



## Adapting with Resilience: How We're Dealing with COVID-19

The shelter program at The Women's Centre Grey Bruce remains open and available to clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Shelter capacity is 20 people maximum in 8 bedrooms. However with physical distancing being practised, we have reduced our capacity to 8 people at the shelter (one client in each bedroom). Additionally, we are converting one unit at our Second Stage location to a furnished apartment, to accommodate a family of up to 3 people. This would bring our shelter capacity up to 11 people. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services currently funds 13 of our shelter beds. During these difficult times, with our Ministry's support and the support of our trusted donors, we will endeavour to accommodate additional women and children fleeing violence over and above these numbers.

Offices at Second Stage are currently closed, with staff there now working from home. We continue to provide service to our existing and new clients via telephone or video conferencing. Outreach support services are available Mondays through Fridays 9:00am to 5:00pm and by calling (519) 371-1600. Women needing crisis counselling can also now text us at (226) 974-0755 or still call our toll free crisis line at 1-800-265-3722.



The Women's Centre Staff in October 2019

 [click to donate](#)

### Client Services

April 2019 - March 2020

- 120** Women in Shelter/2nd Stage
- 61** Children in Shelter/2nd Stage
- 106** Women in Counselling
- 75** Children in Counselling
- 98** Court Support Cases
- 906** Safety Plans
- 1,060** Crisis Calls

## One Year Pet-Friendly!

It's now been nearly a year since we made the transition of going pet-friendly as a shelter. After discovering the stark statistics showing that 56% of women delay leaving an abuser for fear of what will happen to their pet, we decided to pull up our sleeves get to work on making it happen. It involved building partnerships with many different organizations, including PetSmart Charities Canada and our local North Heritage Animal Hospital. We had many "Adopters" for the designated pet-friendly bedroom (thank you all for your donations!) to get dog beds, cat trees, toys, food, doggie bags, treats, and coverage for vet bills.

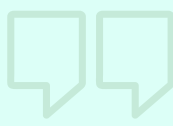


Once the bedroom was set up, policy re-written, and staff all trained, we began accepting clients with pets in the late spring of 2019. Since then, we've seen all kinds of animal companions come through the shelter. From dogs, cats, rabbits, and even hamsters! We're all emotionally bonded to our pets, no matter how big or small. Since 90% of pets are mistreated in the homes of abusive relationships, it's a no brainer to allow women to bring their beloved pets with them when they come to the shelter. Here is a letter from one of our clients who was able to bring her dog with her during her time with us:

**Sometimes life throws you curve balls that nobody expects. I never planned on living in a shelter and leaving everything behind for myself and my little dog Marley. These situations create a lot of stress and uncertainty in life. These stresses are also felt by our animals. If I had to separate from my pet, it would make the situation even more difficult. Having the privilege to have my dog stay with me during this challenging time makes the transition less stressful for the both of us.**

**Having the pet room available for me at The Women's Centre and being able to bring my dog with me means the world to Marley and I. Having access to food and water dishes, dog food, poop bags, toys, and even the dog beds is very appreciated and welcoming. I really like the pictures of the animals on the walls as it makes it that much more comfortable for Marley and I.**

**Forever Grateful,  
Jessica & Marley xx**  
(names have been changed for privacy)



## Helping from Home

In mid-March, I, along with just about everyone else, was following the news closely as our country monitored the effects of COVID-19 and the toll it was taking on the world. We have never experienced anything like this before, and the very thought of isolation and what it would mean took some time to sink in. My mind immediately went to my family and friends, what this would look like for us, and the fear of the unknown leaving you hanging over a cliff of dread. And then you breathe and calm yourself because you are in this together - with family, friends, co-workers, and community. I am so grateful to live in Canada, and especially in our city of Owen Sound along with Grey and Bruce counties. For the most part, people look out for and take care of each other.

My role at The Women's Centre as an Outreach and Family Court Support Worker is a demanding position that works with many community partners. I contemplated about all of the clients we serve and what supports would still be available for them. During the remainder of March, agencies and businesses were tasked with what essential services would remain open. Thankfully, the shelter stayed open with strict guidelines put into place for both staff and resident's safety.

When my manager asked if I could work from home, I was relieved because of health concerns. A positive side of working from home is that I can still communicate by phone, email, and text with our clients. The phone rings just as though I was in my office, but I have the company of a variety of pets! In times of crisis there is nothing as comforting as a cat purring on one's lap or a dog laying by your feet. They calm me and teach me to be still. So, I truly enjoy having them close by and I am confident the feelings are mutual!

Working from home allows for a feeling of being safe which is not something many of the clients that I serve may be experiencing now. Women and their children still need a safe place to live, they may need to go through the Family Court process, help with obtaining a lawyer or the funds to survive. Women may be starting over, having dreamed of going to college to become a nurse but was never supported to have a goal. We can help with this. Some of the women who call are very fearful about the pandemic, they don't have family or friends to support them and they may be misinformed around the facts and information, and my role is to be a comfort and safe person to talk with. We will all get through this when we follow the guidelines. Practice gratitude, manage fear and have hope.

Now, if I could only teach these lazy felines to serve me a cup of tea!

Stay safe and be well,  
Patricia Oxberry (Outreach and Family Court Support Worker)



**Make real change.  
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# the alliance

monthly giving program



**Ally**

**\$10/month**

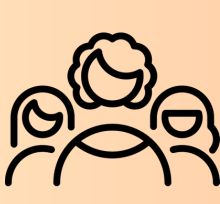
You could cover the cost of 5 calls to our 24/7 crisis helpline.



**Friend**

**\$15/month**

You could provide a Welcoming Kit to a woman when she arrives at the shelter.



**Advocate**

**\$25/month**

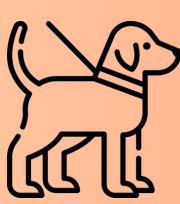
You could impart empowerment through a group therapy session for the women at the shelter.



**Leader**

**\$50/month**

You could help a woman through her healing journey by providing one counseling session.



**Champion**

**\$100/month**

You could provide pet care for a woman's companion including food, toys, and vet bills.

**Ready to sign up? Click here!**