



Women's House
Serving Bruce and Grey

2021/22

ANNUAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

Vision • Mission Statement • Principles

05

Women's House Services

06

Board of Directors • 2021/2022
Women's House Statistics • 2021/2022

07

Women's House Organizational Chart

08

Donors & Sponsors • 2021/2022

09

Annual Reports

10

Tracy Primeau
Board Chair

11

Board Financial Report
Nominating Committee Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

12

Lisa Owen
Executive Director

14

Krista Wilken
Residential Manager

16

Bernice Connell
Sexual Assault Services and Outreach Manager

17

Alana Eadie
Administrative Assistant

19

Marcy Stocking
Public Education and Volunteer Coordinator

21

Michelle Lamont
Community and Fund Development Coordinator

23

Mary Smith
Property Manager



VISION

We envision a world where women are empowered, and women and children are safe, secure, and free from violence.

MISSION STATEMENT

Women's House provides a safe haven for victims/survivors, knowing that ending violence is a community responsibility. We will work towards ending violence through knowledge, which is power, in order to create change.

PRINCIPLES

1. It is a basic human right to be free from abuse and sexual violence. Also, it is a basic human right to have safety, dignity, respect, social and economic justice, self-determination and to contribute to society in our own manner.
2. Abuse and sexual violence are societal problems, yet generally perceived as private matters. Community has an obligation to become involved in these issues.
3. Education is necessary to bring about effective changes in attitude. We believe in challenging statements and beliefs that minimize the seriousness of racism, oppression, abuse and sexual violence.
4. Children's lives are traumatized by exposure to abusive environments. Their witnessing and normalizing of violence perpetuates the cycle. Their needs are specific and distinct from the needs of their parents.
5. We believe in fostering, sustaining and affirming women's culture and diversity and that they are sources of enrichment and strength.
6. We value the reality of every individual's experience and acknowledge and respect their uniqueness and understand that individuals may display a variety of behaviours as coping strategies. However, safety of the woman shall be the primary focus of any intervention and she shall receive sensitive, immediate and appropriate service.
7. We believe that poverty, hunger and homelessness are safety issues that keep women and children in abusive situations.
8. Women's House recognizes that all women face misogyny and sexism; however, some bear an additional burden of oppression due to racism and other forms of oppression.
9. We believe that systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression based on race, religion, class, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, and ability must be addressed as part of an integrated approach to ending poverty, abuse, sexual violence, and homelessness in the lives of women.
10. Networking, partnerships and resource building with other community partners is essential in order to best serve the needs of women experiencing abuse and/or sexual violence.
11. A coordinated community approach to service delivery is essential in order to provide options and information about services and the impacts of abuse and sexual violence so that the victim/survivors can make informed choices.
12. We believe that the abuser is responsible for their behaviour and should be held accountable. Society must develop a policy of zero tolerance for abuse and sexual violence.
13. Women's House believes in being accountable to the victims and survivors who use our services.

In-House Safe Shelter

- A safe, secure, and supportive environment to accommodate up to 13 women and children
- Trained counsellor on duty 24/7

24-hour Support Lines

Toll free, local, and sexual assault support lines answered 24/7 by professional counsellors



Child Witness Program

- Education for parents regarding the effects on children who witness abuse
- Individual and group counselling for children between the ages of four (4) and sixteen (16)

Violence Against Women Counselling

Individual outreach counselling available in Chesley, Durham, Hanover, Kincardine, Markdale, Owen Sound, Port Elgin, Southampton, Walkerton, and Warton

Second Stage Housing Program

Units in Kincardine, Port Elgin, and Warton offer safe and affordable housing for women and their children for up to one year

Group Counselling

Groups provided throughout Bruce & Grey counties in areas of need such as: Self Esteem, Dealing with Anger, When your Relationship Ends, and Finding Your Own Voice

Sexual Assault Services, Public Education and Volunteer Coordination

- Confidential support of women sixteen (16) years of age and older who have been sexually assaulted recently or in the past
- Public education initiatives to provide awareness and understanding of sexual and gender-based violence

Youth Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Services

Support for youth (12-18) and women (18+) who have experienced, or been exposed to, sexual violence and/or human trafficking

Transitional and Housing Support

Workers assist women with developing a transition plan and provide advocacy in the areas of housing, education, job training, income support, legal aid, childcare, transportation, etc.

Community and Fund Development

Educates the public on Women's House services and the issue of violence against women through public speaking engagements and presentations

Volunteer Services

Opportunities to volunteer throughout the organization



Tracy Primeau	Chair
Meag Durkin	Vice Chair
Amanda Friesen	Treasurer
Joanna Malott	Secretary
Colleen Hamann	Director
Angela McOrmond	Director

Gavin Fick	Director
Gretel Steinberg	Director
Judy Rich	Director
Christine John	Director
Lisa McArthur	Director

In the 2021/22 fiscal period:



537

individual women
were served



18,165

crisis, support, and
advocacy calls were
managed on the
phone lines

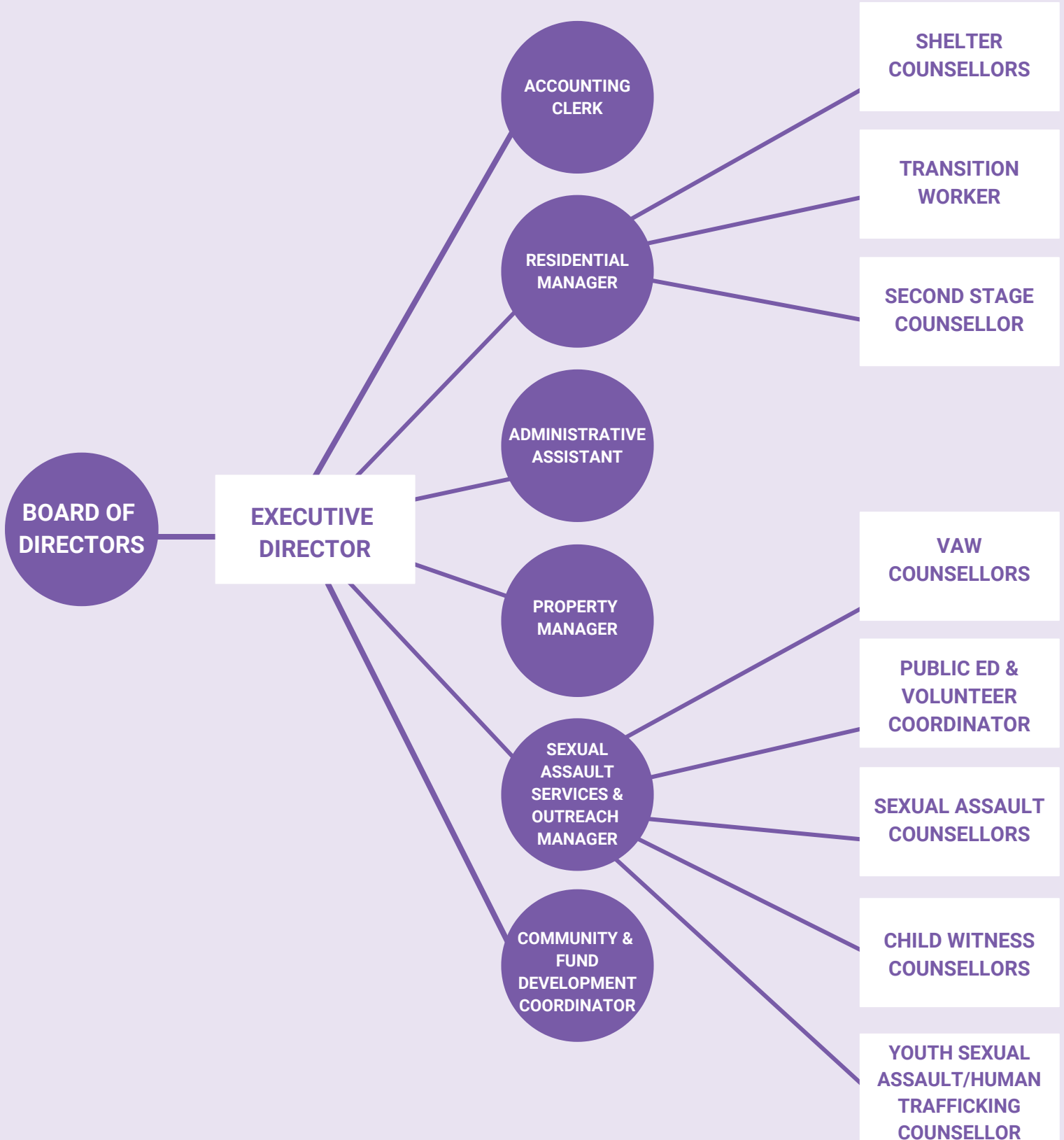


109

individual children
were served

WOMEN'S HOUSE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

07





Women's House
Serving Bruce and Grey

Thank you to the Women's House Sponsors

CHAMPIONS \$10000+



Innovation at work



NUCLEAR WASTE
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION



United Way
Bruce Grey
Change starts here



SOCIETY of
UNITED PROFESSIONALS
IFPTE 160



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MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY



Larry Bannerman Foundation

Walter J. Blackburn Foundation

FRIENDS \$2500-\$4999



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Enzo Foundation (Anon-Scotiastrust, Aqueduct Foundation)

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Lucknow & District
Kinsmen Club



Black & McDonald



KINCARDINE
and area businesses



PROMATION
nuclear



UNIFOR
the Union | le syndicat

Keith & Linda Battler

Canadian Union of Skilled Workers

Retired Teachers of Ontario - District #10

Board & Staff

ANNUAL REPORTS



Women's House
Serving Bruce and Grey

Another year of COVID is behind us and my third and final Chair report that will have to reference it. The management and staff at Women's House continued to show their resiliency as mandates quickly changed, staff moved around, and client needs continued to rise. The board continued to meet virtually, and I cannot wait until we can see each other in person! We did welcome a few new board members and this year we will be welcoming three more as a couple of our members finish out their terms. I'm happy to say there is a lot of interest. I will be passing the torch to a new Chair at our AGM but will be remaining to finish my term in the Past-Chair role.

The many services we provide have been funded by either the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services or the Ministry of Attorney General. However, we would not be able to offer the current level of service we provide to the counties of Bruce and Grey without our many corporate and individual donors. This focus of our strategic plan to build solid, sustainable funding with our neighbours and in our communities continues to be a successful strategy ensuring our future even in year two of the pandemic.

The continued support of our community, even when we are unable to recognize them in person at the Gala or Volunteer Appreciation gatherings as in the past, clearly illustrates how much our sponsors, volunteers and advocates understand the need in our community and the importance of the services we offer.

“VOLUNTEERS DO NOT
NECESSARILY HAVE THE TIME;
THEY JUST HAVE THE HEART.”
- ELIZABETH ANDREW



Michelle Lamont, Community and Fund Development Coordinator accepts a donation from Tracy Primeau on behalf of Community Foundation Grey Bruce

I would like to thank all of the management and staff for keeping our services going and supporting the women and children who rely on our organization. I would also like to thank the team for educating both the public and the board around the Violence against Women (VAW) sector, their daily work, and challenges during this time. Our favourite part of our board meetings is truly the opportunity to hear from the staff from all areas of the organization.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our volunteers, and specifically our Board members, for their time, commitment, and passion for the work we do as part of the Women's House team. Together with management and staff we will continue to strive for a world where our services are no longer required.

BOARD FINANCIAL REPORT NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

11

AMANDA FRIESEN • BOARD TREASURER

As the treasurer of Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey, myself and the finance committee work closely with the Accounting Clerk and the Executive Director to ensure Women's House stays fiscally responsible. The budget exceeds 1.5M annually, with most of the budget coming from government funding. It is important to know that Women's House, and the programs and services it provides throughout Grey and Bruce counties, would not be able to run without the help of fundraised dollars. As the Treasurer, I would like to thank the community for all of its support throughout the year.

Given the unprecedented times, I can proudly say that with the hard work from the Executive Director and staff at Women's House, this was a successful fiscal year. As always, we are so thankful to the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services and Ministry of the Attorney General for the core funding they provide.

You can be a great source of support and information for a friend or family member.

Visit our website at whsbg.on.ca/help-a-friend for more resources



HOW TO HELP

Find shelters across Canada by visiting sheltersafe.ca

You can locate a shelter in a specific geographic area along with its 24-hour emergency phone number.



FIND A SHELTER

GRETEL STEINBERG & MEAG DURKIN • BOARD NOMINATING COMMITTEE

It has been a busy year for the Nominating Committee. We continue to strive to keep our Board of Directors full and diverse to best support the oversight and governance of Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey. We have been fortunate to have a complete Board for the majority of 2021-2022. However, mid-year we were challenged to fill 2 Director vacancies.

Since we started actively recruiting to fill these vacancies, the interest in Women's House has been incredibly positive - 6 applicants (and counting!) have expressed interest in joining the Board. Our Board recruitment has been focused on the following areas where we have gaps or could use some additional expertise:

- Diversity/representation
- Ethnicity/ability/gender identification
- Collective bargaining experience
- Social service programming expertise
- Community development/public education expertise
- Legal expertise

As we continue to schedule and conduct interviews, we're looking forward to the AGM and Board elections to enlist a diversified and fully-staffed Board to support the leadership and vision in serving Grey and Bruce into a successful 2022-2023.



To say that this past year was challenging would be an understatement. As an organization, we continued operations throughout the pandemic and confronted many other challenges along the way. However, when reflecting over this past year in preparation of this report, I found myself feeling rather proud of what Women's House was able to accomplish during these difficult times.

Working Through a Pandemic

It is essential to keep COVID at the forefront when discussing this past year, because it impacted virtually every aspect of our organization and its functions. In response to a Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) directive, we implemented policy and procedure that complied with government mandates with regards to staff vaccination. Implementing this required that we develop a Vaccine Safety Education Program and new personnel file forms for distribution and collection of required information. Although we did not mandate vaccination, we had 100% staff vaccination rate at the time the policy was required to be implemented, thus reducing risk of COVID for all staff and women and children served. We also had to adjust our screening criteria for staff and women and children served throughout the year whenever Public Health made changes. Over the course of the past year, the Shelter managed only one positive case amongst the resident population, and ensured no further spread through the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, sanitization, social distancing protocols, PCR and rapid antigen testing, and lock down procedures.

When things started to feel safer and case numbers started dropping in October 2021, we implemented a graduated return to work plan for Administration and Outreach staff. This of course was short-lived, and all staff were sent back home at Christmas time when case numbers sky-rocketed again with the new Omicron variant. At this time, we moved beyond pandemic planning and into continuity of services planning so that we were prepared to deal with a potential situation where we had no staff available to work, but needed to keep the Shelter doors open. As a result, we set up a "stand by" schedule for our Outreach staff which required them to work in the Shelter in the event that Shelter staff were depleted. We also were required to draft policy and procedure for the use of N95 respirators at this time, which would have to be used within the Shelter whenever there were symptomatic or COVID positive residents. Our Property Manager became certified to do fit testing so that expectations could be met in as timely a fashion as possible. Anticipating staff shortages, we also sought and received permission from Public Health to allow staff who were considered to be high risk contacts but who were asymptomatic, to report to work under "working self-isolation" protocols. Staff were informed of this, and procedures for working self-isolation were developed and implemented. Fortunately, we did not have to move into this higher risk staffing solution, and were able to maintain adequate staffing within the Shelter during that wave. As we move into this next fiscal year, we are celebrating and excited about a return to pre-pandemic operations, and resumption of face-to-face service with women and children both on- and off-site.

Funding

Despite the fact we had many struggles working through the pandemic this past year, covering increased operational expenses was not one of them. This is in part due to the fact that we received federal COVID funding to support us with additional expenses resulting from pandemic operations. MCCSS also annualized the enhanced funding they had been providing for the past couple of years, which alleviated some of the pressure put on our fundraising department to support our core operating budget. We also received Rural and Remote funding from MCCSS, which enabled us to purchase promotional items, upgrade our server, hire a facilitator to support us in the creation of an Intersectional Framework, and provide transportation to women served. This was extremely helpful since we have not been able to utilize volunteer drivers during the pandemic, and have had to rely on taxis which are significantly more expensive. In addition, MCCSS provided us with additional funding for our Transitional and Housing and Support program. This program has historically been heavily dependent on fundraised dollars, and therefore this funding was useful in offsetting the deficit in that program. In addition, Bruce County Housing provided us with funds to prevent homelessness amongst the women we serve. Although this funding does not affect our core operating budget, it certainly supports us in being able to help women with expenses associated with maintaining or securing safe housing.

As we move into this next fiscal year, we look forward to more federal COVID Recovery Funding, which will allow us to provide staff retention bonuses, fund a new Director of Programs position, provide funds to our Staff Wellness Committee, perform some minor Shelter repairs, purchase personal protective equipment if needed, cover increased transportation costs for women served,

cover hotel costs if we need to house women off site due to COVID outbreaks, purchase laptops and required software, upgrade the WIFI in the Shelter, equip Shelter bedrooms with televisions, and purchase required resources for women and children served. Another available pool of federal funding will be utilized for a capacity building initiative next year, which will enable us to review and adopt service approaches to fill gaps identified during the pandemic in efforts to ensure our services are accessible and culturally appropriate for marginalized or underserved communities.

Staffing Crisis

This past year, the Violence Against Women sector encountered a staffing crisis unlike anything we have seen before. Many staff across the province, including at Women's House, left the sector for more lucrative opportunities in other sectors that offered higher wages. This is a systemic wage parity issue that will need to be a focus of attention if we are to remain sustainable as a sector moving forward. Staff wellness, and sometimes lack thereof, compounded the staffing crisis during the pandemic. As an organization, we focused a lot of attention on this issue over the past year. We offered "Being Well in Times of Adversity" and "Creating Positive Energy and Well-Being" workshops for staff, which were facilitated by a Leadership Coach and partially funded through an OATH wellness initiative. We also resurrected our internal Wellness Committee, and will be able to provide them with some funding as we move into this next fiscal year. We also offered ongoing professional development opportunities for staff – both self-directed, and for Women's House as a whole. One such initiative was Local Indigenous History training which enhanced our cultural awareness organizationally. In addition, we developed a Mentorship Program Framework, and look forward to its' implementation in the next fiscal year. It is hoped that with all of these initiatives combined, we will have success with staff recruitment, retention, and wellness.

New Programming

Despite many of the challenges discussed above, Women's House continued to grow and thrive this past year with the addition of a new program. MCCSS provided modest funding to support us in addressing human trafficking in our region, and in response, we developed a Youth Sexual Assault/Human Trafficking program. We were also able to secure funding through the Canadian Women's Foundation and South Bruce OPP, enabling us to employ one full-time staff person for this initiative. Although we will need to continue to seek other sources of funding to grow this program and ensure sustainability, we were excited to be able to finally offer this specific service, as this area of work has been a long identified gap in our services. In the next fiscal year, we also look forward to the addition of a Director of Programs position at Women's House, made possible through Pandemic Recovery funding through the federal government. This change will support Women's House in building capacity, so that we are able to take on new initiatives and special projects, and enhance our ability to be involved in more community collaboration.

Service Statistics

In total over this past year, Women's House served 537 women, 109 children, and managed 18,165 crisis, support, and advocacy calls on its' crisis lines. It is anticipated that these figures will increase dramatically as restrictions continue to be lifted, and staff are preparing for an influx of referrals in the next fiscal year.

Online Presence

Also worthy of note is the fact that Women's House enhanced its' online presence this past year. Our website was re-developed and re-launched in an effort to make it more user-friendly, visually appealing, and informative. We also established a presence on TikTok, which enabled to us reach a demographic that may not have connected to Women's House otherwise.

Acknowledgements

In conclusion, while this past year was riddled with challenges, Women's House managed to keep its doors open to all in need of our support and service, and grow in its offerings to the community. To the Board of Directors, staff members, volunteers, funders, donors, and supporters of Women's House – thank you for making this possible! Your contributions during this difficult time were very much appreciated. Our success would not have been possible without you.

In reflecting on our highlight reel this year, I'm reminded that, besides the challenges of navigating this ongoing pandemic, 2021 brought with it a positive push to further embrace our feminist counselling practices and enhance direct service to women. Due to COVID-19, the shelter was operating at 50% capacity for the majority of the year. We did use alternative accommodations as needed for shelter overflow and prioritized situations of abuse for admission. The shelter suspended the use of most volunteers as well as non-residential counselling services that previously took place on site. It is no surprise that our crisis support telephone lines, including our sexual assault support line, were heavy in use throughout the year. As you can imagine, safety planning has been front and center in our work with women. Women have openly disclosed the significant impact of isolation, many making the choice to stay in abusive situations.

The Second Stage Counsellor continued to support women both in Second Stage Housing as well as a caseload of women in the community needing transition and housing support. Programming has been provided in-person, virtually and/or over the phone, based on women's preferences. Early in the pandemic we deemed the Second Stage Counsellor role essential, recognizing the need for continued, safe, in-person interaction. This is necessary for crisis intervention, case planning, counselling support, education and safety planning purposes – all key elements of this residential program. Due to increased COVID risks with "gatherings," groups and resident meetings were lost. Also due to COVID-19, the program suspended the use of volunteers for peer support and transportation purposes.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of women and children served and shelter staff continues to be prioritized. We have continually updated and maintained the use of our Women's House COVID-19 Health and Safety document outlining guidelines and control measures to prevent, eliminate and reduce the hazards of a COVID-19 outbreak within the shelter. The shelter has remained in compliance with Ministry and Public Health directives specific to COVID-19. Enhanced training has been provided to all shelter staff specific to COVID-19 health and safety practices, including outbreak management and the provision of key services and supports. The shelter maintains an adequate supply of Personal Protective Equipment available for staff use with a MCCSS Critical Supplies and Equipment survey completed weekly.

We continue to complete monthly inspections, comprehensive fire drills, panic alarm drills and panic button testing in shelter. During weekly team meetings we debrief incidents and alarm activity and have increased safety talks. Shelter team staff have ensured renewal of first aid certification and WHMIS as required.

Staff Management & Program Delivery

To drive team development and increase organizational commitment, our full Women's House team worked with Jackie Arnold at *I Heart My Work*. The theme was building resiliency and she offered insight into promoting cooperative and effective team-based relationships within Women's House.

Throughout this past year I provided support and supervision to 17 staff, including the Counsellors on Duty, the Transition Worker and Second Stage Counsellor. We onboarded several new relief staff during 2021 and have continued to enhance our orientation and training program. There is an added focus on working with support resistant women, de-escalation strategies, harm reduction (administering naloxone), stats collection, legal aid and family court support, and feminist-based counselling strategies.

In an effort to improve communication and case management systems, the shelter team has embraced regular team meetings, a

revised shift handover process, weekly case management meetings, updated case planning and personal needs assessment tools, enhanced use of WISH, regular support and supervision meetings and ongoing emergency back up as needed. These help to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, driving staff's decision-making and problem-solving abilities. The management team has also promoted the use of committee work and small working groups, many in response to strategic planning activities. This offers newly hired staff an added way to learn about our internal culture, and ensures effective knowledge transfer.

I have continued to coordinate our Family Court Support Worker program overseeing stats collection. There has been a focus on resource development and sharing of Luke's Place discussion topics specific to family court issues. Monthly reports were filed for Legal Aid Ontario as we continue to offer 2-hour authorization certificates for domestic violence situations.

Agency Wide and Public Relations

The shelter team took initiative participating in November's Woman Abuse Awareness Month. Thanks to the full committee's work and the generosity of the community at large, 2021 also saw a very successful Christmas program. We served 41 women and their children through the program.

Our safety planning working group is continuing to review and develop common risk assessment and safety planning tools for use across the organization. This year, in part due to outreach remote work arrangements, we did see an increase of time spent on case coordination activities. Collaboration between teams is essential as we work to collectively support women across various program during these challenging times. The shelter team continues to maintain good working relationships with community partners and as a result, women benefit from coordinated efforts and system collaboration.

“

Despite the hardships we have faced, I believe the pandemic has been a reminder of how **important and special this work is**. It is a privilege to belong to a workplace where we get to **positively impact the lives of women** who need us most. It is a privilege to be able to **create change every day** we come to the shelter. **Connection is our strongest defense against the evils these women face**, and although it looks different now, that defense is still as strong as ever.

”

— Mallory Earnshaw, Shelter Counsellor

Service Delivery

During the past year, Outreach Programs continued to adapt and rein in some of the COVID chaos that continues to affect our work. Despite ongoing staff shortages and repeatedly filling positions temporarily, staff providing direct services created a new normal for the women and children they work with. Phone sessions and virtual meetings continued as well as in person counseling, depending on women's preferences. Schools are now accommodating Child Witness Counselor meetings with children during school hours. A new requirement to have parental consent from fathers in order for their children to receive counseling support may become a barrier to children receiving services. Thus far, three requests for consent have received no response from the fathers and I anticipate this will be a trend. We will continue to monitor how often this occurs.

Advocacy is critical in our work with women, and staff supported women to navigate legal, medical, income security, housing and mental health systems. Practical assistance in the form of gas and grocery cards have helped women who were experiencing homelessness and poverty. Community collaboration in direct service increased this year. Staff co-facilitated with the Canadian Mental Health Association an eighteen-week support group for women. Staff co-facilitating the Partner Abuse Response Program for women who have been court mandated to attend saw a considerable increase in women being charged with intimate partner violence.

Through the Youth Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking Counselor position we were more involved with local initiatives addressing human trafficking. Specifically, through a South Bruce OPP victim services project and the Anti-Human Trafficking sub-committee of Violence Grey Bruce. This new position addressed a long-standing service gap in Bruce & Grey. Women's House now has the capacity to support youth aged twelve to sixteen who have experienced sexual violence.

Community Collaboration

I continued participation on several local committees, including:

- Child & Family Services/Violence Against Women Collaboration Committee
- Human Services & Justice Coordination Committee
- Community Safety & Well Being Project
- MARAC – coordinated response to women in high risk situations of intimate partner violence
- Violence Against Women Coordinating Committees (regional and provincial)

Violence Prevention Grey Bruce is a long-standing committee addressing violence in our community and serves as the area's Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee, which is funded by a provincial Ministry. After considerable upheaval last year, Women's House became the Transfer Payment Agency for this group and as of April 1st this year, the VPGC Coordinator role will be included in my position.

The internal Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee was very active this past year keeping these issues front and centre within the organization and messaging in the community. A formal land acknowledgement is in place as well.

We welcomed and also said good-bye to many staff this past year, including a long-time Sexual Assault Counselor who was a strong warrior in her work with women. My appreciation to board members, staff and volunteers who ensured that Women's House safely provided the best possible services during such a challenging time. March 31st marked the end of fourteen years for me in the position of Sexual Assault Services & Outreach Manager. I will miss the proximity to direct service but am excited to take on the new role as Director of Programs. I look forward to the challenges and possibilities of the coming year.

ALANA EADIE • ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

17

The 2021/22 fiscal year saw Women's House continuing to adapt and respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While we remained operational, there were continuous changes to ensure the safety and security of the women and children we serve, as well as staff members and volunteers.

Human Resources

Maintaining appropriate levels of staffing is always of utmost importance at Women's House, made especially vital this year due to the ongoing pandemic. It is imperative that we retain a level of staff sufficient to continue operations in our shelter program; this ensures that women and children continue to have a safe place to turn.

A substantial amount of time was spent on staffing efforts this year, including: recruitment; interviewing and onboarding new employees; facilitating staff leaves and resignations; and managing internal job postings & subsequent staff reorganization. Staff recruitment efforts were a focal point this year as we experienced a higher rate of staff turnover and position vacancies, combined with a significant decrease in job applications. This has resulted in a much smaller pool of relief staff for our shelter program. Relief counsellors are an integral part of our organization: they fill vacancies in the 24-hour shelter as a result of vacation, illness and other absences, and they provide vital front-line support to women and children seeking safety and support. Unfortunately, the lack of guaranteed hours of work and the call-in, shift-work nature of the position make it less desirable to those who are seeking part- or full-time employment.

Efforts to expand job posting visibility and increase recruitment included: attending a virtual job fair for the Grey-Bruce area; connecting with educational institutions regarding potential placement and employment opportunities; and advertising job opportunities on various social media platforms and online job boards/websites. Staff recruitment and retention will continue to be of utmost importance in the upcoming year, and finding new ways to reach potential employees will be necessary in order to be successful in these efforts.

An application was submitted to secure summer student employment at Women's House, and we were awarded funding this year through the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program to hire a full-time Transition Support Worker. Unfortunately, our recruitment efforts for the position were unsuccessful and we did not receive any applicants, which meant we were unable to utilize the funding provided. In the past, we have been able to retain students upon completion of the CSJ-funded employment as relief counsellors. The summer student employee works alongside numerous staff during their employment, utilizing this opportunity to learn a great deal about Women's House, violence against women and the shelter program. It has proven to be very successful in providing a foundational knowledge for those who wish to continue employment in the field. Another application was made through CSJ to request funding for the same position in the next fiscal year, and it is our hope that we will be successful in our recruitment efforts this time around.

WE ARE hiring

RELIEF COUNSELLORS

Benefits of working at Women's House:

- Interesting and challenging work where one can be part of the process of empowering women
- Opportunities for growth and mobility within the organization
- Witness women's healing journeys from beginning to end

Visit whsbg.on.ca/careers for more information and to apply

Women's House
Serving Bruce and Grey

Administrative

With a large number of our administrative and outreach staff continuing remote work, internal communication was vital to ensure appropriate delivery of service. With the continued inability to connect in-person as a larger team, methods such as virtual meetings and newsletter platforms were utilized to encourage & facilitate connection amongst staff. All staff were able to take part in online workshops together this past spring on “Being Well in Times of Adversity”.

Active involvement with the Board of Directors continued throughout the year, including compiling monthly Board Packages with staff reports and distributing these prior to each board meeting. Board meetings and the AGM were held remotely via Zoom this year, and most communications happened virtually. Time was spent assisting with both spring and fall ad-mail campaigns, including set-up, formatting and contribution of educational material.

Work continued on overseeing the creation of content and ongoing maintenance of the organization’s website and social media platforms. An increased online presence was once again necessary this year to communicate important information and updates during the ongoing pandemic. Social media posts advertising Women’s House crisis lines and services were created and shared on an ongoing basis. Social media platforms were also utilized to run a number of educational and awareness campaigns related to domestic violence, sexual assault and anti-racism/anti-oppression. With the creation of a Youth Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Counsellor position this year, it was necessary to inform the public about the position and what services would be provided. A promotional flyer for the program was created and shared, in addition to an educational social media campaign on human trafficking. As our social media following increases steadily, it will be imperative to continue utilizing these platforms to provide education and awareness to a broader audience.

find us on social media!

LinkedIn
Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey



Instagram
@womens.house.bruce.grey

Facebook
@WomensHouseServingBruceGrey



Twitter
@WomensHouseSBG

How does one sum up the year that was 2021? The year everything continuously kept shifting. The year of endless challenges in ways we could never have imagined. The year that tested our limits and pushed us towards a breaking point. In 2021, the ground was constantly shifting beneath our feet; every day brought new information and walking a straight line became impossible. And yet, through it all, Women's House and shelters across the country stood strong.

We knew that this pandemic would disproportionately affect our most vulnerable populations. Staggering statistics are confirming that women and their families had never been in a more dangerous, or precarious position. So, Women's House did what we and women around the world always do: We adapted. We challenged. We overcame. 2021 may have been the year that everything changed, but it also became the year of ingenuity. Of creativity. Of resilience. Of learning. Our entire team, and the women, families and community we work with delved deep into a strength we never could have imagined. For Women's House, we hold 2021 with deep pride, love and connection.

It is important to note that our brave community continued to step up to the challenges ahead of them throughout the waves we have experienced over the past year. They continue to be dedicated, compassionate and show genuine care for those who access our services, whether it be through virtual formats, donations or social media presence. WHSBG volunteer program continued to be placed on hold except for a few amazing volunteers offering essential services. Each of these dedicated volunteers played an important role with assisting in the provision of essential services to the women and children we serve. Our Board of Directors, volunteers and community teams have gone above and beyond, working proactively, and thinking creatively. Throughout the restrictive 2021 year, Women's House was able to engage 15-plus volunteers safely while the normal routines of our lives were modified on account of the ongoing pandemic.

In the Spring of 2021 we participated in the #IBelieveYou campaign, which comes with a simple yet powerful message. When survivors of sexual assault disclose... believe them. Once survivors learn this, they are more likely to come forward. Campaigns like this, that aim to increase public support for survivors, show a marked increase in sexual assault reporting, making our community safer for everyone. With passion and excitement, the Women's House website was brought through an overhaul in the Summer of 2021. The site provides online information about the programs and services and has several new features that our agency is very excited to offer to the community, making the website safe, creative, friendly, simple and intuitive for all. In Fall 2021, a creative and ground-breaking initiative, "Do you need someone to talk to?" QR code poster was created and released for youth and secondary schools in Grey-Bruce. This will allow youth to access support, empowerment and provide aid for them to address issues they are facing throughout their lives. As we rounded the

end of 2021, the Public Educator & Volunteer Coordinator engaged and finalized two projects that will be launched in 2022. In the Owen Sound Outreach site, we will be adding a bright, resourceful and informative window display that will be installed in Spring 2022. With great excitement, Women's House will be launching the Male Allyship program in late Spring/early Summer of 2022. The allyship training is designed to move people from passive awareness to active daily advocacy and focuses on daily visible and vocal actions.

**"Each time a woman stands up
for herself, without knowing it
possibly, without claiming it,
she stands up for all women"**

-Maya Angelou



Most of the in-person public awareness events were canceled in 2021, and community partners took the changes in positive strides as we planned engagements in various virtual platforms and social media formats. Throughout 2021 we worked together to prevent violence in all its forms through public awareness and education activities, training programs, inter-sector collaboration, community engagement and knowledge building.

We contributed articles to 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which begins on November 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence) and ends December 10 (Human Rights Day). The 16 Days of Activism provide an opportunity for people around the world to unite in condemning and speaking out against gender-based violence and renew the commitment to eradicate violence against women, girls, the 2SLGBTQ+ community and gender diverse people.

Dec 6 Vigil

On December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed by a lone gunman at an engineering school in Montreal. The events of that day focused national attention on gender-based violence. Now on the anniversary of their deaths, we call out each woman's name that died that day at Ecole Polytechnic. It is for them, and all the others we have lost, that we stand here, remember and vow to act.



Whenever you need to talk, we're here



Women's House
Serving Black and Grey

LOCAL: 519-396-9655

TOLL FREE: 1-800-265-3026

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT LINE: 1-866-578-5566

We must honour the worth of all of creation, of each other, and focus on lifting up our voices over their noise and distractions: over systems that disempower and institutionalize, against stereotyping and othering, binary ways of thinking, and the normalization of violence and power over others. We must strive to walk in good ways and honour the spirits of those that have been lost by all of us. Their potential. Their love. We must work against violence and the structures that force us to not see the potential in every single one of us. We must work together to create a world where we can all be safe, and our spirits can do their work and fulfil the roles and responsibilities that we are here for. This we know as kindness.

It seems fitting, since the pandemic protocols started at the beginning of our last fiscal year, that it should come to a close at the end of a fiscal year. But who knew it would take two years of operations to see it! With two full years of pandemic protocols in place, we learned to be creative and innovative, and to lean into our community for support. Most virtual events did not hit targets like we had hoped, so meeting our \$144,900 fundraising goal seemed daunting at times. Thankfully, our community of donors and sponsors recognized the struggles that faced us and helped to make up the difference, and then some.

Community Development

Support, donations and sponsorship go hand in hand with community development – building relationships and making people aware of what we do for the community helps them to understand the value of Women’s House to our community. We held many virtual presentations this fiscal year with great feedback from the participants, which often led to financial support. They help us, and get a great sense of pride in the fact that their contributions help our most vulnerable community members to have options for a better life. It’s a win-win.

Fund Development

With some of the events we hold, attendance or participation directly affects the fundraising abilities. This year, all events were held as virtual events, so it also affects our ability to use those platforms as a means to educate the public in terms of how we can deliver the information and who we can deliver it to. Unfortunately, attendance was down for most events during the pandemic, resulting in less than ideal results in terms of meeting fundraising targets as well. Our participants and sponsors still stepped up, recognizing our struggles, and made up the difference.

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes (WAM) May-September 2021: With continued pandemic protocols in place, we chose to have another virtual walk this past year. While we used our social media platform to promote the event and to share information about gender-based violence, we had even less participants than the previous year, with only one walker. However, that one walker brought in almost triple the donations of any one person any other year! In addition, after reaching out to Bruce Power, they appreciated our efforts and the difficulties we faced without their staff participation in our event, and came forward with a \$10,000 donation - just another example of our generous corporate supporters.

Woman Abuse Prevention Month and Wrapped in Courage Campaign November 2021: This year, OAITH’s focus shifted to raising “End Gender-based Violence” flags and asking municipalities to sign a proclamation in support of ending gender-based violence. We looked for additional options to promote this awareness month that at the same time could provide a means to raise funds. We continued a sales promotion to sell our “Stay Safe” masks on-line, with less than enthusiastic results. But in terms of education, we excelled: in addition to raising six flags throughout our community (and the Municipality of Brockton signing the proclamation) and documenting it on-line, our team put together a comprehensive on-line education and promotional campaign that was well received. It included a general media release, safety tips and educational articles, articles and letters for the 16 Days of Activism (including some from women we supported) and an admiral newsletter that focused on ending gender-based violence.

Giving Tuesday – November 30, 2021: Giving Tuesday has become a growing fundraising opportunity for us. It is a virtual event, and as more of the public becomes aware of it, they see the value in using that day to support non-profits. This year, we were able to raise \$1,728 on that one day.



International Women's Day (IWD) - March 2022: With another virtual event and continued partnership with Bruce County Economic Department, we held the free event online with 56 attendees who made \$1,435 in donations. With no nominees for the Young Woman of Distinction this year, we coincidentally had a tie this year and awarded two Woman of Distinction awards, to Meag Durkin and Anne Eadie. Keynote speaker Sarain Fox inspired listeners as she spoke about the importance of kindness and the power and opportunities in believing in oneself. We also held a virtual silent auction hosted by NPX; sponsor-donated items led to proceeds of \$1,255.

Host Events continue to create a synergy of support and relationship building, allowing our community members to take leadership in their goals to support Women's House, while enabling us to build good partnerships in the community and reap the rewards of a supportive community outside of our typical reach. We helped to support and guide various community members as they held six individual host events on behalf of Women's House during this past fiscal year.

Donations: At the best of times we have a generous community, where groups and organizations make it their priority to help the women and children we serve. And, at the worst of times, we can see that the relationships we have built with those supporters have laid the groundwork for ongoing support – and this was very apparent this year. Donations flooded in from individuals, service groups, church groups and municipalities, and were also made in memory of loved ones, in lieu of birthday gifts and a variety of other gifts from bequests to investments. CanadaHelps has become a popular means to make donations, with over \$42,000 in donations in this fiscal year, almost double what donations were pre-pandemic. Monthly donation commitments on this platform continue to grow as we promote this option, making it a reliable and sustainable means of maintaining and increasing donations. We saw significant increases in support from all avenues of donors as they recognized the desperate need for the women we work with to be supported during the pandemic.

Grants: Fewer grant requests were made this past year because of changes in their focus area and criteria. For those grants that were available to us, the requested amounts were somewhat increased, in an attempt to fill the gap made by lower than average revenues from fundraising events and campaigns. The response from the grant donors that supported us was overwhelmingly supportive, often with donations higher than expected.

Sponsorships: With up to 36 annual sponsors in our sponsorship program over the course of this fiscal year, many are long-time supporters and either have multi-year commitments or renew on their anniversary date. We have had seven new sponsors come on board this past fiscal year, each with a one-year commitment, and we will work to grow those relationships in hopes to have them continue to support us going forward each year.

In conclusion, our community has helped us to exceed total fundraising targets for this fiscal year. This will provide a financial cushion to put us in good standing for next year. These efforts demonstrate the ongoing support that our community has for the vital work that we do in helping women and their children that have experienced violence to have happier, healthier lives.



Kincardine Main Building

Many capital projects were completed this past year, including:

- Replacing HVAC unit in the Administration building and three stand-alone A/C units in the shelter
- Having a Designated Substance Survey done to fix and paint the plaster and holes in the walls throughout the main building
- Installing an automatic door in Outreach foyer
- Removing old radiators in the shelter
- Upgrading the fire panel in front foyer to allow for this panel to show both zone and which set of devices were activated
- Purchasing five laptops, a conference call phone & speakers and wireless keyboard with mouse
- Removing all of the obsolete window bars as many are starting to break down and cause issues; and upgraded our panic buttons and zones

Grant-based funds allowed for the following capital projects:

- Grants from Community Foundation of Grey Bruce (\$15,000), Trillium Roots Foundation Grant (\$5,000), The Walter J. Blackburn Foundation Grant (\$5,000), NWMO Grant (\$10,000), and funds from Nimrod Gun Club, Kincardine & District Lions Club, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and others helped fund the renovations of the backyard and replacing the playground equipment
- Organization of Canadian Nuclear Industries (OCNI) in partnership with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC) Local 2222 funded and built a new shed in the backyard



The shelter backyard received an overhaul this year, thanks to our generous funders and sponsors



Second Stage

By March 31, 2022, we had 20 women and 23 children that lived in our Second Stage Housing Units. The average length of stay was 9.38 months per woman.

Funds from the Community Foundation Grey Bruce Capital Grant allowed us to install washers & dryers in each unit in Kincardine, install photocell/motion sensor for the Port Elgin and Kincardine entrances. An MCCSS infrastructure grant allowed us to replace all four of the stand-alone A/C units at the Kincardine Second Stage site. We once again received a Home Depot Grant of \$10,000 for painting, cleaning floors and cleaning Second Stage Units. We also replaced the front panel of Kincardine Second Stage and Port Elgin Intercoms.

The main pipe broke in Unit 2 Port Elgin utility room causing damage to all of the baseboards in Unit 2, in addition to baseboards in an adjacent unit's room. We also had to replace the combi-water heater and the kick plates of the bathroom vanity and kitchen cupboards. This was covered under insurance, less the deduction. After a major windstorm, four sections of Kincardine Second Stage fencing came down. The posts that were in the ground snapped near the bottom of each section. B & L Farm Services/Modern Fencing replaced the broken posts and damaged fence section.

Owen Sound

Capital projects at our Owen Sound location included:

- Replacing the main level flooring (except storefront floor)
- Renovating the staff kitchen
- Replacing the key pad on the front entrance door
- Replacing the lock on the storefront door
- Painting of the main level area, second level hallway and all offices

Health and Safety

The Property Manager has conducted the Health and Safety duties including, but not limited to: co-chairing the Joint Health and Safety Committee; chairing the Wellness Committee; overseeing monthly inspections; WHMIS Testing; First Aid Inspections & workplace illnesses and injuries.

I continued to work closely with the Residential Manager to post and follow the recommended procedures from our Public Health Organizations concerning COVID-19. Rapid Antigen Test stations were set up at both the Kincardine and Owen Sound sites, with The Canadian Red Cross providing all of the resources for the stations. The Property Manager was also trained as a N95 fit tester due to the pandemic.

We received seven free portable HEPA units from the Ministry and we bought two using COVID grant funds. These were placed in the following areas: Staff Kitchen in Kincardine Outreach, Shelter Living Room in Kincardine, Administrative Board Room in Kincardine, Port Elgin Second Stage Office, Warton Second Stage Office, Owen Sound South Counselling Room, Owen Sound Store Front, Counsellor on Duty Office in Kincardine, and the Shelter Upstairs.

Women's House staff should be commended for all of their hard work to ensure a safe environment during the pandemic in 2021.



New garden planters & a dog run were installed in the shelter backyard in Summer 2021



