

KEY NOTES



North York Women's Centre: Opening Doors for Women

NYWC's 5th Annual Picnic a Success!



This year, the NYWC's Annual Picnic was held on Saturday, June 7th at Earl Bales Park. Despite ominous warnings of heavy rain, it was a beautiful day, and as we have come to expect, the event was a huge success! Throughout the day, over 60 members of the NYWC community (staff, volunteers, members, and group participants) stopped by to enjoy the great food, great conversation, and great fun! This year, many women brought their partners and children, which made the day extra special.

Picnic fun for Tasia, Sarah, and NYWC volunteer Rebecca

A big "Thank You!" to all the volunteers and donors (see *Thank You to our Supporters*, page 4) who helped make the event possible, and congratulations to the two women who won our draw for Ontario Place passes. For all those who could make it, thank you for coming, and for



All those who couldn't, we hope to see you next year!

Lana, Heather and Jessie – Three new additions to the NYWC team!

The True Value of a Penny

Penny Bedford, owner and manager of ***Stychin Tyme***, was always taught to give back. *Stychin Tyme* is a custom tailor and alterations business offering services ranging from fixing buttons to re-making suits. Since starting her own small business on Yonge St. sixteen years ago she has been a great supporter of the North York community. Just walking into *Stychin Tyme*, you can feel the extra effort made to create a 'community feel', such as the treats available for children and their canine friends, as well as signs posted for local events and groups.

Penny has specifically been a supporter of the NYWC for the past three years. Our relationship with *Stychin Tyme* started when Penny was speaking to her doctor about an organization to give her 'donation jar' proceeds to. Rather than charge clients a fee for something small, such as adding a belt hole, she asks them to put a dollar or two into the jar prominently displayed on her front counter. Her doctor suggested that Penny contact the NYWC, and we have been grateful for this word-of-mouth referral ever since! Over the past three years, Penny has been one of our greatest community advocates, from donating through her 'donation jar' and providing Silent Auction items/promotion, to simply spreading awareness about the NYWC and its services.

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Having once been in an abusive relationship herself, as well as having fallen on harder times in the past, Penny says she feels connected to the values of the Centre and the women we serve. The NYWC would like to take this opportunity to thank Penny and *Stychin Tyme* for their generous heart-felt support, and most of all, their core value of giving back to the community!

~ *Maribeth Christensen, NYWC Staff*

NYWC's Community Corner

I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to acknowledge your contribution both as an organization and individually as women. Know that each of you, who so graciously shared your time either as staff, volunteers or women seeking a safe and nurturing space, have given to me more than I could ever repay. After a few years of searching for a place to invest my time and pursue my passion in women's advocacy, I would never have thought that the little modest building on Caribou road, with the then red doors, would be a corner of the world that would leave such tremendous and indelible impression on my heart and person.

Having been a group facilitator at the NYWC for one year now, I can say that no part of me remains unmoved at the end of a group. Being allowed to share in the journey of some of the most courageous women is an honor and a spiritual experience in itself. I am happy to be continuously involved in various functions at the Centre; in addition to facilitating workshops I've also joined the Fund Raising Committee.

I count myself blessed to have shared with such wonderful facilitators and staff, experiences of enormous emotional highs. Sometimes those blissful moments came in sharing a warm conversation, and other times in the satisfaction of knowing that one group session has allowed us to witness the growth, fellowship and empowerment of women. I am forever grateful to the NYWC.

~ *Jessy Abi-Najem, NYWC Volunteer*

Building Community through Outreach

Over the months of June and July, the NYWC participated in several community outreach events to promote the free services and support we offer to women. We were also there to meet and share with other community agencies, because through this type of sharing we can reach more women and improve our communities. Amazingly, I have had the opportunity and privilege to put my energy to good use and represent the NYWC at these creative, exciting and viable ventures, such as **The Multicultural Fair at Oriole Community Centre**, **Hincks-Dellcrest Family Fair**, and **The Volunteer Fair at St. Stephen's Employment and Training Centre**.

The goal of these events was to raise awareness of available programs and services, as well as encourage people to get together and enjoy themselves through family-oriented fun. What I found amazing was the exchange of information that took place between the other agencies and the NYWC. We were right there, in the middle of it all, engaging in building relationships and helping the event participants gain a deeper understanding of the continuous work that is being done on their behalf.

This article would not be complete without a special thank you to Mulu Haddis, NYWC's volunteer coordinator, for giving me the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and expand my knowledge of the social service field.

~ *Jessie André, NYWC Volunteer*

Say it with PRIDE!

North York Women's Centre showed its support to the LGBTTIQQ2S community by once again participating in the Dyke March. The Dyke March took place on Saturday, June 28th as part of Toronto's Pride week. The March was much more than a display of pride, but also a political event that showed a great effort of advocacy for the equality and rights of women and trans ...

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...people of the LGBTTIQQ2S community. As a first time marcher, I felt privileged to be part of an event that brought attention to the fact that there's work that still needs to be done with regards to oppressive structures, discrimination and inequality.

~Kameela Mahadeo, NYWC Summer Student



Kameela, Melissa & Heather @ Dyke March

Melissa's Fond Farewell

It's hard to believe that this will be my last article for the NYWC newsletter. It is with mixed emotions that I leave the Centre at the end of August to continue my education. The past 4 years that I have spent volunteering and working with the NYWC have been nothing short of amazing. I owe the women of the Centre so much for opening their arms to me and giving me the opportunity to be a part of such a remarkable place. Every day I am astounded by the dedication of our staff and volunteers, as well as the strength and courage of the women using our services.

Words cannot express how much I have learned in my time here. As a Volunteer, I witnessed the power that women have to support one another, even when they have come from extremely diverse and equally difficult circumstances. As Program Manager, I had the opportunity to learn directly about the multiple/varying needs and challenges facing women in North York and Toronto. More recently, as Acting Executive Director, I have been able to advocate for the NYWC and the many women who use our services and also experienced how difficult it has become for community based

non-profits to continue to find adequate funding to keep offering vital services.

These are issues that will not disappear when I leave and I know that the NYWC's staff, board, and volunteers will continue to work towards the vision of a world where all doors are open for all women. In September, The NYWC will welcome back Iris Fabbro from her parental leave, to continue leading the NYWC as Executive Director. I know the centre will continue moving forward under her guidance, as it has for the past 10 years.

I promise to not become a stranger to the Centre and hope to see all of the women from the NYWC sometime in the future!

~Melissa Wong, life-time friend of the NYWC

An Important Message to our Supporters

North York Women's Centre places a high value on our relationship with you, our donors and members. Without your support we would not be able to achieve our mission to continue opening doors for women. We thank you for your commitment to us. We believe that transparency and accountability are essential to our success. With this in mind, we have recently joined **Imagine Canada's Ethical Code Program**.

By adhering to ethical and accountability standards, we are complying with generally accepted practices for soliciting and managing donor dollars. This is important because you, our supporters, are entitled to transparency and the greatest impact possible for your investment in the NYWC.

If you have any questions about our adherence to the Ethical Code, please feel free to contact our Executive Director, visit our website or request a copy of our financial statements. You can also download the Ethical Code itself by going to www.imaginecanada.ca.

Thank You to our Supporters

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Community News

The NYWC is undergoing lots of staff changes! Here they are in a nutshell:

Long time staffers, **Melissa Wong** and **Maribeth Christensen** will be leaving the NYWC in August, as will our fabulous summer student, **Kameela Mahadeo**. We wish all three of them well as they pursue their graduate studies in social work. **Iris Fabbro** will be returning as Executive Director in September, and we will be welcoming a new Program Worker at that time.

The NYWC would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our new volunteers: **Patty Anasco, Beth Correa, Sylvia Ejercito, Marisa Florio, Lana Grodzevich, Vanessa Hout, Shravani Jaruhar, Jenelle Joseph, Shanamay O. Kusi, Celeste London, Naomi Mills Smith, Najoula Morris, Nadira Shammi, Heather Skelton, Rehema Vuo, Selma Yearwood and Lian Zhao.**

As always, we have some NYWC baby news! Congratulations to NYWC Director, **Harpreet Thind**, who is currently pregnant with her first child, as well as **Christine Fung**, NYWC facilitator, who is expecting in September, 2008. Also, best wishes to volunteer **Jessie Andre**, whose son recently had her first grandchild: **Moses Benjamin.**

Two of our volunteers, **Ewa Szumowska** and **Lisa Guluzian** have recently become engaged. Best wishes to you and your future partners from the NYWC!

Last, but certainly never least, congratulations to long time NYWC facilitators, **Mary Benedetto** and **Roz Giller**, who were recently honoured for their 10 years of volunteer service to the NYWC at the **Ontario Volunteer Awards.**