

Fairmont Royal York Hotel



INTERVAL HOUSE



The Fairmont Royal York adopted Interval House about a year ago and the relationship between the two organizations just grows stronger and stronger. Interval House was the first shelter for abused women and their children in Canada and the Fairmont Royal York was the first grand hotel in Toronto, dating back to 1929, Coates points out. "It's a good match," she says.

Fairmont Royal York Hotel Partners Interval House

It was a natural fit, Melanie Coates says. The pairing of Canada's oldest women's shelter with one of the country's most established hotels, seemed like an ideal match says Coates, who is Director of Communication for the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

"At Interval House they are just so organized. When they ask for something, it's really easy to facilitate giving to them," Coates says. "If we call the shelter and tell them we've got 150 beds, they'll help us organize someone to come and get them. They're really great to work with. They're also really sensitive to their clients needs."

Coates says the hotel's staff has been really energized by the relationship and many have volunteered their time and become involved in helping the shelter. Among the most memorable of last year's partnerships was a Mother's Day brunch hotel staff organized at Interval House.

The Fairmont Royal York's chef, along with staff volunteers loaded down with white table cloths, china, crystal, cutlery and fresh flowers arrived at the shelter and prepared and served the woman and children staying at Interval House a delicious and memorable meal. After the meal, the shelter's residents were made to feel even more special when a couple of make-up artists, friends of Coates, treated the women to a beauty makeover. "We wanted to make them feel beautiful," Coates says. When the hotel staff departed the shelter, they left more than the china behind. They gave the women a very precious gift—a lift to their battered self-esteem.

The Fairmont Royal York plans to continue this inspiring partnership by offering to host yet another special Mother's Day celebration for the residents and ex-residents at Interval House. "The Fairmont Royal York is a wonderful partner and an example to the corporate community of

what we can approach together," says Lesley Ackrill, Interval House's Capital Campaign co-Director.

The hotel's management has offered a range of support for the shelter, including providing suites at the Fairmount Royal York allowing Interval House to host donor receptions. It has also donated an array of household goods to the shelter, like bedding and furniture. But Coates says she has been most touched by the initiatives individual Fairmont Royal York staff members have undertaken on behalf of Interval House. The relationship with Interval House is beneficial for the Fairmont Royal York as well because it builds staff relationships within the hotel itself, Coates continues.

"A lot of the staff did different things at Christmas. The switchboard operators made gifts. We had a toy drive in the cafeteria," Coates says naming a few of the initiatives. The hotel staff also put a lot of thought into the gifts that they wanted to give shelter residents. Toiletries, pyjamas and under garments were selected as personal gifts to help women who had fled their homes leaving most of their possessions behind, feel a little more comfortable. "When you leave a very stressful situation the last thing you are thinking about is clothes," Coates says.

The Fairmont Royal York also catered the shelter's Christmas drop-in reception, which was attended by 86 ex-resident families. Since establishing a strong relationship with Interval House, Coates says she has been approached by other individuals and companies eager to get involved with the shelter. "A restaurant in Yorkville and someone who had gift certificates for books, are two that come to mind," Coates says. "Anywhere I go, if I meet people who have something to give to the shelter, I try to link them up," Coates says.