



- 2022 -



Impact Report



Nellie's

Shelter, Education & Advocacy
For All Women and Children

We are Forever Grateful for Your Support



Almost 50 years ago, a group of women activists realized that there were over 400 beds for homeless men in Toronto but only 40 for homeless women. This inequity moved them to open Nellie's, one of the first women's shelters in Toronto.

When we opened our doors in 1973, Nellie's had 16 beds across nine bedrooms. That same year, a young boy named David, whom you will read about in this report, stayed at Nellie's with his mother, his brother and his sister. They were fleeing his abusive father, and today, he credits Nellie's with saving their lives.

Since David lived here, we have sheltered and supported thousands of women and their children. Our understanding of their complex needs has expanded and so has the way we support them. Because at Nellie's, we are so much more than a bed. Even through the challenges of this global pandemic, your generous donations have meant we have continued to stand alongside every woman and child who comes to us for shelter as they take the brave steps toward the next chapter in their lives.

We help them navigate the legal system, immigration services, social services, child protection services, health care, and more. And,

we offer counselling, children's programming, safety planning, violence against women workshops, and more. As well, through our Community Support and Outreach office, we provide support and services for women facing poverty and isolation in our community. This includes our Food Program, which services 60 to 80 single women and families every week.

At Nellie's, we pride ourselves in being a leader in the Violence Against Women (VAW) sector, and sadly, over the last almost half a century, we have not been able to work ourselves out of a job. But because of you, our donors, we will soon be leaving the building we opened in 1973 and moving to a new shelter building where we will be able to make an even bigger impact in changing the trajectory of lives. The complexity of needs amongst those who come to Nellie's is evolving, and because of your generosity, we can continue to evolve our supports.

I am confident that the diligence and enthusiasm of our Board of Directors, the ongoing hard work of our dedicated staff and the support of generous donors like you will ensure that we will continue to rise to every challenge, not just today, but tomorrow as well.

Thank you for your continued support and trust.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jyoti Singh'.

Jyoti Singh, Executive Director

David's Story

"Thank You, Nellie's, for Saving our Lives"



It was late at night when Mary Troke walked with her three young kids to the Hamilton bus station. Her goal was to get on any bus that would take them away from her abusive partner. The year was 1973 and each of them carried little more than the clothes on their backs.

The first bus that arrived was bound for Toronto and once here, she called the police for help. An officer picked them up and drove them to Nellie's.

"My mother knew that she was going to die if she didn't get away from my father," recalls David Willson, Mary's middle child who was seven years old on the night they arrived at Nellie's.

David says his dad never harmed him, his older sister or younger brother and only vaguely remembers the violence of his early childhood. He does, however, vividly remember being welcomed by Nellie's staff in the middle of the night and being given everything they needed to start over.

"I remember going through a room with clothing and being told to take whatever we needed. And, I remember a plastic toy plane the staff gave me to play with," says David, now 55. "Nellie's gave us food to eat and beds to sleep in. And the staff helped my mom get through all of this."

David's family lived at Nellie's for about three months before moving into subsidized housing. Mary found work where she could and devoted her life to helping others. After graduating high school, David moved back to Hamilton to work at Dofasco. He now has two grown children, lives with his girlfriend and runs a ghost hunting website in his spare time. "My kids grew up knowing never to hit women, and people in general. They know what I lived through."

In the 1990s, Mary moved back to Hamilton where she eventually bought her own house. His brother and sister both grew up to have families of their own. In 2018, at the age of 74, Mary died peacefully, leaving her three children and five grandchildren.

"She lived a good life all because the people at Nellie's took us in that night. They helped my mom and us and my life trajectory totally changed," says David.

"I can almost guarantee that my life would have been one of misery with all the abuse at home, and I could have even turned out like my father. Thank you, Nellie's, for saving our lives."



2021 Shelter Stats

Nellie's mandate is to help all women and their children, regardless of why they are homeless. Each come to us with different experiences and needs.

42 women arrived at Nellie's

36 children (ages 0-17) arrived at Nellie's

7 is the average age of children living at Nellie's

Programs Then and Now

Because of You, Nellie's Has the Programs and Services our Community Needs

At Nellie's we have always welcomed women and their children fleeing trauma, violence and homelessness but back in 1973 when we first opened our doors, society as a whole understood little of their complexity of needs. At that time, we provided a roof over their heads, food to eat and beds to sleep in. Our support services and programs were a more relaxed operation.

"It was very informal. You could sit on the sofa and have a coffee with someone and talk about what was on their mind," recalls Jiin Yiong, Program Director. Jiin worked at Nellie's in the 1990s as a counsellor and as the first transitional support worker before moving on to other organizations. She returned to Nellie's in 2021. "There was also a small playroom for children, but no formal programming."

Thanks to donors like you, today we are more than a shelter; we help women and their children take the courageous steps toward accomplishing the next chapter in their lives. Providing programs and services to those living in our shelter and in our community is an important aspect of what we do to address longer-term needs and foster learning and support.

"Both women and their children need information on how best to move forward and what supports are out there to help them," says Jiin. "Our programs also help them understand what they can do to make themselves feel good and feel present. For many women who have been abused, that's taken away, and helping to bring that back is a big part of the healing process."

With your continued support, we have repeatedly reimagined how best to support our community over the last two years of this global pandemic. What follows are just a few of the many programs available today to women and their children both living at Nellie's and through our Community Support and Outreach office.

Some of Our Programs



Food Program

For women and their children in our community experiencing food insecurity, the Food Program provides fresh, pre-cooked and non-perishable food donations. Every week between 60 and 80 single women and families visit the program.

The need is so great that despite having to temporarily suspend many of our community programs because of pandemic health and safety restrictions, we have not closed the doors on our Food Program.

Children's Program

The time a child spends at Nellie's is critical as it is when we can help them understand the trauma they experienced and even break some of the beliefs that continue the cycle of violence. The Children's Program uses art and creative interventions to provide a safe space for children to express their thoughts and feelings. There is a separate program for teens as they process and deal with trauma differently.

Over the last year, we frequently pivoted this program between small group, outdoor and virtual programming depending on pandemic restrictions.



Workshops

Peer Support Groups bring together women who have had similar experiences to talk, listen and share strategies for coping and overcoming violence and oppression. Various workshops have been organized and offered throughout the year to help women living in the shelter and in the community, enhance their knowledge and life skills and build their coping strategies.

Transitional Housing Support

While living in the shelter, every woman is connected with a Transitional Housing Support Worker who is focused on helping them find and maintain safe and affordable housing. This program also offers eviction support to women in our community.

We never closed our shelter doors during these difficult pandemic years, which means we have continued to welcome women impacted by abuse, trauma and homelessness, and we have continued to help them secure housing, keeping them safe from harm.

Vaccine Clinic

For a variety of reasons, not everyone is vaccinated against COVID-19 when they come to Nellie's. Some have not had the ability to visit a clinic, others are vaccine hesitant. On several occasions throughout the year, we ran vaccine education workshops followed by vaccine clinics for all who wanted a shot.



Nellie's: Then and Now

Since 1973, Nellie's has sheltered thousands of women and their children in a beautiful, historic residential building. This 8,900 sq. ft. space opened with just 16 beds across 9 bedrooms, 1 kitchen and a handful of common living areas.

Today, those same 9 bedrooms hold 36 beds and there are still only the same five toilets, four showers and one bathtub. The limited common living areas make it difficult to run more than one program at a time, and the children's play area has taken over a small room in the basement.

This space was deemed too small by a pandemic health specialist and for the last two years, we have been operating out of two locations—the shelter building and a nearby hotel.

On November 30, 2021, we celebrated the grand opening of Nellie's new shelter! Co-chairs Suzanne Johnson and Donnalea Sparling were joined by Nellie's Executive Director Jyoti Singh and Jane McKenna, Ontario's Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, to cut the purple ribbon.





In 2022, after multiple pandemic-related construction delays, we will finally be all together again in our new shelter. The cozy, historic building is accessible with an elevator, wide hallways and features designed to assist deaf residents and residents with visual impairments.

Take a Peek Inside What Your Generous Donations Helped Fund



< 40 beds across 22 bedrooms. Each one has its own bathroom (four of which are barrier-free). There are also three public/gender-neutral washrooms and four staff washrooms.

> A large industrial kitchen and large comfortable dining area. There is also a client kitchen and two kitchenettes for when women need to prepare their own meals or snacks.



< Space for pets, including a pet care room for residents to take care of their beloved family members and a green space where kids and pets can both have room to play.



> Dedicated age-specific safe spaces, including a quiet room, several play areas, a youth breakout room, and more.





THANK YOU
for your continued support.

Find out how you can support our efforts,
contact fundraising@nellies.org
or visit nellies.org.



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