



**Medicine Hat** Women's Shelter Society  
Report to the Community  
2020-21

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*“Every single one of you made myself and my children feel safe enough to work through our traumas and find ourselves again. I am eternally grateful for your kindness, love, and support. I am one with myself again and have the confidence to pick up all the pieces. I can finally make my life better for my family. We are no longer afraid. We are free and happy. Thank you.”*

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2020-21

### **President**

Jennifer Kerlake

### **Vice President**

Kristine Russell

### **Secretary**

Debbie Stiles

### **Treasurer**

Bailey O'Reilly

### **Directors:**

Nicole Anhel

George Best

Conor Doyle

Ryan Thorburn

Miles Thorson

### **WHO WE ARE**

The Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society is a non-profit organization. Our services are available at no cost and we serve Medicine Hat and surrounding area.

### **OUR VISION**

All individuals live free from violence and abuse.

### **OUR MISSION**

The Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society supports individuals impacted by family violence by providing them with safe shelter, education, advocacy and access to community resources. We are committed to social change by providing programs and services that promote treating all people with respect and dignity.

### **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- We believe that violent and abusive behavior is a deliberate choice;
- We honor that victims always respond and resist to abuse and violence;
- We believe that people have the capacity to change;
- We are committed to providing a positive social response to every person;
- We believe in providing a socially responsible and financially accountable organization to the community;
- We value innovative practices and strong advocacy that offers a strong public voice;
- We believe that dedicated and compassionate staff can effect change.

# PRESIDENT'S

# Message

On behalf of the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society's Board of Directors, it is an honour to share with our community how the organization has striven to provide a safe haven for those experiencing family violence over this past year in the face of a global pandemic.

This fall, the Board of Directors will be starting the process of strategic planning. We will be looking towards the future of the organization, including sustainability and evaluating our programming needs to ensure we are able to make the greatest impact in the lives of those who come to us for help.

Even before COVID-19, staff well-being has often been a challenge for organizations that provide frontline crisis services. A report released in 2019 by Women's Shelters Canada that surveyed shelters and transition houses across the country found that over half (55%) of respondents indicated staff turnover and burnout were a "major challenge."

"You can't pour from an empty cup" is a phrase often used to speak about the importance of self care, especially for those in a helping profession like MHWSS. As a Board, we know that words need to be backed up by action. It's why one of our goals with strategic planning is to focus on investing in the well-being of MHWSS staff.

When talking with people in our community, many will openly share how MHWSS has impacted their life, and how it was the kind and patient guidance of staff that helped them through their darkest moments.

The Board wants to thank MHWSS staff for their passion and dedication. Your hard work and willingness to adapt as challenges arise are what has carried us through the COVID-19 pandemic, and what will carry our community forward as we create a safer world, free from violence and abuse.



Jennifer Kerlake

# COMMUNITY

## Address



**H**ere we are 18 months into this pandemic, full into a fourth wave and not sure when or how it will end. At this time last year for our Annual General Meeting, I knew we were in for a long haul but had no idea how long of a haul it would be.

I'd like to dedicate this report to my staff. They have been unbelievable through these past 18 months as they stretch themselves to provide already critical lifesaving work in a setting comprised of covid screenings, physical distancing, masking, extra sanitizing, and so many more safety measures. They pivoted, they were nimble, they put themselves at risk day after day, without complaint.

The work our staff does is hard. They hear heartbreaking stories every day, and meet people at their worst. But they also get to see them at their best.

Trust me when I say that staff don't go into this field for the pay or glory. They do it because they know they can make a difference in someone's life. They know that even if they've helped just one person in a day, they've made an impact.

Our staff are dedicated and passionate about the work that they do as they seek to make the world a better place for the women, men and children who arrive on our doorstep — often not for the first time.

MHWSS staff are relentless in their advocacy for our clients who are taking steps down the path towards a life free from violence — something we all deserve. We ask a lot of our staff, but I hope they know how much we appreciate the determination and passion they bring every day to their work.

Part of our mission statement reads: We are committed to social change by providing programs and services that promote treating all people with respect and dignity.



©Emma Bennett/Medicine Hat News

*"These were dark days for our families. Our staff worked hard to stay connected to all clients, ensuring they were safety planning, providing ongoing support, and bringing them into shelter if needed."*

Staff demonstrate this day in and out in their work with clients and with each other. As we embark on a new strategic planning process this upcoming year, we will continue to recognize respect and dignity as part of our core values.

The increase of family violence during COVID-19 has been called a shadow pandemic, and the effects will be long lasting.

When home isn't a safe place, being told to stay there is not about chilling out watching Netflix and eating comfort foods. For our families it was a scary and unsafe time. Children struggled greatly when sent home to do online schooling, as many did not have access to the technology to make this happen and parents did not have the capacity to navigate the online school system in the middle of crisis and trauma. When your daily life includes family violence, being able to leave the home is a form of survival. This was taken away during the pandemic.

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What is so wonderful about the community of Medicine Hat is that we work so well together. We recognize the strengths everyone brings to the table and know who and when to call when we need help. We have an amazing system of care here that MHWSS is so proud to be a part of.

At the end of the day it's the client and the services provided that are of utmost importance. We thank our funders: The Government of Alberta, Ministry of Community Social Services, for core funding for Phoenix Safe House, Musasa House and Ridge Outreach; the City of Medicine Hat for FCSS funding for Musasa House; and Medicine Hat Community Housing for core funding for Housing First.

Thank you of course to my fabulous Board, who have been incredibly supportive to myself and my staff during these trying and stressful times. Your presence and acknowledgement of what staff have faced these past 18 months has meant so much. It has gone a long way to keeping staff morale up and energized during these difficult days.

And thank you to all of our community for your continued support of MHWSS programs and services. We are truly blessed and grateful for all your support to keep our doors open to families fleeing family violence. You are helping grow hope in our community

Yours with gratitude,



**Natasha Carvalho MSc RSW**  
**Executive Director**

# STATISTICS 2020-2021

## Phoenix Safe House

Emergency Shelter

**184 Adults**

**94 Children**

## 24/7 Help Line

@ Phoenix Safe House

**1,160  
Crisis Calls**

**16,679  
Minutes**

## Musasa House

Second Stage Shelter

**24 Adults**

**47 Children**

## Outreach Services

**Children & Youth Support Groups** - 16 participants

**Adult Support Groups** - 21 group sessions held throughout the year, with a total of 22 participants

**854 Adults**

**139 Children**

## Housing First

with Medicine Hat Community Housing

**73 Adults**

**10 Children**



**Treehouse  
Daycare  
63 Children**

**S.A.F.E.  
2020 Summer Adventure  
Fun & Education Program  
14 Children**

**Christmas  
Hamper  
Program**



**110 Adults, 154 Children**

**ADULTS SERVED**

**1,135**

**CHILDREN SERVED**

**383**

**TOTAL SERVED**

**1,518**

*"We're able to use this data to confirm we're successfully having the impact we want with current programming, while also using it to guide future programming growth."*

# PROJECT IMPACT

The Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society is excited to be a part of a book published this past year that highlights how women's shelters across the province are making a difference and helping people build lives free from family violence.

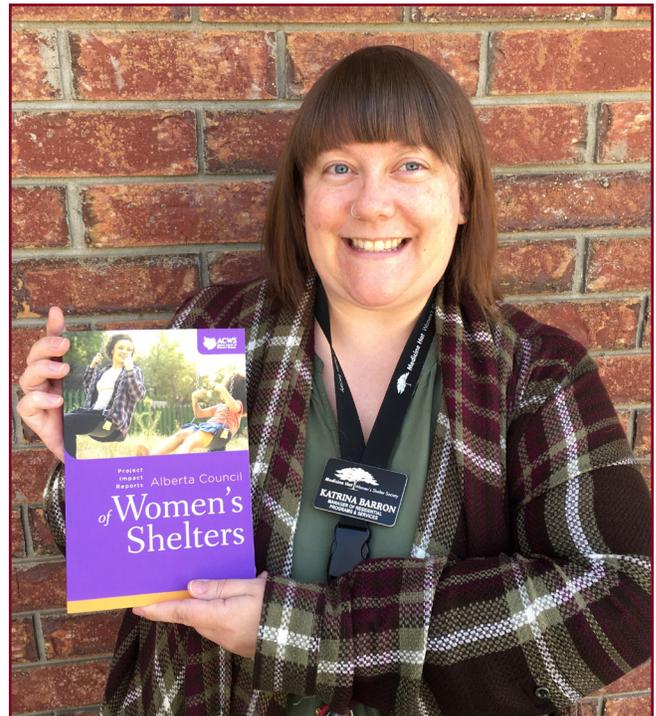
"Project Impact Reports: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters" is the result of work undertaken by 21 shelters over the past year to gather data and feedback from former shelter clients.

"Consistently we heard themes of hope for the future and people expressing that they now had the skills and confidence to make those hopes a reality in their lives," said Katrina Barron, Manager of Residential Programs and Services for the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society, who was the local lead for the project. "People believed that change was possible and that they were worthy."

The project included updating how client evaluations are completed, and moving shelters to more comprehensive quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

The published book is a compilation of reports from the participating 21 shelters, sharing the information gathered through this new evaluation process.

"We're able to use this data to confirm we're successfully having the impact we want with current programming, while also using it to guide future programming growth," said Barron. "We can also use the feedback and data from shelters in other Albertan communities to see



how we can incorporate their strategies into the work we do in Medicine Hat."

Some of the feedback from former MHWSS clients included the importance of having a safe and healthy support network, said Barron. The opportunity to participate in follow-up interviews to share what has changed in their lives also turned out to be therapeutic.

"We heard frequently that families were able to reconnect and heal together and strengthen the family bond," said Barron. "Individuals we spoke to said they appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their journey to healing."

*Copies of "Project Impact" are available for purchase through [amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca).*

"You became the light I needed"

# OUR STAFF

## Phoenix Safe House Emergency Shelter

- Manager of Residential Programs & Services
- Crisis Intervention Worker (CIW) Program Coordinator
- 2 CIW Client Care Coordinators
- 6 CIWs
- 7 Relief CIWs
- 2 Child Support Workers
- Child Care Worker
- Relief Child Care Worker
- Household Support Worker

## Musasa House Second Stage Shelter

- MH Client Care Coordinator
- 2 Child Support Workers

## Outreach Services

- Outreach Program Manager
- 4 Outreach Workers

## Housing First

- Team Lead
- 3 Outreach Workers

## Administrative Team

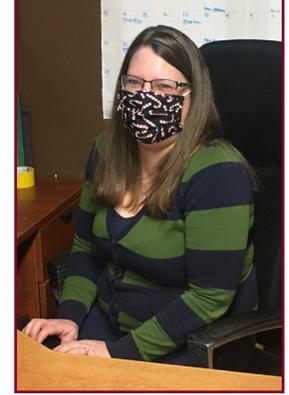
- Executive Director
- Assistant Director
- 1.5 Administrative Assistants
- Human Resources
- 0.5 Bookkeeper
- Community Education & Awareness Coordinator
- Volunteer & Donations Coordinator
- 1.5 Facility Maintenance

## MHC Practicum Students

- Crisis & Musasa - 2 fall, 2 winter Social Work Program
- Child Support - 1/ year Child & Youth Care Program

## SAFE Summer Students

- 2 during summer months





# S.A.F.E

Summer ✦ Adventure  
✦ Fun ✦ Educational



Our S.A.F.E. program provides children whose families are accessing MHWSS services the chance to build happy summer memories by attending day camp programming throughout July and August. A visit to the Lethbridge Corn Maze, horseback riding with Midnight's Trail, creating masterpieces with Painter Girl, and countless trips to local water parks were some of this past summer's adventures.

***SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA TO WATCH OUR VIDEO ABOUT THE S.A.F.E. PROGRAM!***



# MHWSS CHRISTMAS



## Hamper Program



For over 20 years we've run our Christmas Hamper Program (Formally known as Adopt-A-Family) to help provide gifts to those impacted by family violence. This program ensures these families and individuals do not go without at Christmas. In these 20 years, the program has grown from helping a small number of families to more than 100 annually.

Last year COVID-19 made us re-evaluate the most effective way to operate our program while keeping all our staff, volunteers, clients and sponsors safe and healthy.

We moved away from matching sponsors individually to a client or family and instead offered individual appointment times for a parent to come to our depot location and select gift items for their children. We were excited to be able to empower Mom or Dad with the opportunity to be a part of choosing items that will make their child's Christmas special.

We also ensured that Mom or Dad received a gift, provided families gift cards to buy their Christmas meal, while the YMCA generously provided day passes to their facilities for each family member. Our programs also have many single people coming through them, and we were able to make sure these individuals knew they were thought of during the holiday season as well.

The changes turned out to be a huge success, with tremendously positive feedback from clients. We were able to make our community donations stretch to help every family and individual connected to our services who needed the help.

1,592 adults  
+ 2,769 children

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4,361 participants  
throughout 20 years

*"My heart is full. We will be having the best Christmas ever. Merry Christmas."*

We couldn't have made last year the success it was without the support of our fantastic community.

This includes sponsorship by the Community Foundation of South Eastern Alberta and United Way of Southeastern Alberta, and Davis GMC Buick and Sun Valley Honda stepping up and opening their showroom doors as donation drop-off locations.

Going forward we are going to continue running our hamper program with these new changes, including asking our community to continue supporting the program through donations of new toys, gifts, and gift cards.

Follow us on social media or visit our website [www.mhwss.ca](http://www.mhwss.ca) to find out more about drop-off dates and locations this year.

As always financial donations go a long way to supporting our programs such as this one, and can be made through our website or by an e-transfer to [info@mhwss.ca](mailto:info@mhwss.ca) with the inclusion of your name and address to receive a tax receipt.



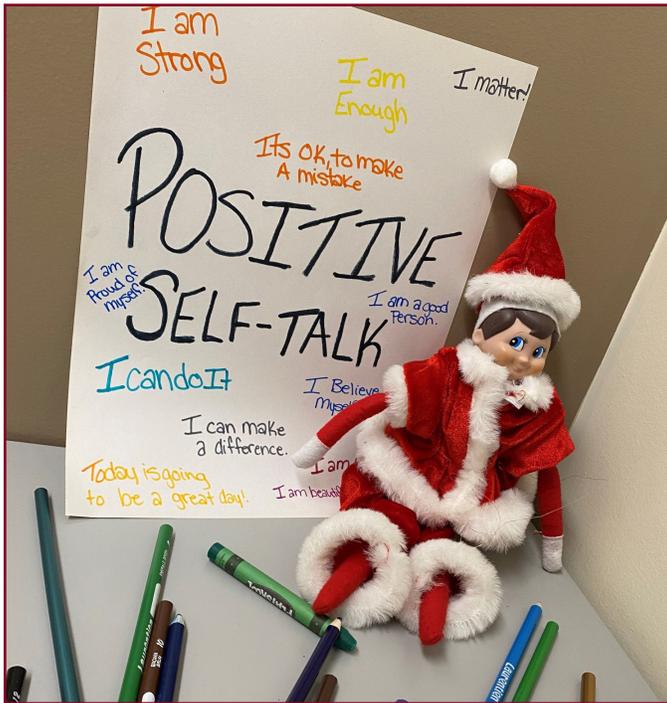
## OUR Volunteers

Throughout the past year our volunteer program has been suspended or running at limited capacity so we can reduce COVID-related risks.

Despite this challenge, volunteers donated  
**894 hours**  
towards supporting  
MHWSS.

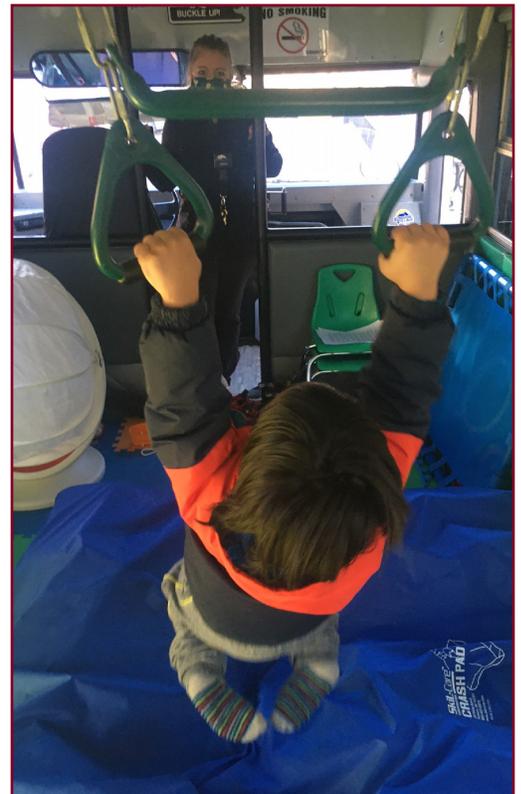
In previous years, volunteer hours ranged from 2,080 to 5,000, representing 1 to 2.5 full-time positions.

*"The first steps to rebuilding something broken is always the hardest part, so thank you for helping me start."*



*"You really do make a difference in the lives of the individuals who stay at your facility. I appreciate everything you have done to help me."*

*"After meeting with my Outreach worker for almost a year, she has helped me to see that abuse is not okay and to see my true worth in life."*



**Top Left:** Tony the Elf who makes an annual visit to our shelter during December. **Top Right:** The annual MHWSS Charity Golf Classic. **Middle:** Community donation from the Inner Man Project of Mother's Day flowers Musasa House clients, one of many donations throughout the year from our community. **Bottom Left:** Purple ribbon tying for Family Violence Prevention Month with the Redcliff Youth Centre. **Bottom Middle:** Child Support display at Phoenix Safe House. **Bottom Right:** Children attending Treehouse Daycare have fun playing on a bus refurbished with sensory activities.

# CONNECTING



## Family Violence Prevention Month

- ✦ 8,000+ feet of purple ribbon put up through community by local schools, community members, and organizations.
- ✦ Nine community webinars with an average of 20 attendees each sharing information on family violence, MHWSS services, and building a safer, more inclusive community.

## National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women

- ✦ Memorial display honouring the victims of the Montreal Massacre and Nova Scotia mass shooting along Sunrise Rotary Trail at Medicine Hat College.
- ✦ December 6th vigil livestream, with 32 people attending, and viewed since by 1,000+ people.



## Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

- ✦ Virtual presentation blitz at local middle and high schools on healthy relationships connecting us with 250+ students in February.
- ✦ Provided school staff with in-class activities and materials for visual displays.

## International Women's Day

**AS WE COME MARCHING, MARCHING...**



Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to watch our video of women from our community reciting the Bread & Roses poem.

## THE IMPACT OF OUR GALA

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to watch our video about the impact our community makes through the Bread & Roses Gala.



With our Community



# COMMUNITY PARTNER

# Awards

## The Home Team Royal LePage Community Realty

The Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society is truly thankful for Sarah Mackenzie and Torrey Mattson of the Home Team and all their fundraising efforts over the years to support us. They have done everything from participating in our golf tournaments, donating auction items to our annual gala, giving a percentage of their commissions from their real estate team and, of course, Sarah's two amazing treks for the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.



Their dedication to helping women and children rebuild their lives safe from violence is inspiring. We are very blessed to be part of the pay-it-forward, give-it-back mentality this team talks and walks. This year MHWSS would like to honour Sarah and Torrey of the Home Team- Royal LePage Community Realty with a Community Partner award.



## Medicine Hat Police Service

The Medicine Hat Police Service and its members have always been a partner and an ally in the work we do responding to and working to end family violence in our community. Seven years ago, the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society and Medicine Hat Police Service formalized a partnership to work towards earlier interventions in family violence situations by created the Safe Families Intervention Team (SFIT).

This collaboration provides a coordinated, effective, and consistent response to families in need of intervention and support. When early interventions and support can be provided, individuals in our community are potentially better able to keep themselves and their families safer and are better equipped to break the cycle of violence.

The dedication and support we have received from all levels of the Medicine Hat Police Service has been vital in the ongoing success of this program. We are honoured to recognize the Medicine Hat Police Service for this continued partnership we have through the Safe Families Intervention Team.

# SHELTER LEGACY Program

## LET YOUR LEGACY LIVE ON

Join a remarkable group of individuals who have taken steps to ensure that programs and services are available for victims of family violence.

## WHAT IS AN ENDOWMENT FUND?

An endowment fund is an income source where the principal is never spent. The interest from the Endowment Fund is the only portion of the fund spent to support the work of the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society.

## ENDOWMENT OPTIONS

**Bequests:** Gifts or personal property, real estate or a specific sum of money.

**Life Insurance:** Through an existing policy or transfer ownership of existing policy.

**Direct Gifts:** Recognized with a Tax Receipt.

**Retirement Funds:** A charitable gift of all or any portion of funds remaining at death.

**Gifts That Give Back:** Gifts that provide a future gift for the society and a lifetime of income for the donor. This type of gift is irrevocable and provides immediate tax benefits for the donor, [i.e. Remainder Trust.]

## TALK TO US!

We can explain more fully each of these gift plans, and assist you in meeting your financial needs and philanthropic desires.

**For more information about the Shelter Legacy Program, contact our executive director Natasha Carvalho — 403-527-8223 or natashac@mhws.ca**

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*“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.”*

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-Pericles

## LEGACY PROGRAM MEMBERS

Drew & Frances Barnes\*  
Gerry Carter\*

Mike Salmon & Natasha  
Carvalho\*

Cleanrite Services  
Joyce Condon\*

Don & Doris Dempster\*

Nick & Voula Douvis

Dr. Trevor M. Brooks  
Professional Corporation

Craig & Donna Elder\*

Dianne & Cecil Finch\*

Gerald & Elaine Freedman\*  
Muriel Glenn

Lyn Gordon\* (in Memory of  
Toni Ward)

Carol & Joel Heese\*

Kambi & Paul Heywood\*  
Hillcrest Church\*

Heather & Danny Koch\*  
Blake Pederson & Angela  
Kolody

Stan & Robin Krause

Randy & Linda Lehr\*

Victor & Myra Link  
PG Mastel

Miles & Noel Maughan\*

Amanda & Grant McCrie\*

Andy & Sherry McGrogan\*

Gerald Borch & Hilary  
Munro\*

Mike King & Rose O'Donnell  
King\*

Bailey & Ryan O'Reilly

Darlene & Todd O'Reilly\*  
Catherine Ohama\*

Sandy & Kevin Redden\*

Mark Lewall & Karen Saffran

Marlene & Kevin Semrau

Dan Kammerer & Cheryl  
Shabaturo\*

Sons of Abraham  
Congregation\*

St. Paul Lutheran - Women's  
Missionary League\*

Ron & Sheila Verhegge

Deena & Mark West\*

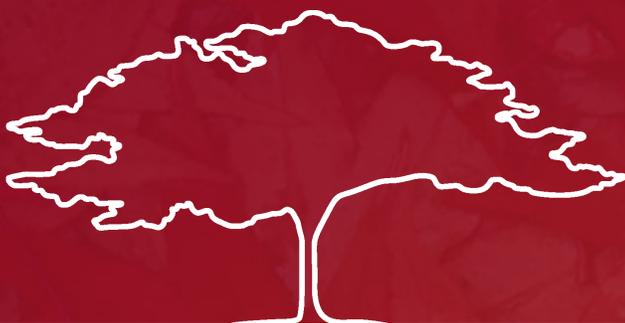
Jim & Anne White\*

Tara Williams

Anonymous\*

\*Shelter Legacy Program Founding Members

# MAJOR SUPPORTERS



@mhwomensshelter  
www.mhwss.ca