



# Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey Newsletter, Spring 2008

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## Reaching Out – The Experiences of Abused Women in Grey Bruce

Reaching Out was a three-year project of Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey Counties and The Men's Program (Grey/Bruce). Its goals were to provide partner outreach services to partners of men who were self referred (as opposed to court referred) to the Men's Program. The Men's Program (Grey/Bruce) has over the last 18 years always included self and community referred men in their groups together with court mandated men. Partner contact with these women has been inconsistent in the past due to lack of funding and due to the belief that these women probably would be at lesser risk because their partners have not been charged and/or found guilty of assault. Reaching Out also had a mandate to complete research with this client group and develop recommendations for future service delivery strategies.

The research study is of particular interest because its goal was to learn more about the women who have experienced intimate partner abuse yet their husbands or boyfriends have not been charged criminally. Some of the questions the research posed at the onset were: Are women of partners who have not been charged in any way different from women whose partners were charged? Or are we dealing with a population of women similar to partners of court referred men, the only difference being that one partner was caught and not the other? Are abused women seeking help in the community? If not, what barriers are they experiencing? Are current community services adequate to meet the needs of women who have been abused yet not involved with the Justice system? A second area of inquiry is to examine the needs and experiences of rural women and get a sense of their particular concerns.

One hundred women were involved in the research project that included

both a quantitative and a qualitative component. The research data compared partners of self-referred men and partners of court mandated men. Other themes explored were: women who sought help from VAW services vs. women who did not seek help from VAW services; barriers in seeking help; informal help-seeking; rural issues and women's perceptions of the abuse. In keeping with the aims of feminist research, the findings are accompanied by recommendations for new service and community development directions.

### Some of the key findings are:

- Much higher incidence of choking and abuse involving a weapon were found in this sample compared to the Statistics Canada Family Violence Survey. 39 % of physically abused women in this study reported being choked (compared to 19% StatsCan) and 29%

of women reported that a weapon was used against them or they were threatened with a weapon (compared to 11% StatsCan). Associated with these high-risk behaviours was that 51% of women in this study reported fearing for their lives as a result of the abuse.

- When comparing women whose partners had been charged with women whose partners had not been charged, some differences were noted as well as some similarities. Women with partners who were charged experienced more: slapping, hitting, injuries and bruises. Women whose partners had not been charged experienced sexual assault twice as often as women who had partners who were charged. These women also reported

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## May Is Sexual Assault Awareness Month Make our homes and streets safe – end sexual assault!

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another and can be anything from unwanted touching of a sexual nature to rape.

Sexual assault can have profound effects on women's health and well-being. It can result in physical injuries as well as psychological and emotional trauma.

Sexual assault is one of the most under reported crimes but of the cases reported to police, 80% of sexual assault survivors knew their abusers. 28% were assaulted by a family member, 10% were assaulted by a friend, 41% by an acquaintance and 20% by a stranger. (Statistics Canada, 2003, The Daily, 23 July)

How can I be sure my relationships are safe?

No one can ever be 100% sure that a relationship is safe, however, there are

some strategies you can use to make it less likely that you will become involved in or stay in an unsafe relationship:

- Trust your instincts: if someone makes you feel uncomfortable, even if you can't quite explain why, listen to yourself and proceed with caution.
- When first dating someone, do it with others or in a public place. Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

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# Working Together for Change

It's nice to have this opportunity on a warm spring day to reflect on the work of the Grey Bruce Violence Prevention Coordinating Committee for the WHSBCG Newsletter. The title of this piece came to mind as I thought of the projects that the committee has carried out since last spring, and the new directions we are heading in for the upcoming fiscal year.

In the fall the committee adopted a new vision to guide the work: *"Our vision is an inclusive community where all people live their lives free from all forms of violence and oppression and have equal access to the best of what the community has to offer."* This vision broadens the scope of the committee work and underscores the critical importance of working together across sectors, systems, geography, and cultures to end violence and oppression.

It has been a very busy year for the committee whose members are already busy with the work in their sectors: Justice, VAW, Child Welfare, Aboriginal Services, Health, Education, Faith Communities and women of experience. A great deal of the work this year was done by larger project subcommittees that bring together many more community stakeholders to the table, many who volunteer their time and expertise.

The fall kicked off with a very successful conference at the Outdoor Education Centre called **Weaving Our Communities: The Land, The People, Our Future**. It brought together youth and adults from diverse communities in Grey and Bruce to develop community strategies to address racism and discrimination and violence in all its forms. We spent two days outside in glorious fall weather in workshops, discussion rounds and strategy sessions that produced 25 action plans. I encourage you to go to our website [www.endabusenow.ca](http://www.endabusenow.ca) and read the **Conference Report**. There are personal and community strategies outlined that everyone can get behind to build more inclusive communities in our shared geographic space. Please consider attending **FrontRunners on May 13<sup>th</sup> at the Roxy Theatre in Owen Sound**. There will be three public screenings of this docu/drama by Laura Robinson that tells the story of Aboriginal runners at the Pan Am Games in 1967, and the impact of residential schools. Tickets are available by calling the Roxy Theatre at (519) 371-2833.

On November 16 we launched the **Grey Bruce Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign with 16 Community Champions**. This newsletter provided an excellent overview of the NFF goal *"to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so people who are close to at-risk women or an abusive man can help"*. Over the winter and spring our Champions have conducted 20 presentations and events over the two counties. Over 365 people have participated, and many more events are planned. Presentations were made to County, Municipal and City governments, Service Groups, Major Area Employers, Church groups, Community groups, and Community agencies/organizations. Over 10,000 brochures have been distributed to date. The NFF campaign will continue over the next year. We hope to do more in-depth training and broaden the reach of the campaign. There is information about the campaign and a link to the provincial website at [www.endabusenow.ca](http://www.endabusenow.ca) *If you would like to join the campaign as a Community Champion please contact me at [cpurdon@bmts.com](mailto:cpurdon@bmts.com)*

A major research and community development project is wrapping up at this time. **Rural Strategies for Women with Mental Health, Addiction and Abuse Issues** is a project funded by the Victim Services Secretariat of the Ministry of the Attorney General. Data was collected from service providers and women who use mental health, addiction and abuse services through questionnaires, focus groups and interviews over the winter months. On April 18<sup>th</sup> service providers from the three sectors and service users took part in a **Community Strategies** workshop and developed priorities for action to improve and coordinate services for women with multiple issues. There will be a Training Workshop on June 10<sup>th</sup> on integrated models for service delivery, understanding the link between mental health, addiction and trauma issues, and to further develop community follow up strategies. A full report on the project outcomes will be complete in June, and you can get a copy of it on the website [www.endabusenow.ca](http://www.endabusenow.ca) at that time. If you are interested in attending the training workshop, please contact me at [cpurdon@bmts.com](mailto:cpurdon@bmts.com)

At the last GBVPCC meeting we developed a list of projects for next year – this group never rests! Here are some of the plans:

- Continue the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign
- Plan another Weaving Our Communities Conference for fall 2009
- Develop a series of half day training workshops and offer them in the community
- Do a project that will focus on improving access to services for our rural community (transportation, information, barriers to service)
- Support the recommendations from the Rural Strategies for Women with Mental Health, Addictions and Abuse project.

The Grey Bruce Violence Prevention Coordinating Committee could not do its work without the ongoing and active support of its member agencies. Women's House Service Bruce and Grey has played an important role in all of our work this year: providing space and staff support for the NFF Campaign, organizing and providing space for a focus group for the Rural Strategies project, and providing staff leadership, input and time on project advisory committees, and for the committee as a whole. A big thank you to Women's House, and we look forward *Working Together for Change* in the upcoming year!

Colleen Purdon, Coordinator  
Grey Bruce Violence Prevention  
Coordinating Committee

## Coming Events

- May: Daisy of Hope Campaign – buy a daisy to show your support for shelters who are helping to end violence against women and children
- Friday, May 23rd from 12:00 noon to 2:00 PM – a parking lot barbeque at our Owen Sound location for our downtown neighbours, our community service partners and the public. This will be an opportunity to network and to take a peak at our store front space – please bring a friend and join us.

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# Reaching Out – continued from page 1

more “mental health injuries” as a result of the abuse they experienced. Other forms of abuse such as choking, use of weapon and psychological abuse were similar in both groups.

- Women in Grey Bruce turn to family and friends less for support than the national statistics indicate.
- Women living in the rural areas (as opposed to the City of Owen Sound) experience more abuse with a weapon. These rural women also experience more isolation and the children being turned against them by their spouse.
- Embarrassment and shame was the most common reason explaining why women had not used VAW services. Another common reason cited was that women wished to stay in their relationship.
- 26% of women in this study said they suffered a mental or physical disability.

## Coming Events

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- As of the end of May, one afternoon per week, a women's drop in will be held in the Owen Sound store front. The space will also be available to community groups and services to hold workshops, training and other events relevant to women.
- June 14: Women's House Charity Golf Tournament – Ainsdale Golf Course – Kincardine, for registration call 519-396-9814 Ext. 25
- June 18: Annual General Meeting – to be held at the Bruce Power Visitor's Centre, 4th of Bruce at 7 pm. All members and anyone interested in becoming a member are welcome to attend
- October 18: Annual Fall Gala – “An Evening in Paris” – Tickets are on sale early September to ensure your table at our largest fundraising event of the year. Held at Best Western Governor's Inn, Kincardine. Enjoy a gourmet buffet dinner, bid on silent and live auction items and dance the night away. The event is indeed a fun evening for a very good cause. For tickets call 519-396-9814 Ext 25

### Some of the recommendations that have come out of this research are:

- That a harm-reduction strategy needs to be developed to address the high use of weapons in domestic abuse in the rural areas. This has been put forth to the Grey Bruce Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee.
- More work is needed to address the psychological and sexual abuse women in common-law or marriage relationships endure. Sexual abuse is not only an issue for teens in dating relationships.
- That more community education and development is needed to increase

the effectiveness of friends and family and to decrease shame and stigma.

- That staff in VAW, Mental Health and Health services need to have a solid cross-sector understanding of abuse, mental and physical disabilities and addictions. These sectors also need to collaborate more with one another to improve service delivery.

Prepared by May Tettero, Researcher

For more information about the research please access our website at: [www.whsbg.on.ca](http://www.whsbg.on.ca) and click on Reaching Out Summary Report.

# End Sexual Assault – continued from page 1

- Know the address of where you are going on a date.
- Don't feel embarrassed about leaving a date if you feel uncomfortable. As much as possible, always have a way of getting home on your own (cab fare, a cell phone, good walking shoes).
- At the beginning of a relationship, pay your own way and maintain your independence.
- Although date rape is NEVER the responsibility of the victim, you can help to avoid misunderstanding and confusion by communicating clearly and giving consistent messages.

- Once again, although date rape is NEVER the responsibility of the victim, you may be less vulnerable if you do not become intoxicated.

Information Courtesy of The Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

51% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of sexual or physical violence. Close to 60% of these women have survived more than one incident of violence.

(Statistics Canada, 1993, “Violence Against Women Survey”, The Daily 18 November, p. 1,3)

62% of the victims who reported being sexually assaulted in 1998 were under the age of 18.

(Statistics Canada, Juristat, Vol. 19, No. 9)

## United Way Invests in KIDS!

A recent grant from the United Way – Children's Rotary Fund has given a big boost to the resources available at Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey Counties kids, for kids who temporarily live in the Shelter with their moms as well as for those who see Child Witness counsellors! Approximately \$2400 received from United Way recently allowed the purchase of some “big ticket items” that are a hit – outdoor kids' picnic table and several Fisher Price/Little Tykes items including doll house with people, farm with animals and tool bench. Other items purchased with this United Way grant included blow up beds for when the Shelter is overflowing or for children who need to sleep with

mom, a new crib & crib mattresses, good quality thermometers for when kids are sick, colourful dishes & eating utensils to enhance the dinner fun, several high quality car seats and 3-in-1 strollers, educational toys, videos, books, music, and, of course, craft supplies and journals. With judicious shopping decisions, the funds went a distance toward addressing the needs of child clients of Women's House.

Statistics say that many children who witness abuse will be part of an abusive relationship themselves, whether as the abuser or as the victim. Everything that is part of breaking the cycle is an excellent investment.

## International Women's Day Enjoyed by All

The room filled with excitement as supporters of Women's House socialized together to celebrate women; as makers of history; as promoters of change and women who give to our community. The event was held at the Royal Canadian Legion, Port Elgin, Ontario, April 18th, 2008 (after a storm delay on March 8th).

Welcoming men and women of South-western Ontario, Casey Weichert, Executive Director, expressed the importance of this celebration yearly, a tradition for 100 years. With the goal in mind to stop violence against women and children, Casey stressed the gratitude of Women's House for those who support the work of Women's House in our community.

Musical entertainment by "Jester", Jackie Ralph and Ester Gierienger, with much laughter, had toes tapping. A country style dinner served by the Legion Auxiliary women was enjoyed. Linda Cooper, MC, added humour mixed with

informative details to keep the program interesting, always remembering the community and highlighting the need for Women's House services.

The highlight of the evening was special guest speaker, Sharon Hampson who educated the attendees regarding her detours in life battling breast cancer as well as a reminder about self care. Through her warm and gentle manner, and her joy of song, Sharon quickly established a bond with the audience. Loved for her warmth and wit on stage, she explained how to use resilience and optimism as a springboard to success and happiness.

Women of Distinction Awards were presented to five deserving recipients. Phyllis Enns, Vi Bland, Sat Dharam Kaur, ND, Kathy Hunt-Trumble and Erin Zorzi. All five were surprised and honoured. We applauded them for making a difference locally.



A fundraising raffle was held and many happy winners left with gratefully donated items from community retailers and friends of WH. Grand prize winner, Patricia Schaus went home with the "Total Tower Experience" from CN Tower, Toronto.

Sponsors and donors for this event have come forward once again to make the 2008 IWD successful. We thank them very much. Keep March 8th open for another inspiring, fun evening for a good cause in 2009!

## Mother's Day

Mother's Day should be a celebration that children prepare for. They shop with Daddy or Grandma to find the perfect card and the prettiest flower to put on Mummy's breakfast tray on the morning of Mother's Day. Children look up to Mummy for comfort and encouragement and want to give back on Mother's Day. They get excited to see the big smiles they bring as they yell "Happy Mother's Day Mummy, look what we made, specially for you!"

Unfortunately, not all children and mothers can celebrate this day in the same special way. They may be sepa-



rated due to violent abuse in the home, they may be living in a shelter together waiting to start a new life free of abuse. The services and programs we provide at Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey

have in the past, and will in the future continue to provide them with the supports they need to live without violence.

Our community is now very aware and understand the importance of spreading the word to rebuild lives. It takes many involved individuals and groups to support an end to violence against women and children. We appreciate every dollar given to support our most vulnerable citizens.



### The year's Women's House Fundraising Goal is \$140,000

I would like to support the work of Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey throughout the year!

My donation of \_\_\_\_\_ will help to ensure the continuation of all programs to assist women and children in crisis

I am enclosing my cheque for:  \$50  \$75  \$ 100  \$250  Other I would like a charitable receipt

I prefer to use my VISA  Mastercard  Signature for credit card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

I would like to discuss a bequest or other planned giving.

I would like to become a voting member of the organization.

I would like more information on becoming a volunteer or board member.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_



Please go to our website

[www.whsbg.on.ca](http://www.whsbg.on.ca)