



My Friend's House News

SUMMER 2016

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When an organization has been in service for 25 years, there comes a time when looking critically at how you get the job done becomes necessary to ensure the services we provide are available for abused women and their children for the next 25 years. Let me say it is truly a privilege to work for such a dynamic organization. Exciting times are ahead of us and I am grateful to work with a passionate, dynamic and committed group of people, at all levels of the organization. We have a talented roster of Board members and a committed group of volunteers. We have, at our core, a group of employees who continually demonstrate unwavering commitment to the women and children of our community.

I am still inspired by the resolve of all our staff across the organization and I believe we provide compassionate, respectful, accountable support, guidance and advocacy to the women we serve. It is not an understatement to say, we could not do any of it without the financial and in-kind support of the residents and businesses within the Georgian Triangle community. We are humbled by your generosity of the last 25 years and we look forward to another 25 years ensuring that women in need, have a safe haven to go to. ~Alison FitzGerald

TESTIMONIALS FROM 25 YEARS

We wanted to celebrate 25 years of being in business, but it is hard to celebrate the fact that domestic abuse is still happening and the need for a woman's crisis centre still exists. We thought hard about how to commemorate the work the staff and volunteers do and how to honour the over 15,000 abused women and children who have crossed our threshold since we started in August 1991. We felt the best way was to try to find residents willing to tell their stories. As serendipitous fate would have it, [Carol Bowden](#), one of the original founders of My Friend's House, over 30 years ago (it took almost 5 years to get through the challenges to door opening) found us. We were also blessed to re-encounter [one of the very first residents of the shelter](#), who entered our doors afraid and alone, just before her 16th birthday, 25 years ago. Both said they were willing to tell her stories on camera. Four other former residents, when they heard we were thinking of creating a testimonial video, bravely came forward and said they would also be willing to speak about their experiences at My Friend's House.

Brian Hunt, a local videographer who is well known in the Georgian Triangle and the GTA for his slick video productions, came forward and said he would take this task on, as an in-kind donation to us. The Simcoe Street Theatre kindly donated the theatre for the day and we sat in stunned silence, deeply moved by the stories being told by these 5 women. Their experiences have been edited into testimonials on the My Friend's House website and we invite you to log on and listen.

Listen to what brought women (and their children) to our doors then, and what brings them today – 25 years later. Listen to the impact having a shelter in their community has had on them, what their lives might have been like if we weren't here and listen to the hope they hold today. Their stories are compelling and we sincerely hope that they are able to continue to live happy, violence-free lives. That is their right, that is the right of every man, woman and child – and that is what My Friend's House, with the community's help, will still be striving for, for another 25 years or as long as it takes to put an end to domestic violence.

STAYNER COLLEGIATE STUDENTS WIN GRANT FOR MY FRIEND'S HOUSE

A group of Stayner Collegiate students raised awareness and \$5,000 for My Friend's House when they won a [Youth and Philanthropy Initiative](#) (YPI) grant, doing a project that highlighted the crisis shelter's annual Walk A Mile event and its annual fundraising efforts. The group of four Grade 10 civics students – Maverick Blackmere, Cody Buckingham, Mickenzie Tremblay, and Ryan Fifield – used the story of a school friend who was abused, as well as the testimonials of women in the community who had used My Friend's House.

"We chose My Friend's House because abuse is a serious problem, and they're having problems raising money. We wanted to help to keep their doors open," said Maverick Blackmere. "We're trying to get people to realize this is still going on and get people to help out as much as we can." Another student in the project, Cody Buckingham, hoped the project broke down the barrier of silence. "You're not going to talk about it with people you know, that so-and-so is in an abusive relationship ... it's something that's kept quiet," Buckingham said. "This (project) brought out the fire inside us to bring the issue to everybody's attention." The four young men have been invited to be the grand marshals of this year's [Walk A Mile in Her Shoes](#), which takes place on Saturday, Oct. 1st in Collingwood.

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Each year My Friend's House supports 600 women and children in our shelter and 1,500 crisis line callers. We need your help to continue to support these abused families and to put an end to violence in their lives!



Mickenzie Tremblay, Cody Buckingham, Alison FitzGerald and Maverick Blackmere

MY FRIEND'S HOUSE

24/7 Info/Crisis Line
705-444-2511 / 1-800-265-2511
P.O. Box 374
Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z7

Admin Phone: 705-444-2586
Fax: 705-444-5289
Website: www.myfriendshouse.ca

My Friend's House News

IN-KIND SUPPORT

In-Kind Support is a life-line to non-profit organizations and My Friend's House is no exception. When a business or individual donates services or products in exchange for a tax receipt, or simply for altruistic reasons, it allows us to divert budgeted operational funds to new programs and initiatives that directly impact the well-being of our residents. There are so many in-kind sponsors that just seem to pop out of the shadows when we least expect it. Whether it's an appliance from [Macdonald's Furniture & Appliances](#) in Meaford, a push lawn mower from [Castle Building Centres](#) in Wasaga Beach, posters from [The Print Shop](#) in Collingwood, Wine from [Georgian Hills Vineyards](#), a donated venue at [The Westin Trillium House](#) in the Blue Mountains or silent auction items from a myriad of generous businesses within the Georgian Triangle, all these donations sustain us.

You truly put the "kind" in "in-kind donation", and none more so than the [Collingwood Horticultural Society](#). The CHS has undertaken a multi-year beautification project at the shelter. Barb, Anja and Jane, joined by a band of merry men and women have diligently started improving the entrance way to the shelter, making it look more welcoming than ever. Bright flowers, new trees, planter boxes and trimmed shrubbery, along with dozens of seasonal bulbs have been newly planted and lovingly cared for. The backyard area, previously overrun with weeds, is being transformed into a functional straw bale vegetable garden area, where the women can grow their own produce. Benches have been added in the shade to create serenity spots and cement has been scaled back to allow natural growth. The trees have been safely limbed and tended to, with additional in-kind support from Tobias, at [Arboreal Tree Care](#), of Thornbury. Even a tree that had to be taken down, due to poor health, was left with a 9 foot stump which is going to be imaginatively carved into a "Healing Goddess" by a local chain saw artist. It's hard to describe the impact that a little planting, growing and caring makes to women that are currently so "uprooted". We could not be more grateful to the Collingwood Horticultural Society for their healing help. They are all just "blooming awesome"!

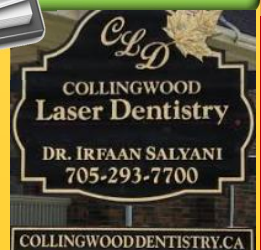
It leaves us humbled and at a loss on how to adequately thank our supporters. Perhaps this quote from Elizabeth Gilbert (author of "Eat, Pray, Love") touches on what we are trying to convey: *"In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices."* To all, please accept our heart-felt "Thank-you".



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!



[Collingwood Laser Dentistry](#) is holding a fundraising BBQ on July 30th on their beautiful property from 11am-4pm at #54 Third Street. The event will be a scrumptious gourmet BBQ, sponsored by [Rusty's at Blue](#). Please join us! 100% of the proceeds of the \$20 ticket will go directly to My Friend's House. Come on out and meet the staff of this new business: Brenda, Eden and Dr. Salyani - friends you just haven't met yet!



Registration for Walk A Mile is open! This will be the 5th year of [Walk A Mile in Her Shoes](#), scheduled for October 1, 2016. Click [here](#) to see the fun had by all at last year's event. We have some great prize draws for early registrants. [Cranberry Resort](#) has donated Aqua Path Spa, Lakeside Grill and Cranberry Golf prizes, and a pair of Blundstone boots is also up for grabs from [Tin Shack](#).



Buy a \$5 ticket to win a new pair of shoes at [Stepping Out Shoes at Blue](#). Monthly raffles are being held in-store on the first day of every month, with the final draw October 1st at Walk A Mile. What would be better than Stepping Out in a brand new pair!



Our Board of Directors for 2016

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Eric Sutton, Governance Chair • Julie Benson, Communication and Fundraising Chair
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