

sonscene

sonshine community services newsletter

SPRING 2009



Stories of Hope

no longer alone

Behind each client at the Sonshine Centre there is a past filled with violence, loneliness and loss of hope. Yet thanks to our generous supporters and dedicated staff and volunteers, these clients' stories don't end there. Lori,* one of our current residents, shares how Sonshine is helping reshape her life's story.

**"I don't have
enough words
to say how
very thankful
I am to
Sonshine"**

"Thanks to the security, surveillance cameras, and safety plans put in place for us, I feel very safe at Sonshine. I feel supported by my counselor, and no longer feel alone. Being at Sonshine has given me the opportunity to make friends and gain confidence, freedom and strength. I'm learning to enjoy life with my daughter. I'm grateful for the new skills I have been able to learn and the community



resources I am becoming aware of through the help of Sonshine. My daughter is now able to make eye contact with others, is very happy and able to have fun. She is doing so well in school and has been able to be focused on studying and has become more responsible with her studies." In addition to the programs at Sonshine, Lori has been given the opportunity to have a volunteer mentor her. She has become very fond of her mentor and considers her a friend she can trust. "I now know I can make it and build a better future for my daughter and I," Lori tells us. "I don't have enough words to say how very thankful I am to Sonshine."

From despair to hope, shame to confidence, dozens of women like Lori are finding a beautiful new chapter unfolding in their life's story at Sonshine.

* Name has been changed

Thanking Our Donors Centre Street Church

Centre Street Church has been part of the Calgary community for over fifty years. As one of the largest faith communities in Calgary, Centre Street Church is committed to using its financial resources and large volunteer pool to help the most vulnerable people in our city. They are a generous supporter of numerous charities in Calgary, including Sonshine. As a long-standing partner of Sonshine, Centre Street Church has made significant annual contributions to the Sonshine Centre, sponsored Sonshine's Gala for the past two years and provided Christmas gifts for our clients through their Christmas gift-drive. In addition, Centre Street's members are active in various volunteer roles at the Sonshine Centre including administration and mentorship. Thank you Centre Street Church for your investment in Sonshine!

Pop Stars bring domestic violence to the spotlight

The picture of a victim of domestic violence that we have consciously or unconsciously stored in our minds is rarely the image of a beautiful, talented and wealthy pop star. Yet as authorities charged pop idol Chris Brown with felony counts of “assault and making criminal threats” to his famous girlfriend, pop star Rihanna, the world quickly realized that domestic violence permeates every socio-economic group and is more common than most would like to think. Half of Canadian women (51%) have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of sixteen.¹

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With details and pictures of Rihanna’s injuries making headlines, many high-profile television shows like Oprah and Larry King Live are giving air time to the issue of domestic violence. Robin Givens, actress and ex-wife of former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, appeared on Larry King Live to talk about domestic violence. Givens survived abuse at the hands of Tyson when they were married, and today she advocates for domestic violence victims as the spokesperson for National Domestic Violence Hotline. “I’ve spoken to women every[where]...” Givens said, “and what’s amazing is that I find that my story is their story; their story is my story - down to the details.”



Although celebrity stories like Givens’ and Rihanna’s are heartbreaking, they present an opportunity for heightened awareness about the tragic pervasiveness of domestic abuse. They also present an opportunity for victims to learn that they are not alone in their plight. If this can happen to the rich, beautiful and talented Rihanna, it can happen to anyone. We at Sonshine hope that this heightened publicity will empower victims of domestic abuse to give up their belief that something is wrong with them, and to realize that they need not endure such treatment. The Sonshine Centre brings hope to dozens of victims of domestic violence each year. Our one-year residential and counseling program helps women and children regain dignity and hope, and equips them for a future free of domestic violence.

¹ Statistics Canada, *The Violence Against Women Survey*, The Daily, November 18, 1993. (Cited on Canadian Women’s Foundation website, *Facts about Violence Against Women*, http://www.cdnwomen.org/EN/section05/3_5_1_1-violence_facts.html.)

program highlight

Community Outreach and Support

In the Fall of 2008, Sonshine enhanced its services to the community with the introduction of a domestic violence outreach program. The new service offers professional support to women in the community who are struggling with domestic violence. These women may be referred to us by churches and other community agencies; others find us on their own, perhaps after picking up a brochure somewhere in the community. Sonshine’s new Outreach/Support Counselor gives us more insight into the program. “It starts with a phone call,” she says. “For safety reasons, many times clients request that they only be contacted at certain times. Many of the clients that access the service have come to realize that what has been happening to them is not right. They come looking for a safe way out and the right resources to help them in their transition. They may not be seeking a residential program and yet they appreciate the reassurance that someone is there to help give them support and accountability as they make some difficult choices.” Our Outreach/Support Counselor helps clients find the practical resources they need, and also offers emotional support. “Domestic violence is a very traumatic and paralyzing experience for an individual,” she says. “I hope to be a supportive voice of hope - to help women with safety planning, provide validation, and keep them accountable for the goals they set, so in the end they can live more confident and healthier lives.”

Innovation in Child Care

Sonshine's new day care campaign

Domestic violence never brings easy transitions. Within a matter of just a few hours, frightened victims find themselves facing the reality of having to find a new home, job, school and daycare. With this in mind, Sonshine Community Services is excited to be developing a new vision for an on-site daycare. The new service will provide quality child care for the children at the Sonshine Centre and the surrounding community, as well as additional therapeutic support related to domestic violence and trauma not found in standard daycares. It is our hope that this on-site daycare will allow for a seamless integration of the children at the Sonshine Centre with those in their peer group. For mothers working to gain financial independence via a new job or additional education, the need for accessible and affordable childcare is critical. For mothers who do not have a vehicle, the provision of an on-site daycare will allow them to experience less pressure so they can make more progress in their healing process. We desire to complete this project without any capital debt, and need your help! There are several ways that you can join with us in this new endeavour:

- Volunteer construction opportunities – painting; framing; drywall, cabinet/countertop installation, etc.
- Financial Support – donations toward capital expenses or goods such as paint, drywall, flooring, etc.
- In-Kind donations – daycare equipment and furniture; professional plumbing, electrical or flooring services.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, call Tania Evans at 403.705.3485.

Gala Success

evening celebrates 30 years of giving hope

“30 Years of Giving Hope” was the theme of Sonshine’s 4th Annual Gala and Auction. \$109,000 was raised in benefit of the Sonshine Centre, marking Sonshine’s most successful gala to-date. As part of the event, previous clients of the Sonshine Centre shared stories of their harrowing experiences with domestic abuse. Some details of their stories were very difficult to hear; yet for all who were there, the cause they were supporting suddenly had a very real face. Event sponsors included Conoco Phillips, Centre Street Church, Investors Group, 360 Financial Services, and Pembina Pipeline. Staff Sergeant Rosemary Hawkins from the Calgary Police Service’s Domestic Conflict Unit, Calgary Alderman Joe Connelly and the Honourable Alana DeLong, MLA for Calgary Bow, were among the guests. They brought greetings on behalf of the City and Province, as well as their sincere gratitude for Sonshine’s service to Calgary over the past 30 years. The tears and excitement came to a climax when representatives from the Canadian Progress Club City Centre presented Sonshine with a surprise \$50,000 donation. Thank you to everyone who helped make the gala a huge success!



Save the Date for Sonshine’s 5th Annual Gala!

November 12, 2009

Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre

Christmas at Sonshine

generosity abounding

December brings many wonderful surprises for the women and children at the Sonshine Centre. We marvel each year at the generosity of our community. Here are a few highlights:

- Our staff watched with wide eyes as a dozen or more employees from Conoco Phillips arrived with two moving-trucks filled with Christmas hampers for the residents of Sonshine.
- South Calgary Community Church delivered Christmas food hampers for our clients to ensure that each family would enjoy a lovely Christmas dinner.
- Ambrose University students donated gifts for the children at Sonshine to choose, wrap, and give to their moms at Christmas. The children chose and wrapped their gifts during their Christmas party.

Thank you to these and all the other groups and individuals who gave to Sonshine this Christmas! Your generosity helped make this a very merry Christmas for many women whose year has been filled with many struggles and challenges.

Volunteer Highlight

Irene
and Harry
Simmelink



Irene and Harry Simmelink have been volunteering at Sonshine since its inception 30 years ago, and there are not many volunteer roles this generous couple has not filled. The Simmelinks children and grandchildren have also been a part of the volunteer support of Sonshine. "You have to teach children at a young age the value of volunteering," says Irene, whose most recent volunteer role involves coordinating a program called Blessingdales. As the Blessingdales coordinators, the couple recruits and delivers fresh food and non-perishable foods for the Sonshine Centre residents. Fresh bread arrives once a week from Glamorgan Bakery thanks to the Simmelinks as well. Having fresh produce and perishables brought in every week helps to ease the financial stress that many of the woman at Sonshine face, especially for clients who are struggling to provide basic necessities for their families and lack the transportation to get to the food bank. Irene and Harry's consistency and positive attitude make them valuable contributors to Sonshine. If you are interested in joining our amazing group of volunteers, contact our Volunteer Coordinator Terry-Mae Hepburn at 403.243.0274 or by email at thepburn@sonshine.ab.ca.

Become a Partner in Hope

join our monthly giving program

Did you know that you can conveniently offer monthly support to Sonshine? Whether it's \$10 or \$100 a month, your support will help provide a reliable flow of support to Sonshine as we continue to help women and children rebuild their lives and find hope in a future free of domestic violence. Donations are conveniently deducted from your credit card or bank account each month, and you can choose to have the funds assigned to the general fund or to a specific program. Join today by calling Jacque Shand at 403.214.2611.

Sonshine Centre Wish List

In-kind donations are an easy and practical way for you to support the Sonshine Centre. Shopping for these items with your family is a simple way for an entire family to be involved in helping women and children in need. Sonshine Centre is currently in need of the following items:

- Broom and Dust Pan- 24
- Mop and Bucket -24
- Vacuum -10 (gently used is ok)
- Dish Drying Rack-10
- Portable Fan- 4
- Bed Pillow – 10
- Bus Tickets – Unlimited
- Safeway Gift Card (\$25 denominations) - Unlimited
- Coffee Shop Gift Card- Unlimited
- Personal First Aid Kit- 24
- 13 Watt Compact Fluorescent Bulb - 25



Please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Terry-Mae Hepburn at 403.243.0274 if you would like to contribute one or more of these items.

Sonshine Community Services is a community supported social service agency. We rely on the financial support of numerous groups and individuals who share our passion for delivering quality services to those in need. We welcome your tax-deductible donation.



Give Online
Sonshine.ab.ca



Give by Phone
403.243.2002



Give by Mail
P.O. Box 34067 RPO Westbrook
Calgary, AB T3C 3W2

The Sonscene is published by The Sonshine Society of Christian Community Services, a registered charitable organization, Registered Charity Business # 119156412RR001. The Society's mission is to effectively deliver services from a Christian perspective that support the development of healthy individuals and families, assist in the building of respectful relationships, and respond to the need of those experiencing family violence and abuse. The Society is incorporated under the Societies Act (Alberta). Sonshine expects to fundraise \$1,013,430 in 2009 at the cost of 7.4% of these funds. The funds will be used for program delivery and operating expenses. Spending of funds is confined to board approved programs and purchases. Each gift designated toward an approved program will be used as designated. Gifts are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes. For further information, please contact Tania Evans, Resource Development Manager or Geri Karsten, Acting Executive Director at 403.243.2002.