Guelph Wellington Women in Crisis

2021 - 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS

1,019

Women Supported

47

Children Supported

3,077

Crisis Calls Taken

136

Public Education Events

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Board Chair Report

I would like to start this report with a reflection of my time at WIC. Over the past 10 years, times have changed and similarly to a rollercoaster ride, there have been many highs and lows for the organization. One thing that remains top of mind for me during my time here is when the shelter became a publically known location to the broader community. Initially I felt confused about why the Marianne's Place location had been kept secret for so many years, and quickly realized that stigma remains a prevalent barrier for women facing domestic violence. Issues of domestic violence are deeply rooted in ideals of masculinity and socially reinforced through institutions, policies, and laws; and these constructs maintain the discourse that domestic violence is an individual problem. Domestic violence, also referred to as family violence, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence has many forms however stems from a sense of control of one partner over the other. Subsequently when the shelter became public, WIC was making a critical statement that domestic violence in a family structure is a community problem. I gained much appreciation that WIC controls its messaging domestic violence and about the need for all voices to stand against the social constructs that permeate toxic values of masculinity and enable family violence.

There is plenty of evidence illustrating that women in domestic violence situations are more likely to struggle financially, in addition to lacking access to affordable housing than other women. Racialized women are even more likely to face addition barriers in leaving their abusive partner because of institutional racism, religious beliefs, and lack of external supports. My reason for highlighting multiple barriers faced by women in family violence intends to also emphasize structural issues such as access to food security, housing affordability, institutional equity, supports for trauma, etc. that women and children face. Therefore, talking more openly about structural barriers faced by women who are victims encourages dialogue that necessitates community engagement. Finally, the need for highlighting structural barriers particularly as it pertains to the lack of affordable housing is my personal plea for a collective call to action. With the present housing crisis, compounded by the two-year pandemic, what this means for women in domestic violent situations is that the shelters are at full capacity and women and children are forced into extended stays because there are little options for affordable housing. Additionally, women living in a domestic violence situation have limited options because of the lack of shelter space therefore they are forced to remain living with their abuser. With the current somber reality, please continue to advocate to all levels of government for a human right's perspective to affordable housing for women and children experiencing violence. Without your support and voice, these structural barriers will continue to traumatize this vulnerable demographic.

Thank you to our dedicated donors, volunteers, and staff of WIC. You have touched many lives and continue to create space for the larger purpose of safety, equity, and belonging for the women and children in our community.

Sincerely,
Sarah Gillies, Board Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Thank you to our amazing team for the work you do to support survivors in our community everyday.

This past year continued as the previous one, still in the pandemic, it was more of the same. Lockdowns and covid mandates continued and finally the vaccine rollout began. This brought hope to a return to more "normal" life.

In previous years, I would reflect on the year and acknowledge our accomplishments and challenges. However, this year my report will be an expression of gratitude for those who worked tirelessly throughout the past two plus years to ensure our safety and the continuation of our services. For those who supported us in immeasurable ways that gave us the strength to continue. A thank you letter of sorts to everyone who helped us along the way during these unprecedented times.

I want to acknowledge all the support that Guelph-Wellington Dufferin Public Health gave to us throughout the pandemic. They were our hotline for everything covid related. They guided us to make the best decisions possible in keeping all clients and staff safe. Thank you for all your help.

To all our funders who stepped up in ways I thought was never possible. The covid relief dollars locally, provincially and federally made such a difference to our ability to keep operating without having to worry about fundraising which was almost impossible with all the restrictions.

To our community, supporters and donors, you were the brightest light in what was the most difficult chapter of our herstory. Your kindness and generosity was overwhelming at times, you helped in ways I cannot even begin to describe. Thank you for lifting our spirits and helping us through it.

To our staff for your flexibility, adaptability and patience as we navigated the ever-changing landscape. Your diligence, patience and compassion made this all possible. Our services continued throughout the pandemic even though at times they were unrecognizable. We did everything we could to keep the clients supported and each other safe. Thank you for constantly rising to challenges that the past two years brought.

To our Board of Directors who while navigating their own challenges during the pandemic, continued to give of their time and expertise to support us. Thank you for your unwavering support and help, I could not have done it without you.

To our clients, thank you for your patience as we navigated these challenging times. I know our services did not always look the same, but your safety and support was always and continues to be our number one priority.

And finally, notable mention goes out to Pluto and her mom Nancie. Pluto, the poochie that became an internet sensation with her fabulous videos that united the world throughout the pandemic. Those videos kept me sane and reminded me constantly that we can do hard things and collectively we will get through it. Sadly, Pluto crossed over to the Rainbow Bridge this year but the impact she had on the world and me personally was extraordinary.

In February, we marked our 45th anniversary. We hope in the coming year we can finally come together to acknowledge this milestone, until then, thank you for all your work and support. Stay safe and be kind to one another, we are not through the pandemic yet and if we have learned anything during this time, it is that we need each other and together we are stronger and make each other's lives better. To quote Pluto, heads high, hearts open!

With gratitude and respect,
Sly Castaldi, Executive Director

PROGRAM REPORTS

Marianne's Place (MP)

Residents served: 74 Women and 47 Children

During our second year of providing service during a pandemic, we faced the new challenge of pandemic burnout. The ongoing changes to prevention measure guidelines was very challenging, especially when community protocols did not match congregate setting protocols. The impact effected both the residents and the staff. The pandemic had made shelter life very isolating, there were no more casual connections or communal spaces, and everything was very structured and formal. This ongoing departure from the shelter model of communal engagement had a profound effect on everyone. As measures began lifting, we were able to spend more time together yet separate. We introduced communal dining and were able to provide some programming and group activities. We were able to play with children, hold babies and listen to the young ones running around. All of this was welcomed.

The lifting of measures also meant that staff meetings could occur in person. This was a very positive shift for all involved. Despite all the activities and opportunities to connect virtually, the use of on-line engagement had lost any initial charm and was now becoming a deterrent for participation. This constant on-line presence amplified the feeling of isolation for many.

During this past year we were able to install a number of items to improve the shelter living space. We were able to create three new private bathrooms for residents, allowing us to increase our capacity by three more families and still maintain Covid prevention protocols. We created an exercise room in the shelter, as gyms remained closed for a very long time. We were successful in a grant, which allowed us to have a new playground and play panels installed in the backyard. We installed a new back up generator that starts automatically when there is a power outage. We installed air exchange systems on all the furnaces and have air purifiers throughout the shelter.

Finally, we were able to bring in additional staffing to support the children and youth around substance use and mental health struggles.

We continue to look at new ways to support and engage resident and staff, as we enter the third year of the pandemic.

Christine Wilson, Shelter Program Manager

Rural Women's Support Program (RWSP)

RWSP provided 2,211.08 hours of direct service to 226 women during this review period.

This year counsellors continued to provide phone, Zoom and in-person appointments in order to meet client's individual needs. We continued to offer some group support via online workshops with a hope to return to in-person groups this year. Counsellors used creativity and thoughtfulness when addressing themes across our client caseloads such as; lack of affordable housing, long waits for subsidized housing, decrease in access to emergency shelters, long waitlists for mental health supports, and increased gas and food costs affecting Guelph-Wellington families. Counsellors continue to provide thorough and thoughtful safety plans for women in-person, virtually and over the phone. We provided 100 gift cards and received 77 other practical assistance requests to help meet client's basic needs.

We collaborated with community partners to ensure the best support for our clients.

The Rural Women's Support Program continues to write and have articles published in the county newspapers and magazines. We participate in interviews, created PSAs via local radio, newspapers and social media in order to stay visible and connected to our community.

Jacinta Cassidy, Rural Women's Support Program Manager

Family Court Support Program (FCSP)

The Family Court Support Program demands increased by 21% from the previous year, with 237 clients receiving support, largely from one staff. Due to the generosity of the Johnson Foundation, the program was able to hire a temporary contract position to assist the single staff of this program for part of the year with the volume of client need. Along with the pandemic and changes to the Divorce Act resulted in a significant backlog in the courts. Our program continued to assist clients navigate the blinding paperwork, work in conjunction with lawyers, accompaniments to court, either virtually or in person, and attend case conferences and mediations. As with other programs, financial instability affected FCSP clients which resulted in the program providing 63 practical assistance supports in the form of gift cards and donated personal items.

"…*they gave me back my dignity and helped me feel that I DID matter. I would have never been able to do this on my own. My daughter got to see that women are important and watch me fight for my rights. All she had witnessed up until now was violence and now she gets to see a strong, happy Mom who fought for her. Thank you for helping me find my voice again*"

Jennifer Davies, Manager of THSP / SAC /FCSP / HT

Volunteer Services and Crisis Line

The 24-hour Crisis Line answered 3,077 calls and provided 557.56 hours of support to callers.

With our Volunteer Program on hold due to Covid, our volunteer hours are lower than normal. Volunteers provided 1,003 hours of volunteer service during this review period.

We are so grateful for all of our volunteers and we were very thankful to continue to utilize volunteer support in some ways over the year. Volunteers were able to support some of our events like December 6th and Take Back the Night, as well as provide some administrative support when needed. We are slowly integrating volunteers back into our spaces. We look forward to increasing volunteer opportunities in the future.

Here is a quote from one dedicated volunteer who was able to provide some support this year;

"As a long-time Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis volunteer, it has been an incredibly humbling and valuable learning experience. This opportunity has allowed me to appreciate and understand the complexity of situations that people go through in their lives and how courageously they deal with them.

The level of support and services provided by the agency's staff and volunteers are exceptional. Their efforts are highly appreciated and do not go unnoticed in the community" – Anu

Jacinta Cassidy, Crisis Line Manager & Volunteer Coordinator

Sexual Assault Centre (SAC)

The Sexual Assault Centre supported 70 clients this past service year, despite being single staffed for most of the that year. Upon hiring a second full time counsellor late February, we were thrilled to be able to completely clear out waitlist. A project that had been years in the making, was finally completed with the creation of an experiential, interactive "Supporting our Healing" workbook for SAC clients that could be accessed either electronically or through hard copy. This inclusive tool provides invaluable resources that can be used in conjunction with their individual therapy. Groups were also well attended. Although we look forward to welcoming back in person groups, we will continue to offer an online option as it was so well received.

Survivors pursuing justice for their sexual trauma were faced with long delays, heartbreaking outcomes and unjust scrutiny. In recognizing the insights and recommendations that have come from courageous movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter and the global mourning of the 215+ Indigenous residential school children who have been murdered, SAC has made the commitment (along with the entire agency) to "learn and unlearn" practices that have prevented marginalized and racialized communities from receiving support. We partnered with the University of Guleph in "You Will Be Heard—Black Women's Experience with Support after Sexual Violence." Survivors were interviewed in order to provide real life experience and recommendations regarding the challenges and barriers for women of colour accessing Sexual Violence Support. We have already started to embed their invaluable feedback. SAC clients were not exempt from the increased financial constraints of the last year. Counsellors provided 12 emergency gift cards and 14 units of practical support from our donation room.

Jennifer Davies, Manager of THSP / SAC /FCSP / HT

Transitional Housing and Support Program (THSP)

The Transitional Housing and Support Program supported 342 clients this year. Despite the ongoing pandemic challenges and Covid fatigue, our staff were tenacious in finding ways to provide wrap around support for our clients. Our in person appointments began to rise when things started to open up in the Province, however we continued to meet the demands through Zoom and phone as well. Due to the housing crisis, the substantial decrease in available emergency shelter and backlogs in various community supports such as the courts and mental health and addiction supports, we needed to deliver a multifaceted service that included advocacy, emotional support and safety planning along with practical support. THSP helped to connect clients with the SEED Program, foodbanks and other community food initiatives. Additionally, 149 gift cards were distributed to help supplement these endeavours. Our donation room was utilized 118 times by THSP clients, as well as 107 practical assistance requests. We were able to offer several groups and workshops online with an overwhelming response from the community. As one client eloquently stated "Despite Covid, WIC never wavered, never gave up, never closed down, never stopped. My kids and I owe our lives, literally, to them."

Jennifer Davies, Manager of THSP / SAC /FCSP / HT

Anti-Human Trafficking Program (HT)

Human Trafficking is reaching epidemic proportions and our community has committed to respond. Our Anti-Human Trafficking Program provided 70 clients with support, who were currently or had been experiencing sex trafficking.

Often there is a very short window of opportunity for a person to escape the "game" given the significant controls trafficker have on their "commodities". The housing crisis and emergency shelter limitations have provided an impossible task of trying to find somewhere safe for a person to go. Due to the limitations and restrictions imposed on shelters, beds have been kept for the extreme demand within the shelters geographic area, which prevented victims of trafficking, little to no options given the transient nature of the abuse. They cannot go back to their geographic area.

Mental health and addiction crisis, suicidality, lack of supports, financial crisis and unemployment, safety planning for abusive situations and self-harm, lack of food and personal products, isolation and lack of access to technology are just some of the daily crisis being supported. As with other programs, financial instability greatly affected AHTP clients, where 263 practical assistance supports in the form of gift cards, donated personal items, Naloxone kits, cellphones, cab fares and household items were provided.

Jennifer Davies, Manager of THSP / SAC /FCSP / HT

Fundraising

Thank you to all our donors, supporters and friends.
We could not do this without you!

Public Education

136 educational events, workshops and trainings
2,095 participants in educational sessions and events

While the pandemic posed challenges to the Public Education Program, we were able to harness our newly strengthened relationship with our online community to grow our social media following by thousands of followers and reach new audiences through consistent virtual events and workshops.

Throughout the year we have grown our relationships with new community partners leading to some exciting collaborations such as developing an educational series for Ontario breweries, bars and restaurants and the creation of Anti-Human Trafficking curriculum for the Upper Grand District School Board.

As pandemic restrictions have eased, we have gotten back into in-person programming and events for our December 6th Vigil, International Women's Day and a Community Celebration of Survivorship as part of Sexual Violence Prevention Month in May.

Upcoming Events:

June: Pride Month and Indigenous History Month
September: Take Back the Night (Date TBD)
November: Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence
December 6th: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Jensen Williams, Public Educator

Staff & Volunteer Years of Service

5 YEARS - Holli Lawrence

10 YEARS - Tanya Benham

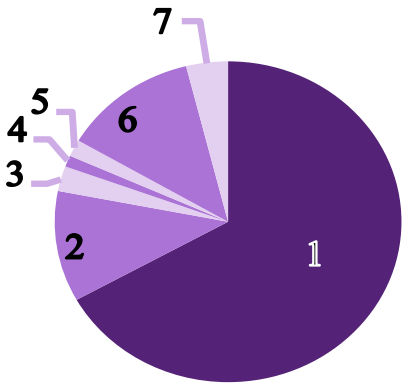
15 YEARS - Jacinta Cassidy & Jennifer Bailey

25 YEARS - Teresa Preski

Financial Report

Revenues 2021/2022

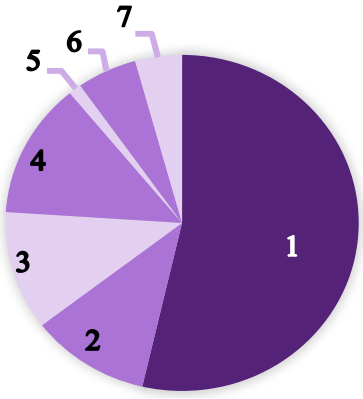
$3,943,537



1. Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services	$2,638,546
2. Ministry of the Attorney General	440,590
3. Wellington County Social Services	99,507
4. Special Projects	44,914
5. United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin	66,897
6. Donations/Fundraising	499,419
7. Other	153,664

Expenditures 2021/2022

$3,415,247



1. Shelter, Crisis Line and Volunteer Program	$1,831,141
2. Transitional & Housing Support Program	374,504
3. Rural Women's Support Program	391,057
4. Sexual Assault Centre & Family Court Support Program	444,588
5. Special Projects	39,857
6. Administration	187,855
7. Capital	146,245

A complete set of audited statements is available upon request by calling 519-836-1110 ext 224.

Contact

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Twitter: @gwwic

Instagram: @gwwic

Guelph Wellington Women in Crisis

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SLATE FOR 2022-2023

Standing for Election for First Year of Third Term:

Kaitlyn Armstrong is an Associate Lawyer in the Family Law Practice Group at SV Law. Kaitlyn holds a Juris Doctor, a Master of Arts in Political Science, and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario. While attending law school, Kaitlyn was an Executive Member of the Student Legal Society, Co-Chair of the Community Outreach Committee and a Caseworker at Community Legal Services. After returning to Guelph, Kaitlyn joined the Have a Heart for Kids' Sake Gala Committee and the United Way GenNext Committee. Guelph is Kaitlyn's hometown and she is happy to live, work and support positive change in the community.

Returning to Complete Second Year of Second Term:

Kate Parizeau is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph. She studies "The Social Life of Waste," and leads research projects investigating food waste, informal recycling, and waste management policy and planning. Kate is a community-engaged scholar, and is committed to conducting research that fosters social and environmental justice. Themes in her work include urban inequality, environmental justice, and feminist geographies. As an educator, she also researches and advocates for the mental health concerns of students in higher education. Kate has previous volunteer experience with organizations that seek to eliminate gender-based violence, including The Redwood (Toronto) and PACE Society (Vancouver).

Heather Lane is the Executive Director at the Ontario Universities' Application Centre, after a long career in student affairs at three Ontario universities, including the University of Guelph. She has served as President of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services and has extensive experience in the management of programs, services, facilities, finances and human resources. Heather most recently served as the Vice Provost, Students at Ryerson University where in addition to managing a large portfolio of administrative units, she wrote, and was responsible for implementation of, the university's Sexual violence policy, after extensive consultation with campus stakeholders in its development. Over the course of her career, Heather had the opportunity to build supports and services for, and work directly with, vulnerable students struggling to better their lives through education, while managing all manner of personal, systemic and financial barriers and crises. Before leaving Ryerson, she was presented with the President's Blue and Gold Award of Staff Excellence.

Nanita Mohan is a lecturer with the Department of Political Science at University of Guelph and University of Guelph-Humber. Her courses focus on Canadian politics and Canadian public administration. Nanita was a volunteer and an Executive Board member for 10 years with the Guelph and District Multicultural Festival and is currently serving as a board member with Rotary Guelph. Her volunteer experience extends beyond Canada including working with underprivileged women, rural women's empowerment projects, and gender-based health care programs in Malaysia and India. She has also organized and coordinated global book drives for underprivileged schools in India and plans to continue with a similar program in Africa.

Standing for Election for First Year of Second Term:

Karina McInnis is a relative newcomer to the Guelph community having moved to the region in 2018 from Kingston, Ontario. While in living in Kingston, she had the honour and privilege of serving as a board member on the Sexual Assault Centre Kingston for four years, during which time she served as Treasurer and Vice-Chair. She joined the Women in Crisis (WIC) Board in January 2020 and is delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to the critically important services WIC provides in the region. During the daytime, Karina is the Associate Vice-President (Research Services) at the University of Guelph, where she leads a team of 30 research administrators who assist the research community in achieving success in their research programs. Prior to joining the University of Guelph, she started her research administration career at Queen's University and held various leadership roles. She received her undergraduate degree in Geological Engineering and Masters in Public Administration from Queen's University and is a registered Professional Engineer in Ontario.

Amy Atkinson is passionate about philanthropy and the role it plays in conversations both around the dinner table, and the corporate board room. Philanthropy is about possibilities and the change it brings. With over 16 years of experiences in multiple areas of revenue development, Amy has had the opportunity to work from the field level up to her current position as Director, Major Gift Advancement for the University of Guelph. This has given her the opportunity to understand the role fundraising plays in local, provincial, National, and Global landscapes. She feels right at home working for the University and volunteering within the community she was born and raised. It is her privilege to facilitate giving locally.

Standing for Election for First Year of Second Term:

Leah Levac is a mother, dog-lover, and outdoor enthusiast. By training and passion, she is a community engaged scholar who seeks opportunities to create research collaborations aimed at addressing complex social problems and highlighting women's and communities' capacities and knowledges. Leah is an Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Guelph, where she has been a faculty member since 2013. She is also a member of the Faculty Advisory Board of the university's Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI). Her research collaborations focus on intersections between wellbeing, community change, and public engagement – particularly for northern settler and Indigenous women and young women – and the framing and development of public policy. She also serves on the Board of the Community Research Ethics Office in Kitchener, ON. Her past experiences include working with youth-serving organizations both as a board member and senior staff person, including Chrysalis House for young women (Fredericton, NB), Partners for Youth (Fredericton, NB), and the YM/YWCA (Victoria, BC), and serving as a City Councillor (Fredericton, NB).

Standing for Election for First Year of First Term:

Cristina Tomaino is a labour and employment lawyer at SV Law. She holds a Juris Doctor from Western University and an Honours Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto. In her practice, Cristina provides employers, including not-for-profit organizations, with strategic guidance in navigating complex issues including workplace harassment, violence, and discrimination. During law school, Cristina served as the Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Western Journal of Legal Studies and as a student editor for the Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence. Upon graduation, Cristina was awarded the J.S.D. Tory Writing Prize for her research into the gendered nature of precarious work in Canada which she also presented at Queen's University for the 2018 Feminist Legal Studies International Women's Day Conference. In her spare time, Cristina enjoys hiking, exploring local coffee shops, and watercolour painting.

Jessica Genusso is a licensed paralegal currently working for Dolden Wallace Folick LLP, a national litigation firm with expertise in insurance law. Jessica's focus is in Small Claims Court matters. Jessica has previously volunteered with the John Howard Society of Waterloo Wellington as a member of the Youth Justice Committee. Born and raised in Wellington County, Jessica is looking forward to being involved in such a well-known, community-based organization and contributing to providing services to women and children in her community. Outside of work, Jessica spends most of her time with family and friends. She enjoys being outdoors, being active, listening to music and exploring new places .

Members Leaving the Board:

Sarah Gillies
Vanessa Miller
Sylvia Gawad
Alana Aird