

# Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2005



## Wow, What A Night

2005 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic's opening and provision of free legal, counselling and interpreter services for women survivors of violence.

To begin this important year, on February 24, 2005, 550 supporters of the Clinic gathered for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute, the Clinic's major fundraising event of the year. The evening had a wonderful warm and positive energy. Guests listened to the fabulous jazz music of Terra Hazelton and her "Easy Answers" band and the "Moment's Notice" jazz group, had fun bidding on over 100 terrific items in the Silent Auction, enjoyed the delicious hors d'hoerves and mingled with friends and colleagues in the fabulous atmosphere of the Boiler House in the Distillery District.

**The highlight of the evening was our special guest, the Attorney General of the Province of Ontario, the Honourable Michael Bryant's announcement of permanent funding for the Legal Services of the Clinic for the first time in the organization's history. This important funding will now provide consistency in the Clinic's ability to offer service in the areas of Family and Immigration Law.**

Thanks to the sponsors, businesses and individuals who donated items for the Silent Auction, the Clinic staff, tickets sellers and the many volunteers who worked so hard on this event, and all those who attended. The Clinic raised \$80,000 which will be used to support programs and services for women. Thank you all for making this a very special anniversary celebration and our most successful Tribute event ever!!!

## Thank you to everyone who helped to make our 20th Anniversary Tribute Fundraiser a Great Success!

Special thanks to our Event Hosts:  
Torys LLP , Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP  
McCarthy Tetrault LLP  
Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP

and to all our Sponsors:  
J. Rob Collins  
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Bogart Robertson & Chu  
Blaney McMurtry LLP  
Aber Diamond Corporation  
Barna-Alper Productions Inc.  
The Law Society of Upper Canada  
Warren Shepell

Thanks to the owners and staff of  
The Boiler House  
55 Mill Street  
in the Distillery District  
for a fabulous venue

and to all the businesses and individuals  
who donated items for our fabulous Silent Auction and  
Balloon Pops

**BARBRA TEENA SCHLIFER****MARCH 12, 1947 – APRIL 11, 1980**

Twenty-five years ago, April 11, 1980. Barbra Schlifer was returning home after celebrating her call to the Bar of Ontario. It had been a night of dreams fulfilled, the start of a bright future. She was full of excitement over the fact that she and her friends Patricia Ashby and Frances Rapoport planned to open a law practice together. They were young, energetic and committed to social justice law and to representing people who were abused, oppressed and marginalized.

But that night Barbra Schlifer was brutally sexually assaulted and murdered in the basement stairwell of her Beaches apartment building. Her senseless death sent shock waves through Toronto and across the country. About 600 women marched in the Beaches demanding safer streets for women. The Toronto police offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to her killer.

Barbra's death forever changed the lives of those who were close to her. Yet, out of this terrible event, a new dream was born, fostered by Barbra's friends, which would commemorate her life and make the difference that Barbra had hoped she would make as a lawyer.

On April 11, 1985, then Mayor Eggleton declared Barbra Schlifer Day in Toronto and in September 1985, the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic opened its doors. The Clinic was designed as a holistic, comprehensive and coordinated service where women who had experienced violence could receive legal and counselling services. Now 20 years later, the Clinic has grown to a staff of 20 and a budget close to \$2 million. It serves 3,000 women a year, with legal services in family and immigration law, individual and group counselling programs, information and referrals, and interpretation for non-English speaking immigrant and refugee women who are victims of violence. As well, the Clinic is involved in public education, training and advocacy on a wide range of issues on behalf of women survivors and in working towards the eradication of violence against women. In February, at the annual Barbra Schlifer Tribute, the Attorney General announced new funding commitments for the Clinic's legal services. On this 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her death, we pay tribute to the memory of Barbra Schlifer. We reflect on the woman she was and the loss of a life cut short by violence.

We honour the far too many women who continue to die as a result of violence, and all the women whose lives have been ravaged by what has been termed a "global pandemic" of violence against women. We remember that so much still remains to be done.

We pay tribute to the countless courageous women who have, despite enormous challenges, survived, prospered and created new lives free of violence for themselves and their children. We thank our colleagues in social services, especially those involved in stopping violence against women, for their vital work; our diversity and shared, passionate commitment is a source of comfort and strength.

We gratefully acknowledge the vision and efforts of the Clinic's founders, and all the staff members, volunteers, donors, funding partners and other supporters who have played invaluable roles in helping the Clinic to thrive, grow and provide essential services to women.

This is the vital community of which the Clinic is a part, a community that sustains, nourishes and supports us. And as we remember Barbra Teena Schlifer, it is to this whole Barbra Schlifer Clinic community that Barbra's parents brother recently sent the following words:

"On behalf of the Schlifer family, we wish to thank all the staff, volunteers, donors and everyone associated with the Clinic over the past 20 years for building it into a vital community service centre of which Barbra would have been proud. In addition, we would like to thank Attorney General Michael Bryant for his very welcome funding announcement this evening. Finally, we wish to express a special offer of gratitude to Patricia Ashby and Frances Rapoport; they were the heart and soul of the Clinic in the early years, and without their efforts, there would be no evening such as tonight."

Sincerely,

**Anne Morris, and Ian Schlifer**

February 24, 2005 at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute Fundraiser

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On April 11, 2005 the Clinic held a Memorial Service for Barbra at the Peace Garden, Nathan Phillips Square at City Hall. Speakers included former Mayor and classmate of Barbra's, Barbara Hall, Marilyn Churley M.P.P., Connie Nakatsu, Lawyer and former classmate and Mary Lou Fassel, Director of Legal Services at the Clinic.

### A Message from the Mayor

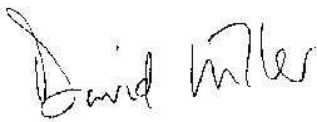
It is my pleasure to extend greetings and a warm welcome to everyone attending the Special 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic.

For the past twenty years the Clinic has provided free counselling, legal, referral and interpretation services for women who are survivors of violence. Compassionate and dedicated staff help make a difference in many lives.

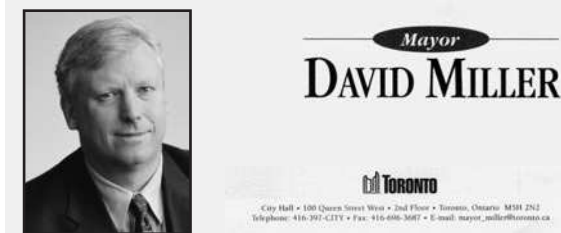
This Tribute commemorates and celebrates the life of Barbra Schlifer and her passion for social justice. I applaud her friends and colleagues in the legal community on this wonderful initiative. To the Board, staff, supporters of the Clinic and everyone here tonight, thank you for caring and giving.

On behalf of Toronto City Council, I congratulate the organizers of this Special 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute and offer best wishes to everyone for an enjoyable and memorable evening.

Yours truly,



Mayor David Miller



## Barbra Teena Schlifer Memorial Service Message From Mary Margaret (Bruce) Daphinee

How I wish that I could be with you at this memorial to Barbra. I have such vivid memories of those early years. Starting with the first meeting of women to discuss what we could do to remember Barbra and followed by the years when Fran (Rapaport), Pat (Ashby), Helen (LaFontaine), Elizabeth (Stewart), Jennifer (Sunley) and I planned and worked to raise the funds to open the doors of the first office.

Anyone around then will remember that when we could not afford the rent of a building, the wonderful people in the City's Public Works Department built us the fake door that we used in the ribbon cutting ceremony at Hart House to announce the opening of the Clinic!

But that was nothing compared to the excitement we all felt as Mayor Art Eggleton and Premier Peterson cut the ribbon with me to open our first real doors.

Sadly, Helen and Jennifer are no longer with us although their spirit lives on in the efforts of those who continue to work for women in Canada.

However, I know that they would share, along with Elizabeth and I – and *all* the wonderful women who worked at the Clinic and served on the Board in those early years – the pride in having been part of the establishment of an organization that not only carried on Barbra's commitment but continues to be a place where all women can find safety and be treated with dignity and respect.

I am thinking of you as you read this message. Thank you for letting me be part of this wonderful organization once again.

**Mary Margaret (Bruce) Dauphinee**

First President,

Board of Directors,

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

## **COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT**

### **UPDATE ON GROUP PROGRAMS:**

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#### **Abuse/Trauma Survivors Support Group for Women with Mobility Disabilities – Closed Group**

In collaboration with the Anne Johnston Health Station, the Clinic is pleased to announce that it will be offering another group for women survivors of trauma with mobility disabilities. Women will again have an opportunity to develop an informed understanding of how current behaviours are linked to living with a disability and the impact of past abuse and trauma. The response from women who have attended this group was very positive. We look forward to being able to offer it for a second time in 2005/2006. We welcome referrals from agencies and women are welcome to call us directly. Call Nicole Biros at 416-323-9149 Ext. 234.

#### **Open Group for Women Survivors of Trauma**

The open group for women survivors of trauma has been running at the Clinic since the Fall of 2004. We will continue to offer this open drop-in group throughout the year. Some of the feedback from participants includes: "Informative, educative, relaxing. The counsellors were aware and caring. They opened us up gently and put us on the right path". The group was developed to address the barriers that women face when attempting to obtain service, including the limited availability of counselling services, by offering a place to come and obtain immediate support, education and information around the impact of trauma. Participants are given an opportunity to gain support for current life situations and develop tools for healthy coping and self-care.

The current group cycle will end on April 29, 2005. This group does not have a waiting list and women may attend as often as they are able, without having to make an ongoing or long-term commitment.

For additional information on all of our groups please visit our website at [www.schliferclinic.com](http://www.schliferclinic.com) or contact Nicole Biros at 416-323-9149 Ext. 234.

#### **Writing and Healing Workshop For Women Survivors of Trauma**

A Writing and Healing Workshop was offered for the first time by the Clinic on March 9, 2005. Writing about traumatic experiences can be an important healing tool. It offers a way of examining and integrating painful feelings that could not be expressed at the time of the abuse. It can also deepen our understanding of our experience, providing insight, clarity, and perspective. This workshop gave women an opportunity to learn what kind of writing is healing to them and to write about their abuse experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Through sharing their writing with other trauma survivors, women were able to decrease their isolation and reduce their shame and guilt.

In the participants' own words: "I found power in reading out loud." "I was able to write and speak about what I'd written and not feel judged."



## Yoga At The Barbra Schlifer Clinic

In the spring and fall of 2004 the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic offered yoga workshops for trauma survivors as a resource for women working towards well-being and recovery. Each group consisted of ten weekly workshops that included yoga instruction and discussion about how yoga may be used in healing from trauma caused by violence and oppression. The workshops commenced with gentle restorative yoga followed by a discussion of topics including: the therapeutic benefits of yoga on emotions, thoughts and the body; yoga history and cultural contexts; and how to use yoga to address specific health issues relating to trauma caused by violence.

Throughout the workshops women expressed their enthusiasm and relief when sharing their experiences of improved emotional and physical health as a result of yoga practice. They also showed great commitment by coming to classes often in the face of tremendous obstacles. In this and other ways they indicated that they were gaining something of value. In her evaluation of the workshops one attendee wrote: "It has been a great benefit to my health and I fully appreciate that the workshop has been offered free specifically for women only who have experienced trauma." Acknowledging trauma as an important aspect of healing work is not often addressed in yoga classes geared to the general public. This is partly because yoga classes are often conducted as physical exercise activities or perhaps these issues are avoided for the same reasons that they are in the larger society. Providing an environment where women could learn yoga and be open about the issues they were working on was very important to the participants.

The yoga workshops differed somewhat from traditional counselling groups in that the focus remained on learning yoga and how yoga may be a resource for specific health related concerns. We discussed body memories, flash backs, disassociation, emotional numbness and hyper vigilance but did so without requiring that women disclose their experiences of abuse. Participants indicated that the yoga workshops helped address memories of abuse, anxiety, panic, loneliness, low self-esteem, insecurity, depression, feeling overwhelmed, despair, sadness, fear, emotional numbness, chronic health problems, colds or flu, body pain, difficulty breathing, insomnia, addiction or substance abuse, and unhealthy eating habits or patterns. By attending to health concerns resulting from trauma caused by violence, the participants focused on gaining tools and developing resources that could then be applied to other work such as therapeutic counselling, meeting day to day challenges and attending to self-care needs.

When asked whether they would recommend the workshops to other women, participants were unanimous in their support for the workshops. In the words of one woman : "This is a good introduction to yoga for trauma survivors. The teacher has created a safe non-competitive environment in which you can learn a practice that you can take with you to enable healing in mind, body and spirit."

*Sheila Batacharya is currently completing her PhD in Adult Education at OISE, University of Toronto. Her thesis project addresses the experiences and understandings of health, healing, violence and oppression among young South Asian women in Toronto. The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and the South Asian Women's Centre are community partners in this research.*

## Counselling Department Students

We were very fortunate to have a "full house" of students this year, who were enthusiastic and eager to learn. We greatly appreciate the contribution that both the students and student supervisors made to the Clinic by creating such an active and vibrant student program. Thank you to Gilda Tavernese, Masters of Social Work, University of Toronto; Lily Sychaleune, Social Service Worker, Humber College; Laurence Simard, Social Service Worker, George Brown College; Christine Hobson, Bachelor of Social Work, Ryerson University, and Silvia Tenenbaum, M.A., Counselling Psychology, OISE/University of Toronto for selecting the Clinic to learn about counselling and advocating for women survivors of violence.

## LEGAL DEPARTMENT

### New Funding

For the first time in its 20 year history, the Barbra Schlifer Clinic has received sustained (annualized) funding from the provincial government for its Legal Services. Attorney General Michael Bryant, made the official announcement at the Schlifer Clinic's annual fundraiser, the Tribute, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Prior to this, the Ministry (along with Legal Aid Ontario) had provided project funding for two years between 1999 and 2001 for the Clinic's Specialized Legal Services For Victims of Domestic Violence and had renewed its funding each year since then. However, this new commitment makes this funding permanent. Minister Bryant said, "This funding acknowledges the importance of the Clinic in protecting women from violence and is another step that shows this government's commitment to building stronger, safer communities." Minister Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible For Women's Issues, stated, "It is critical for abused women to be able to access legal counselling and other supports they need to protect themselves from further violence and to rebuild their lives." This funding will permit the Clinic to provide much needed continuity in the provision of its comprehensive services to victims of partner assault, consolidation of both its service and advocacy partnerships in the community, and will facilitate long-term strategic planning and programme development. The Schlifer Clinic gratefully acknowledges this new commitment by the province to assaulted women.

### Law Students

The Clinic would like to thank its law students (Vanessa Emery, Christine Shallaby, Lizzie Gradinger, Tina Kim, Robynne Kazina and Yeon Pak) who have provided critical support and advocacy services to our legal clients over this past academic year. The Clinic annually operates an accredited placement programme for law students through the University of Toronto Law School and students engage in representation and advocacy on behalf of clients in all areas of law including family, immigration and criminal law, under the supervision of the Clinic's Staff Lawyers. The Clinic would also like to thank Lois Chiang, Assistant Dean Of Students at the University of Toronto Law School, for her ongoing support and guidance. Lastly, the Clinic would also like to thank other law students and lawyers who volunteered their time and services to the Clinic over this past academic year including, Larissa Goodyear, Lobat Sadrehashemi, Erica Tso, Penny Akrivopoulos, Erin Fries and Andrea Danon. Their contributions were invaluable.

### International Women's Day

On March 8, 2005, the Law Society Of Upper Canada, The Women's Law Association of Ontario, the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, the Feminist Legal Analysis Section of the Ontario Bar Association and the Women's Future Fund hosted a forum in celebration of International Women's day on the "Role Of Lawyers In Domestic Violence Cases". The panel (Chaired by the LSUC's Equity Department Director, Josee Bouchard) included Angela Robertson, Executive Director of Sistering, Mary Lou Fassel, Director of Legal Services at the Schlifer Clinic, Carol Curtis, Family Law Lawyer and Sudabeh Mashkuri, Policy Counsel in the Equity Department of the Law Society. Each panelist discussed women's experiences within specific justice systems (family, criminal and immigration) and explored the capacity of those justice systems to advance women's equality rights and ensure victim's access to justice generally. As part of her speech, Mary Lou Fassel stated: "It is important to note...that violence, as a system by which women are prevented from achieving equality,

cannot be understood as distinct from other social – political conditions, such as racism and poverty, that disadvantage particular women. Women who are poor, marginalized, who suffer from mental illness... women who are from visible minorities, women who are non-English speaking, who are disabled, who are young or elderly, who are immigrants and refugees, who are aboriginal, or who are lesbian, are all more vulnerable to violence. And because of systemic racism, homophobia, sexism and other entrenched oppressions in the legal systems, these same communities of women, being as they are, the most disempowered of women, face multiple barriers to justice when they seek the protection of the law. Women's inequality in the justice systems, mirrors women's social inequality in our culture at large and vice versa. Women aspiring to overcome violence in their personal lives face inequities in the justice systems that undermine those efforts. Women's vulnerability to violence is thus increased, women's inequality thus further entrenched..."

## INTERPRETER SERVICE DEPARTMENT

The BSCC Interpreter Service lists over 200 Language Interpreters on its roster. In this issue of our newsletter, we feature two interpreters so we can appreciate and get to know them better.

**Mehri Yalfani, (Farsi)** was born in Iran from a middle class, strongly religious family. She almost did not get an education as her family believed it was a sin to send girls to school. She studied classic literature and the works of Persian classic poets, all of which tremendously affected her and provided a solid base for her future as a writer. Mehri graduated as an electrical engineer and worked for 20 years while married and raising three children. In 1987, Mehri immigrated to Canada with her family. Mehri's short stories first appeared in Farsi publications in Canada, the US and Europe. This is a list of some of her works: "Birthday Party", "Two Sisters", "Parastoo" (collections of short stories); novels "Someone Is Coming", "The Shadows", "Far From Home", "Dance In A Broken Mirror" and "Afsaneh's Moon". Mehri is currently working on a collection of poems based on memoirs of political prisoners in the Islamic Republic of Iran. She is running a workshop for women who had been imprisoned in Iran because of their political beliefs.

**Simy Gruner (Spanish)** was born in Lima, Peru. She has a Biology degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Masters from the University of Toronto. Simy has been passionate about arts since childhood. Living and travelling in different countries nurtured her appreciation for the different ways of expressing human feelings. While she raised 3 children, she volunteered at the Sick Children's Hospital and the Distress Centre in Toronto. She took art classes at The Koffler Art Centre and the Toronto School of Arts. She painted in her free time, but eventually began taking it more seriously. She has been an Interpreter since 2001, which allows her the flexibility to devote time to her painting. Simy's work was at the Naamat Latina group show in November 2003, and the Gallery 401 on Richmond Street in November 2004, as well as private collections in Canada, U.S.A. and Mexico. For Simy, art represents the challenge to explore her inner universe, a world full of intensely felt experiences and emotions. She believes that art should resonate in the individuals that look at it regardless of the language they speak and the culture they come from and for this YOU DON'T NEED AN INTERPRETER.

The BSCC Interpreter Service celebrates the talent and works of Mehri and Simy and are grateful for their work as Interpreters.

## VOLUNTEER CORNER

### Thank you to our "Tribute" Event volunteers

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff and the thousands of women who benefit from the Clinic services, we want to thank you for your participation in our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute Event 2005.

Your generosity in giving your time to assist us in organizing and planning our event and working together on the hundreds of tasks involved, was invaluable.

As a result of your work, we had one of the most successful events since we started with our first Tribute in 1995.

**The staff of the Clinic are very proud and honored to have worked with such wonderful volunteers as you. Thank you for your energy, commitment and passionate support of the Clinic.**

### New Board Member Michele Lopaschuk:

We are pleased to welcome Michele to the Board of Directors. Michele has a deep commitment to helping prevent violence against women. Currently, she works as a Property Services Representative for a large company. Michele is eager to utilize her planning and organizational skills in order to benefit the Clinic. Welcome Michele.

## Leave a Legacy of Caring

You may decide that you would like to include a gift to the Barbra Schlifer Clinic when preparing your will or during your estate planning. These gifts are so important because they will help us to continue our work providing services for women victims of violence in the future and for the next generation. Consider one of the following ways of making a planned gift:

- A bequest through a will
- Assignment of life insurance
- Establish a charitable trust
- Gift annuities
- Assignment of securities

For more information, please contact Meldina Smith at: [fundraising@schliferclinic.com](mailto:fundraising@schliferclinic.com) or 416-323-9149 Ext. 237

## Thanking Our Funding Partners

- Ministry of the Attorney General
- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Health and Long -Term Care
  - Legal Aid Ontario
  - City of Toronto
- United Way of Greater Toronto
- Toronto Community Foundation

## Upcoming Event

### ***Bowlathon 2005***

Join us for our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Bowling Fund-raiser at :

**Thornccliffe Bowlarama  
45 Overlea Blvd.**

**On Saturday, September 10, 2005  
from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Reserve the date now for a great afternoon in support of the Clinic.

**Please contact Meldina Smith at  
416-323-9149 Ext. 237.**

**Or e-mail her at:  
[fundraising@schliferclinic.com](mailto:fundraising@schliferclinic.com)**



## YOUR DONATIONS ARE APPRECIATED

Although the Clinic receives funding from 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. Charitable income tax receipts will be provided.

**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
489 College Street, Suite 503  
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You can also call us at (416) 323-9149 x 237 or e-mail us at: [fundraising@schliferclinic.com](mailto:fundraising@schliferclinic.com) with your Visa, MasterCard or Amex number.



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