

sonscene

sonshine community services newsletter

FALL 2009



Keeping Women Alive

research validates danger confronting women fleeing domestic violence, calls for more second-stage shelters

"My dad is going to kill me," three year old Alex Fekete told local emergency shelter workers. Shelter staff fought to intervene and seek support from the police and the Children's Services Authority; however, all this proved to be futile. Authorities did not take Betty Fekete's claims seriously regarding the danger her husband presented to herself and her son. And so, as the three year old predicted, his father Josif Fekete did kill him one day after a court-ordered visit. He killed Betty too before committing suicide.

Numerous legal inquiries in Canada have affirmed that domestic homicide is predictable and preventable;¹

however,

as the Fekete's story

illustrates, victims have found that their claims are not credible enough to convince authorities to provide them better protection.

In view of preventable tragedies like this, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) set out to develop a standardized danger assessment tool to measure the level of danger women face in abusive relationships. This information can be used by shelters to communicate women's risk of danger with authorities and community stakeholders. The purpose: ensuring effective safety planning and legal interventions take place.

Sonshine was part of an extended research study that examined the utilization of a danger assessment tool in Alberta shelters. The tool was designed by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell of John Hopkins University. The study's results were released this summer in the ACWS report *Keeping Women Alive - Assessing the Danger* and prove that the danger assessment tool significantly contributes to women's safety in that it helps them estimate risk more realistically and better understand the need for safety



Thank You Maple Reinders

Sonshine would like to thank Maple Reinders for their continued support. Your generosity enables Sonshine to continue providing life-saving services to those in need. Maple Reinders is a 100% Canadian and family owned corporation with over 40 years experience in the construction industry. They specialize in commercial construction, program and construction management, waste management and building services. Visit them at maple.ca.

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>> News Bytes

Welcome back Joy

sonshine's executive director returns from maternity leave

Sonshine is excited to welcome back Joy Johnson-Green, as she resumes her role as Executive Director following her maternity leave. Joy and her husband welcomed the apple of their eye, a beautiful baby girl named Jette, to the world on October 4, 2008. Congratulations Joy!



Calgary Police Releases 2008 Domestic Violence Stats

This June Calgary Police released its annual statistical report on person and property crime, which included some shocking statistics about the pervasiveness of domestic violence in our city: In 2008, 21% of homicides and 37% of all assaults were domestic violence related.


Check out our new website


Sonshine has a new website! You can find it at the same address – sonshine.ab.ca. Stay up to date with our new “news flash” section, and don't forget to also visit our virtual donor wall. A big thank you to Ron Strand from Strateo Consulting for helping us build the site.



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

Sonshine Community Services is a registered Canadian charitable organization, Registered Charity Business # 119156412RR0001. Our 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 needs of those experiencing family violence and abuse. We are incorporated under the Societies Act (Alberta). Sonshine expects to fundraise \$1,013,430 in 2009 at the cost of 7.4% of these funds. Gifts are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes. For further information, please contact Tania Evans, Resource Development Manager at 403.705.3485.

Family Day Homes

a great daycare alternative

Did you know that Sonshine has been operating quality family day homes for 23 years? In fact, Sonshine Family Day Homes was the first accredited Family Day Home Agency in the Calgary region. Day homes offer a great childcare option for families looking for a daycare alternative. So what exactly is a family day home? A family day home is a childcare service in which professional caregivers provide childcare in their own home. Sonshine's family day homes are regularly monitored by agency staff, and each day home provider has at least a minimum level 1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) within the first six months of starting. Advantages of family day homes over traditional day care settings include:

- Locations throughout the city – choose a day home near you
- Government subsidies available for qualifying families
- Comfortable home setting
- Siblings can remain together
- Fewer children - usually results in fewer illnesses
- More individual attention to each child
- Programs are more adaptable to each child's needs
- Accredited agency approves and monitors day homes
- Flexible hours of care for children 0-12



Sonshine's family day homes meet accreditation standards in health, safety, nutrition, early learning and care programming. If you are considering an alternative to daycare for your children, our childcare experts would love to talk to you. Call us today at 403.705.3476.

hope gala

Annual Fundraising Dinner and Auction

Thursday, November 12, 2009
Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre
Cocktail Reception - 5:30
Dinner - 7:00

Join Emcee Darrel Janz for an evening of food, live jazz by Absalom Trio and entertainment by Toe Tappin' Swing Performance Team. Start your Christmas shopping at our fabulous silent and live auctions! 100% of proceeds will be directed to providing safe housing and supportive services to women and children fleeing domestic violence.

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Hope after sexual abuse

community counseling
launching new
support group

It is not surprising that many of our clients at Sonshine Community Counseling have a history of sexual abuse. Research demonstrates significant relationships “between the experience of child sexual abuse and subsequent depression, lowered self-esteem, and psychological symptomatology including anxiety related problems, personality disorders, suicidal behaviours, psychiatric illness and dissociative disorders”¹

With this in mind, Sonshine Community Counseling is excited to launch a new support group for women who have experienced sexual abuse. “We are not aware of any support groups in Calgary dealing with this sensitive issue from a Christian perspective. It’s our desire to provide a safe meeting place for women who have been impacted by sexual abuse, and to lead them on a journey of hope and healing through God’s love,” says Vicky Poppe, who along with Barbara Lockhart will co-lead this group.

The group will be using a new counseling curriculum called *In the Wildflowers*, pioneered last year in the the United States. Through professional guidance and understanding, group members are walked through an eleven week psychoeducational curriculum in a safe and caring environment. Participants will receive individual counseling either at Sonshine or from another counselor of their choice in addition to attending this eleven-session group. If you would like more information about this group, please contact Vicky at 403.705.3474

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planning. The study also found that more women at second-stage shelters like Sonshine were at higher risk for injury and homicide than women at emergency shelters. Second-stage residents were more likely to report that their partner had used a weapon, and the weapon used was more frequently reported to be a gun. These women were also more likely to say that they believed their partner is capable of killing them.

The study recommends improving access to second-stage shelters, which allow women to remain safely housed while building new futures. Research suggests that communities should have three second-stage beds for every emergency bed.² This is a wake-up call to Alberta which only has 124 second-stage apartments and 730 emergency beds.³ In an interview with the Calgary Herald, Sonshine’s Executive Director Joy Johnson-Green stated that lack of funding was the key reason for the provinces inadequate second-stage capacity. “Emergency shelters receive core [government] funding,” said Joy. “Second-stage shelters rely on donations and fundraising.” Sonshine hopes that this study will encourage the government to provide core funding to second-stage shelters and that the danger assessment tool will provide women affected by domestic violence a stronger voice as they seek help from authorities. To view the full report, visit www.acws.ca.

1 Reimer, Jan and Woodman, Kate. (2005). Canada’s Death Penalty: the ugly truth of domestic homicide. RESOLVE news [Online]. Volume 7 Number 3. Available: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/newsletter/volume%207/vol7%5B3%5D.05.pdf> [2009, September 10.]

2 Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters (2008). Second Stage Shelters: Closing the Gap. [Online]. Available at: <http://acws.ca/documents/secondstageshelterstoolkitjuly292008final.pdf> [2009, September 11].

3 Ibid.

**Christmas gifts with impact
make a donation in honour
of a loved one this holiday season**

Don't know what to get your family and friends this Christmas? Consider making a donation to Sonshine in their honour. We will send them a Christmas card to notify them that women and children at Sonshine are being supported in their honour. Who knew Christmas shopping could be this easy and rewarding!

¹ The Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres. Children and Sexual Assault/Abuse Fact Sheet. Available at <http://www.aasac.ca/txt-fact-children-sexual-assault-abuse.htm>. [21 September 2009]

Volunteer Highlight

Lorraine Vandrunen

Lorraine Vandrunen is one of Sonshine's most treasured volunteers. Giving of her time selflessly, Lorraine assists with mail outs, storage room sorting, suite cleaning and inspections, volunteer fairs, and more. Additionally, Lorraine regularly provides loving care to the children at Sonshine who affectionately know her as Grandma Rainy. Lorraine's flexibility and positive attitude lift all our spirits, and we are so grateful for the countless hours she gives to Sonshine. Thanks Lorraine!



Lorraine (right) with Volunteer Coordinator Terry-Mae in the Children's Play Room

Taking the Next Step

children's services expansion

It is well documented that exposure to domestic violence can have significant negative effects on a child's emotional, social and cognitive development. Witnessing domestic violence is the greatest indicator a child will grow up to become either a victim or perpetrator of domestic violence. At Sonshine Community Services we see the effects of violence on children every day, and we have long desired to do more to address this urgent need in our community. For the first time in thirty years this goal is within our reach, but we need your help!

We have set aside 4,000 square feet of undeveloped space in our facility for specialized counseling rooms, play areas and office space where our staff and volunteers can work with children who have experienced domestic violence or other forms of trauma. We believe our facility will be the first of its kind in Alberta and perhaps even across the country. Initially our services will be made available to the children of our clients. These children need directed professional care and support to help ensure they are able to break free of the effects of family violence. As our program grows, we will expand our scope and welcome children from outside the centre who are referred to us for specialized treatment.

The provincial government has already given us \$60,000 toward this initiative. We have also received various offers of gift-in-kind support, and we are committed to supporting this project through our own revenues.

We invite you to help us take the next step to ending the cycle of domestic violence. There are several ways that you can help:

- 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 – childcare 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.

Stories of Hope

paying it forward

As residents from the Sonshine Centre prepare to move back into the community, they are given an opportunity to reflect on their past year at Sonshine. Kari*, a recent client, writes in her exit reflection: “Sonshine has helped create awareness about abusive situations. I saw myself and others grow and change over time, and I became more confident and less frightened. The counseling sessions were invaluable – I greatly benefited from them.”

Kari tells us that she will fondly remember how comforting it was to feel safe and know there were always counselors around to go to for advice. “I owe a previous resident a big debt for telling me about Sonshine,” Kari tells us. “I will [now] ‘pay it forward.’”

Sonshine thanks all its supporters for allowing women like Kari a chance at a new life free from violence and its tragic effects. “One year seems like a long time, but really it isn’t when you realize how damaged you are and how long it takes to heal,” Kari says. Thank you for giving Kari this year to heal. We truly can’t do this work without you.

* Name has been changed

