

Fall 2020

## A Strength of Her Own

*You helped Antonia  
achieve her dreams*



"I still remember the first day I stepped through the doors of Interval House," Antonia remembers. "I was crying, because I was so broken."

Antonia's journey to Interval House was one filled with pain, abuse and heartache. She grew up in an abusive household and ran away several times. When she was pregnant as a teenager, her partner abandoned her, choosing drugs over her and their child.

Years later, Antonia found herself in yet another horrible situation. She was at her lowest point and wondered if there was any reason to keep on living. She urgently needed a safe, supportive place to stay.

Then a friend recommended Interval House. At first, Antonia was afraid. Would she experience the same judgement and blame she'd felt all her life? To her surprise, the exact opposite happened.

"I was shocked," she says. "The ladies there, they were just incredible. They couldn't have been kinder to me.

They were so thoughtful and just listened to me. They didn't judge me at all. They made me feel at peace, and they gave me strength I didn't have."

Eventually, through counselling, workshops and building connections with the staff and other clients, Antonia realized she did have strength – a lot of it.

Day by day, she learned how to set goals and work hard to achieve them. Now she has a place of her own and is working as a front-line support worker in another shelter. She recently achieved a life-long goal: buying her first car.

But her proudest achievement is being able to break the cycle of abuse and judgement for her son, who is now in his 30s. "Mom, you can do it," he tells her. "Everything you put your mind to, you end up doing it." And he's right!

***Thank you for helping Antonia achieve her dreams.***

\*While Antonia's story is real, her name has been changed to protect her privacy.



## When Home is not Safe

by Paula Del Cid, Manager – Shelter Services & Outreach

We all felt unease when the first lockdown orders were given; when we were being urged by health officials to stay home as much as possible.

But some women felt more than unease. *They felt sheer terror.*

Before COVID-19, they were maybe able to leave the house to go grocery shopping or pick up the kids from school. But the pandemic gave their abusers the perfect excuse to exert even more control over their lives. Every move was watched, every phone call listened to.

Some brave women still managed to find a way to reach out for help. I've answered some of those crisis calls myself. I've heard the fear and panic in these women's voices. "He'll only be gone for five minutes." Or "I told him I was doing laundry and I hope he can't hear me over the sound of the machine."

Of course, the pandemic has added an entirely new level of fear. Women are afraid of catching the virus if

they manage to escape and come to our shelter. For some, they were only willing to risk catching COVID-19 when they believed their abuser was going to kill them.

This is why I'm so, so grateful for you, our incredible family of donors. It's only because of your support we were able to quickly respond to this situation and make sure our residential program was as healthy as possible, so women would feel safe coming to us.

Thanks to you, we were able to hand out Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to each family and staff member. We increased our heavy-duty sanitizing to twice a day. We reduced our capacity so each family could have their own bathroom, instead of sharing with others. And we installed better Wi-Fi so children could do online school.

**Your committed support means our shelter continues to be a safe, welcoming and healthy place for women and children fleeing abuse during the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you.**



# The Same... Only Different

## How you're helping women and children during COVID-19

We've seen a lot of changes over the past few months. But one thing has stayed the same: your inspiring commitment to making sure survivors of intimate partner violence have access to the services and supports they need.

Here's a look at how you've enabled us to adapt to life in a pandemic:

- In March, all in-person services were cancelled and replaced with phone, email and virtual support
- In May, we launched Virtual Workshops, which have been a massive hit with clients! Workshops were conducted on topics such as Building Connections during COVID, Virtual Tax Clinic, An Organized Life, and Conflict Management Styles
- Employment services shifted to counselling clients regarding job loss, recovering wages and worries about returning to work
- In our Residential Program, we replaced in-person group programming with virtual programming, covering topics such as The Cycle of Abuse, Healthy Relationships, and Goal Setting
- Case Coordinators continue to meet residential clients in person with proper hygiene and physical distancing
- We adopted greater health and safety measures, such as screening and disinfection for everyone entering and leaving the building, sanitizing the shelter twice a day, and providing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to all shelter clients and staff

**THANK YOU for keeping our vital programs and services running through COVID-19!**



## In Their own Words

Hear from the women  
whose lives you've changed

“It was good to speak to you and  
validate how I've been feeling.”

“I now feel moving forward,  
it's going to get even better  
and easier to not doubt  
myself. This is growth for  
me personally and just  
wanted to say thank you!”

“Sending a big thanks to you & your fab BESS team  
for today's webcast. It was great to be part of such a lovely  
group of women to listen & share thoughts.”

## It's Not Okay

When silence  
is deafening

The silence is terrifying. Across the country and here in Toronto, shelters, sexual assault centres and crisis lines have reported a drop in calls and fewer requests for help since the beginning of the pandemic.

But that doesn't mean domestic violence isn't happening. It means women, trapped with their abusers, are unable to reach out for help. The social isolation also means women experiencing abuse are cut off from those who might recognize the signs of violence and intervene to help.

### One in 10 women

is very or extremely concerned about the possibility of violence in the home during COVID-19, according to Statistics Canada



Even before the pandemic,  
**a women was killed**  
by her intimate partner  
**every six days**

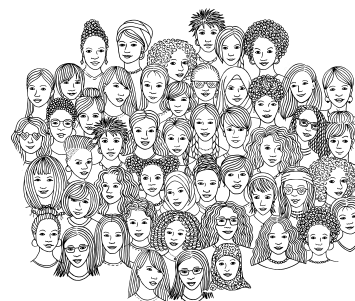
**Thousands** of women, girls, trans and non-binary people now face a heightened risk of violence at home due to isolation measures

**1 million jobs lost**  
as of March 2020



**63%**  
were women

**70%**  
workers aged  
25 to 54



\* Source: <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/women-and-pandemics/>



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