

# sonscene

sonshine community services newsletter

SUMMER 2011



## This is Why We Do this Work

Today I attended a post secondary graduation ceremony. It was not an ordinary graduation, but one I had been anticipating with much excitement for the past month. It was not just a celebration of an accomplishment but a celebration of overcoming a lifetime of challenges.

After waiting two hours, the moment arrived. Across the stage walked a beautiful, strong, confident young woman. Her head was held high; her stride was long and powerful and with her hand outstretched, she received her graduation parchment. This parchment was not simply a degree, but a representation of the fact that she had beaten the odds.

You see, four years ago, this young woman and her child came to the Sonshine Centre running for her life. After many years in a violent and abusive relationship, she had gathered the courage to leave and embark on a new journey. Fearful for her life, and the life of her young child, she fled and obtained a Restraining Order - the first step in the challenging task of rebuilding. She worked hard. She remained focused. She gathered strength. She began to dream; thought of possibilities. What if? Can I actually build a positive future for myself? Can I really do this? She began to reach beyond her abuse into a place of possibilities. She worked hard at Sonshine and, half way through her program and with the support and encouragement of her counselor, she enrolled in post secondary education.

Today, I cheered louder than anyone else; I clapped my hands with great enthusiasm and shouted in the most undignified way! My heart overflowed with joy and tears filled my eyes. Long after she crossed the stage, I was still clapping and cheering. Cheering because here was a woman who had beaten the odds; cheering because she was neither 'victim' nor 'survivor,' but she now held her own future in her hands. I was cheering because she had overcome.

As I left the auditorium, I walked slowly in the rain toward my car and thought 'this is why we do this work'.

*Joy Johnson-Green  
Executive Director*

## Name That Playroom!

At our Hope Gala last November, Sid and Marilyn Dykstra purchased the rights to name our playroom for the year. They chose to honour their mother, Anna Spronk, by naming the room after her. On June 6th, we had a Tea Party to commemorate the official naming of the room. Anna traveled all the way from Edmonton to attend the Tea Party we held in her honour. More than twenty of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren were in attendance! Now those who visit our playroom this year will find a plaque that reads:

*In honour of Anna Spronk, mother of 12 (Oma of 48, Great-Oma of 29 and counting).*

We are so happy that Anna Spronk will be a part of our building this year! At our 2011 Hope Gala being held November 3, we will again have the naming rights on auction, and will celebrate the renaming next June, on International Children's Day.



## Volunteer Highlights

Martin Luther King said, “Everyone has the potential for greatness– not celebrity, but greatness – because greatness is determined by service.” Sonshine’s great volunteers come from corporations, churches and communities to serve the women and children who live in Sonshine Centre. In the first half of 2011, volunteers contributed 834 hours of service doing all sorts of necessary tasks!

Each day 22 pairs of little hands and 24 pairs of big hands move throughout Sonshine Centre leaving big and little fingerprints wherever they go, so you can imagine how challenging spring cleaning can be. When 17 young adults from Centre Street Church took up the challenge, we were delighted! One grey day in June, 17 volunteers from CH2MHILL Canada Environmental Services donated construction materials and then installed a sidewalk so Sonshine residents would not have to walk through mud to take out their garbage. Oakpark Church brought a team of volunteers to the Centre to accomplish important gardening chores in the pouring rain! New volunteers from The Lantern, New City Church, and McKenzie Towne Church helped move our residents in and out of Sonshine. All of these things make a world of difference and we are very grateful for our great volunteers!

In April, Sonshine volunteers joined their peers from other Calgary shelters at two educational seminars. Helena Kreca, from Discovery House, presented a workshop on the effect of trauma on a child’s brain development while Richard Phillips, from the Opioid Dependency Program, offered a seminar on the challenges of overcoming addictions. Both workshops equipped volunteers to interact with residents more effectively.

Our volunteer team is remarkable, but we are always on the lookout for more. We are especially in need of male volunteers to act as positive male role models to the young residents. If you would like to offer the gift of your time, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Terry-Mae, at 403.243.0274 or thepburn@sonshine.ab.ca .

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## Partnership Awards

Three outstanding organizations were honoured as “Partners in Service” at our Annual General Meeting. Birthday Buddies Inc., Calgary Interfaith Food Bank, BP Food Link Program and The Canadian Progress Club, City Centre are generous and thoughtful organizations who bring hope to the families who live at our shelter.

Imagine being unable to make your child’s birthday as special as it deserves to be. Birthday Buddies, under the direction of Dawn Bury and Marg Scobie, knows how to turn a child’s birthday into a celebration. Birthday Buddies bring gifts they know the child would love, a cake, candles, balloons, and a card and throw a party! Birthday Buddies makes children feel loved and valued!

Every week, volunteers drive to the Food Bank, pick up fresh fruit and vegetables, and deliver them to Sonshine so families at the Centre can supplement their weekly groceries. This is made possible by a partnership between BP, the Food Bank and our amazing volunteers. It is a collaborative coalition of nutrition!

The Canadian Progress Club, City Centre works tirelessly to help Sonshine achieve its mission. They sponsor three suites, serve on the Hope Gala planning committee, raised over \$100,000 for Sonshine, and provide a helpful link to various Calgary businesses. The contributions of this all female club epitomize the concept of “Partners in Service.”

### We Would Love to Hear from You

Is there anything you would like to read about in our next newsletter? Write Celina an email to let us know. We would also like to save precious environmental and financial resources by sending this newsletter to you electronically. Please send an email to Celina at [claforet@sonshine.ab.ca](mailto:claforet@sonshine.ab.ca) if you prefer to receive our newsletter by email.

## Carving a Day into the Great Tree of History

Several years ago, on a dark day in my history, an inspirational email called out to me from my inbox. I typically delete those sorts of emails before reading them, but on this day, I didn't. I felt listless and uninspired, and more than a little disappointed with life. The message of the email mocked me.

It said, "There are moments in our lives when we realize that we are beholding the carving of a day into the great tree of history." The words were set against a picture of a beautiful flowering fruit tree. I settled into a little pity party for myself and thought, "Despite my best efforts, my life doesn't appear to be bearing much fruit, and my legacy is certainly not what I hoped for."



As I thought about it, I realized that whether I recognized it or not, I was carving a day into the great tree of history. I had a choice: this day could be one where I secured a black cloud over my head and brought it everywhere I went - or I could let the sunshine in. Even though my circumstances were breaking my heart, letting sunshine in meant choosing to let optimism, generosity and joy rule the day I was carving in history.

Everyone has challenging days. Most of Sonshine's families have had more than their share of days that would break your heart. The other day, our outreach worker told me about a young mom who was excited to have a job interview, but was frustrated because she didn't have the bus fare to get her there. If you are looking for a sure-fire way to "carve a meaningful day into the great tree of history" may we suggest one practical and simple way? Buy bus tickets or gift cards from Safeway or Walmart, and send them to Sonshine. This selfless act helps make essential costs more manageable for Sonshine families living on a very limited budget.

Your commitment to support Sonshine with your gifts of time, talent, and treasure encourages and empowers our families, and we are very grateful. Some moms who left Sonshine Centre this year told us that they felt they had gained their life back, and asked us to thank those of you who donate to Sonshine. Many of them said it was the little things that made all the difference in the world. The little things that make them believe they are carving a day in the tree of their history and it is going to be great!

SAVE

the  
Date

11.03.11

hope gala  
Annual Fundraising  
Dinner and Auction

Sonshine invites you to mark your calendar for our  
Hope Gala on Thursday, November 3rd, 2011.

Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Center  
1316 - 33 Street NE, Calgary, AB T2A 6B6

We are looking for auction items. If you have anything to  
donate, please contact Celina at [claforet@sonshine.ab.ca](mailto:claforet@sonshine.ab.ca).

## Play Therapy Helping Children Heal

Domestic violence is not experienced in isolation. It cuts deep within the heart of the entire family and can impede a child's physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and emotional development. If children are left to sort out their experience without therapeutic interventions, they may continue to propagate the cycle of violence. Research proves that the greatest indicator that a child will grow up to either perpetuate violence or be a victim of domestic violence is that they witnessed violence as a child.

Play Therapy is an effective intervention that helps children heal from the trauma associated with domestic violence by capitalizing on a child's natural desire to play. Play is a child's natural language reflecting his or her inner world. "Play is to the child what verbalization is to the adult. It is a medium for expressing feelings, exploring relationships, describing experiences, disclosing wishes, and self-fulfillment."<sup>1</sup>

The idea that one can learn more through informal play than calculated dialogue goes back to the Greek philosopher Plato, who suggested "you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." In play therapy, a lot more happens than a child comprehends. They reveal what is troubling them without even realizing it - giving the counselor an insight into the child's world-view.

The goal of play therapy is to move away from the trauma in a safe and controlled way while moving towards more balanced play. In early sessions, a child may express themes such as aggression, anger, rejection or isolation and, over time, will move to play with nurturing, protecting themes centered on trust and openness.

Domestic violence creates so much fear and anger. For a child to be able to reveal himself or herself without fear of backlash is essential. "The use of toys enables children to transfer anxieties, fears, fantasies, and guilt to objects rather than people. In the process, children are safe from their own feelings and reactions because play enables children to distance themselves from traumatic events and experiences."<sup>2</sup>

Sonshine has supported children at Sonshine Centre since inception, and since 2003, we have actively developed a program that centers on supportive counseling for children. Your generous support makes Sonshine's ability to provide this essential service to the children possible.

<sup>1</sup> Landreth, Gary and Sue Bratton. "What is Play Therapy." The Alberta Play Association. <<http://www.albertaplaytherapy.ca/go.php?page=4>>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## Multiply Your Donation with a Matching Gift

Organizations often support their employee's charitable contributions by matching employee donations. That means that your donation could double! Some companies even match the gifts of retirees and spouses. Please ask your Human Resources department if your company will match your donation.

Summer months can be lean times for charities. Donations at this time are especially appreciated. You may give online at [www.sonshine.ab.ca](http://www.sonshine.ab.ca) or by contacting Celina at 403.705.3485.

Without your support, we would not be able to serve the women and their children who come to us for assistance. Our work truly is a team effort!

Sonshine Community Services is a community supported social service agency. We rely on the financial support of numerous groups and individuals who share our passion for delivering quality services to those in need. We welcome your tax-deductible donation.



Give Online  
[Sonshine.ab.ca](http://Sonshine.ab.ca)



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