the community, came



together to celebrate the past year's work, and to say goodbye to Zahra Mohamed and Kathy Rampersad who, after six years of service, have left the board. Their work to maintain Nellie's vision and mission is greatly appreciated.

Three new board members were elected at

the AGM: Lauren Hanna, Bethany Johnson and Sahar Zaidi. They participated on the volunteer orientation session along with newlyselected board committee members: Tamyka Bullen, Sherri Thiele, and Dale Yurka; volunteers: Rhiannon Downey, Tea Hadziristic, Megan Marrelli; and student placements: Kathryn Dunmore, Lilliane Namukasa, Maria Nazarova, Joeann Pearson, and Kaitlin Rybacki. A warm welcome to all, and my sincere appreciation to the volunteer orientation facilitators Anna Morgan and Marlene Bell.

This year we have received funding from HRDC to hire five summer job positions. Thanks to this, we were able to provide support to and increase attendance for the Children's Summer Programs and other administrative and programs services. For the second consecutive year, we have been able to hire a French-speaking student. This year we translated the Resident's Manual to French, and updated information on francophone services. We were also available to respond to incoming calls from francophone women at the Community Support and Outreach site.

Thanks to the "Investing in Neighbourhood Project" from the City of Toronto Employment and Social Services, we are able to hire a House Coordinator Assistant and an Intake Administrative Support Worker. We will work hard to ensure women placed at Nellie's from this program develop strong skills that will facilitate their entrance in the permanent work force.

November is Women Abuse Awareness month. All Ontario Violence Against Women Shelters are participating in the "Wrapped in Courage Campaign" lead by OAITH. We are selling purple scarves to show community support to end violence against women. Visit our website to buy a scarf and wear it to show your support.

We welcome the newly elected mayor, John Tory, and the returning and newly-elected city councillors. We are looking forward to an ongoing working relationship to ensure all city residents' basic needs are taken in consideration.

This issue's theme article addresses food Insecurity. The 2014 Who is Hungry report shows that "hunger amongst people with disabilities is on the rise in the GTA. Forty-three per cent of GTA food banks' clients with disabilities reported not eating for an entire day due to lack of money." According to the report, the top three reasons why people visit a food bank for the first time are: a lost job – 33 per cent; disability – 23 per cent; and being new to the area – 20 per cent. The average food bank client spends 73 per cent of their household income in housing, leaving them at risk for both hunger and homelessness.

We need to advocate to all levels of government for the creation of affordable housing units, an increased minimum wage, and increases to social assistance allowances.

Justice and Equity,

Margaita Méndez

Hunger for the Holidays

By Anna Morgan, Transition Support Worker and Social Justice Committee Member

The holidays bring people together around the dinner table to share food with family and friends. However, a growing number of people in Toronto, and Canada at large, are experiencing food insecurity.

The HUNGERCOUNT 2013 report by Food Banks Canada stated that four million people in Canada, including more than one million children, have inadequate or insecure access to food because they do not have enough money to meet their needs. There is an undeniable link between poverty and food insecurity. Most people who access food banks in the GTA earn on average \$750 a month, with 71% of their income spent on utilities and rent, leaving little money left for food.

Social factors, such as race, gender, class and ability, increase the likelihood of hunger. Food insecurity is disproportionately high among lone parent families, recent immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities and aboriginal peoples. According to HUNGERCOUNT 2013, of the total number of people who access food banks:

- 50 % of households are receiving social assistance (demonstrating insufficient social assistance rates)
- 25 % are single-parent families
- 16 % of households are living on a disability-related income supports
- 11 % identify as First nations, Metis or Inuit (rising to 25% in rural or small towns)
- 11 per cent are immigrants who have arrived in Canada within the last ten years.

Food insecurity is a form of violence that women who come to Nellie's experience and has a real impact on their lives. Poverty and hunger are linked to lower life expectancy and chronic disease. The interconnection between poverty and food insecurity can result in women staying in violent situations longer. When women leave abuse, frequently as the sole provider for the children, they commonly experience poverty and are forced to choose between paying rent and paying for food.

As a result of the growing food crisis, food banks have become a permanent fixture in Canadian society. Total client visits to food banks across the GTA from April 2013 to March 2014 were 1 million, which is a 9 per cent increase from 2008. In 2013, Nellie's provided 10,587 meals to women



and their families through the Supper Surprise Program. Around the holiday time, Nellie's provides turkeys to families through Second Harvest and connects women to resources that can provide meals for the holiday. Nellie's also coordinates workshops on nutrition, cooking and diabetes prevention through the Her Share workshop program.

While food banks and meal programs are still necessary in today's landscape, food banks do not address the larger interconnected systemic issues, such as housing, employment, transportation, poverty, nutrition and health. A strong anti-poverty movement has emerged in Toronto to address systemic causes of food insecurity.

The anti-poverty movement recognizes the link between poverty, housing, employment and food insecurity and advocates for anti-poverty measures, such as a higher minimum wage and an increase in social assistance rates. In the report HUNGERCOUNT 2013, they provided the following recommendation to address the complex issue of food insecurity:



- Commitment to adequate, long-term federal funding of affordable housing in Canada
- Increase social investment in Northern Canada
- Increase federal support for existing programs under Labour Market Agreements, to help most vulnerable get well-paying jobs
- Revolutionize social assistance so people can build self-sufficiency
- Increase federal and provincial support to help people in precarious employment attain better-paid, long-term employment.

At Nellie's we also rely on food support for our shelter from the Daily Bread Food Bank. This weekly food supply for the shelter helps us to offset the grossly inadequate funding we receive to support our work.



continued... In addition to providing a food program and workshops, Nellie's is also committed to systemic advocacy that connects food insecurity to poverty from an anti-racism/anti-oppression framework. Nellie's is committed to raising awareness on food insecurity and is committed to anti-poverty work through its social justice committee, position papers and coalition work with other social justice organizations. Nellie's supports campaigns to increase the minimum wage, increase social assistance rates, and establish the right to housing.

Voices of Women – Carol's* Story

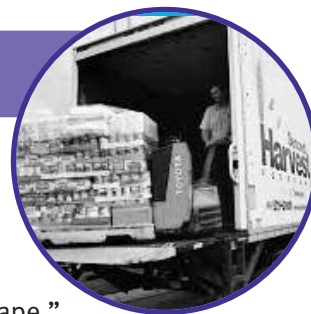
By Adriana Pelayo, Community Support and Outreach Worker

When Carol arrived at Nellie's 12 years ago she was using crystal meth, cocaine and alcohol to suppress her memories of abuse. She lived at the shelter for three months in 2003 and during that time she asked staff to accompany her to programs that treat drug-addiction.

"When I first came to Nellie's I was scared, hungry, cold, depressed and in very bad physical shape," says Carol. "Here, I got a home."

Eventually, with the support of Nellie's, Carol stopped using drugs. She's a grandmother now and receives ODSP, living in her own apartment and taking care of her two grandsons. Nellie's two food programs, Supper Surprise and the drop-in are still her primary source of food supplement. "The meals I get help me survive," she says.

Carol is a unique leader who is now an advocate of harm reduction. When she accesses Nellie's food programs, she also helps staff run the operations.



Nellie's is partnered with Second Harvest

The food Nellie's provides is crucial—not only because it feeds women in need, like Carol, but also because it gathers strong individuals. Carol describes the programs as a space where she shares "not just meals, but stories, laughs and sometimes crying," she says. "I feel so supported."



Erica's* Story When the choice is between safety and access to food and shelter

By Lil Manger, Relief Counsellor & Social Justice Committee Member

Three years ago, when Erica was pregnant with Savannah, she experienced one of the most violent incidents with her abuser. Her screams could be heard from across the street and many of her neighbours called the police. When the police arrived, Erica was quickly taken to Women's College Hospital for urgent care. Luckily, her abuser was arrested immediately and charged with assault. Erica was relieved to hear that her baby was not injured. Once she healed physically, Erica was discharged to Nellie's Shelter, where she found the emotional support, direction and advocacy that she needed. Erica looks back upon her time at the shelter as a time of healing, transition and support. From there, she thought, things could only get better.

But sometimes the harshness of reality hits harder than expected. Eventually, Erica and her daughter Savannah found housing, left the shelter and moved into their new apartment. Life was difficult. Erica had worked as a nurse before Savannah was born, but was fired a few months before the last incident because of the impact the emotional and physical violence had on her ability to do her work. Recently, Erica has thought about going back to work, but she is still experiencing flashbacks from the violence and doesn't have safe and affordable childcare.

Erica now lives on Ontario Works, and barely has enough financial resources to pay her rent and obtain food and necessities for herself and Savannah. While Erica does access the Nellie's Food Program, she finds that there is still not enough food for herself and her daughter. Very often Erica gives up a meal to make some payments or to ensure her daughter has enough to eat. It is she who goes without. "It's unfair," she thinks to herself, that she had to choose between living a life free from violence, and access to adequate food and shelter. Understanding that it is the interlocking systems of oppression that support oppressive policies, Erica is looking into ways to create social and political change. Contact Nellie's or your local social justice-based organization for more information on how to advocate for a livable social assistance allowance and the development of accessible housing units.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality of our client

Program Update – Shelter

By Tamara Nickie, Shelter Administrative Support Worker



Staffers Tamara and Emily got their medals from the 5K walk at the Waterfront Marathon



Adriana Pelayo delivering the workshop on elder isolation



Immigration law workshop with Silmi Abdullah from METRAC

At Nellie's, connecting women & children and introducing them to diverse cultures are as vital as providing a safe place to live. We try to provide these links through our programming.

In June, Toronto welcomed the LGBTTIQQ2SA world. Nellies participated in the Dyke March, where we showed support for the struggles that continue, but also celebrated the ones that were won. On National Aboriginal Day we attended a Pow Wow, where women and children learned more of Canada's first peoples' culture.

On July 1, we went to see fireworks as Canada celebrated its birthday. During July, the children also started their summer program. They went to museums and parks, and had a wonderful time all around. On July 5, we went to have fun in Woodbine Park at Afrofest. The month ended with a dinner for Eid, a Muslim holiday which marks the end of the month of Ramadan. Women enjoyed different foods and enlightening discussions with each other and staff.

In August, we danced with masqueraders at the Caribbean Festival. The summer came to an end, but programming continued in September. We marched in solidarity with the unions for fair labour wages and we also went on the rides at the CNE. We attended the rally/march for Take Back the Night, where we demanded the right for women to be able to safely walk the streets at any time or however we are dressed.

We are always grateful for everything we have, and our Thanksgiving table was laden with a variety of food. Then, for Halloween, the spookiest of all nights, we became pirates, princesses, ghosts and superheroes.

As this reminiscence ends, we look forward to winter programming, hot chocolate and holiday celebration parties. Happy holidays!



Workshop on the municipal election, with Israt Ahmed from Social Planning Toronto



James Elcombe from East Toronto Community Legal Clinic talking about housing rights

CSO Update

By Awo Abokor, Summer Children Worker and Adriana Pelayo, Community Support and Outreach Worker



Art Gallery of Ontario

Nellie's ran a six-week children's program this summer. The goal of the program is to provide a safe fun environment for children. The 15 campers, ranging from the ages of 6-12, immediately made new friends and were very welcoming to each other.



Kids getting ready to go to the ROM

The themes for this year program were tolerance and anti-oppression; exploring different cultures, backgrounds and ages. The campers also had the opportunity to showcase not just their artistic talents throughout the program, but also their leadership and compassionate skills. All the games and activities played gave the children a chance to build their social skills in addition to making friends.

We had a special visit from Acts of Kindness who helped the children crochet bracelets, and necklaces. Gender was not an issue to actively participate, as the boys were eager to participate as the girls.



A fun science experiment

The campers also went on field trips such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Toronto islands. Exploring the city in which they live was something that children really looked forward to each week.

Her Share workshops in the past six months were: Family Law by Legal Aid Danforth; Cultural and Elderly Isolation by Elder Abuse Ontario; Legal Aids Rights and Responsibilities by METRAC; Criminal Injury Compensation by Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; New Immigration Laws by FCJ Refugee Centre; and Mayoral and Ward 30 Election.



So nice to draw in the park



Yoga lesson

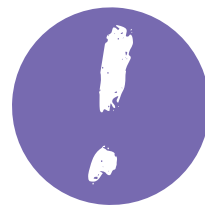
Nellie's Holiday Party is being held at Ralph Thornton Community Centre. Our sincere appreciation to RBC volunteers for organizing the food for the event again. This is the time to share and time to give. Happy Holidays!

Fundraising Update

By Julia Robinson, Development Manager

Third Party Events

With the holidays just around the corner, we are presenting some options for you to support the women and children of Nellie's. You can party with a purpose! If you are having a holiday gift exchange, consider having a toiletry drive or toy drive and provide in-kind gifts. During your office holiday party, ask guests to consider making a donation to Nellie's. This way you provide your guests with the opportunity to make a significant contribution to others.



You can also host an office holiday bake sale: get everyone involved to bring in baked goods and collect donations for Nellie's. Create some healthy competition with a "Best Holiday Cookie" contest. Hang a stocking near the entrance/exit of your workplace and every-one can donate their afternoon coffee/snack money to the "Skip the Coffee" Stocking. They will feel great doing something good, and will get a head start on New Year Resolutions to look and feel better!

There are other opportunities to give throughout the year. Nellie's Celebration Club - ask family and friends to donate for your birthday or other important events. If you are part of an arts group or hosting an event at your work or school, consider giving part of the proceeds to Nellie's. Contact Julia Robinson at julia@nellies.org!

Scotiabank Marathon

On Sunday, Oct.19 2014, Nellie's had 18 participants run, walk and wheel their way to over \$15,000 in donations! Many of our participants were able to meet or surpass their personal goals, such as running their first half marathon, and beating their own personal best time! Thank you to all our supporters. We couldn't do it without you!



Stephanie approaching the end of her half-marathon

Holiday Gifts

During the holidays, Nellie's helps break women and children's isolation by providing diverse and celebratory events, sharing meals and gifts, and boosting the spirit of community with music and storytelling. You can support these Holiday activities and make the celebrations brighter in a variety of ways!

You can donate toys and gifts to the women and children of Nellie's. If this interests you and you'd like more information please call 416-461-0769 or email julia@nellies.org. You can also donate gift certificates of food vouchers; and of course, you can make a financial donation, which will support our holiday celebrations.



*From left:
Fran Odette, Lauren
Hanna and Anna Morgan
finishing the 5K*

*Runners Helen Nowak and
Jamie-Lynn Bueno*



*Megan Marrelli
was cheered on and
supported by family and friends after she
finished her half-marathon*



Nellie's Annual General Meeting



Thank you to Zahra Mohamed, Past-President and Kathy Rampersad, Past-Treasurer, for their endless contributions to Nellie's board

Thank you for attending Nellie's AGM on Sept. 17 at the Ralph Thornton Community Centre. In addition to the business meeting, we held a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony. Everyone at the AGM enjoyed a musical performance by Ania Sow from One Fire Movement. We also supported "One Day for PEACE Campaign" by keeping a minute of silence and holding up signs for peace in different languages. It was a great night!



Nellie's Board of Directors



Six-year-old Camila dancing along with Ania's music



Nellie's supported the One Day for Peace campaign

Nellie's Community Events



Program Manager Marlene Bell being interviewed by Global News, discussing the cycle of violence



Marlene with host Adrienne Batra at Sun Media to talk about the cycle of violence



Staff member Anna Morgan at Pride



Nellie's staff team at accessibility training

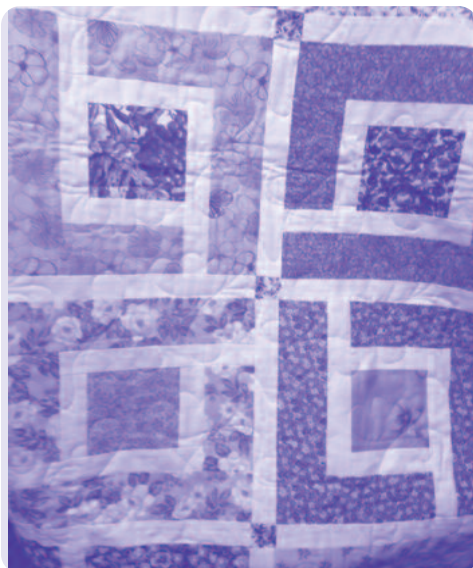


Amran and Jorlene raised money for the United Way Campaign



Accessibility training instructors. From left: Marlene Bell, Lynda Roy and Fran Odette

Acknowledgements



We have received many donations from local business and friends to be auctioned at our fundraising activity. Special recognition goes to York Heritage Quilters Guild, for their ongoing support. Once more they have chosen Nellie's to receive a

beautiful quilt for the auction. Other lap quilts were donated for the women staying at the shelter.



Backpacks for Back to School donated by Tiffany and Tanisha of Individuals Motivated by Philanthropy and Acts of Charity (I.M.P.A.C.T.). Thank you for your generosity!



A big thank you to Nellie's amazing volunteers at the AGM 2014

Nellie's Calendar of Events

Jan 1	New Years Day
February	Black History Month
Feb 19	Chinese New Year – The Year of the Sheep
Feb 19	Losar- Tibetan New Year
Mar 8	International Women's Day
Mar 21	International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination –UN
Apr 3-11	Pesach (Passover) – Jewish
Apr 3	Good Friday (Christian)
Apr 5	Easter (Christian)
May 10	Mother's Day
Jun 21	National Aboriginal Day

Note: Please visit our website at www.nellies.org for more community & cultural celebrations for 2015.

Nellie's Contact Information

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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

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