



My Friend's House News

In this Newsletter

Message from the Executive Director



"My Friend's House would not be able to make the difference it does without our incredible staff and volunteers."

For most of us, it is hard to imagine living in a world of constant fear, hopelessness and despair. Yet this is reality for those who seek the services of My Friend's House.

Since joining My Friend's House over 20 years ago the courage of our clients to leave their home and seek refuge from danger never ceases to amaze me. They are entrusting their lives to My Friend's House and this is an honour.

I am in awe of our dedicated staff team. Every single day of the year, these remarkable individuals appear with a warm smile, a soft touch, a listening ear and a guiding hand to those who walk through our doors or call seeking someone to understand their pain.

I so wish you could see what happens behind the walls of My Friend's House. It is inspiring.

The word that best describes all that occurs behind My Friend's House walls is Hope. I want to thank our team that provides that hope and I also want to thank the women who trust us enough to give them hope.

Message from the Executive Director

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Brittney knows what happens behind the walls...

On September 17, 2014 I walked through the doors of My Friend's House as a fourth year Honours Bachelor of Social Work student. Before this day, I tried to prepare myself for what I would see or hear during the course of my student placement. I was aware that My Friend's House was a well-recognized organization in the Southern Georgian Bay community. I also knew that they were an organization that supported women who were currently experiencing, or have experienced domestic violence. What I didn't know was how many women My Friend's House actually served on a weekly basis and how important their organization was to this area.

When I arrived at the shelter, I was greeted with friendly faces and warmth. I felt that I would gain a lot from my experience at the shelter and that I had support from the people that I would consider to be my colleagues for 8 months. I believe this is how the women feel when they stay at My Friend's House. They are entering into an environment that is opposite of what they have lived in for so long, a place they can feel safe, comfortable, warm, supported, independent, strong and ultimately recognized as a human being.

There are ready and willing staff that will do anything and everything to support the women in what can be a difficult journey. There are fantastic front-line workers that are in office 24/7 answering a crisis line, and counselling the women of the house, an amazing child and youth worker that connects with the children who are involved in the situation, a transitional worker who will connect women to safe and affordable housing, and an outreach worker that wears the hats of multiple roles; counsellor, court support, legal clarification, and many more. I currently have been working with the outreach worker and can honestly say: my eyes have never been so widened. I have seen everything from women who are struggling to make it through legal processes, seeking reassurance that they are doing the right thing in leaving, looking for advice on what to do, who to see, or where to turn from "here", to hearing some that believe it is their fault that they are the cause of their partner's behaviour and that they must have something wrong with them. Listening to these stories and observing these situations has only made things more clear for me and that is that My Friend's House provides a valuable service to the women in this community and that without it, many women would remain feeling hopeless and stuck where they are in their relationships.

Call Day or Night

My Friend's House
24 Hour Info/Crisis Line
705.444.2511
1.800.265.2511
TTY: 705.444.5266

705.444.2586 admin
705.444.5289 fax
myfriendshouse.ca

Rethinking Stereotypes

I am not the stereotypical abused woman. At least not the one I carried around in my head.

I am a respected professional. I am a mother of two girls and my ex-husband was also a professional. It looked like I had it all: a husband that was generous to a fault, great kids, a home in a sought after neighbourhood, a career, membership in a respected service club.

No one new what my real life was like.

I married my husband as soon as we both graduated from school. I really loved him. He was funny, smart, athletic and had a wonderful relationship with his family. He was the guy that others would say, "he'll give you the shirt off his back."

What I didn't know about him until after we were married was that he was a bully; selfish, quick to anger and quick to pull his love away if I didn't meet his expectations.

I felt lucky to be chosen by him. Whenever he put me down or criticized me I convinced myself that he was only trying to help me be a better person. Even though I was successful, I had no self-esteem.

I tried harder, I read books, I went to counselling, I tried to focus on meeting his needs and being the wife and mother he needed me to be. Whenever I would go to bed crying I would tell myself that marriage takes work. It isn't always easy.

Fifteen years later after another incident of rage where he had me pinned to a wall, he never hit me, I realized I was being abused. I started reading different books and articles and found my relationship being described over and over again. It wasn't me.

My Friend's House and its incredible support groups saved my life. They gave me valuable advice and when I would start to minimize the abuse, "well he never hit me...." others would tell me that emotional abuse is even harder to recover from.

The shelter staff helped me heal, helped me survive the family law system, helped me find a home. They helped me change my life and the life of my children.

I can't believe how happy I am. I had forgotten how it felt.



There is no such thing as a stereotypical abused woman.

Ready to Respond—24/7

My Friend's House operates a Crisis/Support Line 365 days a year!

Our counsellors are available 24 hours per day to respond to calls from women seeking information, support, counselling, or shelter. The crisis line is often the first point of contact for women who are struggling in their relationship and need to talk about what to do or are planning to leave an abusive relationship. All services are confidential. Women can call as often as they like for as long as they require support and it is not necessary for a name to be provided.

Women will receive immediate support and may also be referred to our outreach or transition programs for additional support. This line is also available to people who call for information about a friend or loved one that they are concerned about, and to community agencies calling on behalf of a client.

"It was such a relief to be able to talk to someone who understood my situation. They knew what I was worried about before I even said it. I am glad I called." Janice



Walk a Mile in Her Shoes 2014

THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR MAKING IT A GREAT SUCCESS

Thanks to our Major Sponsors

Century 21 Millennium Inc. & Fuhre Construction Ltd.

Special Thanks

Peak to Shore Physiotherapy, Ashanti Coffee, Rogers Cable TV, Simcoe County Elementary Teachers Federation, 95.1 The Peak, The Town of Collingwood, Collingwood BIA, 97.7 The Beach, AI & The Greenside Wailers, The Connection, Collingwood Enterprise Bulletin, Cranberry Golf Resort, Fleet-Wood Dance Centre, Good Health Mart, Northwinds Brewhouse & Eatery, Park Sign, Sports Clips Hair Cuts, The Creemore Echo, The Print Shop, Tin Shack, Toppers Pizza, Wendy's.

Why Doesn't She Leave?



Leaving is one of the most difficult things to do. When she is ready My Friend's House will be there for her.

The conversation about Domestic Violence increased over the last few months due to the release of a shocking video of the NFL player Ray Rice brutally assaulting his then fiancée. People have condemned Ray Rice for his actions but many had difficulty understanding why his victim, Janay Palmer later married him.

Leaving an abusive relationship is far from easy. Women in abusive relationships make difficult choices every day. For many, their focus is just to get through the day without an incident of violence or abuse. For many it is a matter of surviving and keeping their children safe.

Saying, "If it were me, I would leave." isn't helpful. How we react to an abused woman is crucial. If she feels blamed or judged in any way it is unlikely she will reach out for help. Knowing how to offer help is essential and understanding why she can't leave makes you a key support person in her life.

"Why does she stay?" is an important question to ask.

Barriers to Leaving

Fear	<i>That her abusive partner will harm her , the children or her family if she leaves. That she will be unable to support herself and/or her children. That she may lose custody of her children.</i>
Guilt	<i>Perpetrators may be relentless in blaming her for "breaking up the family". Repeatedly being told/coerced into believing the abuse is her fault.</i>
Social	<i>Societal beliefs that normalize violence. Messages that pathologize and blame victims for their circumstances and excuse the perpetrator. Social responses to victims are often very negative and judgemental.</i>
Systemic	<i>Many systems hold the victim accountable for creating safety, and do not hold the perpetrator accountable for the abuse and for stopping it.</i>
Lack of Support	<i>Victims are expected to leave behind everything in order to be safe. There are few supports for starting over. People often do not believe her, think she's exaggerating or is being "dramatic".</i>
Hope	<i>People may not help her or may not know how to help her. Her partner may be very remorseful and make a commitment to change. Her partner may give explanations for the abuse (e.g. stress, accident, drinking...).</i>
Love	<i>Because she still loves him—not the abusive behaviour. The kids may love him. Partner is loving and respectful between the incidences of abuse.</i>

Adapted from Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan.

How can you help the shelter?



Having the comforts of home is important.

My Friend's House is like any other household and we need supplies just like you. You can help us keep spending down by donating household items. Our weekly grocery budget is \$150 so any help to meet budget would be great. Below are just a few examples of items that would be helpful.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Children's lunch items | non-perishable food items | liquid laundry soap | dish soap |
| Vinegar | baking soda | zip lock bags | plastic wrap |
| Foil | compost bags | pajamas, | underwear |
| Socks | paper products | fabric sheets | |

It takes a community

It takes a community response to reduce the rate of domestic violence. It also takes a community to help keep the services of My Friend's House going. This past year, My Friend's House was the beneficiary of many events held on our behalf and we received both financial and in kind donations. There are too many people to thank in this Newsletter so please know that your support is needed and appreciated.

We pleased to let you know that there are already some great events coming up over the next few months and we hope that you will join us. Below us a list of events but not all the details are confirmed just yet. The best way to stay informed about My Friend's House and our activities is to drop us a line and ask to be placed on our email list. You can also go to www.myfriendshouse.ca and "Like" us on Facebook or "Follow" us on Twitter.

Disco Dance for My Friend's House at Cranberry Resorts' Bear Estate - November 21 @ 8pm
A Christmas Carol—December 12 in Collingwood
Creemore Literary Event Featuring Terry Fallis —April 25 @ 5pm in Creemore—Tickets \$30.00
Mezelpalooza 2015 —June
Gibraltar 6 Hour Relay—July 11, 2015—www.6hrsofgibraltar.com



"Thanks to All Saints Anglican Church Co3 group for the wonderful quilt. Pictured from left to right are Janet Adams, Robin Shutter, Rev. Victor Gauci Deacon, Cindy (MFH Staff) and Jennifer Spencer.

Fundraising Continues

The Southern Georgian Bay community has been incredibly supportive of My Friend's House since the doors were opened in 1991. We are grateful for that support but we need it to continue.

My Friend's House is funded by the Province yet this funding does not cover basic operating costs. This is why every single year we ask our community to cover the funding shortfall.

It is our hope that you will find a way to help. You are needed and appreciated.

How You Can Help

- Make a personal donation, tribute/memorial or planned gift to support My Friend's House. All donations go directly to helping the women and children we serve. You can donate online or by sending in the donation form on this newsletter.
- Convert your loyalty card points into a gift card and consider donating it to My Friend's House.
- Participate in one of My Friend's House fundraising events. You can find details about events on our website, by calling 705.444.2586, by "Liking" us on Facebook or "Following" us on Twitter.
- Stage a fundraising event on our behalf; our volunteers will help you.

Your support and donations will help women and their children find the effective supports they need to begin a life free of domestic violence.

Find out more about how you can support My Friend's House at www.myfriendshouse.ca

Yes! I want to help provide a safe haven from violence and abuse.

Enclosed is my donation of : __\$75 __\$100 __\$150 Other _____

A charitable tax receipt will be issued for donations over \$25.

Please include your mailing address.

Payment Method: __Cheque __Credit Card

Credit Card: _____

Credit Card #: _____

Expiry: ____/____ Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town/City: _____ Postal: _____

Telephone:(_____) _____

E-mail: _____

Please make cheques payable to:

**My Friend's House,
P.O. Box 374
Collingwood, Ontario
L9Y 3Z7**

You can donate on line too!

www.myfriendshouse.ca

Charitable Tax #12967 7191 RR 0001

____ Please place me on your email list.

Thank you!

2014-2015 Board of Directors

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