



Women's House  
Serving Bruce and Grey

# Dedicated to Ending Violence Against Women



## ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

Vision • Mission Statement • Principles

05

Women's House Services

06

Board of Directors • 2020/2021  
Women's House Statistics • 2020/2021

07

Women's House Organizational Chart

08

Donors • 2020/2021  
Media Sponsors • 2020/2021

09

Annual Reports

10

Tracy Primeau  
Board Chair

11

Amanda Friesen  
Board Treasurer

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

12

Lisa Owen  
Executive Director

14

Krista Wilken  
Residential Manager

16

Bernice Connell  
Sexual Assault Services and Outreach Manager

17

Alana Eadie  
Administrative Assistant

19

Candace Burton  
Volunteer and Community Development Coordinator

20

Michelle Lamont  
Community and Fund Development Coordinator

22

Mary Smith  
Property Manager



## VISION

We envision a world where women are empowered, and women and children are safe, secure, and free from violence.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Women's House provides a safe haven for victims/survivors, knowing that ending violence is a community responsibility. We will work towards ending violence through knowledge, which is power, in order to create change.

## PRINCIPLES

1. It is a basic human right to be free from abuse and sexual violence. Also it is a basic human right to have safety, dignity, respect, social and economic justice, self-determination and to contribute to society in our own manner.
2. Abuse and sexual violence are societal problems, yet generally perceived as private matters. Community has an obligation to become involved in these issues.
3. Education is necessary to bring about effective changes in attitude. We believe in challenging statements and beliefs that minimize the seriousness of racism, oppression, abuse and sexual violence.
4. Children's lives are traumatized by exposure to abusive environments. Their witnessing and normalizing of violence perpetuates the cycle. Their needs are specific and distinct from the needs of their parents.
5. We believe in fostering, sustaining and affirming women's culture and diversity and that they are sources of enrichment and strength.
6. We value the reality of every individual's experience and acknowledge and respect their uniqueness and understand that Individuals may display a variety of behaviours as coping strategies. However, safety of the woman shall be the primary focus of any intervention and she shall receive sensitive, immediate and appropriate service.
7. We believe that poverty, hunger and homelessness are safety issues that keep women and children in abusive situations.
8. Women's House recognizes that all women face misogyny and sexism; however, some bear an additional burden of oppression due to racism and other forms of oppression.
9. We believe that systemic racism, discrimination, and oppression based on race, religion, class, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, and ability must be addressed as part of an integrated approach to ending poverty, abuse, sexual violence, and homelessness in the lives of women.
10. Networking, partnerships and resource building with other community partners is essential in order to best serve the needs of women experiencing abuse and/or sexual violence.
11. A coordinated community approach to service delivery is essential in order to provide options and information about services and the impacts of abuse and sexual violence so that the victim/survivors can make informed choices.
12. We believe that the abuser is responsible for his/her behaviour and should be held accountable. Society must develop a policy of zero tolerance for abuse and sexual violence.
13. Women's House believes in being accountable to the victims and survivors who use our services.



## In-House Safe Shelter

- A safe, secure, and supportive environment to accommodate up to 13 women and children
- Trained counsellor on duty 24/7

## 24-hour Support Lines

- Toll free, local, and sexual assault support lines answered 24/7 by professional counsellors



## Child Witness Program

- Education for parents regarding the effects on children who witness abuse
- Individual and group counselling for children between the ages of four (4) and sixteen (16)

## Outreach Counselling

- Individual outreach counselling available in Chesley, Durham, Hanover, Kincardine, Markdale, Owen Sound, Port Elgin, Southampton, Walkerton, and Wiarton

## Group Counselling

- Groups provided throughout Bruce & Grey counties in areas of need such as: Self Esteem, Dealing with Anger, When your Relationship Ends, and Finding Your Own Voice

## Sexual Assault Services

- Confidential support of women sixteen (16) years of age and older who have been sexually assaulted recently or in the past

## Transitional and Housing Support

- Workers assist women with developing a transition plan and provide advocacy in the areas of housing, education, job training, income support, legal aid, childcare, transportation, etc.

## Community Development

- Educates the public on Women's House services and the issue of violence against women through public speaking engagements and presentations

## Volunteer Services

- Opportunities to volunteer throughout the organization



## Second Stage Housing Program

- Units in Kincardine, Port Elgin, and Wiarton offer safe and affordable housing for women and their children for up to one year

<b>Tracy Primeau</b>	<b>Chair</b>
<b>Meag Durkin</b>	<b>Vice Chair</b>
<b>Amanda Friesen</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Angela McOrmond</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Colleen Hamann</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Joanna Malott</b>	<b>Director</b>

<b>Gavin Fick</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Gretel Steinberg</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Judy Rich</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Christine John</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Lisa McArthur</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Marcy Stocking</b>	<b>Director</b>

### In the 2020/21 fiscal period:



**541**

individual women  
were served



**7,336**

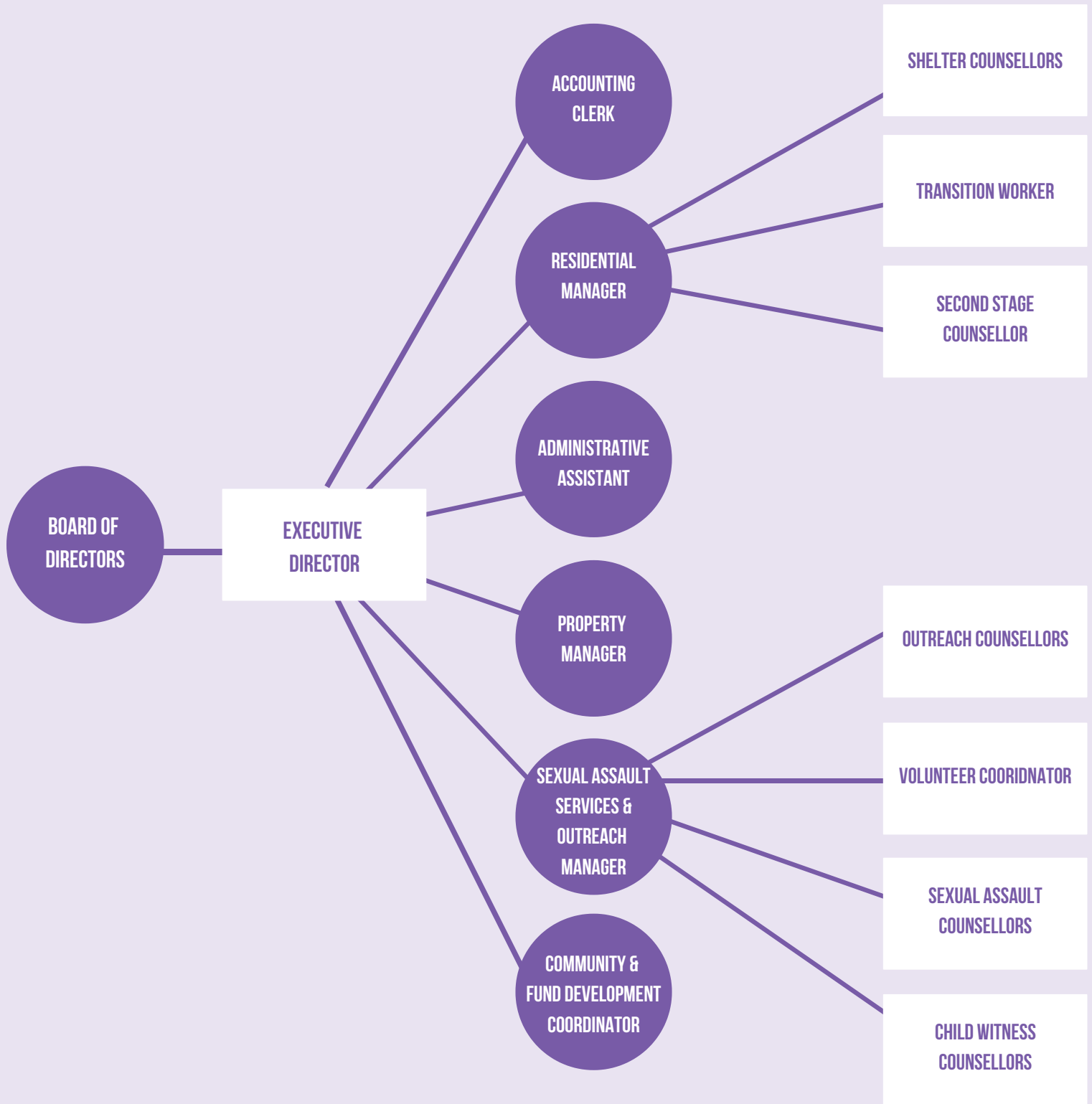
crisis, support, and  
advocacy calls were  
managed on the phone lines



**118**

individual children  
were served

# WOMEN'S HOUSE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





Women's House  
Serving Bruce and Grey

## Thank you to the Women's House Sponsors

### CHAMPIONS \$10000+



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**United Way**  
Bruce Grey  
Change starts here



**SOCIETY of  
UNITED PROFESSIONALS**  
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Connecting our Community



**HOWICK**  
MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY



Larry Bannerman

**ROYAL LEPAGE** Keith &  
Linda Battler

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**PROMATION**  
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Board & Staff

# ANNUAL REPORTS



Women's House  
Serving Bruce and Grey

It's been a year, hasn't it? Last year when I pulled together this report I referenced how we were dealing with COVID, and I'm proud to say we continue to "pivot" as needed to ensure we can support the women and children who need us. There's not much good to say about this pandemic, but it has introduced new ways to communicate that I know will continue into the future. Attendance at board meetings is almost 100% when you don't have to drive through a snowstorm. Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey welcomed new Board members this year and we continue to be fortunate to have a diverse skillset and representation. Even in this time, we continue to focus on and "tweak" where necessary our Strategic Plan.

The many services we provide are funded by either the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services or the Ministry of the Attorney General. However, we would not be able to offer the current level of service we provide to the counties of Bruce and Grey without our many corporate and individual donors. This number one focus of our strategic plan to build solid, sustainable funding with our neighbours and in our communities continues to be a successful strategy ensuring our future, even in these challenging times.

We are especially grateful to our sponsors and donors this year as we were unable to host our favourite events, including Walk-A-Mile and our Gala. However, we did have some participants who came together on their own to wear their red shoes and we were able to once again co-host our International Women's Day event virtually along with Business to Bruce where we heard another motivational speaker.

I would like to thank all of our Management and Staff for keeping our services going and supporting the women and children who rely on our organization. I would also like to thank the team for educating both the public and the board around the Violence Against Women (VAW) sector, their daily work and challenges during this time.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our volunteers, and specifically our Board members, for their time, commitment and passion for the work we do as part of the Women's House team. Together with management and staff we will continue to strive for a world where our services are no longer required.



Lisa Owen, Executive Director and Tracy Primeau, Board Chair accept a donation from Royal LePage Exchange Realty Co.



**"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."**

- ELIZABETH ANDREW



I would like to start by saying what an honour it is to continue serving as the Treasurer on the Women's House board for the 6th year. I would also like to thank my fellow board members who dedicate their time, energy, and efforts to make this board run smooth and efficient, while always holding the interests of Women's House first.

As the Treasurer, I work very closely with the Accounting Clerk, and in the spring of 2020 she announced her retirement after 13 years of service. She has been and will be missed; however, our new Accounting Clerk is doing a wonderful job of filling some pretty big shoes - I'd like to take the time to welcome her!

This past year has been very unstable for everyone, and the pandemic has brought so much uncertainty throughout the year. Budgeting was not left out of the chaos! Women's House operations now exceeds 1.5M annually, and some of the programs we have could not operate without fundraised dollars. Fundraising is always a priority, and because of the pandemic we saw a complete shift in how our fundraising was supported. I am happy to announce that we were able to surpass our fundraising target this year.

Given the unprecedented times, I can proudly say that with the hard work from the Executive Director and staff at Women's House, this was a successful fiscal year. As always, we are so thankful to the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services and Ministry of the Attorney General for the core funding they provide, and to the community for their donations and support every year.



*Whenever you need to talk, we're here*



LOCAL: 519-396-9655  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-265-3026  
SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT LINE: 1-866-578-5566

**Board**

The Board of Directors demonstrated exemplary leadership during this past year as Women's House was forced to maneuver through unprecedented times due to the pandemic. This included dramatic changes to service delivery and operations at Women's House, all of which the Board oversaw. The Board also participated in the implementation of a new initiative intended to enhance communication between the Board and front-line staff. At each Board Meeting, a different representative from our various programs attended to present on their work, answer questions, and engage in conversation about the day-to-day activities of Women's House from their personal experience. This initiative has enhanced Board understanding of front-line work, and enabled staff to develop stronger connections with the Board. Also, one member of the Board participated in a Leadership Development Program offered through the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). This program was intended to strengthen leadership in the Violence Against Women sector, and included Board members, Executive Directors, and emerging leaders from the sector throughout the province, and enabled our Board to have greater insight into the work of the sector.

**Administration**

Over this past year and during the course of the pandemic, a high level of contact was maintained with the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). This proved to be extremely helpful due to the assistance provided in pandemic planning, risk mitigation, accessing vaccines, and interpretation of the constant changes to our practice resulting from emergency orders and various Ministry directives. OAITH was in regular contact with government, and was very effective at getting quick responses to our questions and concerns. Ongoing communication also took place with the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services (MCCSS) this past year because of the pandemic. Our Program Supervisor proved to be very supportive by being able to offer clarification on Ministry directives during this period of change and uncertainty, and also ensuring adequate access to required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Also, this year as a result of the pandemic, Women's House shifted to an increased use and reliance on technology as a way to maintain service delivery and staff connection. Zoom accounts were set up, laptops purchased, cell phone plans enhanced, and working from home options established. Women's House also drafted a new Vaccination Policy and Procedure for Board review this year. In addition to all of the new pandemic-related activities, Women's House continued to submit all of the regularly scheduled reports for both MCCSS and the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG), and participated in a consultation to inform the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence this year.

**Financial**

This past year, Women's House received an enhanced level of funding from the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services (MCCSS). This enabled us to maintain our current level of service, and alleviated some of the pressure in our fundraising department. MCCSS also provided an additional \$24,600 for Sexual Assault Centers Anti-Human Trafficking Community Supports, which was used to employ a much-needed Youth Sexual Assault/Human Trafficking Counsellor for the past year. Unfortunately, this year we had to decline approximately \$60,000 in year-end funding from MCCSS. It was announced in late January and had to be spent by the end of March. Approximately \$40,000 was for rural and remote initiatives, and \$20,000 for Child and Youth initiatives. Because of the staffing pressures associated with the pandemic, we did not have the organizational capacity to take on new work or positions. We also received \$79,000 in COVID Relief Funds from the Federal Government for the Shelter, Second Stage Housing program, and Sexual Assault Center. These funds were utilized mostly for costs associated with remote work (technology), shift premiums for Shelter staff, gas and grocery cards for women and children served, hotel and catering costs for women who needed service when the Shelter was at capacity, Personal Protective Equipment when Ministry deliveries fell short, and capital expenses related to modifications required to enhance resident ability to socially distance. Because of decreased spending in some areas due to



the pandemic (mostly transportation costs associated with our Outreach department), we were able to make our part-time Child Witness position in Bruce County full-time. Other under-utilized budget line amounts were used to complete a number of capital projects that have been on our “wish list” for years. MCCSS provided us with the opportunity to move funds between budget lines this year, which was helpful, because when the pandemic began, everything changed in terms of operations and Shelter capacity, which had a huge impact on the budget. Also, this year we had a staff member off on unpaid leave from our Sexual Assault program, which created a surplus in salaries. A Budget Realignment Request was completed for the Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) so that the surplus funds could be used for new flooring in the Owen Sound building.

## Personnel

There were some personnel changes that took place over this past year involving key positions within Women’s House. One resulted from the retirement of the Shelter Manager in the early stages of the pandemic. The Shelter Manager Job Description was amended to include management of the Second Stage Program and the position was re-named Residential Manager. The position was filled with an internal candidate who had been part of our Management Succession Plan for many years. The other change resulted from the retirement of the Accounting Clerk. An external candidate was recruited, and because of our ability to use funds where they were needed, she was able to train and mentor the new candidate for a good period of time, thus ensuring stability within our Finance department. We also began creating a Sexual Assault Counsellor Succession Plan this year, and have three staff interested in participating. The “new” Management Team began work with a Leadership Coach to support them in working as a cohesive unit. Full Staff Team Meetings became more frequent due to the isolation of staff from one another caused by the pandemic, and took place by Zoom. Our internal Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression (ARAO) Committee began meeting again this year, mostly in response to media coverage of events that took place, and they developed a Solidarity Statement regarding Black Lives Matter and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. A new Collective Bargaining Agreement with Unifor was also negotiated this year. Interview questions, job descriptions, and performance evaluations were also all updated this past year to include core competencies that were missing from previous versions. In addition, some new in-house training opportunities were created whereby staff willing to share knowledge identified their areas of expertise, and then were matched with staff who were seeking knowledge in those areas.

## Community Development

Women’s House became increasingly involved with some of our community partners over this past year, including the Housing and Homelessness Committee, the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, and the Community Safety and Well-Being Committee in an effort to ensure continuity of service and case coordination during the pandemic.

## Health and Safety

Weekly, and sometimes daily, updates regarding constantly evolving and changing COVID protocols were provided to staff throughout the year. New directives from Public Health and funding Ministries were all implemented immediately upon receipt.



Lisa Owen, Executive Director of Women's House accepts a donation from Linda & Keith Battler

In June 2020, I was proud to step into the role of Residential Manager, responsible for the direction and overall management of the Women's House Shelter Program, Second Stage Housing and the crisis lines. In reflecting on our highlight reel this year, I'm reminded that besides the challenges of navigating a pandemic, 2020 brought with it a positive push to further embrace our feminist counselling practices and enhance direct service to women.

Due to COVID-19, the shelter has been operating at 50% capacity since March 2020. We are using alternative accommodations as needed for shelter overflow and have limited admissions to situations of abuse only. The shelter has suspended the use of volunteers as well as all non-residential counselling services that previously took place on site. It's no surprise that our crisis-support telephone lines, including our sexual assault support line were heavy in use throughout the year. As you can imagine, safety planning has been front and center in our work with women. Women have openly disclosed the significant impact of isolation, many making the choice to stay in abusive situations.

The Residential Manager now has the added responsibility of managing the Second Stage Housing program. Early in the year, support from the Second Stage Counsellor was mainly provided over the telephone or through virtual platforms with groups and resident meetings lost. Also due to COVID-19, the program suspended the use of volunteers for peer support and transportation purposes. We have since deemed the Second Stage Counsellor role essential, recognizing the need for continued safe, in-person interaction. This is necessary for crisis intervention, case planning, counselling support, education and safety planning purposes – all key elements of this residential program. The Second Stage Counsellor continued to support a caseload of women in the community needing transition and housing support.



### Health and Safety

The health and safety of women and children served and shelter staff continues to be prioritized. I developed and maintained a Women's House COVID-19 Health and Safety document outlining guidelines and control measures to prevent, eliminate and reduce the hazards of a COVID-19 outbreak within the shelter. The shelter has remained in compliance with Ministry and Public Health directives specific to COVID-19. Enhanced training has been provided to all shelter staff specific to COVID-19 health and safety practices, including outbreak management and the provision of key services and supports. The shelter maintains an adequate supply of Personal Protective Equipment available for staff use with a MCCSS Critical Supplies and Equipment survey completed weekly.

All recommended actions have now been completed, following a previous workplace incident in March 2020. These include intercom installation in shelter foyer, updated protocol to be followed when a woman is involuntarily discharged from the shelter, increased debriefing after incidents, and increased safety talks during team meetings. We continue to complete monthly comprehensive fire drills, panic alarm drills and panic button testing and are happy to have a new and enhanced fire system panel installed in the shelter. Shelter team staff have ensured renewal of first aid certification and WHIMIS, as required.

### Staff Management & Program Delivery

In terms of leadership, one-on-one and management team work with Jackie Arnold, I Heart My Work has offered insight into promoting cooperative and effective team-based relationships within Women's House. In addition, participation in OAITH's purpose-driven, VAW specific

leadership program, Leading for Impact, offered summits, peer coaching circles, and an online learning platform.

Throughout this past year I provided support and supervision to 12 staff, including the Counsellors on Duty, the Transition Worker and Second Stage Counsellor. We welcomed 2 students to our team, one during the summer months and another through Kincardine District Secondary School's Cooperative Education program. Students were responsible for back-up in day to day shelter operations, various administrative tasks and helped with COVID-19 cleaning and disinfecting. We onboarded 5 new relief staff during 2020, enhancing our orientation and training program. There is an added focus on working with support resistant women, de-escalation strategies, harm reduction (administering naloxone), stats collection, legal aid and family court support, and feminist-based counselling strategies.

In an effort to improve communication and case management systems, the shelter team made the following changes: regular team meetings, revised shift handover process, weekly case management meetings, new case planning and personal needs assessment tools, enhanced use of WISH, regular support and supervision meetings and ongoing emergency back up as needed. These changes helped to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, driving staff's decision-making and problem-solving abilities. The management team has also promoted the use of committee work and small working groups, many in response to strategic planning activities. This offers newly hired staff an added way to learn about our internal culture, and ensures effective knowledge transfer.

I have continued to coordinate our Family Court Support Worker program overseeing stats collection. There has been a focus on resource development and sharing of Luke's Place discussion topics specific to family court issues. Monthly reports were filed for Legal Aid Ontario as we continue to offer 2hr authorization certificates for domestic violence situations.

### Agency Wide and Public Relations

The shelter team took initiative in writing articles for November's Woman Abuse Awareness Month. Topics included Domestic Violence and Homelessness, The Misconceptions of Woman Abuse and A Day in the Life of a Counsellor on Duty. The team also developed and circulated awareness post cards through partner organizations and businesses. Thanks to the full committee's work and the generosity of the community at large, 2020 also saw one of our most successful Christmas programs to date. We served over 30 women and their children through the program.

Aside from participation on the internal communications committee, I formed a safety planning working group with representation from across the organization. The group is working to review and develop common risk assessment and safety planning tools. This year, in part due to outreach remote work arrangements, we did see an increase of time spent on case coordination activities.

Collaboration between teams is essential as we work to collectively support women across various program during these challenging times. The shelter team continues to maintain good working relationships with community partners and as a result, women benefit from coordinated efforts and system collaboration.



Masks, virtual meetings, trunk deliveries, isolation, lockdowns, personal protective equipment, cleaning protocols, e-learning, monitoring case counts, COVID fatigue and health directives. Such is the new language and the new norm that is life and work during a pandemic. The past year presented challenges to service delivery, struggles to continue community work and impacts on staff who worked from home and those who did not have the option.

## Service Delivery

One of the difficulties this year within the Outreach, Sexual Assault and Child Witness Counseling programs was considerable staff shuffling. As unavoidable as staff changes were, combined with changing pandemic guidelines, some disruption was experienced by the women and children accessing services.

No support groups for women or children took place with the exception of the Partner Abuse Response open group that Women's House co-facilitates with The Men's Program. The first part of the year saw Women's House Counselors work with individual women to assist them to carry out the court-mandated requirements of the program. In the fall, the group reconvened online virtual sessions.

Only intermittent in-person counseling was permitted the past year. This was especially difficult for the children counselors were working with. The Child Witness Counselors worked more closely with moms in providing support for the children. Women in all counseling programs were very receptive to phone and virtual sessions, with a few reporting they actually preferred the phone to meeting in person. One time funding through MCCSS enabled us to employ a Youth Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking counsellor to respond to a considerable wait list for sexual assault counseling. Advocacy for women and children required considerable tenacity on the part of staff assisting with legal and child protection issues.

## Community Collaboration

- Women's House continued membership in the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres.
- Maintained work with Bruce Grey Child & Family Services as per the provincial Child & Family Services and Violence Against Women Collaboration Agreement.
- Participated in the OPP West Region Review Committee, which reviews sexual assault cases.
- Collaborated with Violence Prevention Grey Bruce and The Women's Centre to receive funding support for MARAC – a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. This pilot project will establish advocate-led, community support to women in high-risk domestic violence situations.
- Contributed to organizing virtual public education events only – December 6th, 16 Days of Activism (articles), and radio ads for Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Volunteer involvement was greatly reduced as we were no longer able to provide drives to women. There are currently fifteen individuals awaiting volunteer training when restrictions are lifted.

An internal Anti Racism/Anti Oppression Committee was established this year. The group completed a Solidarity Statement for Women's House in response to Black Lives Matter and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movements. We also created a social media series of messages on how to be an ally in this work.

My thanks to a long-time Outreach team member, Candace, for her work at Women's House. Best wishes to her for a happy retirement.

Amid the uncertainty of the past year, there emerged incredible adaptability and creativity in responding to women and children needing our support. Thank you everyone. I can't imagine a better group of colleagues to have worked with during such trying times. Much appreciation to all at Women's House for your perseverance. We are more resilient as we move toward the unknown of the coming year.



Women's House has had to adapt in many respects over the course of the past fiscal year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While we have remained operational, there were numerous adjustments to be made to ensure the safety and security of the women and children we serve, as well as staff members and volunteers.

## Human Resources

Maintaining appropriate levels of staffing is always of utmost importance at Women's House, made especially vital this year due to the ongoing pandemic. It is imperative that we retain a level of staff sufficient to continue operations in our shelter program; this ensures that women and children continue to have a safe place to turn.

This past year we had a smaller pool of staff, with many employees covering temporary positions within Women's House. There was a large focus on keeping all agency positions fully staffed while also maintaining appropriate levels of staffing to operate the shelter program. We were able to successfully maintain employment for all of our full and part-time employees throughout the pandemic, as well as fully staff the shelter to ensure this vital service remained operational. Recruitment efforts for relief counsellors in the shelter were made on several occasions throughout the year in an effort to maintain appropriate staffing levels. It remains an ongoing struggle to recruit, train and retain relief staff in the shelter, especially over the past fiscal year. Delays in completion of vulnerable sector checks and First Aid training due to the pandemic meant a postponement of hiring external staff until those tasks could be completed.

One-time funding was received through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to help address human trafficking amongst youth in Grey-Bruce. This funding was used to employ a much needed Youth Sexual Assault/Human Trafficking counsellor for the past year.



An application was submitted to secure summer student employment at Women's House, and we were awarded funding this year through the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program to hire a full-time Transition Support Worker for seven weeks. The successful applicant was retained as a relief counsellor in the shelter upon completion of the CSJ-funded employment. Having the opportunity to hire students after their summer employment or student placement has proven to be very advantageous. The employee works alongside numerous staff during their student employment or placement, utilizing this opportunity to learn a great deal about Women's House, violence against women and the shelter program. Another application was made through CSJ to request funding for the same position in the next fiscal year.

Compliance with training requirements under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act was ensured throughout the year, as was compliance with Workplace Violence legislation. Women's House new staff orientation was reviewed this year, and there are plans to modify the training program in the next fiscal year to ensure a well-rounded and extensive orientation when onboarding new staff.

### Administrative

A major change for many staff this past fiscal year was the adjustment to working remotely. With a large number of our administrative and outreach staff working from home, it was important to ensure that everyone was equipped with the necessary items to do so successfully. Staff cell phones were upgraded and the plans were adjusted to ensure staff could continue to connect with women and children while working off site. Staff communication proved to be of utmost importance; with the inability to connect in-person, methods such as virtual meetings and newsletter platforms were utilized to encourage and facilitate connection amongst staff. On-site, maintenance and cleaning supply orders were increased to ensure health and safety measures and sanitation practices could be conducted at an amplified rate.

Active involvement with the Board of Directors continued throughout the year, including compiling monthly Board Packages with staff reports and distributing these prior to each board meeting. Board meetings and the AGM were held remotely via Zoom this year, and most communications happened virtually. The Annual Report covering the 2019/20 fiscal year was compiled and distributed at the Annual General Meeting in June, as well as being posted on the Women's House website.

As part of Women's House strategic plan, work was completed this year on developing and creating community educational campaigns on Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and for the Child Witness program. Time was spent compiling previous presentation materials alongside newly researched content to create three educational presentations. These will be utilized by staff moving forward when providing education and information to members of the community.

Work continued on overseeing the maintenance of the organization's website and social media platforms. An increased online presence was important this year in order to communicate important information and updates during the pandemic. Early in the fiscal year we conducted a campaign acknowledging local businesses through social media who have supported us in the past. Many of these businesses had to close down or severely restrict operations due to the pandemic, and this was an opportunity for Women's House to share our appreciation for their ongoing support over the years. We also utilized our online presence to run a number of educational and awareness campaigns related to domestic violence, sexual assault and anti-racism/anti-oppression. We reached new milestones this year with regards to our social media presence: Women's House now has close to 1000 likes on our Facebook page, and we continue to reach more people as awareness of our page increases. Women's House joined Instagram in late 2019 and is quickly building an audience on this platform with over 400 followers and counting.



**find us on social media!**

Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey @womens.house.bruce.grey

**LinkedIn**  **Instagram** 

**Facebook**  **Twitter** 

@WomensHouseServingBruceGrey @WomensHouseSBG

Due to the ongoing pandemic, our volunteer program had to be placed on hold except for a few amazing volunteers offering essential services. Our volunteer board continued to meet virtually, our volunteer shoppers carried on with the weekly shelter grocery shopping, and our maintenance volunteers continued to care for our properties. Each of these dedicated volunteers played an important role with assisting in the provision of essential services to the women and children we serve. All volunteering took place with strong health & safety measures in place. We were fortunate to have had 20 volunteers who worked a total of 600.50 hours during this difficult pandemic year. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, we were unable to have our usual appreciation gathering. Volunteers received a heartfelt thank you during Volunteer week in April, and I stayed in touch with all of our volunteers regarding the status of the volunteer program. We continued to hear from individuals wanting to volunteer with us, and we have 15 volunteers waiting for the opportunity to start the process of joining our amazing volunteer team as soon as the restrictions lift.

Our in-person public awareness events had to be cancelled, as were our planned engagements in various communities. As a result, we were able to quickly transition into a virtual format for some of our events, such as our Annual December 6th Vigil which was promoted using social media. I have also been able to take advantage of number of online training opportunities of a variety of relevant and timely topics.



## Events

### **May: Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month**

We continue to promote this with radio ads, telephone interviews and storefront window display.

### **November: Woman Abuse Prevention Month**

Social Media Campaign, newspaper articles and storefront window display. We also had a Bathroom Stall Poster Campaign in conjunction with The Women's Centre called Love Shouldn't Hurt. The posters were distributed when possible.

### **December: December 6th Vigil**

This was the first year that people were unable to gather in Owen Sound for the Dec 6th Vigil, however the committee worked together with other partners to create an on-line gathering that was well attended.

you are beautiful

hello?

# Love shouldn't hurt.

*Need to talk?  
Call us anytime.  
1-800-265-3722  
1-800-265-3026*

If you're feeling trapped, mistreated, or concerned for your safety, please call us anytime on our 24/7 support lines.

The Women's Centre Grey Bruce: 1-800-265-3722  
Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey: 1-800-265-3026  
Sexual Assault Line: 1-866-578-5566

Free and confidential counselling, shelter, court support services, safety planning, and more.

**WOMEN'S CENTRE GREY BRUCE INC.**  
**VIOLENCE PREVENTION GREY BRUCE**  
**Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey**



In the normally fast-paced world of fundraising events, grants and presentations in Community and Fund Development with Women's House, the onset of the pandemic and subsequent protocols limiting our actions made it seem daunting to even hope to reach the fundraising target of \$140,746. But, a willingness to be open to new ideas and put into action things we've never done before, and the flexibility to pivot, especially to a digital format, allowed us to navigate the pandemic storm and continue to fundraise, educate, and grow so we could continue to deliver our current programs and services that are so vital to our community.

## Community Development

We have a generous community, where groups and organization make it their priority to help the women and children we serve, and we work to ensure we build and maintain great partnerships with them. We have played an active role in Community Development within Bruce & Grey counties, with presentations made to many service clubs, churches and special interest groups. We have also put a focus on providing presentations for our sponsors, enlightening their staff on our much-needed services. Every presentation or interaction is an opportunity to build public awareness and educate the public on domestic violence and Women's House programs and services. They also allow us to build partnerships and make connections for future supporters, while we foster ongoing mutually beneficial relationships. In addition, the knowledge and awareness gained from our interactions generate conversations outside of our presentation space, and help others to be our ambassadors, making strides towards our common goal of elimination of violence against women.



Michelle Lamont presents Chris Turcotte with the Top Individual Walker trophy. Chris had the highest total dollar amount in pledges for an individual in our Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event for the 8th year in a row.

Woman Abuse Prevention Month and Wrapped in Courage Campaign November 2020: With the factory and our connection to the scarves we normally sell closed due to the pandemic, we opted to order masks designed with a "Stay Safe" message and Women's House logo on them. We held an on-line donation campaign throughout November, and received almost \$2,000 in donations. This format meant that we had less opportunity for education and personal interaction, but we provided information in our media release and on daily social media posts.



## Fund Development

Walk a Mile in Her Shoes (WAM) May-September 2020: The pandemic protocols steered us towards a virtual walk this past year, meaning less opportunity for education and the visual awareness that this event brings. In addition, Hanover cancelled their walk completely, meaning a missed opportunity for further awareness and fundraising. Our virtual walk was held from May until September, and had considerably less participation and funds raised by participants' pledges than any WAM event in recent years. Bruce Power is a strong supporter of this event every year, often holding gate collections, with many staff members participating and promoting the event. Since they couldn't participate like they normally do, they chose to donate an additional \$20,000 in support of the event and Women's House, bringing the revenues for this event closer to the norm.



# MICHELLE LAMONT • COMMUNITY AND FUND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

# 21

International Women's Day (IWD) March 2021: IWD was another virtual event this year, with a new format in partnership with Business to Bruce; it was shown to the public via a live YouTube link, with speakers and participants coming together to share their part. Registration for the free event was held through CanadaHelps, offering the option of making a donation in support of Women's House. We held an on-line auction the week before the event, with donated items coming from our sponsors' purchases supporting local businesses, and NPX hosting the on-line auction. We also opened nominations for our Woman of Distinction, Young Woman of Distinction and Inspiring Woman of Distinction awards, and made the "presentations" to the winners at the live event. The speaker, Samra Zafar, was amazing and inspiring, and we received plenty of positive feedback. With a few behind-the-scene hiccups, we held a successful event, raising almost \$4,200 with 113 in attendance.

**Host Events** create a synergy of support and relationship building, allowing our community members to take leadership in their goals to support Women's House, while allowing us to build good partnerships and reap the rewards of a supportive community outside of our typical reach. We helped to support and guide various community members as they held 14 individual Host Events on behalf of Women's House during this past fiscal year.

**Donations:** This year we saw a significant increase in the number of on-line donations. Our Spring and Winter Admail newsletters were sent out to almost 1,500 people, providing information on Women's House services, violence against women and sexual assault. We saw significant increases in support from all avenues of donors as they recognized the desperate need for the women we work with to be supported during the pandemic. These efforts demonstrate the ongoing support that our community has for the vital work that we do in helping women and their children who have experienced violence.

**Grants:** Fewer grant requests were made this past year because of changes in their focus area and criteria. For those grants that were available to us, the requested amounts were somewhat increased, in an attempt to fill the gap made by lower than average revenues from fundraising events and campaigns. The response from the grant donors that supported us was overwhelmingly supportive, often with donations higher than expected.

**Sponsorships:** With 28 annual Sponsors in our Sponsorship Program this fiscal year, we have seen six sponsors that are new to Women's House. The majority of our Sponsors have either contractually committed to multi-year support or are long-time supporters who renew their support each year. Many of our sponsorships come from successful grant applications, but the majority come forward on their own because they see a need or have heard about our needs via request letters, newsletters or through social media. As with all supporters this year, we saw a significant increase in sponsorship support. The generous financial support we received this year helped us to overcome any shortfalls in our fundraising, allowing us to surpass our overall fundraising target and provide for the inevitable backlash as we see pandemic fatigue set in and supporters' donation budgets dwindle in the future. In the meantime, we will work to keep our messages of support for women's issues in the public view, in spite of our limited ability to have gatherings that help to start the conversation. We will continue to hold our events in new ways; encouraging partnerships, host events and additional streams of fundraising that do not require additional resources.



### Kincardine Main Building

An MCCSS infrastructure grant allowed us to do the following capital projects:

- Upgrade Panel A and Panel B of our electrical
- Replace 13 of 16 of our cameras (three of them were just replaced in the past few years).
- Install heat detectors in three areas that were not previously installed.
- Funded most of the new flooring in the administration building. Additional funds from our operating budget paid for the remainder of the administration building flooring, as well as the playroom in the shelter.

Funds from our operating budget allowed us to upgrade the following capital projects:

- The Kincardine Main Building fire zones to allow our system to indicate which device (smoke/heat alarm, pull station) was activated. This allows staff and the monitoring station to know precisely where the potential fire is located and can then inform the fire department.
- Replace old heat detectors that were no longer supported by the manufacturer.
- Replace the printer in the outreach building. The new printer can fax, scan and is connected to our network.
- Replace the old dishwasher/sanitizer in the Shelter kitchen.
- Replace the printer in the administrative building. This new printer will also be able to fax once a phone line is installed. Any faxes coming in will still be confidential since they go to an email instead of printing at the machine.

### Second Stage

By March 31, 2021, we had 26 women and 24 children that lived at the three Second Stage Housing Units. Fifteen (15) women during this time stayed in second stage for a combined total of 126 months. This is an average of 8.4 months of stay per woman.

We had to replace Unit 1 and Unit 4 boilers in Kincardine. One was under warranty but we upgraded both units to actual in-floor and hot water boilers. The original ones and Unit 2 and 3 are hot water boilers that have been adapted to do in floor heating. Funds from the COVID relief fund allowed us to install washer/dryers in each unit in Port Elgin. We replaced the locks to coded locks on individual units in Kincardine with a Community Foundation of Grey & Bruce Grant. All three Second Stage Buildings locks for entrances, offices and individual units now have coded locks. This allows us to add a code when a new tenant moves in and delete the code when they move out. An MCCSS infrastructure grant allowed us to replace all the cameras at the Kincardine Second Stage site. We had to replace a combo hot water heater in Unit 4 in Port Elgin. We once again received a Home Depot Grant of \$2,000 for painting, cleaning floors and cleaning Second Stage Units.

### Owen Sound

Funds from our operating budget allowed us to replace the flooring of the second floor in the Owen Sound Outreach building.

### Administration

We were able to buy three desktop computers and seven more laptops from another grant from MCCSS. The old laptops are now available to be loaned out to Second Stage and outreach women accessing service. We also placed two old laptops in the shelter for women to use while staying in the shelter.

### Health and Safety

The Property Manager has been conducting Health and Safety duties including, but not limited to: co-chairing the Joint Health and Safety Committee; overseeing monthly inspections; WHMIS Testing; First Aid Inspections; & workplace illnesses and injuries. I worked closely with the Residential Manager to post and follow the recommended procedures from Public Health to staff and second stage tenants concerning COVID.



Mary Smith, Property Manager demonstrates use of a Thermal Monitor in the shelter, donated by Bruce Power. The monitor provides the ability to check temperatures hands-free, which has proven to be an asset during the pandemic.