



GILLIAN'S
PLACE

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Tanja Loeb

Executive Director – November 2015 – July 2021

Nicole Regehr

Interim Executive Director

Kristi Lawrence

Director of Shelter Services & Operations

Rhonda Sliwa

Director of Finance

Marion Wright

Manager of Legal Services

Amy Stott

Manager of Counselling Services

Graeme Dargavel

Manager of Community Development

Zacheriah Loeb-Houston

Manager of Strategy & Operations

Jami Coughler

Manager of Quality & Engagement

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Wallace

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Janet Allan

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Darryl Andree

Director

Jude Atwood

Director

Tim Empringham

Director

Samah Marei

Director

Carolyn Mullins

Secretary

Mary Shaw

Director

Franca Vavaroutsos

Treasurer

Rachel Williams

Director

Thank you to our Board of Directors, who last year collectively volunteered over

300 HOURS



Our Leadership Team



Our Board of Directors

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE

It is our second year writing an Annual Report during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board of Directors and Leadership Team are tremendously thankful for how our team, and the greater community, continue to rally and rise to challenge and circumstance. We have been unwavering in our commitment to supporting survivors of gender-based violence throughout the pandemic by providing compassionate and practical support 24/7.

As we closed out 2020, we ended our Strengthening Our Core, Deepening Our Impact Strategic Plan that we embarked on in 2017. The strategic directions to Strengthen Our Core, Demonstrate Excellence, Expand Our Collaboration, and Sustain have been our map for action over the past four years. Undeniably, these objectives have helped Gillian's Place effectively and efficiently respond to unforeseen challenges caused by the pandemic.

While the pandemic has been a gruelling test, consuming most of the year, we are proud that it has not compromised our ability to pursue our organizational goals. We have continued to evaluate our programs and services, ensuring our team has what they need to meet our clients' unique and complex needs. Our Domestic Violence Response Initiative partnership with FACS Niagara has benefited from having a third Domestic Violence Consultant added to support the ever-increasing calls for support. Staff training, especially safety planning, harm reduction, technology safety, mental health and addictions, and leadership development, has continued to be a top priority. We have continued to see the inspiring benefits of having our additional ten second-stage homes with full wrap-around support. We have, with renewed fervour, focused on improving service delivery to equity-seeking groups by using an anti-racism anti-oppression lens, informed by intersectional, feminist values. Our Inclusion, Diversity,

Those working in the gender-based violence sector have been on the front lines of this pandemic for decades.

Equity, and Access Committee has played a pivotal role in organizing training in Indigenous Awareness, Treaty Teachings, Anti Racism and Anti Oppression, preparing us to better serve our community now and into the future.

We have done this and more under the dark cloud of a pandemic that has reinforced the heartbreaking reality of our work. Yet, unfortunately, COVID-19 has disproportionately pushed women, girls, and other marginalized populations into poverty, and the risk of violence against them is rising.

The World Health Organization has called this "The Shadow Pandemic." Those working in the gender-based violence sector have been on the front lines of this pandemic for decades. We have been working tirelessly to bring the issue out from behind closed doors and into the public eye.

We have been waiting for our "me too" moment.

Friends, this moment has arrived.

Today, the voices of activists and survivors have reached a crescendo that cannot be silenced or ignored. Eyes are opening, a spotlight is shining, and communities are talking. **We have a responsibility to further the conversation and foster action.**

While the devastating effects of COVID-19 were immediate, rebuilding and recovering will certainly not be as swift. The road to safety and independence is profoundly more complex and challenging for those surviving violence.

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE

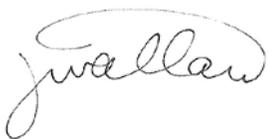
While we continue to respond to pre-pandemic demands, we are forecasting continued escalation in calls for support as public health restrictions begin to lift. What this past year has shown us is that no matter what we face, with the support of our caring and generous community, as well as our government funders, we will be there to provide compassionate free and confidential support and care to individuals as they break the cycle of violence and abuse.

In this spirit, we share our 2020–2021 Annual Report, entitled Hope, Support, and Choices. As we entered our 44th year of providing hope, support, and choices to those experiencing violence and abuse, we thought it appropriate to share just what these words look and feel like to our clients and team.

We hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report.

As we look to the year ahead, we are grateful to be here. Grateful to be supported. Grateful to be trusted by our community's most vulnerable. Grateful for our role in ending gender-based violence in Niagara.

Gratefully,



Jennifer Wallace
Board President



Nicole Regehr
Interim Executive Director



“
Today, the voices of activists and survivors have reached a crescendo that cannot be silenced or ignored.

EMERGENCY SHELTER



132
ADULTS



64
CHILDREN



196
LIVED IN OUR
SHELTER

COMMUNITY SERVICES



5562
calls and texts
answered



626
obtained legal advice
and support



381
attended counselling
appointments



268
received transitional
housing support

94

CHILDREN
living in the community
were seen by our Child
& Youth Counsellors
for exposure
to abuse

690

received help from our
Domestic Violence
Consultants at FACS
Niagara

7621
TOTAL SERVED
through our
community
services

Last year, our expert counsellors responded to a **41%** increase in the number of calls/texts on our **24/7** support line.

In the past two years, we have seen a **68%** increase in demand for this service.

7817
TOTAL SERVED
through Gillian's Place

HOPE

I came in a broken spirit, and with the help of everyone here, I have found my way again. My future is bright and full of **hope**.

– Client Testimonial



Because of you guys, **hope** and love is real.

– Client Testimonial



Hope,
Support,
Choices

Because of Gillian's Place, I now have **hope** that I will reunite with my children. Thank you, Gillian's Place, for advocating and supporting my family through this journey.

– Client Testimonial

This place provided a ray of light when all I saw was darkness. **Hope** instead of fear. I have learned to laugh again and see the joy in living life to the fullest.

– Client Testimonial

ELLEN'S STORY OF HOPE

Arriving At Our Shelter

Ellen never thought her marriage was abusive.

After 35 years together, Ellen had felt her husband's abusive behaviours were that of the norm. Her husband would call her names throughout their life and be very aggressive, which got worse and worse as his dependency on alcohol worsened. Ellen had felt alone, as her children were now grown and moved outside of Ontario.

It was not until she joined a local Facebook group and connected with a woman online who disclosed to Ellen about her husband's behaviours that Ellen realized she was being abused. Ellen was comforted knowing that this woman also experienced violence and abuse and had accessed Gillian's Place. After her husband lost his job due to his drinking, Ellen was repeatedly abused. Her friend begged Ellen to call the 24/7 support line to get help. Ellen called and spoke with a counsellor and created a safety plan for the home and a safety plan to leave if she chose to do so.

Finally working up the courage to leave, Ellen followed her safety plan when her husband left home and quickly gathered her belongings, called the support line, and a counsellor sent a taxi to bring her to our shelter. Greeted with compassion from the Gillian's Place team, Ellen received comfort items that she overlooked in her packing, a hot meal and a warm bed.

Ellen knew she had a choice. A choice to stay in her marriage, a path well-worn and known, yet riddled with abuse from her husband, or choose a new path that is unknown, uncertain, but a path to safety and support. Ellen knew she needed to make a safe choice. As soon as she arrived at Gillian's Place, she knew this is exactly where she needed to be. Ellen said, "There is no better word than 'hope' to describe how I felt when I arrived here."



“There is no better word than ‘hope’ to describe how I felt when I arrived here.”



It was a huge relief when our staff and clients were able to receive their COVID-19 vaccine. We are so thankful to Niagara Region Public Health and Niagara Health for their continued work organizing and administering vaccines across Niagara. To us, the vaccine is a sign of hope – hope for moving out of lockdowns that put our clients at greater risk because of isolation, hope for being able to see loved ones in person, and hope for the health and safety of everyone in our community and across the world.

– Jami Coughler

Manager of Quality & Engagement
COVID-19 Task Force Lead

MADISON'S STORY OF SUPPORT

Our Supportive Housing Program

Madison came to Gillian's Place from another service agency with a history of significant environmental concerns and struggling to keep herself personally safe in a violent and volatile relationship.

Madison entered our Second Stage Family Program at 17 years of age, pregnant, and with one child in her paternal grandmother's care. Child Protective Services (CPS) planned to apprehend the child at birth due to ongoing child protection concerns at the time of entry into the program.

Madison's pregnancy was considered high-risk, and immediately, our Family Counsellor provided full wrap-around support and care. Our Counsellor attended doctor appointments and hospital visits, building a level of trust that Madison had never had before in any relationship.

Throughout her pregnancy, Madison worked hard and became actively engaged in making positive and substantive changes. She started learning life skills in the program, such as cooking, cleaning and maintaining a safe and healthy home environment. Madison is highly involved in the program, never cancels appointments, and asks for additional support appointments when she feels it is necessary.

As Madison worked hard to become self-sufficient, our team began to advocate to have the baby stay with her after birth. As a result, CPS child protection concerns were alleviated, and, in February, Madison gave birth to her beautiful daughter. After leaving the hospital,

mom and her newborn temporarily lived in our shelter to ensure she had 24/7 care. When they arrived, our staff had set up a nursery, and Madison had assistance every step of the way.

Madison receives ongoing support from Gillian's Place, now learning parenting skills. In addition, she attends all appointments with her child, identifies when she needs help and asks for support from our Family Counsellor.

In one year, Madison has gone from living in squalor, with a child apprehension looming, to being an active participant in her journey to safety, security, and independence.

**In one year,
Madison has
gone from living
in squalor...to
being an active
participant in
her journey...**

Support

COMMUNITY OUTREACH WELLNESS BASKETS

We knew our clients living in the community during lengthy lockdowns were struggling with isolation while continuing their journey to safety and stability. In response, our Community Outreach Team spent several weeks preparing isolation care packages for our clients. These packages were delivered to families and included games, snacks, movies, craft supplies, self-care items, pizza kits from Big Marco's, and fresh produce from Small Scale Farms.



I am so proud of our team of talented and thoughtful outreach counsellors for thinking of our clients who were facing increased isolation during periods of lockdown. The outpouring of thanks from our clients was touching and will ensure we continue to find meaningful ways to support them no matter the scenario. I thank our community of donors, who make this level of support possible.

– Kristi Lawrence

Director of Shelter Services & Operations

ZARA'S STORY OF CHOICES

Zara and her daughter had been experiencing emotional, verbal, and financial abuse at the hands of her husband for years.

Zara had to continually call emergency services for much of her marriage to intervene when her husband would escalate. However, as the abuse centred around control, with no physical attacks, there was only so much intervention that could happen. Police services would take him away and suggest he sleep elsewhere, but he would always return to the home soon after he left, often more unstable and unrelenting. Time and time again, Zara had to endure her husband's abusive behaviours. Every day, she tried to keep the peace in the home for the safety and well-being of her daughter. Zara's husband insisted she earn income for the family while maintaining household work. Zara, an immigrant to Canada, was not familiar with available support services. In her country of origin, support lines and emergency shelters were not widely known or accessible.

Zara, her husband, and daughter went to visit her family just weeks before the pandemic. After finally being able to fly home, they had to quarantine for two weeks. These pressures, after so long away from home, resulted in terrifying escalations of abuse. During this time, they had no internet, and Zara and her daughter felt trapped – constantly under her husband's eye. After being unable to fly back to Canada for some time, the isolation she experienced intensified, especially after spending time with family back home. She felt alone in Niagara with no choices.

Finally, after calling emergency services to intervene when a situation turned physical, two officers provided her with a Gillian's Place business card and told her it is not safe at home. Zara gathered the courage to choose to leave home and seek safety at our emergency shelter. Zara thinks back to when she arrived. Had she known about Gillian's Place and the safety and care she would receive, she would have left her situation much sooner.

Feeling like she and her daughter received enough support from our expert counsellors regarding safety planning, legal information, and child and youth counselling, Zara made an informed choice that she wanted to try again with her husband for her daughter's sake. But, unfortunately, Zara quickly discovered that his abusive behaviours did not change and decided to leave again to her supportive family, Gillian's Place.

Zara and her daughter felt like they were back home at Gillian's Place. Her daughter would often tell Zara that Gillian's Place is a happy place where they are safe; she can eat what she wants and do what she wants. Sadly, her daughter experienced abuse from her father, too, as she was not allowed to interact with friends. Fortunately, she was able to join our child and youth programs and interact with other children her age while staying in our shelter.

Zara felt the genuine wrap-around support that Gillian's Place offers. Zara engaged in expert counselling, transitional housing support, legal advice, and parenting support from our child and youth counsellor. As a mother, Zara never experienced some of the joys many enjoy on Mother's Day due to her husband's neglect and abuse. At Gillian's Place, Mother's Day was special, and thanks to our community, she felt spoiled and appreciated for the first time.

With the help of these supports, Zara and her daughter have safely transitioned to living independently. Zara and her daughter are still connected and supported by Gillian's Place, where both are engaged in ongoing outreach counselling, and Zara has used the 24/7 support line when she has needed it. In addition, Zara built meaningful connections with other shelter residents that have extended beyond her stay. Meaningful connections extend to her daughter too, whose network of friends has grown and is always encouraged by Zara. They will always think of Gillian's Place as family.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Our Community Providing Hope, Support, and Choices...

We have always known what an incredibly generous community Niagara is, but this past year, as everyone navigated such uncertain times, we realized an entirely new level of support. We are so thankful for Niagara's faith in our work and their thoughtful and generous support of survivors of gender-based violence.

– Nicole Regehr
Interim Executive Director

Thank You markmeldrum.com!

Just four months into the pandemic, at a time of great uncertainty, Dr. Mark Meldrum stepped up in a big way with a \$30,000 gift to Gillian's Place. Mark's generosity did not stop there. Together, with his Director of Operations, Tara Willard, they have been wonderful sponsors of the ten families in our Second Stage Family Program. They ensured the children and youth returned to school with all the necessary back-to-school supplies, including Chromebooks for each family. Then, heading into the holidays, Tara guaranteed that each family in the program experienced the joys of the holidays. Both Mark and Tara's support have helped provide a level of care and support to the families in this program that far exceeded our dreams for this program. We are abundantly grateful for their partnership and trust in Gillian's Place.



Thank You Graves & Richard Personal Injury Lawyers!

We are so thankful to Chris Richard and the entire team at Graves and Richard Personal Injury Lawyers for their generous financial support this past year. Chris wanted to help our clients further and support local businesses during the lockdown in the new year. He organized and delivered a delicious feast for our clients prepared by Four Brothers Cucina. Our food services staff noted the big smiles on our clients' faces that night. Thank you!



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thank You Kim and Bonnie!

A few days before Christmas, long-time and dear friends of Gillian's Place, Kim Gillespie and Bonnie Handley, dropped off a donation to Gillian's Place including beautiful flowers and cookies for our clients staying with us. This donation is just one example of the many ways these two amazing women have supported Gillian's Place over the years. Thank you!



Thank You Gabe & DeSantis Homes!

One of our most significant responses to the pandemic was pivoting our signature fundraiser, Walk a Mile in HER Shoes, to a virtual community walk, Walk a Mile – COVID Style. Thanks to our generous community, and not just men, over \$105,000 was raised to support Gillian's Place. Special thanks to our top fundraiser and ambassador, Gabe DeSantis, who raised over \$40,000 for Walk a Mile!



Thank You Restaurant Pearl Morissette!

Throughout the pandemic, our clients have been spending more time in their bedrooms due to social distancing. With funds donated by patrons, Restaurant Pearl Morissette provided over \$3,000 for us to purchase artwork to brighten our client bedrooms. They also prepared and delivered delicious chili with all the fixings, warming and filling both client and staff bellies on a cold winter night!



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thank You Bench Brewing Company!

We were incredibly thankful to Matt Giffen and his team at Bench Brewing for helping keep our clients and staff safe by providing us with hand sanitizer throughout the pandemic. We were also grateful that Bench donated \$5,000 to Gillian's Place with their Lincoln Lager sales proceeds.



Last September, we were thrilled to collaborate with more than 80 charities, financial advisors, and legal services from across the Hamilton-Oakville-Niagara Region to show how Canadians can leave a gift in their will. For more than four decades, Gillian's Place has been the grateful beneficiary of numerous planned gifts – each one leaving their legacy on the story of hope, support, and choices.

– Graeme Dargavel
Manager of Community Development

I care about my family.
I also care about the safety of women and children.

You don't have to choose.
Support your loved ones and a charity in your will.

To learn more about leaving a gift in your will, joining our Dream Builder Society, or making a gift of securities, please contact Graeme Dargavel, Manager of Community Development at 905.684.4000 ext. 254 or graeme@gilliansplace.com

STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSES

For the year ending March 31, 2021

Revenue	2021	2020	2019	
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	1,973,649	1,664,294	1,692,153	53%
Donations and Fundraising	839,488	566,492	571,834	23%
Other Grants	420,190	104,952	15,618	11%
Investment and Other Income	168,817	219,791	111,400	5%
Forgiveness of Loan	138,162	138,162	138,162	4%
Rent Subsidies	102,022	60,335	57,050	3%
United Way Program Funding	48,550	48,552	48,552	1%
Ministry of the Attorney General	32,500	32,500	32,500	1%
	3,723,378	2,835,078	2,667,269	100%
Expenses				
Emergency Shelter	1,627,815	1,525,320	1,397,438	48%
One-time Projects	557,598	33,241	111,298	17%
Transition and Legal Services	328,206	363,106	311,527	10%
Community Development	209,451	193,777	154,510	6%
Administration	201,000	171,661	204,335	6%
Domestic Violence Consultant	151,636	145,662	128,588	5%
Outreach Counselling	134,971	150,466	159,873	4%
Depreciation	122,184	124,850	132,977	4%
Family Court Support	32,500	32,500	32,500	1%
	3,365,361	2,740,583	2,633,046	100%
Surplus (Deficit) as per p.5 of Audited statements	358,017	94,495	34,223	



Practical, Compassionate and Confidential Support Services.

24-HR Phone/Text Support Line: 905.684.8331

Business Line: 905.684.4000

Mailing Address: PO Box 1387

St. Catharines, ON L2R 7J8

 gilliansplace.com



We welcome all women, children, two-spirit, genderqueer, trans, and non-binary people to Gillian's Place.



Gillian's Place gratefully carries out its work on the traditional territory of Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples.