



nellies.org

Nellie's

50 Years of Providing
Shelter, Education and
Advocacy for Women
and Their Children



YOUR IMPACT REPORT **2023**

Thank You for your Continued Support and Trust



When we started our Children's Program six years ago, it was a simple craft-based program just a couple of days a week in the basement playroom of our old shelter. It was in a dark room — as basements

often are — which was filled with toys most-suited for younger kids. Despite our best efforts to be inclusive, older kids and teens living in the shelter often didn't want to head down there to hang out with the little ones and the baby toys — leaving them even more isolated and without the necessary support to aid in their unique healing process.

Being in our new shelter building this past year has made a monumental difference in our efforts to engage children of all ages. We now run multiple programs a week in our multi-room, third-floor space for children and youth of all ages. There is still craft-based programming for little ones, but there's also story time with mommy, a cooking program for school-aged kids, a daily homework club for older kids, and Rock and Water, a world-renowned violence prevention program that instills anti-bullying and empowerment skills in an effort to break the cycle of violence.

These programs, supports, toys and dedicated spaces are important because more children than women come through our shelter doors every year. That's because when a mom flees violence,

more than one child often comes with her. These children didn't choose to come to Nellie's, their mothers did. They were torn away from their life, their schools, their friends and their belongings, and thrust into new surroundings. Our job is to support every one of them in their unique healing process, making them feel safe, cared for, and at home.

Your donations support these children, and their moms, as they take the courageous steps toward the next chapter of their lives. I am so grateful that because of you, our donors, we are so much more than just a bed. It is your generosity that allows us to empower them with essential programs and services that foster learning and support.

I am confident that with 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, we will continue to empower women and their children while working to create the social change needed to stem the flow of violence on a systemic level.

Thank you for your continued support and trust.

Jyoti Singh, Executive Director





By the Numbers: Children Living at Nellie's in 2022

From January to December 2022, a total of 85 women and their children came to us seeking shelter and support. The average stay was 76 days.

January

10

February

16

March

16

April

14

May

21

June

18

July

16

August

20

September

18

October

10

November

13

December

14

“I Can’t Make it Better, But I Can Support Them in Making it Better”

Even though the Children’s Program is on the shelter’s third floor, many of the kids living at Nellie’s often like to visit shelter supervisor Candice Cosbert’s office. Sometimes they want to tell her about their day, other times they bring their homework or ask to help with her work. And sometimes, they confide in her.

“Not long ago, a young girl sat in my office and told me how, before she came to Nellie’s, she saw her dad slap her mom. It really touched me because she was just six years old and it reminded me of how important our work is,” says Candice, who is a registered social worker. “When we create a positive environment for them, then they can see that there’s another part of life than the one they’ve known.”

Last year, women and their children stayed at Nellie’s for an average of 76 days, and in any given month, there were between 10 and 21 children living in the shelter.

“Even though I’m busy, I always make sure that my door is unlocked so the kids or their moms can come in and sit on my chair for a chat,” says Candice.

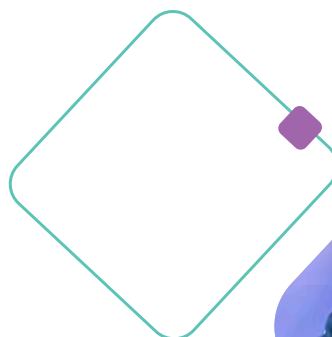
And busy she is, as there is always something going on inside the shelter. One minute she may be preparing a room for a new arrival, making the beds with fresh sheets and neatly placing clean towels on the bathroom counter, and the next minute she may be calmly listening to a panicked young mom pushing a fussy child in a stroller while suggesting ways to solve her immediate problem. From there, she may head downstairs to the main floor and, when she sees a woman sitting quietly by herself in the dining area, she may take a moment to sit with her.

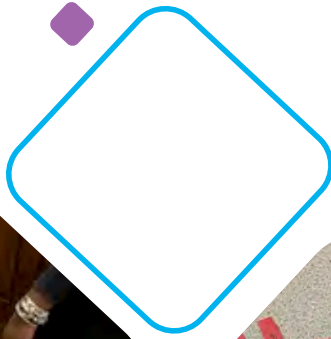
“The women who come to Nellie’s are so broken, and I always give a listening ear and let everybody know that they matter,” says Candice. “I myself can’t make it better, but I can support them in making it better.”

She adds that rather than directly asking a woman what she needs, she prefers to quietly observe and then offer an item or resource that hasn’t been asked for. Many of the women are afraid to ask for anything because they feel as if they are a burden, she says.

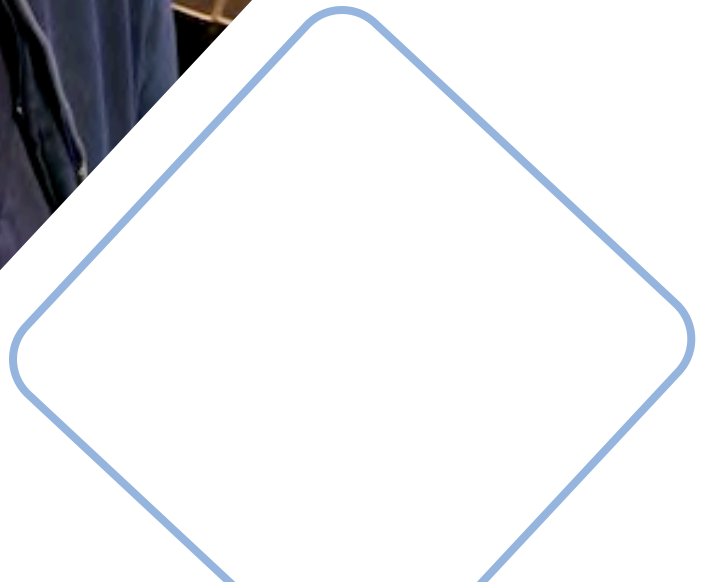
“Part of social work is meeting someone where they’re at, so a woman may not come to me [directly], but if I see a woman looking like she’s down or anxious, I’ll ask what I can do to help make this moment better.

“Being here is not an ideal situation for moms or their kids, but we try to make them all feel as comfortable as we can so it feels like they are at a home away from home.”





Shelter supervisor
Candice Cosbert





Look Inside our Children's Area

Sometimes, kids just need to be kids. They need to run and jump, play and explore, smile and laugh. To do so, they need a space that gives them that freedom; one that is warm and welcoming, and full of games, books and toys.

Since we moved into our new shelter last February, the children living at Nellie's now have a beautiful space of their own. Kids of all ages are free to just be kids, as the whole third floor is dedicated to supporting their needs. Rather than just a single room, the children's area is spread out amongst three bright, window-lined rooms.

The Playroom

The playroom is a sunny room, filled with toys for children aged 0 to 5. Favourites include a rocking horse, giant stuffed animals, musical instruments, a train set, Legos, and a beloved play kitchen.

Children's Kitchen

The children's kitchen is where we run our weekly Mini Chef Corner program. With aprons on and spatulas ready, older kids living at Nellie's learn how to make simple meals and snacks, such as a sandwich or a fruit salad. Each child gets to wear a mini chef uniform and uses kid-safe utensils for cutting. The goal is that when they leave the shelter, they know how to prepare easy snacks and meals on their own. There's also a space in this room to play board games, do crafts or play an intense game of Velcro darts.

Quiet Spaces

Primarily for tweens and teens, this room is used for a variety of activities. Desks and chairs are available to make for a distraction-free homework space (or to attend virtual classes) and can be pushed aside to make space for group programming, such as Rock and Water. A smaller, currently empty fourth room on this floor is sometimes used for youth programming as well.

Book Cart

Just outside the door to the playroom is our book cart loaded with books for every age group. There are board books and picture books for our littlest readers, chapter books for our early readers and YA novels for our older bookworms.



How we Support Women Living at Nellie's

Thanks to donors like you, we are more than just a bed. 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 to foster learning and support. While the entire third floor may be dedicated to children's programming, our new shelter has plenty of space for us to run a variety of programs for the women living at Nellie's. These are just a few of those programs.

Support Groups and Counselling

Peer Support Groups bring together women who have had similar experiences to talk, listen and share strategies for coping, as well as overcoming violence and oppression. These sharing circles, as well as our one-on-one counselling, are an important step in the healing process.

Workshops

Workshops enhance knowledge and life skills, such as nutrition classes, resumé writing, financial literacy and safety planning. Still other workshops promote wellness and healing, such as yoga and art classes.

PAVE Prevention

At Nellie's, our approach to violence is full-spectrum prevention. If we could have a critical mass of people empowered to set boundaries, and to speak up when someone else is experiencing bullying, harassment or violence, it could be life-changing on a systemic level. The women living at Nellie's have the opportunity to participate in PAVE Prevention (Proactive Anti-Violence Education) sessions, a trauma-informed program that empowers women to set their own boundaries.

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.



What is Rock and Water?

In early 2022, Nellie's became the first gender-based violence organization in Canada to implement the world-renowned anti-bullying program, Rock and Water. This innovative program teaches kids through a series of exercises and games about setting their own boundaries, making independent decisions, using communication and respecting others' limits.

It's a physical program as students learn to block, hit strike shields, stand strong, negotiate using "rock" or "water" verbal approaches, walk away from a fight, consider alternatives to aggression, and develop understandings about who they are, their intuitive feelings and their personal direction. More than just anti-bullying, Rock and Water provides a foundation for life skills by teaching kids to navigate social relationships and adapt to various circumstances.

"If we teach kids when they're young how to set boundaries and how to listen, we can potentially break the cycle of violence," says Ariana Gomez, Community Support and Outreach Supervisor, who runs the program.



THANK YOU
for your continued support.

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



Nellie's

Shelter, Education & Advocacy
For All Women and Children