Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Newsletter Spring/Summer 2003

Another Great Success!
350 Guests and over $63,000 Raised.

EVENT POSTER

Thanks To Our "Tribute" 2003 Sponsors.

Host Sponsors: McCarthy Tetrault, Tory's LLP, CIBC, and Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt.

Sponsors: Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP; Bank of Montreal; J. Rob Collins; Fasken Martineau; Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP; Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP; Aird and Berlis LLP; Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP; Lax O'Sullivan Scott; Cassels Brock; Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre and Cornish, McCormick Rankin Corporation, Sack Goldblatt Mitchell; Stockwoods LLP; Rovena and Dr. Mervin Cooper; Peters Family, Andra Takacs, Gilbert's, and Kroll.

The Body Shop
Stop Violence Against Women Campaign

Special thanks to the Manager and Staff of the Body Shop (71 Wellesley Street East). The Body Shop held a fundraising in-store campaign from March 1 to April 24, 2003 to stop violence against women. All proceeds from the campaign will go to the Clinic to help in our work with women survivors of violence.

Highlights

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Over 350 guests attended the 9th Annual "Tribute" Fundraising Gala of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic held on February 27, 2003. With the generous contributions of the legal community, and particularly our host sponsors, Hoskin & Harcourt, Tory's LLP, CIBC, and McCarthy Tetrault, many businesses, individuals, volunteers, staff, the Milano restaurant, The Thin Skulls and Jonas and The Fifth bands who provided the entertainment, this event was a great success.

The fabulous fun filled evening of food, entertainment, and a silent auction raised over $63,000. These funds will go to support the services of the Clinic. We are also grateful to our M.C. Barbara Smith of CBC's "The World at Six" who has committed her time and talent to this event for the past five years, and to Zahra Dhanani promoter and DJ of FunkAsia Night (DJzahra.com.)

Guests at the event commented on the wonderful time they had and that they were already looking forward to next year. Special thanks are in order to the Board of Directors and Special Event Committee.

Upcoming Events

Bowlathon 2003 Join us for our 2nd Annual Bowling Fundraiser at Thorncliffe Bowlarama 45 Overlea Blvd., on Saturday, September 13, 2003, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Reserve the date now for a great afternoon in support of the Clinic.

Volunteer Corner

"As people search for ways to enrich their lives, many are giving their personal time and skills to the community. Others are looking for new routes to personal and professional development. Individuals with special needs are becoming empowered to take charge of their lives and want a chance to contribute their energies to helping others. In short, more and more people are considering volunteering.

This year, from April 27 to May 3, National Volunteer Week celebrates the spirit and energy of Canada's Volunteers with the theme THE VALUE OF ONE, THE POWER OF MANY. The theme describes how one person's individual actions informed by the heart and by a desire for change in the world, can make a significant difference. When this one person's actions are multiplied by 6.5 million people, the world is changed, in very real and important ways" - Volunteer Canada

The quality of services we provide to the Clinic's clients are greatly enhanced by the everyday contribution of our volunteers. We join in National Volunteer Week to recognize and celebrate our volunteers for their time, energy, commitment, and dedication to our organization.

We thank all our volunteers - from those who assist the staff every day of the week to the ones who help us at the "Tribute" and Bowlathon fundraising events. Without you, we will not be able to accomplish nearly as much or help nearly as many women.

Volunteering At The Barbra Schlifer Clinic Helped Me Change My Life

I originally came to the Barbra Schlifer Clinic as a volunteer in October 2001. My experience volunteering as an assistant receptionist and filling in wherever I could be of help, quickly grew to an awareness about pursuing my future career. I realized I wanted to continue to help women in the community. So, I searched out a school that could help me realize my goal and became a student at George Brown College, currently studying as a Human Service Counsellor. I am now a counselling student at the Clinic under the supervision of a staff member who brings me insight as a counsellor, and allows me to have experiences that I could never gain from a classroom. My involvement with the BSCC has been a life changing experience in every part of my life.

Cathy Bennett

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic Expands April 1, 2003

As of April 1st, the Clinic has expanded into an additional 1,000 square feet of office space right beside our current site. The new offices will help relieve our very busy and crowded premises, provide for a second group room and for an expanded Legal Department thanks to the support of the Ontario Women's Directorate/Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Aid Ontario. We look forward to being able to serve more women with these additional resources!

Board Of Directors News A Goodbye and A Welcome

The Board and staff of the Clinic extend a big thank you to Board Member Nicole Stewart Kamanga. Nicole was a lawyer at the Family Law Office. A Board Member since April 2001, Nicole was the Chair of the Board Recruitment Committee and was active in all aspects of Board initiatives and governance. We wish Nicole and her family all the very best. She will be missed.

We also extend a warm welcome to new Board Member Denise Doyle. Denise brings fundraising, I.T., Strategic Planning, H.R., training and other skills to the Board, along with a strong commitment to addressing issues of violence against women. We look forward to working with Denise- welcome aboard!

Volunteers Needed

We offer a range of volunteer opportunities including: office assistance, reception, and in fundraising special events. Volunteers are now needed for our special Bowlathon event to assist us to secure sponsors and gifts in kind for prizes.

Call Julia Sanchez at: 416.323.9149 ext 240
Or email her at: j.sanchez@schliferclinic.com

Correction

Silver Table items # 75 in our Tribute Event program should have read "One FranklinCovey Planning System, Courtesy of FranklinCovey North York Retail." Our apologies to FranklinCovey for this error, and our appreciation for your donation.

COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Spa Day for Clients

For the first time, BSCC clients benefited from the "Look At Me Now!" program of Beauty and Wellness. As part of an International Women's Day celebration, 10 women were treated to a Spa Day donated by David Scott Spa and the Azans Salon. They were pampered with various treatments, including hairstyles, massages, manicures, and special gifts. The goal of the program is to give women a renewed sense of self-confidence, and to feel re-energized to embrace the world. Many clients telephoned their counsellors the next day with deep appreciation for the event, and one woman reported that she "felt like a queen".

Self-Esteem Group Art

Client Feedback from the Self-Esteem Group

"Sharing and hearing other people's stories was a big part of the learning. Coming to the group helped me to feel less isolated."

"I learned to judge myself less and generally to be more accepting."

"I learned to be self-aware, to be with myself in the present moment, to sit with myself and to accept myself for who I am."

"I am learning to leave the past and the pain behind. I have started journaling. Journaling has helped me to become more aware."

"This group gave me the strength to do the things I need to do."

Group Programs

Our Group Program offers rich and diverse options for women in the process of healing from the impact of physical and sexual adult or childhood abuse. Currently, we are pleased to be offering the full range of ongoing groups, including the Self-Esteem group, the closed Partner Assault group, the "Weaving Our Voices" group held in collaboration with Sistering, and the Spanish-speaking women's Quilting group.

Other groups being offered at the Clinic include an open Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse group that involves topics related to the impact of trauma on various life issues, an Art Therapy group in partnership with the Gardiner Museum and Sistering where women will create a totem pole with the guidance of a professional artist, and two Wen-Do (Self-Defense) groups.

We are pleased to be able to offer a Spanish-speaking "Parenting after Violence" group once again, beginning in May 2003 and we are offering two Mindfulness Meditation and Childhood Sexual Abuse groups.

A Client Says Thank You

I could just keep walking and never go back, I said to myself. It was break time in the group and my sense of relief increased with each forward motion away from the Barbra Schlifer Clinic. What was I doing here? It seemed logical. I had been sexually abused as a child. Now, 20 years later, I found myself involved in a group that was geared to doing healing work. Nevertheless, I kept thinking that I didn't belong there. I worked, was married and a productive member of society. But, my meticulously ordered world belied the chaos I felt. Unwillingly I returned to my spot in that group where once a week for 16 weeks, I would be shown strength, openness, vulnerability and kindness I had never experienced before.

That was the start of a two and a half year very necessary journey, that I now continue happily. I could not have learned what I have without the help of the people in this Clinic. I have an understanding of how the abuse affected me and the knowledge that it has not destroyed me. This is my opportunity to say thank you.

It Takes A Team

Recently, Ines tried to kill herself. Three times in three days. As she explained it, she needed to rest. Ines is a single mother, separated from an abusive husband, socially isolated, suffering health problems, facing challenges in a new country and immigration uncertainty. Our first job was to immediately develop a safety plan that included identifying triggers, increased counselling sessions, back-up for when counsellors would not be available and varied self-care steps. But above all, we offered reassurance, and a sense of hope.

Our next step was to arrange a case conference. An action plan, outlining the mother's, child's and father's needs was drafted and reviewed with Ines. We invited all the community and Family Services workers familiar with Ines' situation, to a meeting to explore our concerns, share our information and develop an unified approach to help her and her son.

It has been several months since our case conference, and Ines' life has remarkably improved. She is able to identify and initiate steps to better her self-care. And she is reassured that she has coordinated, solid community support. Ines was told by her Children's Aid Family Worker and her former shelter Outreach Worker that they had never before attended such a case conference process. Ines does not feel alone. She is developing trust, and, she is finding inner resources to better cope. Now her son is exhibiting behaviour problems. As Ines gets stronger, he seems more free to reveal his needs and to count on his Mom to help him. We now have a team, and a plan in place to help him as well.

It takes time for a complete picture of a woman or a family to emerge. It often takes a team and team management to assess a situation fully and correctly, and to provide the degree and types of support needed. Team support not only helps a women and her family, it also supports the workers whose job it is to provide assistance as well.

Cherie Miller, Director of Counselling Services Joins The Clinic

In August 2002, Cherie Miller was hired as the Director of Counselling Services at the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic. She still considers herself a "new" member of the Clinic after recently celebrating 6 months of employment. Cherie has worked in the area of Violence Against Women for 15 years, beginning as a Shelter Worker at Women's Habitat, then as a Counsellor on the Jewish Family & Child Service's Woman Abuse Team, and finally, designing and co-ordinating the Jean Tweed Centre's (an Addiction Treatment Centre for women) Trauma Program for nearly 10 years.

Cherie has presented workshops across Ontario on "Women, Trauma and Addiction" and "Secondary Trauma: The Impact of Working with Abuse Survivors on the Counsellor". She has been involved in the development of Woman Abuse educational materials, including the Ontario Association of Social Worker's "Victims of Violence: Woman Abuse" handbook and material for Partner Abuse in Gay and Lesbian Relationships.

Cherie is very pleased to be a part of the innovative and exciting programming at the BSCC. She says the Counselling Team and members of the other departments have welcomed her into the Clinic's community, and have made this new step in her life a very positive experience.

Hiring a New Counsellor

The Counselling Department is involved in an exciting new initiative. We are in the process of hiring another full time counsellor on a one-year contract to help with the great number of women requesting individual counselling. We have received an enormous number of resumes for the position and a dedicated Hiring Team has begun the process of selection.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT UPDATE

The Legal Department Grows

As we enter into fiscal year 2003/2004, the Legal Department of the Clinic is undergoing considerable growth that will better position us to meet the challenges ahead. Below are some of the highlights of things to come:

Funding: In April 2003, the Clinic entered into a two-year funding agreement with Legal Aid Ontario and the Ministry of the Attorney-General of Ontario (through the Ontario Women's Directorate) which will facilitate much needed expansion of our Specialized Services for Victims of Domestic Violence as well as ensure service continuity into the foreseeable future. This funding will also be used to deliver some important new public legal education and community development initiatives that are designed to facilitate consistent and co-ordinated service to victims of violence across the non-profit legal community. We would like to express our appreciation to the Ministry and to LAO for their continued commitment to victims of violence.

Legal Staff: This year, the Clinic will expand its staff to include a full time Intake Worker/Advocate, a Legal Assistant and an additional lawyer. These new positions will enhance our service efficiency and thereby increase service to women.

We are happy to welcome back our staff lawyer, Sudabeh Mashkuri who returned from her maternity leave in February. Sudabeh is a knowledgeable and effective advocate for refugee women who have experienced gender-based violence and she is much-respected within the legal community for her insightful analysis of immigration law and its impact on women. In March we bid farewell to Zahra Dhanani our immigration lawyer over the last year. Zahra not only possessed great legal skill but also employed a uniquely holistic approach to addressing the multiple needs of her clients. She will be truly missed.

New Service Initiatives: This year, LAO funding will help us establish a new service called, "The Associates Programme". Designed to promote diversity in service-delivery models and enhance the family law resources of the Clinic, the "Associates Programme" creates a unique relationship between the Clinic and lawyers in private practice. In return for their professional services, the Clinic will provide infrastructure and other supports to our "Associates" as well as specialized training on domestic violence.

Law Students: The Clinic would like to thank the U.of T. and Osgoode Hall law students who contributed their time and commitment to the Clinic over this past year. Their efforts on behalf of our clients were greatly appreciated.

Bill C-22

Bill C-22 was introduced on December 10, 2002, as an Act to amend the *Divorce Act* (and other related legislation) in the House of Commons. The Bill proposes some significant changes to the language and substance of the current *Divorce Act* with respect to custody, access and child support. The new Bill replaces the words "custody" and "access" with "parental responsibility" as a way of trying to move away from the adversarial nature of custody and access hearings. There are other important changes, which could conceivably have a significant impact on battered women, though it is difficult to anticipate their full impact. Women's justice groups are concerned that the Bill does not sufficiently address the issue of violence against women.

Currently our clients are struggling with a family law system that is oriented towards both parents having as much contact with their children as possible after separation, even in cases where there has been a high level of spousal abuse. Over the years, we have advocated for women who have lost custody of their children as a result of denying their abusive ex-partners access to the children in situations where the mothers feared for their children's safety. Tragically, in some cases children have been placed in the care of their abusive fathers. This is both alarming and dangerous and is resulting in great hardship and trauma for women and their children.

In Family Law, applications to court for child custody must be based upon proper notice to the other party who has parental rights. But many of our clients who are fleeing abusive relationships with their children are afraid of the repercussions of notifying their abusive partners. All too often such actions result in threats, aggressive behavior toward the mother and children and even life threatening violence. Nevertheless it would be extremely difficult to dispense with notice of a court proceeding, even in situations where the mother has had de facto custody of her children for a number of years. The clinic is currently working on such a case involving a mother who requires a court order for sole custody of her child. The abuser in this case inflicted severe violence against his wife and was undeterred by the numerous charges and restraining orders against him. The clinic will attempt to make the case that, in these particular circumstances, averting the risk to the mother and child associated with giving notice to the father must be given exceptional consideration.

Interpreter Services

The Interpreter Service Department receives an average of 20-25 requests for Language Interpreters every day, and an additional 6 calls in the evenings, totaling about 30 calls a day, and 900 calls a month. For each call/request, we make and receive an average of 15 calls to set up interpretation. This means IS handles about 450 calls a day.

This translates to a total of 3,886 assignments, 5,841 hours of services, and 800 victims served over the course of a year.

The top 10 languages sought for interpretation from April-Sept 2002 were Spanish, Tamil, Amharic, Mandarin, Somali, Korean, Farsi, Russian, Arabic and Cantonese .

The Clinic currently has over 150 Language Interpreters on its roster who speak 44 different languages.

Cabinet Ministers Visit The Clinic

On February 10, 2003 Citizenship Minister Carl DeFaria and Dianne Cunningham, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues presented a cheque for $451,705 to the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic for the Interpreter Services Program, which supports non-English speaking abused women gain access to shelters, health care and legal services including the Domestic Violence Courts. In 2001, the Interpreter Services Program served more than 800 victims of domestic violence.

Ten other agencies throughout the province also received funding under this $2.2 million grant program.

Me The Stone

I am a stone…a tiny stone
laying on a bed of sand
With all of natures' elements surrounding me
The suns' hot ray, the droplets of rain,
and the moonlit beams embracing me.

Here I lay, all alone
helpless against natures' elements
Then…a large wet blanket comes
and is surrounding me.

I am thrown into the cold enormous waves
Tossed effortless
Tumbling around and around.

Then, I'm placed back onto my bed
Tired and uncertain of what is to come my way.

by Cathy Bennett

Tribute to Barbra Schlifer

April 11, 2003 marks the 23rd Anniversary of the death of Barbra Tina Schlifer.

We at the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic remember Barbra's life and work to provide a service for women that is a tribute to Barbra's memory.

Our Funding Partners

•Ministry of the Attorney General
•Ministry of Citizenship
•Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services
•Ministry of Health
•Legal Aid Ontario
•City of Toronto
•United Way of Greater Toronto
•Toronto Community Foundation

YOUR DONATIONS ARE APPRECIATED

Although the Clinic receives funding from the our partners listed above, we also greatly rely on the generosity of individual donors. If you wish to make a contribution in support of our Counselling, Interpretation and/or Legal services for female survivors of violence, please send a cheque to the address below. Your donation, large or small, is vital to the operation of the Clinic and is sincerely appreciated. Income tax receipts will be provided.

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You can also call us at (416) 323-9149 x 237 or e-mail us at :**fundraising@schliferclinic.com** with your Visa, MasterCard or Amex number.

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Graphics: Jose Antonio Sanchez