



2015 Summer Newsletter

# Nova Vita

Domestic Violence Prevention Services

**Help. Hope. Heal.**

Nova Vita extends its sincere gratitude to all donors for their generous contributions and ongoing support. Without you, many of our services and events would not be possible. Thank you for ensuring we can continue to provide help, hope, and healing to women, children, and men in our community.



*Brantford has the highest reported incidence of domestic violence in Ontario and the 9th highest in all of Canada.*

Statistics Canada. 2013. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile.*







## The Shelter

With an increase of families being admitted, the shelter has been busy! Luckily, with community support through our many volunteers and donors, we have been able to continue to meet our clients' needs. Our shelter volunteers have been coming into the shelter throughout the week to encourage and teach our clients self-care such as yoga and meditation, and even spending fun time having manicures/pedicures and movie nights with moms and kids. The clients in the shelter have had a positive reaction to this! We are looking forward to bringing more volunteers on board this year as we continue to have great success with our volunteer program.

The community has also been very generous when donation requests have gone out via social media. Many donations of baby needs (such as formula and diapers), children's pajamas, and toys have been donated to the shelter which helps us with our budget.

To accommodate the busyness of the shelter, the children's program has continued to grow and evolve - offering much support and guidance to mothers, children, and staff. Daily programming and check-ins have helped to build the confidence of children impacted by violence and homelessness and this has encouraged mothers to broaden their parenting skills. This support will help families continue to strive to reach their full potential.

***40% of the women living in the shelter were between the ages of 18-25.***

## Program Updates

### Community Counselling

Women that come into our Community Counselling program receive counselling that helps them address the impact of domestic violence on themselves and their families. We also offer Mindfulness groups, and groups geared towards the needs of older women looking for a safe space to talk about their abuse experience. Through the generosity of a volunteer Art Therapist, we offer an Art Therapy group that provides an alternative therapy approach. Additionally, new this year, through a partnership with St. Leonard's Community Services, we offer a group for women that have experienced abuse and who identify personal substance use concerns. We are always looking for ways to improve our program based on clients' needs and feedback.

We are also proud to offer training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students from local colleges and universities. This year, three of our community counsellors were honoured for their hard work and dedication to the education and growth of their students. Congratulations Sarah, Lauren, and Ashley!

### Children's Programming

The children's program at Nova Vita is ever evolving. It had become apparent to us that in addition to addressing the impact of witnessing domestic violence on children, we needed to consider their developmental and recreational needs as well. Additionally, research points to the importance of early intervention with children who witness violence as the best strategy for the promotion of a child's well-being.

With the generosity of Brant United Way, the Cowan Foundation, Telus, and the hard work of our staff, we were able to develop a program that combines counselling and therapy with Early Childhood Education. The children experience fun activities, crafts, outdoor play, field trips, help with their reading/writing, and math as well as counselling support. The moms have access

to support with their parenting as they learn how to help their children begin the journey of healing.

Violence and aggression have severe negative effects on children of all ages. Nova Vita's Children's program is a safe place for children and their moms to work through these effects and learn what it feels like to live a violence free life.

### Caring Families

The Caring Families program supports families with parents who are experiencing parental conflict that leads to abusive and unhealthy family dynamics. This 16 week group based program offers separate groups for moms and dads as well as age appropriate groups for children.

Parents learn about their own parenting and how it affects their relationship with their children and the other parent. Parents gain the knowledge and skills to be able to practice child-focused parenting that is also respectful of one's self and the other parent. The children learn about respect in relationships and the importance of listening to and considering other perspectives when it comes to problem solving. Children are given the opportunity to identify their support systems as they learn to adjust to any changes in their families that may have resulted from separation, divorce and/or parental conflict.

Over the past year, we have served over 15 families. Many of the partners were separated or divorced while continuing to share parenting responsibilities of their children. The feedback from clients has been very positive and encouraging - parents are finding ways to communicate better and to consider the needs of their children by moving the focus away from the conflict.

***Over 70% of the children living in the shelter were 0 - 6 years of age.***

## International Women's Day



The inspiring and comedic Kate Davis entertained 320 attendees at International Women's Day this year.

The following were the recipients of the 2015 awards:

### Culture and Heritage:

Arlene Laskey

### Business, Professions and Trades:

Colleen Miller

### Community Service:

Shirley Simons

### Active Living and Wellness:

Fran Welsh

### Agriculture, Environment, Science and Technology:

Ruth Ann Charlton



Public Education

The Public Education program continues to be in demand by the community. We received several requests to participate in information fairs and community events such as Police Week, Pride In the Park, and the Best Start Parenting Fair. We gave classroom presentations to Tollgate Technological Skills Centre Secondary School and Fanshawe College. These community events proved very beneficial for Nova Vita as we made great connections with individuals wanting to volunteer for Nova Vita, networked with several community partners and informed long term donors how their generous donations make a difference to the lives of women, children and men who use our services.

Social Media

Nova Vita’s presence on social media has served the purpose of education, fulfilling donation requests, advertising our fundraising events, as well as assisting our community partners through sharing their causes and events. In the past fiscal year, we doubled our followers both on Facebook and Twitter which has increased our donation request posts to often reach over 10,000 people and be shared up to 160 times! As our presence grows on social media, so does our ability to make new connections and provide another safe avenue for women to reach out.

Follow us @SupportNovaVita



Men’s Programming

The Men’s program provides counselling and support for men who struggle with behaving abusively and in some cases, violently. Abusive and violent behaviour is more than hitting and punishing. It can also be name calling, put-downs, control, insults, minimization and denial. While the majority of the men that come into our program are mandated by the court as a result of being charged with domestic assault, many of our clients choose to attend our program as a way to break the cycle of violence in their own lives.

Clients gain knowledge and skills to be able to gain personal insight into their own behaviour. They learn healthy communication skills, problem solving skills, and self-regulation strategies that minimize the risk of violence reoccurring. Safety planning and support is also offered outside of group as needed.

This program continues to operate at full capacity. The program is able to reach men and offer them an opportunity to make changes that will lead to healthier lives for themselves as well as their partners and children.

*The crisis line received over 3,400 calls in the 2014/2015 fiscal year and the shelter was over capacity 57 days - making it a very busy year for shelter workers!*



Differential Response

Through a collaboration with Family and Children’s Services of Brant, we engage both moms and dads in appropriate services at Nova Vita and in the community. This lowers the risk of violence and helps children and their families access resources that enable them to break the cycle of violence and learn skills that empower them to lead healthy violence free lives. This collaboration affords Brant FACS and Nova Vita to develop both an understanding of and an appreciation for the role that each organization plays in the fight against domestic violence.

We presented this program at the Fourth Annual Canadian Domestic Violence Conference in Toronto (2015). As a result of our presentation, we were invited to contribute to a book about the work that is being done to effectively work with men and women involved in domestic violence.

Outreach

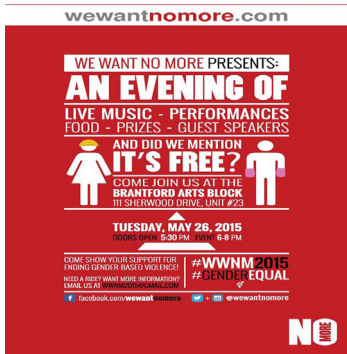
The We Want No More Project

Since 2013, the We Want No More project, funded through Status of Women Canada and sponsored by BRAVE, has continued to work with young men and boys alongside young women and girls to address and prevent gender-based violence in our community. The project has engaged over 650 young people through workshops, information booths, school visits, team visits and our kick-off and wrap up forums.

Over the past year, the project has taken root in the community and We Want No More is becoming a household name. The No More Project has also developed strong relationships with the Grand Erie School Board (both elementary and secondary), Boys & Girls Club of Brantford –Keystone Leadership group and the Why Not Youth Centre.

To celebrate the project’s successes a forum was held at the end of May. This included an evening of food, friends, live music, dance, theatre, and a panel discussion on ending gender-based violence. Almost 100 people attended the event and demonstrated how many young people in our community are committed to ending gender-based violence, once and for all!

The project is such a success, we are applying to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for additional funding.



*“Gender equality is important to me because all people are equal. Unfortunately, this reality is not yet true for all people in all places. We must be diligent and commit to the work so that equality in theory becomes equality in practice.”*

- Student from Laurier University, Brantford

18th Annual Golf Tournament

The rain held off once again, and 110 golfers enjoyed a fantastic day on the course. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Management and Staff at the Green’s of Renton, the participants, Strode’s BBQ and Deli, Toppers Pizza, Dr. Zohra Docrat, Millard Rose & Rosebrugh, Winmar, as well as our numerous sign and gift sponsors.

Men in Heels - Standing Tall Against Domestic Violence

Wow! We surpassed this year’s goal thanks to over 100 men and boys who stood tall against domestic violence. The money raised will once again directly benefit the women, children, and men we serve in Brantford and Brant County.

We truly appreciate the support of our dedicated participants, their pledge sponsors, our community sponsors and dedicated volunteers - we couldn’t have done it without each and every one of you!

Together, these events raised more than **\$56,000!** These events are important to Nova Vita, not only for the funds they raise, but also for the awareness they bring to the domestic violence issue in our community.

If you would like to participate or sponsor one or both of these events in 2016, please contact us at 519-752-1005 ext. 232 or e-mail us at [events@novavita.org](mailto:events@novavita.org)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Brantford Basketeers

Through donating laundry hampers filled with new items - kitchen themed or bed/bath themed - community members help women start over. Baskets are distributed over the holidays. For more information, please contact Joanna at 519-752-1005 ext. 210 or jskinner@novavita.org. Our drop off party will be Saturday, December 5, at Nova Vita - 59 North Park Street, Brantford - from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Holiday Wish List

The holiday season can be a difficult time for the many children living in our shelter. To help bring a smile to their faces, we are asking for your help by donating new unwrapped toys for children of all ages and interests such as:

- board games, puzzles, books
- action figures, lego
- dolls, barbies, journals
- CD's, DVD's, & Video games
- Pajamas, slippers
- Gift certificates for teens
- infant and toddler toys
- craft items (beads, looming kits, markers, etc.)

Financial donations are always appreciated - this allows Nova Vita to purchase specific items on a child's list.

If possible, please include wrapping paper, tags, and tape with your donation. Items must be new and unwrapped. Please deliver your donation to 59 North Park Street, Brantford, Mon. - Fri. between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. before Monday, December 14th.



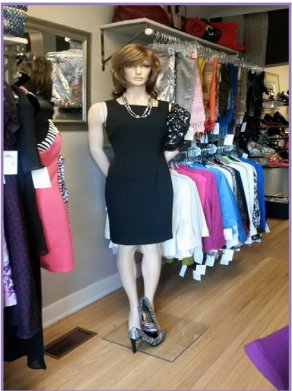
Closet Couture Boutique

Closet Couture, Nova Vita's social enterprise, is starting its third year of operation. The boutique is covering its expenses and earning a small profit; this is significant as we decided to shorten the hours of operation and lower the pricing structure!

Closet Couture maintains a solid reputation in the community for providing a great shopping experience, with professional staff and quality products. With a team of 15 committed volunteers (including clothing sorters and sales staff) as well as two paid staff, the store operates efficiently and smoothly. Closet Couture has a loyal customer base that is continually growing – word of mouth is our best advertisement!

We strive to promote Closet Couture in the community through actively participating in community events such as attending a Grand River Women's Probus meeting where we staged a fashion show and provided information about Nova Vita's services. The boutique also participated in several community vendor sales. To give back to the community, we offer Closet Couture as a venue for community events. In May 2015, we donated time and space at Closet Couture for the Brant Belle of the Ball event – donated prom dresses were offered free of charge to young women needing formal wear. Closet Couture donated accessories to the young women as well. There was not a dry eye in the house!

With a commitment to every single client - whether it be someone who wants to donate clothing or make a purchase, the team at Closet Couture never loses sight of their goals. Plans to initiate a work training program are underway, with the boutique providing a uniquely safe space for women to learn and grow.



Clarissa models a new outfit everyday on Facebook and Twitter.



The upstairs of Closet Couture was overflowing with beautiful dresses for the Belle of the Ball event held in May.



Volunteer Activities

Nova Vita continues to have the support of an amazing group of volunteers who come to us from all walks of life within Brantford and neighbouring communities. These selfless individuals have contributed their time, skills, and talents in every department of the organization.

In the 2014/2015 fiscal year, our volunteers contributed an overwhelming 3337.5 hours to support our efforts to end domestic violence. Some of these hours were spent facilitating life skills groups, providing childcare assistance for counselling groups and moms in the shelter, sorting our many clothing donations, assisting at our boutique, giving administrative support, aiding in renovations projects such as our outdoor playground, and offering special services to clients including free legal advice, Yoga, Bingo, and art therapy.

We are humbled and appreciative of every task that our volunteers are willing to do for Nova Vita and we look forward to the continued growth of our volunteer outreach program.

Your donation can help abused women and their children

- ☐ I want to support Nova Vita
  - \$ 50 - will provide breakfast for our residents
  - \$ 100 - will provide diapers for one week
  - \$ 200 - will provide bus tickets for women and children for one week
  - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ other gift amount

- ☐ I want to be a monthly donor

I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each month to all the ongoing services offered by Nova Vita.

(To give monthly, simply attach a cheque marked "VOID" or fill in your credit card information below.)

- ☐ This is a gift:
  - In honour of
  - In memory of

\_\_\_\_\_

Donation Method:

- ☐ Cheque (payable to Nova Vita)
- ☐ Visa
- ☐ MasterCard

Please print your name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\*Tax receipts are issued for amounts of \$20 or more. Registered Charitable Number 107771727 RR0001