



# Annual Report

## 2016-2017

### NOVA VITA

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES

*Our 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 the community.*

#### OUR VISION

*Every person is entitled to a life without violence.*

#### OUR MISSION

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

#### OUR CAPACITY

*Our staff are focused, committed, passionate, innovative, and competent. Because of the support of our funders and donors, we are able to provide the best services and make a difference in our clients' lives.*

#### OUR PARTNERS

*We have a history of building strong relationships which are essential to our success. We will continue to build relationships at the local, provincial and national levels investigating innovation and best practices in family violence services.*





Natasha Dobler, Executive Director

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is an absolute honour and privilege to lead Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services as the new Executive Director. Nova Vita's reputation as a leading authority in violence prevention and intervention was built under the tremendous leadership of Joy Freeman who, after 21 years, deservedly retired in January 2017. She left behind a legacy of groundbreaking programming, excellence in service-provision, and strong community partnerships; a solid foundation that will propel us as we move into the next historical chapter of Nova Vita.

As I initially transitioned into this new leadership role and immersed myself into the culture of Nova Vita, the passion, dedication, and commitment of the management, staff, volunteers, students, and donors were immediately and distinctly apparent. The willingness to help, the drive to go above and beyond, and the compassion exhibited, exceeded my expectations. The energy was palpable. It was clear to see that behind the locked doors and security systems, deep within this fortress of safety, the work being done was more than the requisite bed for women and children to lay their head. There lived a heart and soul that breathed life into the corridors. There was a sense of hope and a desire for healing.

It is within this spirit that Nova Vita will move forward, beyond the bricks and mortar. We will continue to utilize best practice and explore innovative approaches in service provision. We will build upon our reputation as a well-respected community partner and collaborator. We will actively foster inclusive spaces and celebrate diversity. We will strengthen our financial sustainability and pursue new opportunities. Together we can achieve safe, healthy, and vibrant communities where every individual can live a life without violence.

I wish to thank the Board of Directors for their invaluable support, the staff and management for embracing me into the team, and the Brantford-Brant County community for their warm welcome.

Natasha Dobler,  
Executive Director

### A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO APRIL FEATHER- STONHAUGH

April had a special place in her heart for Nova Vita and over the years she was a devoted Board Member and a gracious donor. Sadly, April passed away in the summer of 2016. We were honoured and humbled to receive a bequest from her estate that will enable us to continue providing essential services to families in need. In her memory, we have designed a sitting area, looking out over the trees to the community park beyond. Her generous legacy of giving will continue to bring comfort to many.

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

In June we regrettably accepted the decision of our Executive Director, Joy Freeman, to retire from her position effective December 31, 2016. Joy was the mainstay of Nova Vita for over 23 years and her leadership steered the shelter to new accomplishments. We welcomed our new Executive Director, Natasha Dobler, who officially took over the reins in January 2017. Since joining our team Natasha has brought with her not only experience and enthusiasm but fresh, innovative ideas.

This was also a year to welcome Paul Oddi, Peter Martyn and Bob Kindon to the Board of Directors. We appreciate the experience and insight they bring to the table. Regrettably we also accepted the resignations of Victoria Malcolm, our past President, Colette Good, our Board Secretary, and Chris Churchill. Their contributions and experience will be sorely missed.

Again this year we continue to search for creative ways to support our shelter through various funding opportunities and special events. International Women's Day, Heels to Heal and the annual golf tournament draw support from the community and in turn, assists the shelter. We are very grateful to all who participate in these events.

Once more the dedication and passion of our managers, staff, volunteers and the support of funders, sponsors and donors continues to permit us to offer 'help, hope and healing' to women and their children from our community. On behalf of Nova Vita's Board of Directors, we would like to extend our gratitude... because of your support our doors will always be open.

Dianne Wallis  
President, Board of Directors



Dianne Wallis, Board President

### **2016-2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Dianne Wallis  
*President*

Gerri Jensen  
*Vice-President*

Patricia Lovelock  
*Treasurer*

Tara Conway  
*Secretary*

Dr. Louise Scott  
*Director*

Heather Barker  
*Director*

Safi Hafiz-Zadeh  
*Director*

Paul Oddi  
*Director*

Bob Kindon  
*Director*

Peter Martyn  
*Director*

*Resigned through the year*

Victoria Malcolm

Colette Good

Chris Churchill



*"Nova Vita saved my life. I will forever be grateful for what they have done for me" -client*

259



WOMEN AND  
CHILDREN  
STAYED IN OUR  
EMERGENCY  
SHELTER  
INCLUDING

64

MOTHERS WHO  
BROUGHT

114

CHILDREN TO  
SAFETY

# SHELTER PROGRAM

4,560 CALLS WERE ANSWERED ON  
OUR 24 HOUR CRISIS AND SUPPORT LINE



*"The staff made me feel at home. For the first time in a year, I had a home."  
~ residential client*

*"I often think of  
how brave the  
women are in  
being able to  
finally leave  
their abusive  
situation and  
how Nova Vita  
supports these  
families to make  
a violence-free  
life for them-  
selves."*

*~shelter staff*

**95%** of women who stayed in our emergency shelter said they  
felt more aware of safety and support options available to them



**94%** of women said they are more aware of where to go to ask  
for the services and supports they need in the community



**94%** of women agreed that the help they received at nova vita  
made a positive impact on their life



**93%** of women said they would come back to Nova Vita if they  
needed help



## HOW NOVA VITA MAKES A DIFFERENCE

We asked the staff to share their thoughts on the stories behind the statistics and what inspires them in the work they do every day. Here's what they said.

"I'm always inspired by the amount of care and thoughtfulness our staff puts into working with clients in the shelter."

"We collectively work with clients supporting their goals individually and providing support for families as a whole."

"I feel proud and honoured that Nova Vita has given me the opportunity to be part of Brant's Community Response Team, representing the agency in such an important role and helping individuals who are at risk."

"I'm proud of our ability to work well together and utilize each of our strengths to make programming innovative and client centered."

"With every challenge we face comes a chance to grow, learn and utilize our strengths in order to continue to provide the best service possible to our clients."

"I think Nova Vita continues to implement opportunities for engagement with the whole family. We know that when women and men have a person who supports them they will reach out which often reduces the conflict and its intensity, keeping everyone more safe."

"What has inspired me in my work in the Community Counselling program has been our ability to listen to the voices of our clients and create programming that meets their needs."

"When you work at Nova Vita, it's like being part of a family."

"We run one of the most thorough men's program in the province. We are able to look at the complete indi-

vidual, not just the isolated behaviours and incidents that have brought them to our program"

"During the past year, I received a thoughtful thank you card from a client who was moving into her own place and was very appreciative for my help during her time at Nova Vita. I knew that it was more than just my assistance, but that her success was the result of a cooperative effort from both the staff and volunteer team."

"What stands out for me from the work we did in Community Counselling is witnessing the resiliency of the human spirit and will. Our clients, young and old, face many challenges on a daily basis to work through their fear, pain, sadness and struggles, yet they manage somehow to keep going and fight for their right to find better and healthier ways to live."

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

**4** babies born at Nova Vita

**58** children played in our daycare

**45** preschoolers supported through S.T.E.P

**15** children received ongoing individual counselling

**23** children actively participated in our after school program

**27** children who witnessed abuse attended group programming



## FINDING SAFE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Finding safe affordable housing seems at times impossible, especially for single women. In the past few months, we have seen an increase in single women over the age of 50 needing shelter. Learning how to best serve an aging population and making connections with other support services in the community has been beneficial to the team. Along with this and in partnership with the City of Brantford we have been working on the Portable Housing Benefit, a pilot project that opens up more options for women who have experienced violence to secure housing.



**33** WOMEN  
FOUND SAFE AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
THROUGH THE  
PORTABLE HOUSING  
BENEFIT PROJECT

## TRANSITIONING FROM ABUSE ...

**293**

women in the community were assisted with safety planning and transitioning into a safer home

*"Nova Vita made me strong again and saved my life."  
~ client*

**146**

individuals were provided with info, support, and system navigation in Family Court

**13**

women lived at Maria House, our Second Stage Transitional Home

*My confidence is back and the ability to move forward in my life without fear. ~ client*

## THE HEALING JOURNEY...

**61**

women attended our Abuse Recovery Group

*"Helped me to be stronger, learned how to forgive. And most of all to move forward"  
~client*

**222**

women received individual counseling to heal from abuse

**7**

women discovered their creativity in Art Therapy

**15**

mothers, whose children were exposed to domestic violence, attend group

**14**

attended Women of Wisdom, a support group for older women

## CARING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY...

*"Thank you for being such a life changer for me. You allowed my daughter and I to remove ourselves from an abusive environment. You made me a stronger woman. I feel very blessed."  
~ client*

**40**

parents in high-conflict relationships learned about respectful communication and cooperative co-parenting approaches in our **Caring Families** group program

**16**

children received support and will benefit from their parents learning these new skills

## DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

Our partnership with Brant Family and Children's Services, is a coordinated response to quickly intervene, assess, and support families experiencing high conflict and domestic violence. Together, a FACS worker and a Nova Vita worker, meet with the family and develop a plan of intervention.

**75** mothers supported  
**45** fathers supported  
**165** children impacted

*"I am a lot stronger of a person than I was when I started the group program." ~client*



Meet me at the Pole, a suicide awareness and prevention campaign



QUOTES FROM MEN  
IN THE PAR  
PROGRAM

*"Thankfully for PAR ,  
I was able to regroup  
and make the right  
choice instead of let-  
ting my foolish pride  
and anger get to me.  
I owe PAR my life,  
because you are,  
honest to God, saving  
my life with these  
classes and I don't  
think you get the  
proper credit you all  
deserve for lending  
your wisdom and a  
guiding hand. I  
appreciate all you've  
said and done for me.  
It means the world to  
me man."*

*"I have learned to be  
more mindful of  
other's thoughts,  
feelings and views."*

*"Its's made me a bet-  
ter person to myself  
and others. You guys  
have changed my per-  
spective on life and  
showed me there is  
still hope."*

*"Thank you for all the  
support and help to  
get through this as a  
better person. Not  
only for me but for my  
girlfriend and my  
friends and my  
family."*

## FROM CHALLENGE TO CHANGE...

For individuals who are, or 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 learn to respect themselves and their families. Those involved will develop an understanding of the complexity of domestic violence which extends beyond physical abuse. Safety of the participants' partners is monitored through the Partner Check Program

**PAR Program** - The Partner Assault Response Program is a 12 week psycho-educational program for perpetrators of domestic violence who have been charged with a domestic violence related criminal offense and mandated through the criminal court system to enroll in coun-

selling.

### **SCRIBE Men's Program**

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

### **Partner Check Program**

Current and ex-partners who have been the victims of abuse from program participants are contacted by a counsellor to offer information, support, and resources. Safety planning and monitoring of abusive behaviours are also discussed.

**254** men enrolled in the  
PAR Program

**326** women contacted  
by Partner Check Program

**22** men enrolled in  
the SCRIBE Program

**4** men received individ-  
ual support services

**62** women enrolled in the  
PAR Program

**64** men contacted by  
Partner Check Program





Youth from the No More Project

## GROWING THE ‘NO MORE’ PROJECT

The No More Project, a youth centered, gendered violence prevention initiative developed by the BRAVE Committee (Brant’s Response Against Violence Everywhere), began its journey in 2012 with funding from Status of Women Canada. In 2016, the Project received new funding in the form of a “Grow” grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Since 2012, The No More Project has been successful in developing strong relationships with a variety of youth-centered agencies in the Brantford community, which has allowed the team to engage close to **1,000 community members** between the ages of 12-24 the past 5 years. As a grass roots community based initiative, No More strives to create a space for young people to take on leadership roles in fostering gender equality, and take a stance against gendered violence. Operating from an anti-oppressive, intersectional framework, The No More Project helps young people to draw connections between the way language and actions can contribute to a larger culture of gendered violence.

This past year, the No More team was successful in providing an Ambassador Leadership Training which was a 5 week program focusing on various topics related to gendered violence prevention including: gendered violence education, gender identity, expression and sexual orientation, module development and facilitation skills. A total of **18 youth** ages 16-24 completed the training and have been successfully facilitating alongside project staff in the community using a peer-to-peer model. The Project team looks forward to continuing to foster its peer-to-peer awareness raising model, as well as continuing to develop new and engaging programming while expanding its reach within the community. The Project is headquartered out of the Sexual Assault Centre of Brant with an additional office at Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services.

## CLOSET COUTURE BOUTIQUE

*Change your wardrobe.  
Change a life.*

Closet Couture Boutique is Nova Vita's first social enterprise, opening its doors in July 2013 to offer exceptional quality, new, and like-new women's fashion items. Customers experience the thrill of shopping in a beautifully decorated boutique assisted by friendly, attentive staff and discover great savings for one-of-a-kind finds.

Our work training project, **The Runway**, is a thriving partnership with St. Leonard's and supported by the Brantford Community Foundation. It officially launched in April 2016 with **4** successful participants completing the work training program.

With limited financial resources and ever increasing demands for services at Nova Vita, we continue to find innovative ways to support our programs.

**222b King George  
Brantford  
closet-couture.ca**

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

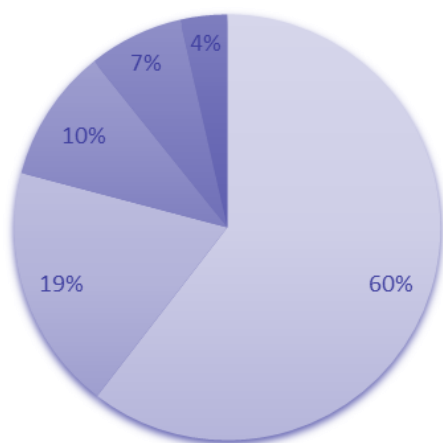
At Nova Vita, we know that public education and awareness is a critical aspect to addressing domestic violence. Presentations to schools, businesses, community agencies, faith-based organizations, and local clubs create dialogue and bring the issue to the forefront. It's a way to share information about warning signs of abuse, provide tips for safety planning, discuss healthy relationships, and point to available resources in the community that people can turn to in their time of need. It can equip

friends, families, neighbours, and co-workers with the tools to support loved ones, as well as encouraging community members to take collective action on a broader scale.

Surprisingly, this vital service relies solely on our fundraising efforts. With the help of our sponsors, partners, and community supporters, we were able to provide **31 presentations to 3,554 people** in our community and increase our social media presence.

*"I am more confident in my choices. I am happier with myself" ~ client*

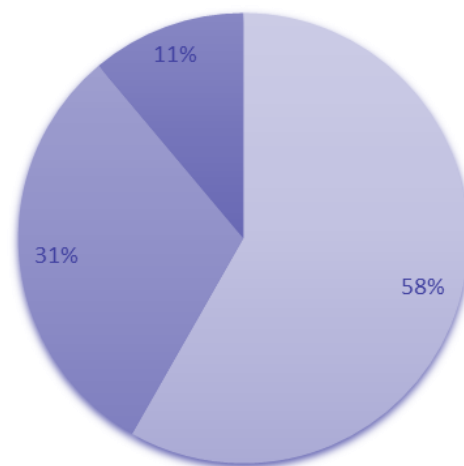
### Revenue \$2,652,594



- Provincial Government \$1,603,605
- Grants/Foundations/Fundraising \$495,101
- Municipal Government \$268,783
- Others Sources of Revenue \$190,845
- Brant United Way \$94,261

## FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

### Expenditures \$2,673,174



- Residential Shelter \$1,556,686
- Community Counselling \$819,563
- Community Engagement \$296,925



## VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL!

*“There can be no greater gift than that of giving one’s time and energy to help others without expecting anything in return.” ~Nelson Mandela*

Our volunteers personify this quote! During the past year, they dedicated an alarming **3,900 hours** to help sustain our mission. Our volunteers selflessly give their time, talents and energy that directly or indirectly benefit all clients enrolled in the many programs offered at Nova Vita. Their tasks include donation sorting, shelter support, reception and administrative duties, legal services, children activities and supervision, helping at Closet Couture, assisting our fundraising efforts or at special events and steering our board.

During the 2016-2017 financial year, our volunteers’ creativity and thoughtfulness fueled growth in our capacity to receive and distribute donations to community partners, organizing our limited storage spaces so that our clients’ needs are continually met, reaching more donors for financial support, increasing information sharing for our life skills program, and initiating new programs and activities for client engagement.

We truly cannot do all we do without the involvement of our volunteers who complement staff efforts in providing help, hope and healing to the families and individuals that we serve.

## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMITTED VOLUNTEERS

Saffron	Tammie	Rose	Jean
Annetoinette	Norma Jean	Patti	Karen R.
Wenda	Kathy	Danielle K	Candy
Jacklyn	Susanne C.	Valerie	Stephanie
Edna	Susan	Kristen	Sana
Lori	Lucinda	Dawn	Salena
Janet	Braylyn	Elaine	Lori
Jacquie	Austin	Heidi	Janice
Peter G	Monique	Lois	Tracy
Danielle G	Jeff	Sarah	Samantha
Marilyn	Dorothy	Barb	Shirley
Karen B.	Rebecca	Kim	Karen
Lindsay	Dayna	Marilyn P.	Dariusz
Kayla	Kathy	Sarah	Irena
Lisa	Margaret	Nelson	



**THANK YOU TO  
OUR FUNDERS, SPONSORS,  
DONORS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS,  
AND OUR SPECIAL NOVA VITA FRIENDS.**

**WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!**

*Please join us next year at one of our  
upcoming community events:*

**January 2018  
Skate to Heal**

**March 2018  
International Women's Day**

**June 2018  
Heels to Heal**

**August 2018  
Golf Tournament**

**September 2018  
Nova Vita's 35th Anniversary**

## **NOVA VITA**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES**

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