



# 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

June 2016 , Issue #41

### Celebrating Labour and Mother's Day!

May 1st is recognized in most of the African and European countries and all of the countries of Latin America as International Worker's Day. It is the date of the 1886 Haymarket affair in Chicago. On that date, a general strike demanding the eight-hour work day was dispersed by police firing on the workers and killing four demonstrators. May Day has been formally recognised as an annual event since 1891.

During the month of March, Nellie's participated in the International Women's Day March. We also held our annual recognition for Nellie's students, staff and volunteers.

Jian Ghomeshi's recent court case process and outcome highlight once more the limitations of the criminal justice system and the enormous barriers that survivor-victims face. It is very troublesome that still to this date, the burden of proof in cases of sexual assault remains the total responsibility of the victims. We have to work harder to change the legal system that makes it impossible for women to have their cases fairly heard in court.

We closed the month of March with a visit to the shelter from the



*The Honorable Minister Dr. Helena Jaczek from MCSS VAW visiting Nellie's*

Honourable Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services, Violence Against Women. Minister Jaczek came to learn first-hand about the conditions women fleeing violence are living with while staying at shelters. It is remarkable that she is making the time in her busy schedule to see directly how the issues and concerns that we have been presenting for years (i.e. lack of accessible beds, crowded living conditions, limited staffing and appropriated program space) are experienced on a daily basis at Ontario shelters.



*Welcome Ingrid!*

We are happy to welcome Ingrid Graham to Nellie's staff team as the Manager of Development. Ingrid has a wealth of knowledge and experience after working for more than 20 years in the field. Ingrid started her new position in early May. We are looking forward to working with her to ensure

Nellie's continues to engage the support from the community in order to maintain and enhance our programs and services to women and children experiencing violence in their lives. Her first official activity was joining Nellie's board and staff to thank our long-term donors at the donor recognition event on the evening of May 12th.

Thank you to Employment & Social Development Canada, we got approval for seven (7) Summer Jobs positions. These positions are key to our special summer activities for women and children.

In partnership with the Ralph Thornton Community Center, we ran an eight-month, pre-employment program for women who have experienced abuse and/or violence. Participants who completed the program developed skills leading to employment, enhanced education or trade programs. Funding for this project was received from Women Gaining Ground through the United Way of Toronto and York Regions. For a completed report contact our admin office.

The main article reflects how the external factors affecting violence against women reinforce Nellie's transitional plan. The plan's job is to assess the best ways to continue to focus our resources in order to meet the existing needs of the women we serve. Once the transitional plan is completed, we will be able to direct our resources to respond to the emerging trends affecting the sector.

Justice and equity,

*Margarita Méndez*

# Changing landscape of women's shelters services in Toronto

By Sahar Zaidi, Chair of Nellie's Social Justice Committee

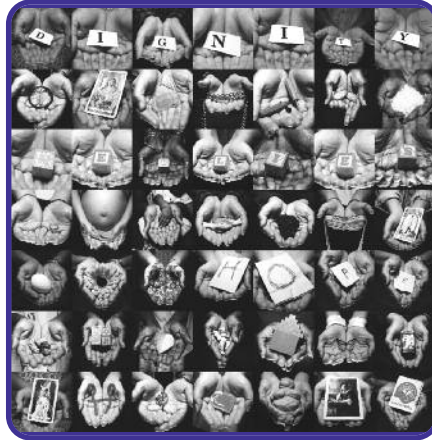
It is an interesting time for us at Nellie's. In 1973 the organization was founded to address gaps in the systems at that time for women who were homeless and needed shelter supports.

As do many Violence Against Women (V.A.W) shelters, Nellie's continues to address service gaps that are identified every few years, in order to remain relevant to the issues experienced by the women we serve. To address these changes with our exiting limited resources, we have engaged in a Transitional Strategic Planning Process, which focuses on addressing key issues within a strategic framework that supports our thinking into the future.

Many Violence Against Women's shelters are facing similar challenges to address today's needs for services for women and children who face abuse and/ or homelessness.

Among those challenges are the building conditions. Many shelters are worn down and are making do with existing properties that are in dire need of maintenance and additions to increase privacy for residents and to respond to their different family compositions. Women's shelters have to be accessible, closer to public transport, house an increased number of women and children from diverse ethnic, cultural, educational, religious beliefs, sexual identity and orientation. At the same time shelters have to ensure that their clients can access external support services such as legal aid, counselling, child care, employment offices, schools, etc. Continuing to stay within the city of Toronto and making changes to respond to accessibility legislation requires additional operational funds.

In the past, shelters have been hidden out of the public eye, especially VAW shelters, but this practice may be changing due to land cost and lack of capital funding allocations from either the Provincial or the Federal Government. New approaches for infrastructure development should be explored such as changing city by-



laws to integrate affordable housing and or emergency shelter facilities as part of the many new condominiums being developed in Toronto. Although women's shelters usually prefer anonymity to protect their clients; this trend is one solution to prevent shelters from being pushed to the outskirts of the city to make way for luxury condo buildings. New safety measures need to be developed within this approach to building emergency shelter facilities in order to ensure safety for women and children fleeing abuse continues to be maintained.

Providing emergency housing for transgender women and properly responding to their needs is another area that women's shelters are giving more attention. Many transwomen feel isolated because programs, services and resources at women's shelters do not address their safety and survival. Transwomen should be included as members of policy making groups: as board members and as staff responsible for developing programs and services at the shelters.

The lack of affordable, accessible, safe housing is another sectorial issue faced by women's shelters. When women's shelters first started clients could find housing within three months. Now clients wait up to a year and in some instances, longer. Shelters were created to respond to emergency situations but now that clients are staying longer, beds are not empty often enough for other victims of abuse. The solution is not just building more shelters, but also building or allocating more affordable housing.

Nellie's has attempted to address some of the causes of homelessness for clients at women's shelters in the form of position papers that can be found on our website at [nellies.org](http://nellies.org). Issues range from accessibility, harm reduction, poverty, violence, mental health and criminalization.



## Voices of Women – Dyanira’s\* Story

*By Diana Galeano, Housing Support Program Worker*

As a transgendered woman, Dyanira has faced many forms of oppression, including violence, homelessness and poverty. Dyanira described her experience growing up as a transgendered woman. She was often very isolated and faced multiple forms of abuse and violence, and had to hide her identity. Dyanira explained that she didn’t really have anyone to talk to and that led to depression and an attempted suicide.

"It was about 10 years ago, I guess." Dyanira said. "And after I got out of the hospital, I decided I was going to live for myself."

Dyanira continued to face many forms of discrimination, including housing and employment. Like many transgendered women, it was difficult for her to find work. As a result, she faced many years of living in poverty and violence on the street, going from shelter bed to shelter bed. Dyanira was not able to stay at any shelter too long due to the transphobia she experienced in the shelter system. When Dyanira experienced transphobia in the shelter, she often had to leave because she felt unsafe. Or as often happens, her reaction to the oppression led to being discharged from multiple shelters.

Nellie’s works with transgendered women and continues to challenge transphobia, including offering education and awareness by having training opportunities for staff, residents and community clients. Dyanira first received support from Nellie’s when coming to the shelter. She often stated that Nellie’s Shelter was one of the places she felt more safe. Nellie’s was also able to continue to support her when she was living from shelter to shelter through our outreach program.

After many years of homelessness and fleeing abuse, Nellie’s was able to support Dyanira’s efforts to rent a one-bedroom apartment. She was also referred to the furniture bank program and received support connecting to health care; legal services and counseling; employment and training; clothing; and referrals to other programs in the community.

For the first time in many years, Dyanira has a safe space of her own. She said that Nellie’s support throughout the many years has led to greater confidence in herself.



## Voices of Women - Natasha’s\* Story

*By Kristi Lemke, Student Placement*

Throughout the last few months, Natasha has attended a new program that was developed by Nellie’s in partnership with Ralph Thornton Center. The program was created to address the various unique barriers women fleeing violence and/or abuse endure when accessing employment opportunities. Our program is unique, as it is accessible to all women despite the barriers they may face, whereas they might not be eligible for or “successful” in other employment programs.

Natasha recently immigrated to Canada with her children in order to flee her ex-partner’s abuse. When we met her, Natasha was in the process of attaining her landed immigration status. For many programs similar to ours, Natasha would not be eligible to attend without status. Such strict eligibility standards prevent women from establishing themselves as independent from their abusers, especially within a new country. Due to Natasha’s unique situation, she was a perfect fit for our program.

Natasha found it challenging to conduct a job search in a new country due to language barriers and accumulated stress from the process of attaining her status. We supported her throughout this process by providing her with information about skills upgrading, referrals and accessing resources and funding money to cover the costs of some application fees involved with attaining status. Furthermore, Natasha utilized the information she learned within our program to access alternative opportunities, such as volunteering in order to update her resume before she could legally work in Canada.

Today, Natasha has successfully completed our program and is celebrating her official status in Canada as well as a job offer in the finance sector. Natasha has expressed that with our support, she was able to surpass the barriers she initially faced after moving to Canada. Although Natasha will continue to encounter hardships, the skills and confidence she has gained will continue to support her throughout her life’s journey.

\* not real name



# Program Update – Shelter

By Tamara Nickie, Shelter Admin. Support Worker



Minister Dr. Helena Jaczek at the shelter

February was the month of many celebrations: we started with the Chinese New Year. We also celebrated Valentine's Day, with flowers and appreciation gifts. Women created jewellery through our 'healing with art' program and continued to learn valuable skills to share with loved ones. Children also participated in the fun. Project Reset donated their time to provide face paint. The women received makeup and gift bags. As it was also Black History month, we ended our month with a celebration of diverse foods and cultures where women and children spoke of some black heroines and heroes.

In March, we looked forward for spring to 'spring', but it remained cold. We persevered! For International Women's Day (IWD), in the nurturing ourselves program, women made cards with inspirational words for each other, and reminded each other to be strong, no matter the situation. We also participated in the IWD march in solidarity with other organizations and staff attended the fair booth. The children were on March break too, and they saw cool things at the Ontario Science Centre, watched movies, played games and hung out at the park. In this month also, Easter was acknowledged with a festive brunch.



Legal Aid workshop by METRAC

As we continue to enjoy the warm weather April has brought, we look forward to the summer and the way women seem to shed all tensions, like they shed their winter jackets, and become almost 'childlike' as they enjoy the summer programming.



Thank you to Christina Veira for the diapers donation



Donation from Namazi family, Farah, Ali & Aliyah



Shawls donation for auction from Mona Zaccak, Dianna Abdu and friends



From left Marlee, Logan, Lily & Henry from 2 families gave holiday gifts

# Community Support & Outreach Program Update

By Adriana Pelayo, Community Support & Outreach Worker



*Easter Hunt Fundraiser  
by Nell & Natasha*

Thank you to RBC Group Volunteers for giving us a fun and wonderful holiday party during the holiday season. 127 women and children enjoyed music, dance and good food. The kids loved their gifts! A big thank you to the event coordinator and new mom Peggy Capitain. She was not only organizing her team members from RBC and her close friends, but she also brought her new-born baby Kingsley: Women and kids experienced much joy and laughter that evening.



*Amazing WEAV group  
facilitators from RTCC &  
Nellie's*

Thank you to our community supporters for their generosity. More than 100 women and 400 kids were able to receive a gift for the holidays.

The International Women's Day march and rally was full of energy. The cold weather didn't matter; women and kids were chanting to share their feelings about social, economic, and emotional change.

The warm weather is here, with fresh air, sun and rain puddles! Many Nellie's activities and education programs start in the spring and summer. From April to July, we will be hosting different workshops on health, immigration; gardening; and family law. To join us, please call Adriana at 416-461-2052 for more information.



*Holiday Dinner*

Nellie's 25-week program "Women Experiencing Abuse and Violence & Employment" group ended in April. This program was a project funded by United Way. Participants attended three days a week, six hours a day for six months. It was a great success. We had 18 women enlisted. Women left positive comments like: "Wish it lasted longer"; "The best thing happening in my life"; "I'm a different person now".



*Sex Education workshop by  
Public Health*

"Women on the Move", a nine-week program, started in May for women with disabilities & deaf who experienced violence and abuse. Our aim is give the same opportunity to these women to access Nellie's services.

We are getting ready for the Summer Camp, where we are inviting kids from the shelter and from the community to join.



*Community Spring  
Cleaning Day in April*



# Fundraising Update

By Helen Stalker, Fund Development Coordinator

First of all, we would like to say a Special Thank You to our community partners & individual donors for supporting us so generously over the Holidays! Because of your kindness and generosity, we were able to provide amazing holiday gifts to the women and children we serve at Nellie's.



Online Auction  
Please Donate Items

We would also like to thank all of our supporters for stepping up to answer our calls for help this year as we struggled to keep pace with the Baby Boom at Nellie's! You held Baby Showers and Diaper Drives, collected supplies at concerts, parties and plays and even held online Fundraising Campaigns to keep us well stocked with diapers, formula, baby strollers and other baby items! We received donations from as far away as Norway and every package of diapers was gratefully received & put to good use by the moms & babies at the Shelter.

We held our first ever Mother's Day Auction in April this year! Thanks to your generosity in donating and bidding we were able to support some essential Programs for Women & Children at the Shelter and in our Community, such as our Kids Summer Program and our weekly Food Bank.

We are gearing up for our participation in the Scotia Toronto Waterfront Marathon on Sunday October 16. To register for the Scotia Waterfront Marathon please contact [shanine@nellies.org](mailto:shanine@nellies.org). We invite you to Walk, Run or Wheel in the Marathon, Half Marathon or 5k, or sponsor a participant on Nellie's Team.

This year we are hoping to get more of you involved in holding 3rd Party Fundraising Events for Nellie's. If you are interested in holding a 3rd Party event, please contact [helen@nellies.org](mailto:helen@nellies.org) or call 416-461-0769

Nellie's Annual Online Holiday Auction will start on November 18, with 100% of the proceeds supporting all of the Programs for Nellie's Women & Kids. To donate an auction item, please contact [Helen@nellies.org](mailto:Helen@nellies.org) as early as possible or call 416-461-0769. When you donate an item, a service or a gift certificate to our Online Auction, you are helping to raise much-needed funds for the Women & Children in our care. You are taking a stand against violence in our community and helping to bring a woman & child to safety



Lori Loewen

## Donor Recognition Event

By Ingrid Graham, Manager of Development

Thanks to our Donors! On May 12, 2016 Nellie's held its annual donor recognition event, at the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, to thank our loyal donors and volunteers for their generosity and support. The evening included remarks from Lori Loewen, Chair of the Fund Development Committee and Fran Odette, President of the Board of Directors. The night's featured guest speaker was Enza 'Supermodel' Anderson a writer, activist and media personality, who is a trans-woman working and living in Toronto. Special thanks to renowned jazz pianist Richard Whiteman for his contributions to the evening's festivities.



Guest Speaker  
Enza Anderson



Margarita with Mr. Mirza's family



Fran Odette



Pianist Richard Whiteman

# Student Placement Experience with WEAV Pre-Employment Program

By Veronica Hall, Student Placement



My student placement position at Nellie's Community Support and Outreach Program gave me the exciting opportunity to be involved in the WEAV (Women Experiencing Abuse & Violence) Pre-Employment program in collaboration with the Ralph Thornton Centre. Along with a team of three other placement students and four staff members, I was able to build new skills and gain confidence in applying already-existing abilities. My role in the program allowed me to plan and co-facilitate workshops in the Violence Against Women component on the topics of confidence and self-esteem; coping strategies; post-traumatic stress; and art-based self-care activities. As well, I was involved with event planning for the WEAV Next Steps Employment Fair and the program's final graduation ceremony and celebration. The WEAV program also involved a component of case management, which provided me the opportunity to work one-on-one with a participant. I supported the participant in creating an action plan that works towards future education and career goals.

The unique program structure and diverse topics covered allowed me to build connections with various community organizations as well as gain knowledge on systems affecting the lives of women. From resume and cover letter sessions, to self-employment and entrepreneurial workshops, to self-care yoga, I was able to take away important information that can be applied to my future work in the field.

Most significantly, my involvement in WEAV allowed me to witness the incredible strength and resilience of the participants in the program. The connections and relationships built, the support shown between women and the incredible stories shared are unforgettable. I am grateful for this learning experience, which contributed to the creation of a safer space fostering empowerment and skill building among a strong group of women. As my placement position and the program have come to an end, I am extremely hopeful for what the futures holds for them.

## Nellie's Community Events



OAITH members at the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls at Queen's Park on Nov 25



Heading on to the IWD rally



IWD booth at Ryerson University



## Acknowledgements



*Thank you to all volunteers for the wonderful holiday party*



*IWD Celebration - Thank you to Nellie's dedicated staff, students, board members, board committee members and volunteers for providing good services to the vulnerable women and children.*



*Thank you to Tony Roost and the One Fire Movement for the wonderful performance at the Mothers' Day celebration*



*Holiday donation from BMO*

## Nellie's Calendar of Events

Jun 6	Ramadan begins (Islam)
Jul 1	Canada Day
Jul 1	The Trans March
Jul 3	Toronto Pride Parade
Jul 6	Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam)
Sept 5	Labour Day
Oct 1	International Day for the Elderly – UN
Oct 3-4	Rosh Hashanah/New Year (Jewish)
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day – UN
Oct 10	Thanksgiving
Oct 17	Int'l Day for Eradication of Poverty - UN
Oct 30	Diwali (Hindu)
Nov 25	Int'l Day for Elimination of VAW - UN
December	Universal Human Rights Month
Dec 6	National Day for Remembrance & Action Violence Against Women
Dec 25	Christmas (Christian)
Dec 25-Jan 1	Hanukkah (Jewish)
Dec 26	Kwanzaa (African-American)

Note: Please visit our website at [www.nellies.org](http://www.nellies.org) for more community & cultural celebrations for 2016.

## Nellie's Contact Information

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### Shelter

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Fax: 416-461-0976

E-mail: [programs@nellies.org](mailto:programs@nellies.org)

### Community Support

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Fax: 416-461-0970

E-mail: [outreach@nellies.org](mailto:outreach@nellies.org)

### Transitional Housing & Support

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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

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