

GILLIAN'S PLACE

support for women and children who have experienced abuse

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



GILLIAN'S PLACE LEADERSHIP VISION & VALUES

We are a woman-centred, compassionate, and unified leadership team boldly embracing possibilities.

- POSITIVE
- CONSISTENT
- ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE
- VALUING OF INDIVIDUALS
- TRANSPARENT AND HONEST
- ABLE TO RELY ON EACH OTHER
- AWARE OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY
- ON THE FRONT LINES OF CHANGE MAKING
- WILLING TO HAVE THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

EXECUTIVE TEAM:

Tanja Loeb

Executive Director

Kristi Lawrence

Director of Shelter Services & Operations

Nicole Regehr

Director of Development & Violence Prevention Programs

Rhonda Sliwa

Director of Finance

Marion Wright

Manager of Legal Services

2018-2019

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Jennifer Wallace- President

Janet Allan

Darryl Andree

Jude Atwood

Tim Empringham

Samah Marei

Robert McGray

Carolyn Mullins

Mary Shaw

Rachel Williams



MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & BOARD PRESIDENT

It's no doubt that the services provided to the community by Gillian's Place are crucial to the ongoing safety of women and children throughout the St. Catharines, North and West Niagara area. While the needs continue to increase, and become more complex and rife with challenges for every client, we must acknowledge the work that these women are doing each and every day to extinguish gender-based violence from their lives.

These women have built up the courage to say enough is enough; they are taking their first steps to transform their lives. This time is the most dangerous, so the safety of these women is top priority. While the journey will be long, these women are not only brave but their strength enduring. Not only do we admire them, but celebrate them.

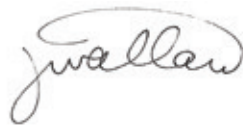
Guiding them every step of the way is our dedicated staff at Gillian's Place, who work tirelessly to help women through the most difficult times of their lives. Everyone from our counselling, legal support, transitional housing, maintenance, administration and community development departments work together to ensure that Gillian's Place is able to help as many of the over 2000 women who need our assistance each year as possible.

Along with our staff, we celebrate the many volunteers at Gillian's Place who are working for women, allies for women, and are helping the broader community understand, identify and combat gender-based violence in hope of making change.

We look forward to sharing with you through our staff, success stories of women who have changed their lives thanks to Gillian's Place and the support we receive from our funders and community. While we take this time to celebrate the ongoing support and incredible efforts by those working for women through Gillian's Place, we encourage you to not lose sight that our vision is to *"seek a socially just community where all women and children are free from violence and abuse."*

This freedom comes from a society free from abuse against women and children. That massive change comes only with prevention, education, and changing future generations' minds around gender-based violence.

OUR WORK IS NOT YET DONE.



Jennifer Wallace
Board President



Tanja Loeb
Executive Director



SHELTER & OUTREACH SERVICE NUMBERS 2018-19



3310

CRISIS CALLS
were answered



308

lived in the shelter

183 WOMEN

125 CHILDREN

172 were re-directed
due to no available space

1593

TOTAL SERVED
through outreach
services

577 WOMEN

obtained
family law
advice and
advocacy

329 WOMEN

received
crisis outreach
counselling

293 WOMEN

received
transitional
support

104 CHILDREN

received
child & youth
counselling for
exposure to
domestic abuse

493 WOMEN

received help from
our Domestic Violence
Consultants
763 CHILDREN
were impacted



IN 1977, WE OPENED OUR DOORS.

There we were, in our cramped-but-cozy old downtown home. Every inch of every corner was packed with stuff. Every couch had a pillow and blanket in case we needed to squeeze just one more family into our home. People like you joined us, sharing our belief and our insistence that a better life existed for women and children fleeing violence. Our family of supporters grew, and your continued support means that the Gillian's Place story is about more than our physical space. We offer holistic care to women and their children – we nurture families from crisis intervention to re-integration into our community with programs providing emotional support, practical help and life skills. You give women and their children confidence on their journey to freedom, and when they leave our home to go on to lives without violence, they take Gillian's Place with them. Because of you, the spirit of Gillian's Place extends beyond our bricks and mortar, beyond our four walls, across our region, into every neighbourhood. And we thank you for making this journey possible for all of the women who come to us as they seek a different life. Join Gillian's Place as we share some of the stories from this past year, stories about courage, stories about impact, stories about incredible women who have graced the halls of Gillian's Place.

DIMITRI'S STORY

From our Child & Youth Department

6 year-old Dimitri had seen too much in his short time. Like many of the children we see, he was suffering the effects of having been exposed to his father's physical and verbal abuse of his mother, along with the devastating impact of his substance use. Though Dimitri couldn't protect his mother, he always tried to keep his brother safe, and had learned that singing to him helped calm him down. Dimitri's father did not allow his mother to work, and had isolated them from family and community support. For years, nobody knew what they had been going through. But when they finally escaped their home and came to Gillian's Place, we understood. Dimitri was struggling and it came out in his behaviour; he would often yell and lash out at his mother. Sometimes, he would cover her mouth when she spoke, and once told us that this is what his daddy did when he didn't like what she was saying. But as Dimitri began to heal, he gradually learned to trust our Child and Youth Counsellor, and he began to share openly about the trauma he had experienced. He started to actively work on the coping strategies and mindfulness activities she showed him to help him manage some of his feelings of anger and frustration and to learn more adaptive behaviours. Dimitri began to feel safe again, and over the year, he began to thrive. One year later, Dimitri is a different child. He is excited to come to appointments and share stories about his home life, friends, and the things he enjoys doing. He talks proudly about the home he lives in now, his family members who live close by, and most of all how safe he feels. The hope for Dimitri, his mother, and his little brother began with walking through our doors, and one year later, that hope knows no bounds.



BEGINNING AGAIN

Reflections from our Transitional Housing Support Program

We first met Sara when she was a new refugee, having escaped some horrific circumstances in her home country of Syria. Not only had she lived through war, she lost her husband and youngest son to its ravages as well. Shortly after they died, she began to experience terrifying abuse at the hands of her husband's family, due to political issues. It began with insults and verbal aggression but escalated to threats and then physical violence. Corruption in the justice system complicated matters, and she narrowly escaped being kidnapped by the police. She escaped to a nearby village with her older son Basil, but shortly after, Sara experienced a terrifying incident when her late husband's family learned of her whereabouts and attempted to have her murdered. Fortunately, she was rescued by a villager and was then able to seek asylum in Canada. She soon discovered that her husband's family was using their ties in Canada to try to find her. She moved to a new city, but when she was chased one day outside of her mosque, she knew she was still in danger and had to leave her province. It was then that the police brought her to Gillian's Place for safety.

Gillian's Place moved Sara into one of our transitional homes where she and her son were able to begin to build a new life. After many months of trauma counselling, learning coping tools, and safety planning, Sara and Basil were able to share that they were well on the way to healing. They were also receiving support to master their English skills, develop community connections, and access permanent housing. They are now both enrolled in college, pursuing new careers, and excited about their future. Recently, Sara returned to Gillian's Place for a visit and shared with us her appreciation: "I am forever grateful for the services we received and we would not have gotten to where we are without all of your guidance and support."

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

From our Legal Department

Janine and her two children were referred to Gillian's Place by the Niagara Regional Police who responded to a domestic violence call at their home. Janine's partner was charged with assault and taken into custody. Even though Janine was finally in a safe place for the first time in years, it was clear that she would need some intensive, ongoing support in order to stay safe. Janine's partner was let out on bail, and despite a court order to discontinue contact with her, he continued the harassment and abuse through stalking and manipulation. He was arrested for breaching his probation several times, but each time he was released, and continued his abuse. The stress of worrying about where and when he might show up, what he might do next and the impact of his behaviour made it very difficult for Janine in all aspects of her life. Her children were scared and confused and wondered whether they would ever be safe. Through this difficult time, Janine and her children received ongoing support from Gillian's Place. Janine shares now that one of the things that made a significant difference in her life during these struggles was the legal advice and information she received about custody, financial support, and advocacy in navigating the family and criminal court systems. Janine often shares about the very first time she felt hope in her situation. It was after her partner's last arrest, when our Lawyer contacted the Crown Attorney to discuss the significant risk her partner posed to her safety. Thanks to this advocacy, Janine's partner was denied release, resulting in him being held in custody and eventually pleading guilty. Our Lawyer attended court with Janine after which Janine expressed that she finally felt a sense of justice and relief. "It was this first step that gave me what I needed. I could see that Gillian's Place was right beside me, supporting me and giving me hope. Knowing I had information, expertise, and choices made all the difference as I began the long road ahead to put the pieces of my life back together."

PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER

From our Shelter

Natalie described herself, when we first met her, as broken. It wasn't just the two black eyes and lacerations she had on her face, but what lay behind the physical markers of the abuse she had endured. For many weeks at the shelter, Natalie seemed to feel out of place – she kept to herself and wasn't comfortable opening up. But, slowly, very slowly, this began to change. There was one day, in particular, that seemed to be a turning point for her. It was when Natalie was sharing about her Indigenous spiritual practices, and discussing making dream-catchers. She shared that this intricate tradition was very special to her, as she had learned it from her mother at 10 years old. Being able to share such an important part her traditions seemed to open the door for Natalie to begin trusting and sharing more openly. She talked about her painful childhood, about witnessing her father's abuse of her mother, and about the time she saw him put a gun to her mother's head, and then watching as her mother was carted off to jail after she tried to defend herself. Natalie spoke about trying to raise her siblings herself and about how hard she worked to break the cycle of abuse, but how difficult it was to learn to live a different way. She shared that having allowed herself to succumb to an abusive relationship years later made her feel like such a failure. Soon, Natalie disclosed that she was starting to feel safe enough to receive help to face her past and begin the work of healing. It was an honour to be part of Natalie's journey after that day. Natalie went on to facilitate a dream-catcher workshop for other shelter residents and during that session, she spoke about how she realized that she is more than what her upbringing and her abusive partner made her believe she was.

Natalie began to set some impressive goals, for her healing and for her future. When she left Gillian's Place, Natalie had begun to trust others again, was more open, and had forgiven herself. She moved into safe housing and set on her way to become a nurse. She enrolled in and graduated from a college preparatory program, and then started a university nursing program. Aside from the resilience and passion in her eyes, Natalie was almost unrecognizable from her first day at the shelter, and it was an amazing privilege to be a part of her wonderful transition.



A WOMAN ARRIVING AT GILLIAN'S PLACE IS IN A WHIRLWIND

She feels relief, but also fear. She's second-guessing her decision to leave. Trying to heal, and often helping her little ones do the same. All the while, she's figuring out what's next. Her world has turned upside down.

But our supporters – 170 corporate partners, 50 monthly donors, 30 volunteers, over 1,000 event participants, and thousands of amazing donors– help a woman to right it.



CORPORATE DONOR SPOTLIGHT

When a woman is ready to move on from Gillian's Place, we all stand with her. GBF Community Services provides assistance to members of the West Niagara community to meet their basic needs and to achieve self-sufficiency. They are some of our strongest, proudest advocates who are key to ongoing support programs. And in 2018, they donated nearly \$30,000! GBF helps us to support women in accessing affordable housing so she never wonders where she and her children will sleep. And they help us by providing funding for our own Transitional Housing Units for women who need a little extra time securing permanent, affordable housing. But it's more than walls, floors and a roof. For 8 women and their children in 2018, it's a home. It's security, warmth, and comfort. And because of this support system she gets to take them with her as she moves forward.

FOUNDATION PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Each year, nearly half of our shelter residents are children. Children who have been exposed to violence and abuse in their homes, and who need their own counselling and support to heal from the trauma of their experience. Up until recently, we have had only one Child & Youth Counsellor to offer this valuable service to families who both reside in our shelter as well those who remain living in the community while they access our services. Greater support was needed, and the Branscombe Family Foundation answered our call. With a generous grant, we were able to hire an additional Child & Youth Counsellor resulting in the ability to increase the therapeutic programming available to mothers and children with support and activities that provide a positive and motivating atmosphere conducive to healing, promote skills development, and minimize behavioural difficulties. We are so grateful to the Branscombe Family Foundation for partnering with us. Because of their gift, we were able to provide service to 50% more children than the previous year. That is 35 more children for whom the cycle of abuse may have been broken.

MONTHLY DONOR SPOTLIGHT

By making a monthly gift to Gillian's Place, members of our Leadership Giving Society are helping to provide the support, stability, and reassurance that a woman needs to build a new life for her children. They are providing a stable and reliable source of funding that allows us to plan for future work.

Greg Miller is a proud monthly donor. "Any abuse of women or children is a tragedy with long-lasting ramifications. It takes a special place to rebuild trust and replace despair with hope. Gillian's Place does that every single day and that's why I'm proud to be a supporter."

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

"Gillian's Place was there for my daughter when she was in need. I am happy to do what I can so the great work they do can carry on."
– Louise - Gillian's Place Volunteer

"Gender-based violence affects every member of our community. As men, it is crucial that we do our part to combat this violence. It is an honour to volunteer with an organization that has played such an important role in Niagara."
– Robert - Board Member

EVENT SPOTLIGHT: Breakfast to End Violence Against Women

In March, over 400 supporters from across Niagara attended our Breakfasts to End Violence Against Women in Grimsby and St. Catharines to hear stories of people who have lived with abuse, to understand how abuse affects families, and just how much Gillian's Place is changing lives. Between these two events, we received \$20,000 in annual pledged support from those in attendance to help build a sustainable future for Gillian's Place. Our featured speaker in St. Catharines was Kelly Serniak, who shared her heartfelt account of being a child forced to flee her home with her mother and brother and seek safe refuge at Gillian's Place. Kelly and her mother, Marnie, are living violence-free lives full of happiness and hope and remain actively involved in bettering the lives of women and children so that they too, may live lives free from abuse.

"Even as a little girl, I could feel the love and protection that was available through those doors. I sensed the community that existed and I just KNEW we weren't alone in our struggle anymore. We shared one big room, I could see large fences all around the property outside our window, that made my little heart happy. This place felt safe...it would be the first time in my life I had felt that way. I had a sense that my mom was healing here too. I saw her feel safe enough to fall apart, then I witnessed her coming back together but now the pieces fit a little differently. She felt stronger and empowered. WE needed a safe hideout; my father was still searching for us. With the help of Gillian's Place, we were recharging. My Mom was formulating her next steps; she had access to counselling/guidance, hot meals, legal advice and the support of many. I was enjoying playing safely with other kids who understood my shy and standoffish ways and accepted me completely as is, they GOT IT. We were blessed with clothes, toys and everything we needed to live comfortably there. I still remember a pair of slippers I was given, they were so cute and special to me. After we left we moved out on our own, the three of us. We didn't have much as my father had destroyed a lot of our things after we left, but we had each other, a fresh start and everything that Gillian's Place gifted us."



Kelly Serniak shares her story at the Breakfast to End Violence Against Women.



'Dancing Dudes' raise over \$6,000 for Gillian's Place.



Men marching to end violence against women at our annual Walk a Mile in HER Shoes.



Students from Eden High School win \$5,000 for Gillian's Place through the Youth & Philanthropy Initiative.

IT'S HARD TO SAY GOOD-BYE



The Gillian's Place staff gather annually to celebrate our employees' years of service to the women and children in our community. This year, we had staff members celebrating 5, 10, 15 and 20 years! Whether they are here for one year, or twenty, each of our caring and dedicated staff have a role to play and make an incredible impact on our work in providing safety, support and services to end the cycle of violence and abuse. And sometimes, though it is hard, members of our Gillian's Place family move on... some for new careers, some retire, some just choose a different path, but all are missed. Whether they worked the front line or in the back offices, they all had some wonderful parting thoughts as they moved on last year.

Erin

Manager of Counselling Services

(former Executive Director of West Niagara Second Stage Housing & Counselling - now Gillian's Place West Niagara)

Moved on to Mission Services, Hamilton – Inasmuch House as their Director of Women's Services.

"In my time with Gillian's Place, our greatest success was the integration of West Niagara Second Stage Housing & Counselling. My hope for the future is that you keep doing what you're doing! Very professional staff from frontline all the way to Executive Director. Gold standard!"

Shirley Vandenberg

Director of Finance & Operations

Retired

"During my time at Gillian's Place, I had very little contact with clients, donors or volunteers. My main contact was with our vendors who provided their goods and services to keep our facility operating. Dealing with our local vendors who were primarily men, I was surprised how many were aware of a women within their social sphere who required our services or the services of a sister Violence Against Women agency. For those who had no specific experience many were quick to share how thankful they were that our services were available within their community. The safety of women was very important and a priority for them."

Val DuRoss

Development & Communications Coordinator

Left to start her own business, Crafted Communications

"One of my fondest memories from my time at Gillian's Place was when a woman stopped by the shelter with a card for one of our clients. We have a lot of well-meaning supporters, so this wasn't so unusual... then, she shared her story. She explained that nearly 40 years ago, as a 6-year-old girl she stayed at Gillian's Place with her mom and brother. On their first night, her mom took them out for ice-cream, and they laughed and played, and felt like a "real family" for the first time. Being able to enjoy herself was a new experience, as her father had made their lives very scary until that point. When I got back to my desk and opened the card, a \$100 bill fell out. She had written out her story and asked that we pass along the money to a woman with a family, so that they could experience the same joy from a night out as a family that she had on the first night, so many years ago."

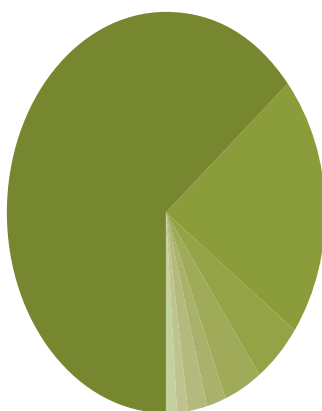
STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES

For the year ending March 31, 2019

	2019	2018	2017
REVENUE			
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	\$ 1,692,153	\$1,565,495	\$1,470,738
Donations and Fundraising	571,834	430,995	502,344
Ministry of the Attorney General	32,500	32,500	32,500
United Way Program Funding	48,552	–	–
Rent Subsidies	57,050	–	–
Other Grants	15,618	89,416	–
Investment and Other Income	111,400	144,396	149,678
Forgiveness of Loan	138,162	138,162	138,162
	2,667,269	2,400,964	2,293,422
EXPENSES			
Outreach Counselling	159,873	73,971	73,128
Emergency Shelter	1,397,438	1,272,689	1,260,335
Transition and Legal Services	311,527	171,612	159,356
One-Time Projects	111,298	239,624	31,291
Domestic Violence Consultant	128,588	144,682	144,949
Family Court Support	32,500	32,930	32,556
Community Development	154,510	103,089	110,896
Transition/Restructure Costs	–	–	7,062
Administration	204,335	223,137	198,979
Depreciation	132,977	137,231	137,231
	2,633,046	2,398,965	2,155,783
Surplus (Deficit)	\$34,223	\$645	\$137,639
as per p.5 of Audited Statements			

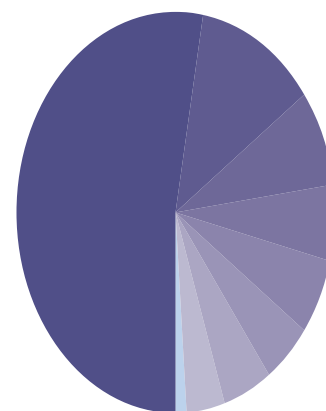
REVENUE

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	64%
Donations and Fundraising	21%
Forgiveness of Loan	5%
Investment and Other Income	4%
United Way Program Funding	2%
Rent Subsidies	2%
Ministry of the Attorney General	1%
Other Grants	1%



EXPENSES

Emergency Shelter	53%
Transition and Legal Services	12%
Administration	8%
Outreach Counselling	6%
Community Development	6%
Depreciation	5%
Domestic Violence Consultant	5%
One-Time Projects	4%
Family Court Support	1%



A copy of the Audited Financial Statements are available upon request

MISSION

To empower women and their children fleeing abuse by providing safety, support, and a range of services and to raise awareness about root causes to end the cycle of violence and abuse.

VISION

We seek a socially just community where all women and children are free from violence and abuse.



GILLIAN'S PLACE

support for women and children who have experienced abuse

24-hr Support Line: 905.684.8331

Business Line: 905.684.4000

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L2R 7J8

gilliansplace.com

