

a voice
in the
community



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Linda Sims

Linda Sims is a successful hardworking media professional and a happily married mother of a 12-year-old daughter. "I do not come from a home where there was any violence. But I feel very deeply for women who are not so lucky." Sims, 52, has been a supporter of Interval House for about 20 years. Giving to the women's shelter was something that seemed quite natural to her. "I've always been a feminist. I'm in my 50s and I was brought up at a time when a woman wasn't expected to do anything." "When I was young the idea of a woman manager or a woman astronaut was unheard of."

Sims has been a recognizable presence on television for some 15 years. She spent 10 years reporting and hosting CBC's premier business program, *Venture*. Sims is currently a financial reporter and commentator for CTV Newsnet. "When I started at the CBC women weren't allowed to read the news because their voices weren't considered authoritative enough." In such an inequitable social climate, Sims reasoned that no woman could be more disadvantaged than one forced to live in a violent and abusive atmosphere. "It struck me as a horrible place to be in, a place of such powerlessness. I wanted to do whatever I could to help women escape such situations."

About 15 years ago, Sims realized that she was no longer satisfied with simply writing a cheque to Interval House. "I wanted to be a little more connected with what I was doing." Sims became a friend of Interval House and in addition to sending the shelter monthly cheques, she became a volunteer. At first she lent her media expertise to the shelter by helping to write letters, hosting events and speaking in public on the shelter's behalf. Sims hosted a documentary Interval House produced in March of 2000 to heighten the general public's awareness of the issue of spousal abuse. She said she has always respected the fact that apart from offering a refuge for women and their children, Interval House has also played a role in educating the public and speaking out on behalf of vulnerable women. "What I loved about it was I felt I had a connection to a charity that had continuity and was doing important work." Sims eventually became part of Interval House's Fundraising Committee.

She said it just boggles her mind to think how far Interval House has come when she compares the shelter's Capital Campaign with the organization's early fundraising efforts. "We had a Mother's Day sale where we sold chocolates and pansies at the Eaton Centre and we raised \$5,000 and we were thrilled." Sims also reflects on how public attitudes to Canada's first women's shelters have altered dramatically since the early days. "The headlines talked about the shelter housing 'runaway wives'. The public was against the shelter." "The whole ethos was that domestic violence was a private affair and Interval House didn't have any business sheltering these women." Thankfully, times have changed dramatically over the last three decades, she said, and so has Interval House. Sims said she was pleased to have been around long enough to see Interval House on the verge of realizing its dream of a new shelter with expanded services to better respond to the needs of the women and children it serves. She also praised the shelter for the innovative corporate partnerships it has succeeded in forging, while remaining true to its core values.

Sims' relationship with Interval House is one she holds dear and she foresees it continuing well into the future. "I feel a definite emotional attachment to the shelter. I cherish the relationship." "I always see myself being associated with Interval House. Whatever I can do to help, I will do it," she said.