

A photograph of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) walking across a field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and silhouettes of the people. The sky is filled with soft clouds. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

we are
novavita

Annual Report 2015 - 2016



On September 5th, 1995 I walked up the stairs of Nova Vita at our newly completed shelter on North Park Street. Although

I had 25 years of combined experience as a social worker in Toronto with street youth, and as an Executive Director at a small agency in Simcoe, I had never worked at a women's shelter. I can honestly say that I didn't know what I was getting myself into.

When I look back 21 years, I see a small organization struggling to be known and make its name in the community; an organization that knew it had an important job to do; an organization that was willing to take risks such as serving perpetrators of domestic violence when no one else did; a group of staff that was totally committed to the clients; and a Board of Directors that was willing to do what needed to be done. There was huge potential, and it needed to be harnessed.

In 2002, due to an overwhelming demand for services, Nova Vita expanded our "new" shelter by another 10,000 square feet – increasing our bed space by 40% to give us 33 beds – so that we could provide services to homeless women and their children. In 2008, we realized a dream of offering a continuum of services for domestic violence victims. We built our own second stage/ transitional housing that included eight units for women and their children who needed a little more support in the community. In 2013, we opened our first social enterprise, **Closet Couture**, to develop another revenue stream by selling gently used clothing that was not utilized at the shelter, and to educate the community about Nova Vita and domestic violence in a unique way.

Over the ensuing years, we had our ups and downs. There was "the flood" of 2010 when a huge rain storm flooded all 10,000 square feet of

the main floor of the new building. Shortly after that, we had "the fire" at the six-plex. We were waiting for the pestilence! Happily, no pestilence came, and we made it through these trials and still maintained our sense of humour!

Our reputation as an expert in the field of domestic violence is now established in Brantford and the County of Brant. We are known as an innovative, creative organization – thanks to the hard work and vision of our staff. As I reflect on the past 21 years, I believe that Nova Vita is a trailblazer. We continue to forge ahead with our "holistic approach to domestic violence" serving women, children and men. Nova Vita continues to be a strong community partner with organizations such as Brant Family and Children's Services, Victim Services, and the Sexual Assault Centre, to name a few. At Nova Vita, we believe that strong partnerships build stronger communities.

Working with victims of domestic violence, their children and their partners becomes a passion. As Executive Director, my tenure here has been more than a job where no two days were alike - it has been a continuous education, and...*a gift*. I have had the absolute privilege and honour to work with talented, professional and dedicated staff. Many thanks to our fabulous staff, our generous volunteers, donors, supporters, and members of the board. I could not, and would not, have been here for 21 years, if not for you.

As I prepare to retire at the end of this year, I want to thank you for enriching my life both professionally and personally. I am certain that Nova Vita will continue to make a difference in our community. Thanks for the memories...

Joy Freeman MSW, RSW
Executive Director

we help. we hope. we heal.

As our year closes and we reflect on our accomplishments and challenges, I am pleased to say that much progress was made this year in the area of Board Governance.

In January, we embarked on a mission to review and update our governance policies. We have successfully completed Phase I and II of Policy Review and Development, with both updated and new policies added to the procedural manual.

In June, we regrettably accepted Joy Freeman's decision to retire from her position as Executive Director effective December 31, 2016. Joy will be with us for the transition period, and we are currently recruiting for her position. As our Executive Director for 21 years, we know that replacing her will be a monumental task but wish her the very best in the years to come.

This was also a year to welcome Paul Oddi to the Board of Directors. Regrettably, we also accepted the resignation of Linda Heibert. Her contributions and experience will be sorely missed.

Funding challenges this year remain a concern and we strive to find creative ways to support our organization. Again, the dedication and passion of our managers, staff, volunteers and the support of funders, sponsors and donors continues to help us offer 'help, hope and healing' to women, their children and families from our community. On behalf of Nova Vita's Board of Directors, we would like to extend our gratitude to you. Because of your support our doors will always be open.

Sincerely,
Dianne Wallis
Board President

2015-2016 Board of Directors

Dianne Wallis – President

Gerri Jensen – Vice-President

Colette Good – Secretary

Tara Conway – Treasurer

Victoria Malcolm – Past President

Dr. Louise Scott

Linda Hiebert*

Chris Churchill

Heather Barker

Safi Hafiz-Zadeh

Patricia Lovelock

Paul Oddi

*resigned

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“They saved my life. They identified I was considering suicide and they stopped me. I will be forever grateful for what they have done for me. Every single worker here is always available and not only treat each other with so much respect but also the women living here.”

- Nova Vita Client



Nova Vita's reputation as a leading authority in the area of domestic violence is the result of over 30 years of experience in providing relevant, quality services and programs that meet the changing needs of our community.

Our Mission

We provide holistic client-centred residential and counselling services to abused and homeless women and their children, and counselling services to perpetrators of domestic violence in Brantford and the County of Brant.

The 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE, **519.752.HELP(4357)**, is available to anyone in the community who is in crisis, or who needs help and advice about an issue involving domestic violence. While many of the callers are women who themselves are the victims of domestic violence, an increasing number of calls are from concerned friends, family members, neighbours and co-workers.

3,893 crisis calls were made in 2015/16

71,458 minutes were spent on the crisis line

78% of calls were within Brantford

414 were known first time callers

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“The will to survive, the empowerment to succeed, the courage to change and the immense internal strength to venture into the unknown, be vulnerable and grow. Every face, every story and every change has made an impact on me and keeps me motivated and dedicated to the work that I do.” - Nova Vita Team Member



a home when needed

We have 33 emergency beds for abused and/or homeless women and their children. The shelter is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing a safe haven, meals, support, information and referrals to other community resources.

The child-friendly facility has both indoor and outdoor play areas. Children and adolescents receive the comfort and support they need from a dedicated Child and Youth Worker and an Early Childhood Educator.

Our Clients

Children **140**

Women **141**

Total **281**

- 44 days - the average length of stay in the shelter
- 90 days - spent at 100% capacity
- 76 days - spent OVER capacity
- 70% - the percentage of children in the shelter who were under the age of six





a safe place to heal

Maria House - A Home for Families in Transition

What happens when families are no longer in need of emergency shelter? Nova Vita's Maria House offers 8 residential units in a setting that combines independent living with counselling and life skills training. Two of these units are wheelchair accessible.

Our staff also provide outreach services for women who want to make the transition to an independent, violence-free life. This support may include safety planning, referrals to other community resources, accompaniment to court, lawyers' offices or other appointments, and advocacy with social service agencies, home support and follow-up.

**Transitional Support was
involved with 205 clients**

**12 women and their children stayed at
Maria House last year**



services for all

Community Counselling for Women

Counselling is provided to women aged 16 and over who are in, or have been in, an abusive relationship. Most counselling takes place in small group settings, where participants can draw support from one another. The increased focus on group counselling, combined with streamlined intake procedures, have drastically reduced the waiting time for service.

269 women took part in our community counselling program last year

**18% were between 17-25
15% were between 50-70**

Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

Children and adolescents aged 4 to 16 meet in small groups to deal with the impact of the violence they have witnessed against their mothers. Concurrently, the mothers attend separate sessions to discuss the impact of domestic violence on their children and learn parenting and coping strategies.

**Mothers Supported 13
Children Supported 28**

Mothers in Mind

This program is very similar to the Children Exposed to Violence program except it is designed specifically for infants, toddlers and children up to five years of age and their mothers. *This program started in February 2016 so numbers are not yet available.



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“All the staff at Nova Vita were very sympathetic and caring. They always made sure I didn’t feel alone, especially the nights after the residents I became close with had left. They always made my opinion and thoughts feel validated, and took into consideration any changes I mentioned whether it be about house rules or different foods to try. They were very accommodating, and overall an amazing bunch of women.” - Nova Vita Client

Differential Response

A partnership with Brant Family and Children's Services (FACS) that brings a Nova Vita worker and a FACS worker together to meet with the victim and the perpetrator of domestic violence to assess the needs of the family and develop a plan of intervention that meets each member of the family's needs.

**99 families were provided support by our
Differential Response program**

Caring Families

This prevention-based program helps parents create respectful adult relationships and a cooperative, positive co-parenting approach with their children. Concurrent group sessions are offered to mothers, fathers, and children.

**54 adults and 7 children participated
in this program**

Violence Prevention and Community Outreach

At the heart of what we do is trying to inform the community and shape the next generation to believe that everyone is entitled to a life without violence. We provide class presentations to elementary and secondary schools on such topics as domestic violence, teen dating violence, sexual harassment and healthy relationships. Our hope is that giving them the knowledge and tools they need will lead to reduced rates of partner violence in the future.

Upon request, we will provide on-site counselling at schools. Nova Vita also conducts in-service seminars at local agencies and delivers workshops and presentations on various issues surrounding domestic violence to service clubs, churches, businesses and other groups in the community.

**35 presentations given
4561 community members reached**



Challenge to Change

For individuals who are, or are at risk of being abusive towards their partners, this program is designed to recognize non-abusive, healthy ways to communicate and problem solve in their relationships.

The program invites individuals to take responsibility for abusive thoughts and actions and to respect themselves and their families. Those involved will develop an understanding of the complexity of domestic violence which extends beyond physical abuse including verbal, emotional, financial, sexual and psychological abuse. The safety of the participants' partners is monitored through the Partner Check Program.

S.C.R.I.B.E. Men's Program

This 12 week program is directed at those who are, or are at risk of becoming abusive towards their partners. Through group counselling, participants discover how violence has impacted their families, learn how to stop their abusive behaviours, and develop new respect for their partners and their relationships. The safety of the participants' partners is monitored through the Partner Check Program.

Partner Assault Response Program (PAR)

This is a 12 week psycho-educational program for perpetrators of domestic violence who have been charged through the criminal court system. As with the SCRIBE Program, the safety of the participants' partner is monitored through the Partner Check Program.

Programming by the Numbers

Challenge to Change 238

SCRIBE 23

Partner Check Program 409



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“We watch how clients progress and learn when attending groups. The man who realizes he has become his abusive father; the promise he made to himself as a child that he thought he would never break. Realizing he needs to change, the man sadly says, I wish I knew this information before - things would have been different. We hear the pain of how domestic violence has impacted lives and provide empathy and support to give hope and empowerment.” - Nova Vita Team Member

supporting the community

Nova Vita's proactive and innovative approach to ending the cycle of violence involves close working relationships with the Brantford Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police, Victims Services of Brant, the Sexual Assault Centre of Brant, school boards and many other local organizations and social service agencies. Brant Family and Children's Services and the Brant County Health Unit provide on site services for Nova Vita clients.

Nova Vita is a member of the BRAVE committee (Brant's Response Against Violence Everywhere), and an active member of DiVA, a subcommittee charged with the task of promoting heightened community awareness of the issue of domestic violence. Nova Vita also supports The Hairspray Project which uses the privileged relationship between salon professionals and their clients to help women living in abusive relationships get the information and services they need.

We would like to thank our community partners for their continued support to our clients, and for working together with us on ending the cycle of violence for those living in Brantford and Brant County.

community support

Thank you to the following major sponsors for their continued support of our events.

Nova Vita Heels to Heal Walk

TELUS Small Business Solutions
Mother's Pizza Brantford
Millards Chartered Professional
Accountants Brantford
Personal Service Coffee
Diva Essentials

International Women's Day

Madorin Synder LLP
Millards Chartered Professional
Accountants Brantford
Serenity Country Candles
BMO - Bank of Montreal
Winmar
Hearth & Home
Decorating Den Interiors
Dr. Zohra Docrat

Charity Golf Tournament

Winmar
Hospitality Dynamics Inc.
the design center
Dr. Zohra Docrat
Brantford Toyota
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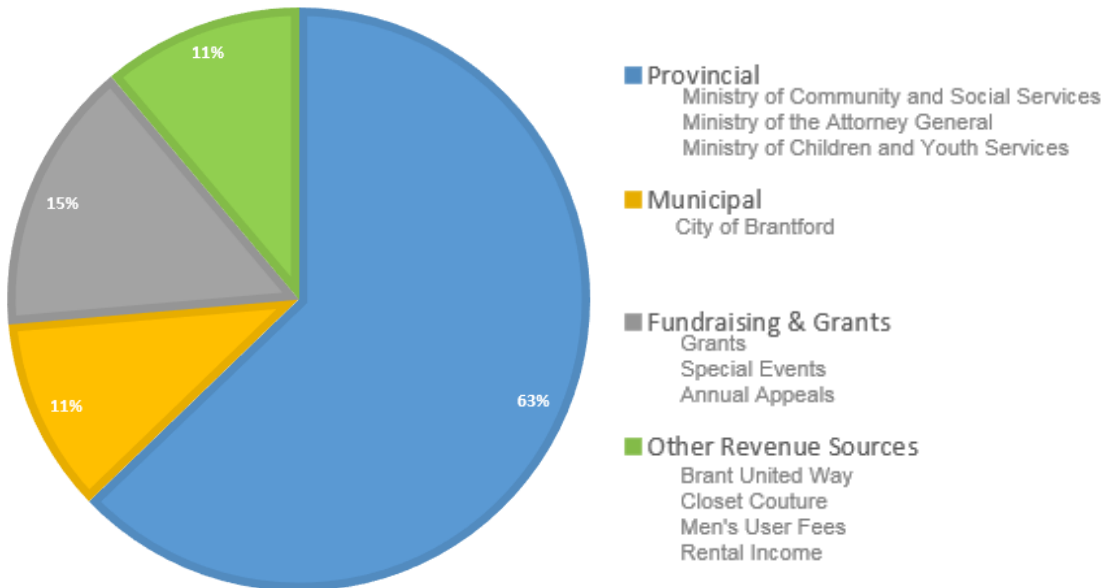
*We are so grateful to **all** our wonderful donors and we thank you for your dedicated support.*

Every donor makes a difference in the lives of women and families at Nova Vita by making it possible for us to provide the vital programming that helps families achieve stability, independence and a better future.

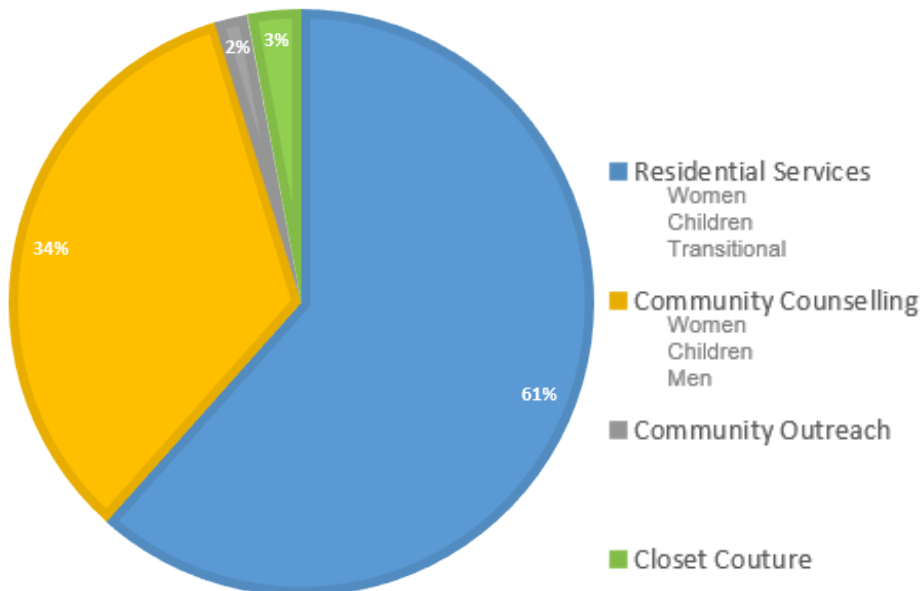


nova vita 2015-2016

REVENUE \$2,501,960



EXPENDITURES \$2,466,553



REVENUE

Provincial	\$1,571,535
Municipal	\$270,790
Fundraising & Grants	\$380,674
Other Revenue Sources	\$278,961
Total Revenue	\$2,501,960

EXPENDITURES

Residential Services	\$1,519,135
Community Counselling	\$830,573
Community Outreach	\$44,216
Closet Couture	\$72,629
Total Expenditures	\$2,466,553



novavita
help. hope. heal.

Domestic Violence Prevention Services

59 North Park Street

Brantford, ON N3R 4J8

24 Hour Crisis Line: 519.752.HELP (4357)

All other calls: 519.752.1005

Fax: 519.752.0811

www.novavita.org

E-mail: info@novavita.org

Revenue Canada Charitable Tax: 10777 1727 RR0001



United Way
Brant
Change starts here.

Ontario
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario



Ontario

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



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