

# Willow Place

## Fall 2015 Newsletter

Phone: (204) 615-0313  
Fax: (204) 615-1077  
www.willowplace.ca  
Crisis Line: (204) 615-0311

### A Message from our Executive Director

Our first newsletter! What a milestone. Since April 2015 Willow Place, Inc. has been delivering services to women and children experiencing family violence. And together with our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, donors, supporters, and funders, we have been working hard to support their strength and resiliency. Last week I spoke to a young child who was sitting on the floor close to the stairwell, waiting for his mom to finish her laundry. "What are you doing?" I asked. "Making sure no bugs get in the door," he said. "Good," I said, "we don't want any nasty bugs to get in." "Nope," he said, "cause this is a safe place and nobody can hurt you here."

Food, shelter, safety - things many of us take for granted, can sometimes be gone in an instant and there are regularly between 25-45 residents living at Willow Place at any given time. Although our core funding comes from the Province of Manitoba, we also count on the support of the community. Our new website will soon be launched (with a very generous offering from local businesses) and will have information about our services, resources for those experiencing violence in their families, acknowledgements to our sponsors and supporters and ways to get involved at Willow Place.

Our first strategic planning process is underway and the Board of Directors, together with staff, will meet in September and work together to establish our long term vision. Our facility will be completely renovated this year as part of the Family Violence Prevention Strategy so we are also in the process of packing and preparing for the renovation.

With September comes the beginning of school and we look forward to a great school year working with our partner, Winnipeg School Division, who offers our half day in-house, one room school program, fondly known as "Sunrise".

We have become an active participant with the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters and with activities at the Family Violence Prevention Program. The network of professional support in our start-up year has been both generous and timely. I am grateful to all of you.

The winds of change are upon us and we have a great deal more to do in our pursuit of fostering an organization that thrives on learning from and supporting the changing needs of the women and children who seek our services.

Every day I am humbled by this work and grateful for the opportunity to work with you; the staff, the board of directors, our residents (past and present) and the community.

Meegwetch  
Lesley Lindberg  
Acting Executive Director - Willow Place Inc.

### April 2015 Lincoln Girls Toiletry Drive for Willow Place



One day in April, a staff person at Willow Place received a phone call requesting information on the services that Willow Place provided. This information was to be used for a school project. During the phone call the callers also requested to know what donations the shelter currently required for the women and children. This phone call was special as it was from three Grade 7 students - Emma, Jocelyn and Sydni, and they were calling from Lincoln Middle School. They really wanted to help and asked if it would be okay if they were to collect items on behalf of the shelter. They were very excited to take on this project and their enthusiasm was contagious!

The staff at Willow Place were very touched by the care and concern Emma, Jocelyn and Sydni expressed, as well as, the hard work that each of them put into this endeavor. The girls went on to facilitate a campaign of toiletry items for the women and children to use while in shelter (as many women leave without these items). They were extremely successful as they collected 1780 toiletry items!!!

Great work girls and thank you so much!

It is people like you who make a difference in our community!

Fall 2015 Newsletter made possible by ForeTell Technologies Limited.

### Would YOU like to donate?

Willow Place is always in need of community support via donations and fundraising. While \*monetary donations are very helpful, there is also a need for other types of donations as well!

Please call the Community Coordinator at 204-615-0313 ext.237 or email reception@willowplace.ca to find ways that YOU can help!

\*We are in the process applying for Charitable Tax Status and would gladly accept monetary donations but unfortunately cannot provide a tax receipt at this time.

### A Message from Our Board



I am honoured to be submitting an article for the first edition of the Willow Place newsletter. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this new initiative. As a bit of background, in February I was approached by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Family Services and asked if I would be interested in being a founding Director of a new entity; this entity at the outset didn't have a name but provided very important services and support to women and children who needed a safe place in order to escape the violence they were experiencing in their lives.

While the idea of starting new and being in a position that requires me to provide guidance, support and direction in a field where I admittedly lack professional experience, what the entity stood for and wanted to accomplish was certainly something I wanted to be part

of. I would be lying, though, if I said I wasn't more than a little overwhelmed at the get-go.

However, as I've settled into my position and have worked with Lesley and our new Board I am confident that Willow Place will do great things for the women and children it serves.

While there is still a lot of work to do and changes to be made I've already seen and heard about some changes that have taken place. The biggest change and the initiative that I can speak specifically to is my involvement in the interviews for the Leadership Team. If the women we interviewed are any indication of who we have working within the organization I have no doubt that the future of Willow Place is in good hands. I say this with confidence because what I experienced first-hand during these interviews was a genuine caring, compassion, resilience, and dedication to the organization. In addition, the interviewee's openness to change, willingness to find new and better ways of working, their enthusiasm, excitement and clear commitment provided a very positive indicator of our future success. This is, however, not to say that I also didn't hear things about the past but not once did I ever feel any of the candidates wanted to stay there or go back to that place.

I know change is not easy. I've worked for a not-for-profit organization for the last 15 years and in that time a number of changes have taken place. I haven't always understood why some of the changes needed to happen but as I watched things unfold and participated with an open mind I was able to look back and see why the change was so important and why I needed to be a part of it.

While change challenges us to step out of our comfort zone and away from what we know it is necessary in any organization that wants to continue to be successful now and into the future. If I can offer any sort of advice it is this,..don't be afraid of change embrace it as it will allow you to have new experiences that will foster your own personal and professional growth.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank all of you for the work you do with the women and children who come through our doors. We know it's not easy and while it would a good day if no one needed our services we know and we trust that the residents who are with us are in good hands.

Thank you.  
Rhonda Taylor  
Co-Chair, Willow Place Inc.

### Did you know,..

Crisis Line Services at Willow Place provide crisis intervention, counselling, information, referrals to women experiencing abuse, public awareness, and education to the general public on a 24 hour basis through local telephone service and a Province wide toll-free number.



## A Woman's Story

Have you ever been in an abusive relationship? I have. For the longest time I didn't even know it was abuse. The most recent abusive relationship took me almost two years to recognize that it was in fact abuse, and after I realized it, I still stayed. Not because I wanted to but because I was planning a way to get out with my two children, safely.

Abuse isn't just physical. In fact the hardest type of abuse to heal from is emotional abuse, it is also the most difficult to detect. For me it started with emotional abuse. I would ask my ex-partner if I looked okay, before I went out. He would respond with "you aren't actually going to wear that are you?" That is abuse, because it was putting my self esteem down, and making me question how I looked, when all I was asking for was a compliment.

I would go out for an evening with my mother and I would get a phone call as soon as we got to where we were going, saying "you need to come home". Suddenly I was being controlled. I was being isolated. I was being abused.

After I had my son in 2012, I became a stay at home mom. It was quite the change for me as I had always worked. That was where the financial abuse started. I was a stay at home mom, depending on my partner for everything financially. When I would ask him for money, he would question what I needed it for. I know, I didn't know that could be considered abuse either. But it can be abuse, especially if it is a regular occurrence.

Then one day he told me that he manipulated me at a time of weakness. At that moment, for the first time I opened my eyes. I asked myself if he had manipulated me in the past, what else has he used to manipulate me? I started watching. In my safety plan, I learned everything good and bad about my partner, so I would know the right moment to get out. I got that chance in August of 2014, when my partner and I broke up and I left with my two children.

However, things took a turn for the worst when he was able to manipulate me back into our residence saying he would leave. He did leave. He also came back two days later with a spare set of keys. That's where I was stuck. I had to start my safety planning over again. I didn't tell anyone what I was doing. By doing that I wasn't putting anyone else in the cross fire of what was about to happen.

I started seeing someone socially. When my ex-partner found out in about this person in December of 2014, the switch flipped. He threatened to kill that person's family, and he told me in detail how he would kill me. I was terrified, but still stuck to my safety planning, not telling anyone what had happened.

A short period after that I was smacked for the first time, while my ex-partner was intoxicated. He was an alcoholic so this was not an irregular occurrence. However, that was the first time he had hit me. After that he started drinking more and more. I always thought, it is just the alcohol making him act this way. When really, alcohol was just the excuse, used to hide behind an angry person, who needed to take responsibility for his actions.

By April of 2015, I was physically abused twice more. Once by him waking me and trying to throw me out of my apartment, and once by him smacking me in the face in front of our two year old son.

A week later is when we left with a police escort, as my children and I were barricaded out of the apartment. The police took my children and I to my sisters house, so I could figure out what to do. That evening at the dinner table, my sister Kayla said to me, "There is somewhere you need to go." she continued explaining to me that it was a safe place for women and children in my situation. I listened to what she had to say.

The following day, I asked her to make the call for me, as I was too scared, and did not know the proper questions to ask. They were extremely helpful and told me everything I needed to bring. That day after suppertime a taxi arrived at my sister's residence. My mother and my two nieces walked me to my taxi to say good-bye. I was terrified to get into the car because I had no idea where I was about to be taken. All I knew was my children and I would be safe. That was okay with me.

My mother gave me a big hug, and I shut the door. I was trying so hard to keep my head up high so my mom wouldn't see how frightened I was. As soon as the taxi pulled away from the curb, I cried.

The car pulled up to this strange place, my children and I got out of the car, and went inside. It was that moment I was introduced to Willow Place.

## Volunteer Program

The fall 2015 volunteer training session has just wrapped up and we now have a group of new volunteers. The volunteer team at Willow Place offers support to both clients and staff alike in many different functions as volunteer support workers.

Volunteers are integral in enhancing the services that Willow Place provides for the women and children who access these services!

Recruitment is underway for the next training session. If you are a self-motivated, energetic individual who enjoys a multi-faceted environment then the Willow Place Volunteer Program may be for you!

If interested, please call Marcie at 204-615-0313 ext.237 or email [volunteer@willowplace.ca](mailto:volunteer@willowplace.ca).

## Research Projects

There are currently two research studies ongoing at Willow Place.

The first is a study headed by Dr. Diane Hiebert-Murphy from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba and Dr. Roberta Graham from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Brandon University. The study entitled "The Changing Face of Women's Shelters" involves assessing the backgrounds and needs of women who are entering domestic violence shelters. There is the perception that the population of women using shelters has changed and that services offered may also need to change to better meet women's needs. Very little research exists that describes who is actually accessing shelters and examines their specific needs.

The second study is a Master's thesis project. Katherine Kenyon, a student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Manitoba is looking at the empowerment experiences of women in shelter. While coming into shelter represents a huge upheaval in the lives of women seeking refuge, the effect of a shelter stay on women has received little research attention. Katherine's qualitative study will examine how women in shelter define and experience empowerment, as well as how interventions in shelters contribute to, or hinder, the personal empowerment of clients.

Interviews for both studies have been taking place at Willow Place and at Ikwe Widdjiitwin throughout the summer, and as the data collection period draws to a close we're looking forward to learning more about the clients we serve.

We anticipate that research findings for both studies will be available by May 2016. Detailed research findings will be presented in various public forums and will be shared with shelter staff. Fact sheets will be available in shelter as well.

If you have any questions about either research study, please contact Dr. Diane Hiebert-Murphy at 204-474-8283.

## Royal LePage Food for Shelter Campaign May 2015

This past spring a group from Royal LePage led an extremely successful food drive on behalf of Willow Place which was labelled the "Food for Shelter Campaign." This tenacious group was able to collect 3000 food and toiletry items and delivered them in person on May 22nd!



As you can imagine, donations such as food, toiletries and cleaning products are items that the shelter is in need of on an ongoing basis due to the high volume that required to meet the shelter needs. This donation in particular has been of particular value during a very busy spring and summer! Thank you Royal LePage for your years of generous support to shelters in Manitoba and across the country!

## Winnipeg Mind and Body Massage Therapy

Are you in need of a massage?  
Hollie (Massage Therapy Student) at Winnipeg Mind and Body Massage Therapy offers a discounted rate for her clients on the 15th of each month with the donation of items the shelter is in need of! Here is how it works: for every item brought in to donate, clients will get a certain dollar amount off, up to a maximum of \$25. Any items that are high need (clients can inquire at the time of booking with Hollie) will count as double the value for their discount. So, if an item is valued at \$5, and it's a high need item at the shelter, the discount will be \$10 off the massage rate. What an excellent way to relax and donate!!!  
Call Hollie today at 204-669-4540 or 204-583-0369!

## Current and Ongoing Fundraising Soup Sisters Winnipeg Chapter

The Winnipeg chapter of Soup Sisters has resumed following their summer hiatus. The Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers provide a unique fundraising experience which directly supports the women and children at Willow Place. Each month a soup making event is hosted by Soups Sisters at the Fairmont Hotel under the supervision and expertise of a Chef or professional facilitator. The day following the event, 150-200 servings of nourishing soup is delivered to Willow Place. This soup is very special as it is made with love by generous Willow Place supporters. The soup making experience is a wonderful way to celebrate special birthdays, to spend time with family, or as an activity for a large group of people while giving to those in need! If you are interested in participating, please visit [winnipeg@soupsisters.org](http://winnipeg@soupsisters.org) to book an event!

## A Volunteer at Willow Place Where Healing Begins

My sister told me once to start volunteering, not anywhere specific but just to do it, so I listened. I volunteer for many music events around the city and when I found the ad for a musician wanted to provide music at a women's shelter it tied in two of the things I feel most passionate about. Willow Place is a wonderful organization, it provides a welcoming safe home to anyone who walks through its doors. The women and children there have started on a healing process. It's frightening to start out on your own and take control of your life but Willow Place provides the steps necessary to start that process. By seeking out entertainment and other helpful life skills training, the shelter doesn't just care about moving people through the program, they want them to find joy in life and succeed.

Every second Wednesday I come in and play music for an hour. I write songs with an encouraging spirit that focus on healing and hope. I get to talk with the women and children in between songs and the turn out will range anywhere from 1-15 people usually, either passing through the dining room or sitting around watching. I offer my guitar to anyone who can play and I've had a couple takers which was lovely. I also bring small instruments that the kids can play along with, it works in distracting them from my guitar while I'm playing. By the end of the hour they've all had a turn strumming usually, I've found that "The Cat Came Back" never gets old. I've played it three times in one hour by special request. It's a new room each time and I've had many a captivated audience.

Music has been such a healing element in my own life I feel honoured to be able to share it. I reminisce with the women about people they care about who play and discuss the way different songs and music can help you remember a moment or help you get through something. I teach the children that music is an expression and encourage them to dance and sing. Music might not save the world but it definitely has the power to connect people. Having confident, educated women and children is very important for society. Connections made at Willow Place will stay with them throughout their lives encouraging them to seek out something more and give them the ability to recognize it in others going through the same.

I'm so happy that Willow Place took a chance on me and that I'm able to provide a musical break for the women and children there. A little kindness goes a long way, I always leave feeling very appreciated by everyone staying and the regular staff. I hope to continue volunteering for Willow Place as long as possible and will support them any way I possibly can.