

Linda Sims

Financial Reporter and
Television Broadcaster

Dear Friend of Interval House,

When I was first starting my career in journalism, women weren't allowed to announce the news on air because their voices weren't considered authoritative enough. It didn't mean too much for some people, but for Canadian women **it meant we were told what we could and couldn't become.**

This attitude made me all too aware of the barriers we faced. So I began to support Interval House and I've done so for close to 20 years. The first shelter of its kind - it helped abused women and children escape violence... and I remember just how different attitudes were back then. They branded it as a place for 'runaway wives'!

Thank goodness today we've come a long way from those destructive attitudes. We have a lot to be proud of in Canada. We've made great strides in our gender equality rights, and we have to be thankful for the important work done by shelters like Interval House.

Truly, I can't think of another organization that has played a more meaningful role in helping women than Interval House has. Keeping women and children from harm and violence is one of the most basic and fundamental services they provide.

As an Interval House supporter for 20 years, I've seen the positive impact Interval House has made on people's lives. When I first became involved I couldn't imagine how awful it must have been for women and children who were forced to live in a violent atmosphere because they didn't have anywhere else to go.

But thanks to the shelter and services available at Interval House, countless women and children have escaped violence, and broken the cycle of abuse.

That's why I'm asking if you'll join me in renewing your support in 2004. Without your help, Interval House can't meet the needs of the women and children who show up on the doorstep each year.

A gift today of \$40, \$75, \$125 or any amount you can manage would help provide food, clothing, emergency shelter, and counselling for women who have nowhere else to seek refuge.

Violence towards women and children affects us all because it happens everywhere... in wealthy or low-income neighborhoods, in every other part of Toronto and across Canada. Interval House is there to help any woman in need - maybe even someone close to you.

I can't stress enough just how widespread partner abuse is. But you don't have to take my word for it.

Please take a quick look at the enclosed map of Toronto. You can see that the dots spread across the city, making no allowances for

economic or cultural differences. This is a small sample of the women who came to Interval House - but our services have no geographical boundaries. We have served women from Newfoundland to British Columbia and beyond Canada's borders.

Rich or poor, young or old, able-bodied or disabled, university-educated or high school dropout, any woman could experience abuse and need somewhere safe to turn to for help.

It's often a matter of life or death.

On March 8th we celebrated International Women's Day. It's a day to commemorate the accomplishments of the women's movement and consider our greatest challenges ahead. So it was a fitting occasion to reflect on the courage of women who have faced unthinkable abuse at the hands of their partners.

It also reminded us that when women come together to support each other, no matter where they're from, everyone benefits. And Interval House has a long history of bringing diverse women together to help each other through hardship.

Interval House is a place where women can find safety from beatings, rape, torture, and threats... where women can receive counselling to deal with trauma and emotional scars, and access legal assistance. And Interval House is a place where they can start on the road to supporting themselves and their children by learning how to re-enter the workforce through programs like B.E.S.S. (Building Economic Self-Sufficiency).

Interval House is also a place where children of abused mothers can become stronger and feel more stable through counselling, art therapy, and playtime that gives them the chance to be kids again.

I've always been deeply impressed with Interval House's dedication to speaking out for abused women and educating the public about the harsh realities... and the solutions.

Please help Interval House continue to serve women who are desperate to rebuild their lives - free from violence - by renewing your support today.

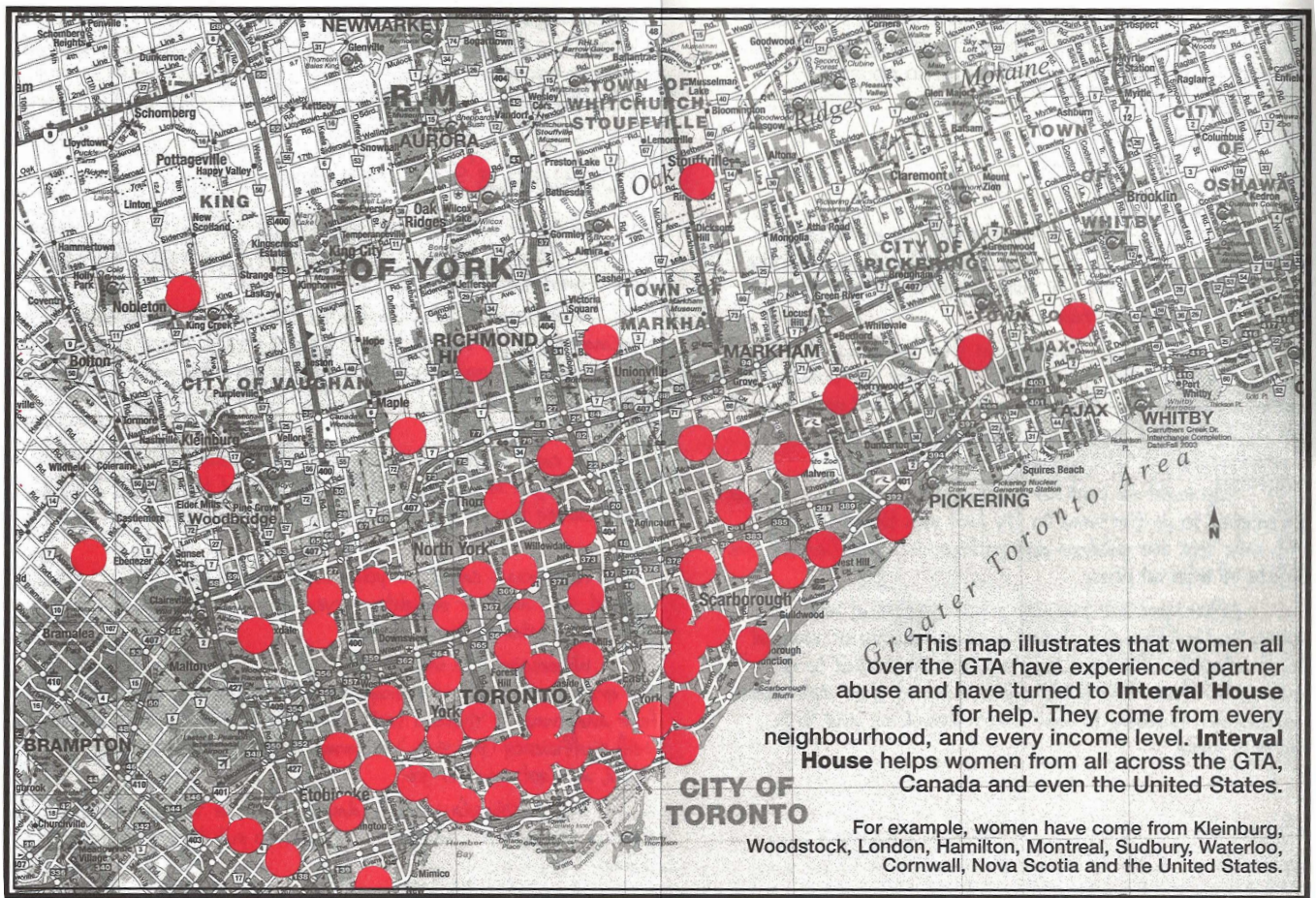
Thank You,



Linda Sims
CTV Reporter and
Television Broadcaster
Interval House Supporter



P.S. When you read the enclosed stories of two women who've fled abuse, you'll remember why you chose to support Interval House in the past. Women and children still need your help, because abuse - I hate to say - is still happening. Please give what you can.



Heather – aged 35, university-educated, born in Canada, lived in Eastern Ontario but moved to the big city to escape the stigma of being known as an abused, divorced, woman.

Heather's story

Heather gave up her teaching position after she married and gave birth to twins. Her husband's law practice provided well for the family, giving them an upscale lifestyle in a wealthy neighbourhood.

The abuse began early on in their marriage. First insults, then threats, then beatings. Because her husband controlled all of their finances, and Heather had no income of her own, she could see no way of breaking free and supporting herself and her children.

The night he beat her black and blue with his belt and threatened to do the same to the kids was the night she left. She took the children and nothing else, and fled for the safety of Interval House.

After spending two and a half months at Interval House, Heather was able to get her own apartment. Interval House helped her find the legal support she needed to get back on her feet. The twins are thriving at their new school, and Heather is happy to have her independence and to be teaching again.

Yolanda - aged 28, recently emigrated from Northern Europe, educated as an engineer in her home country but was unable to find work because she had couldn't speak or write English well. She couldn't afford to pay for recertification exams and courses.

Yolanda's story

When Yolanda came to Canada with her husband and young child, she took any odd job she could find to help support the family. Her husband did the same.

After some financial setbacks, Yolanda's husband began drinking heavily. He became violent when drunk, smashing glassware, kicking furniture, and slapping Yolanda across the face. Not a day went by without an insult or a threat, and Yolanda began to fear for her children's safety.

He came home drunk and enraged one night, telling her he had lost his job. When she told him she wanted to leave him, he beat her, breaking two of her ribs and her arm, and giving her two black eyes.

Neighbours called the police and Yolanda was taken to the hospital. She and her daughter never returned home, and went straight to Interval House instead.

Witnessing the violence left Yolanda's daughter traumatized. But group and individual therapy helped her begin to deal with the fear and trauma. Yolanda took advantage of the Building Economic Self-Sufficiency (B.E.S.S.) program at Interval House, went to school, and got a better job.

Today Yolanda and her daughter believe there is hope to build a better life here in Canada. They want to put their past behind them.