

The History of “A Woman’s Journal”

A Woman’s Journal was developed by Oshawa Community Health Centre. Our purpose is to enable people to increase control over and improve their physical, emotional and social well being and consequently, to build a stronger and healthier community. Our priority population includes women and children and many of our programs and resources focus on violence prevention.

In 1995, one such programThe Peer Support Program.....matched trained women volunteers with women who were leaving, or had recently left, abusive relationships. The Social Action component of the same program encouraged the initiation of a project intended for community education. The women developed a plan to create a woman’s journal to both educate others about the impact of woman abuse while assisting abused women. On a very limited budget, the first few journals were printed and have evolved into the journals that are in your hands today.

In 1997, Oshawa Community Health Centre submitted a proposal to the Ontario Women’s Directorate to re-develop the journal. We hired Val Nowaka participant in the Peer Support Program to oversee this project. With her talented, creative ability and the contributions of inspiring poems, artwork, quotes, informative essays and exercises from women in the community, we were able to produce a new and improved journal. When we asked for creative contributions from women in our community, we simply asked them to respond to the question “What helped you get through a difficult time?” Blank pages were defined by women as an essential tool for self-discovery. One thousand (1000) copies were printed and distributed to women in the Durham Region. A special effort was made to ensure that the journal reached the hands of women dealing with issues of abuse.

Women in our community continue to request copies of A Woman’s Journal. We charge a nominal fee and all profits are directed back to further printings for free distribution to abused women. The journals have been sent to other Community Health Centres across Ontario, as well as to Women’s Shelters, and to Family Resource Centres. Other communities have developed their own journals, utilizing the creative ideas and initiative of the women living there. We have learned of the innovative ways that the journal is being used..... in support groups, in individual therapy as gifts for other women for safety planning and for informing people about the impact of women abuse. Perhaps the most profound benefit of A Woman’s Journal has been the creative and individual expression each woman has found when her eyes or her pen have touched its pages.

As we continue to see women hurt and murdered by abusive partners, we take comfort in knowing that some women have found strength and made new lives for themselves. Oshawa Community Health Centre remains committed to violence prevention, and the health and well-being of women and children. Through this meaningful project, we have connected women from across the nation connected them to the resources within their communities and to their strengths within.

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