

# DISTRESS CENTRES NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK



I hope that everyone is enjoying the fine summer weather this year, despite its unpredictable patterns of heat and rain. While

unpredictable may be okay during these more relaxed months before the fall, it is not a good adjective to describe a safety net organization like Distress Centres. As we have begun anticipating next year's 50th anniversary of the oldest and largest crisis helpline in Canada, we are working hard to ensure that our agency, in future decades, continues to be able to reliably deliver relevant and impactful life-sustaining services. Those who are vulnerable and in a state of emotional need must be able to count on us! That is a challenge that we accept and look forward to successfully meeting during the years to come.

Significant anniversaries, though, do provide great reflection moments, times to review and acknowledge the accomplishments of the past and to identify emerging trends and changing needs. Great organizations are the ones that are able to capitalize on the solid foundation that has been

built to date while, at the same time, remain flexible enough to adapt as necessary for newer generations. And, we are definitely in the process of doing both: revamping our entire telecommunications system and launching our new set of strategic directions.

Distress Centres is most grateful to RBC Capital Markets which, through a United Way Capital Grant, has funded the complete overhaul of our technology infrastructure. By the end of August, 2016, our new state-of-the-art telephone system will be fully functional, enabling us to provide more reliable and flexible service that can be ramped up in emergencies and has the capacity to support future partnerships. New monitoring and reporting features will also generate quality assurance information as well as data on the emotional well-being of the community that can be shared with other social services. The new system is both user-friendly and fully integrates telephony, chat, text and yet unknown future communication applications. Funds to cover the full costs of this project were supplemented with generous donations from the Toronto Rotary Club Foundation, Gazelle Communications and Rogers. We are now ready to meet the future!

As a leadership organization that has pioneered many of the existing suicide prevention services, Distress Centres has never been content to rest on its laurels. After a comprehensive series of external and internal consultations, in April of this year, we released our new Strategic Directions—the framework for the next three years of activity and growth. We are committed to: Ensuring our services remain rooted in our communities; Providing leadership in crisis response, particularly as it relates to suicide; Investing in our youth by ensuring our programs meet their needs; Promoting volunteerism as the service delivery model of choice; Taking a leadership role in the development/delivery of integrated distress centres services; and, Strengthening the foundation of our agency to sustain it for years to come.

We celebrate the past by welcoming the future as a progressive organization well equipped and positioned to meet the challenges of the future. Thank you for partnering with us on this life-enhancing journey.

Karen Letofsky, C.M.

## ON TARGET WITH ONLINE

### ONLINE TEXT (ONTX) / ONLINE CHAT SERVICES

# 80%

OF VISITORS  
ARE UNDER 25  
YEARS OF AGE

Top 5 concerns among chats/texts are interpersonal issues, experiencing isolation/loneliness, depression, suicide ideation and stress

# 70%

OF VISITORS  
CONNECTED  
AFTER HOURS



Kayla sat staring at her phone. She knew she needed help, but she just couldn't bring herself to pick it up and dial her local Crisis Line. It had been 3 months since she had last self-harmed and she had been trying not to fall back into it, as a coping strategy, again. She knew that it would help to talk to someone, and was sure that if she could only call a helpline she would be able to get her mind off of this urge that had been creeping up on her for the past few days; but it was just too hard. Every time she tried to tell someone how she felt, it seemed the words got all jumbled up and she just ended up feeling even more confused.

Kayla opened the browser on her computer and she searched the words "Distress Centres". Distress Centres Toronto's webpage came up. There, on the home page, appeared a link with the words "Ontario Online & Text Crisis Services: 2pm-2am". She clicked the link and was brought to a page that asked a few simple questions: things like her age and a scaling question

### **SHE KNEW THAT IT WOULD HELP TO TALK TO SOMEONE, AND WAS SURE THAT IF SHE COULD ONLY CALL A HELPLINE SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO GET HER MIND OFF OF THIS URGE THAT HAD BEEN CREEPING UP ON HER**

of how upset she was feeling; she selected "4- Very upset". Once she filled in a few questions and clicked submit, she was brought to a chat screen asking her to wait for the next responder. Her anxiety started to rise and she felt that familiar feeling of tightness in her chest. "I can't do this", she thought and moved her mouse to exit out of the screen.

Before Kayla could click the window closed though, a responder entered the chat. "Hi Kayla, my name's Corey. How's it going today?" "Not good..." she responded. A message appeared

in the bottom corner of the chat window indicating the responder was typing a message back; "Oh no! Want to tell me what's been happening to you??" Kayla took a deep breath and typed, "I feel like cutting myself and don't know how to stop". She saw her words appear on the screen. She couldn't believe how easily they had come out. "That sounds pretty scary,"

Corey responded, "Let's talk about this a bit more".

By the time they finished chatting, Kayla found that she was no longer actively thinking about cutting. She felt that Corey really cared about what she was going through emotionally. Together, they were even able to come up with some strategies for what she could do the next time she felt like harming herself. When she closed the chat, she was asked to complete a post-chat survey. When asked "How are you feeling?", Kayla selected, "1 - I'm doing okay", and she really was.



## THE SPIRIT OF A VOLUNTEER



Gail Kramer has been volunteering with Distress Centres for more than two years and, recently, Gail was the recipient of Distress and Crisis Ontario's "Spirit of Volunteerism" Award. This award is a provincial award given to volunteers who have dedicated their time to the support of the vulnerable and their communities. Gail's nomination was particularly meaningful because of her personal experience with depression and anxiety, the courage and strength to overcome her own battle with cancer, the deep feelings of grief that arose from the death of her best friend by suicide, as well as her own capacity to stretch and adapt with the challenges of caring for an adopted child who lives with a disability. And, she still makes time to volunteer at least once a week with Distress Centres in a variety of roles. The following is some of what Gail shared with us during a recent conversation.

### *What are all the programs and areas in which you volunteer at Distress Centres?*

I volunteer on the phone lines, Crisis Link and the PARO Helpline. I do listening-in shifts and supervisory shifts with new volunteers who are just starting on the phone lines. I have also participated in some of the training of new volunteers. And, I volunteer with the Survivor Support Program.

### *Why are you so involved with Distress Centres? Why go above and beyond in your volunteering commitment?*

I don't feel that I am going above and beyond. I am doing what feels right for me. I am very fortunate that the circumstances of my life allow me to choose what I want to do rather than dictate what I need to do. Being of service is what I want to do because there are so many rewards. It's certainly not just about helping others. It helps me in my life too!

### *Why did you originally choose to volunteer with Distress Centres?*

I chose to volunteer with Distress Centres because it gives me the opportunity to connect directly with people in a truly meaningful way. It's very personal. When I talk to callers, I am drawing on my own experiences and my own personality. I have done a lot of self-healing in my life and I get to share that with people in a way that can hopefully help them.

### *How is volunteering with Distress Centres rewarding?*

It is tremendously rewarding to feel that I have made a difference (no matter how big or small) in someone's life. I might have helped someone feel better about themselves (always my goal!), given them some new perspective to consider, helped them come up with some new strategies to cope or just given them a chance to be heard.

### *What has been your most impactful moment volunteering with Distress Centres?*

I'm not sure that I have had one specific moment that has been most impactful.

At the end of a call, when a caller tells me "I feel so much better" or "I never looked at it that way". Or when someone says "you've been a great help, will I be able to talk with you again?" that has a big impact!

### *How did it feel to be nominated and then win the "Spirit of Volunteerism" Award?*

It felt wonderful to be nominated for and win the "Spirit of Volunteerism" Award! What I liked most was being recognized as somebody who represents the "spirit" of volunteering. It was a great honour.

### *What would you want people to know about Distress Centres?*

I would want them to know that it is a wonderful place that does wonderful things because of the wonderful people who work and volunteer there. One of my favourite things about Distress Centres is continually meeting new volunteers who are always really great and interesting people.

### *Do you have any advice for someone thinking of volunteering with Distress Centres?*

My advice would be: Volunteering at Distress Centres is not an easy thing to do. There are definitely challenges and it isn't for everyone. But if you are someone who is looking for an opportunity to help others in a significant way and learn a lot about yourself while doing it, you should definitely check it out!

*To learn more about the different ways to volunteer at Distress Centres, please visit our website at [bit.do/dc-volunteer](http://bit.do/dc-volunteer)*



## CALLER REASSURANCE MEANS SELF-EMPOWERMENT



5061

ANNUAL OUTBOUND  
CALLS



76%

OF CALLERS  
REPORTED  
IMPROVED COPING



60

CALLER  
REASSURANCE  
PARTICIPANTS



78%

OF CALLERS REPORTED POSITIVE  
COMPLIANCE WITH MEDICATION  
AND APPOINTMENTS



83%

OF CALLERS  
FELT LESS  
ISOLATED

The Caller Reassurance Program for Seniors uses volunteers who are trained and supervised to provide mental health support for elderly clients via telephone call-outs. We live in a society which places a high value on children, youth and healthy adults. Sadly, the clients in the Caller Reassurance Program do not fit into any of society's most popular groups. Many of their friends and family members have died and, as they age, they have developed problems with mobility and memory, making it

She described what little she ate and how worried she was about getting enough food. The volunteer explained that food banks were available and she might be eligible to use them. She went to check out a food bank with her best friend and now both of them are using the food bank.

We also remind clients about making and keeping doctor's appointments. Sometimes a client will say they want to make a doctor's appointment, but does not have transportation. We ask if they are eligible for Wheel-Trans. A client who says they are bored may be encouraged to explore community centres and day programs. Many times, the reason people don't use services is because they don't know

goals. This is especially important if clients have dementia or hearing loss, since both conditions make it more difficult for them to have conversations and establish meaningful connections with others. Some clients even refer to the Caller Reassurance volunteers as "phone friends".

Every human being needs to feel heard, cared about and encouraged in order to remain healthy, emotionally content, hopeful and productive. For the elderly who are often sick, vulnerable, fearful and isolated it is especially important. For them to be heard and encouraged is to be empowered. They look forward to getting calls from Caller Reassurance volunteers. One of our clients valued



more difficult for them to participate in community activities. Since many of these clients have difficulty caring for themselves and cleaning their homes, they often limit the number of people they allow into their personal space for fear of being judged, condemned and possibly institutionalized.

Communication complications can also often lead to confusion unless placed in a larger context. For example, a client will mention that they are feeling dizzy. In one such conversation the client was asked if she had eaten.

that they even exist. If the client has a need, the volunteer can help them explore their options and encourage them to use the resources available to them. The more community resources a person finds that they feel comfortable with, the more likely they are to remain involved in their community. This leads to a decrease in isolation, loneliness and thoughts of suicide.

The most valuable service we provide our clients is just caring, listening and encouraging clients to pursue their

us so much that she remarked, "You guys are the only people who have supported me on a consistent basis".

With your support this program can continue to help marginalized and isolated elderly individuals improve their quality of life. As we continue to support them, we are there in ways that prevent our clients from being prematurely or unnecessarily institutionalized as they struggle to meet the challenges of daily life while coping with major life transitions.

**THE MOST VALUABLE SERVICE WE PROVIDE  
OUR CLIENTS IS JUST CARING, LISTENING AND  
ENCOURAGING CLIENTS TO PURSUE THEIR GOALS.**

## EVENTS

### B.A.D. Ride 19

In comparison to the torrential downpour of last year, we couldn't have asked for better weather for this year's Ride. More than 1,000 supporters came out on this hot and sunny day to support Distress Centres in the 19th annual Bikers Against Despair (B.A.D.) motorcycle ride on Sunday, May 29, 2016.

Riders enjoyed a new 3-hour scenic backroads route that wove together some old favourites with newly discovered gems. Starting at Dave & Busters in Vaughan, the bikes meandered through York and Durham, taking a break at Jackson's Point and ending for an afternoon of partying at the Markham Fairgrounds. The festivities there kicked off with a delicious lunch provided by Hero Burgers, prepared by celebrity chef Marc Thuet; great music by James Anthony Band; silent and raffle auctions along with an afternoon of laughs courtesy of comedian Mike Bullard. The high point of the event, as always, was the draw for our grand prize, a 2016 Harley-Davidson Fat Boy FLSTF. Congratulations, to this year's winner, Noel Peters!

B.A.D. Ride 19 was a tremendous success! Thank you to all of the B.A.D. riders who participated in this year's event. With their support we were able to raise \$200,000 towards life-sustaining programs for those in need! And many thanks to all of our sponsors who made this event possible through their generosity, enabling us to maintain our promise that 100% of the funds raised by riders goes directly to support the programs of Distress Centres.

We look forward to celebrating our 20th Ride next year!



### Andrew Ferrone Halloween Bash

In October 2015, the Andrew Ferrone family, who are committed, long-term supporters of Distress Centres, hosted for friends and family, in Andrew's memory, their first annual Halloween Bash. After 10 years of holding a successful golf tournament, their guests enjoyed a Halloween-themed evening of dining, dancing and trick or treating. We are deeply grateful to the Ferrone family for dedicating these much-needed funds to our agency, allowing us to fulfill our mission to foster hope and resilience one connection at a time.

### Balls for Calls

What a way to hit off a new event! On June 25, 2016, on a sunny, hot day, the Distress Centres' Young Professionals Committee organized an inaugural charity soft ball tournament called Balls for Calls in support of Distress Centres. Seven teams of young professionals took to the baseball diamond swinging, trying to lead their team to victory. A huge congratulations to The Misfits for winning the first ever Balls for Calls tournament. Thanks to all of the participants who came out on this beautiful day to play for such an important cause.



## HEALING THROUGH CONNECTION

Nancy Moreau Battaglia identifies herself as a survivor of suicide loss. She lost two family members to suicide, in 2001 her mother Rosie and then in 2002 her eldest brother Maurice. Nancy is very candid in sharing that the support she received through Distress Centres' Survivor Support Program was critical for her survival. Not only did it begin her healing journey, over time, it inspired a long career helping other survivors. As she said, the program helped her find "some normal" in the unique circumstances of a suicide. Thanks to the Survivor Support Program Nancy felt there was a community that understood.

The Survivor Support Program is Canada's oldest suicide-specific bereavement program. It offers face-to-face individualized and group supports to those impacted by a suicide or a homicide. In particular, it was the direct contact with others experiencing a similar death that has an impact. Seeing others show up week after week, having the will to survive. As Nancy related, "They could put one foot in front of the other". Nancy believes that, at the beginning that's what you hope for. That's what you need to see.

Over time, Nancy believes survivors start to define themselves differently. Although they still carry the legacy of a being a suicide survivor, it recedes into a fuller definition of who they are. When she looks at her life trajectory after the two suicides in her family, she can see how she has changed. One of her strongest motivations became the need to help others dealing with suicide. It was her involvement in the Survivor Support

Program that prompted Nancy to leave the corporate world and return to school to train as a Therapist. Nancy began her new career in 2008, at the Season's Centre for Grieving Children. She now works as a private practitioner supporting people whose lives have been touched by sudden

### THE PROGRAM HELPED HER FIND "SOME NORMAL" IN THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF A SUICIDE. THANKS TO THE SURVIVOR SUPPORT PROGRAM NANCY FELT THERE WAS A COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTOOD.

traumatic death. For the last decade, she has volunteered with the program as a peer grief counsellor and is now on the Board of Directors on C.A.S.P.-the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention.

This year, Nancy is helping to organize Distress Centres' first full day Survivors of Suicide Loss Conference. Following last year's community event, that hosted 120 survivors, the Program has extended the event to a full day of workshops, presentations and opportunities for networking. This will be the first event of its kind in Canada. Scheduled for November 19th, 2016, it will coincide with the International Survivors of Suicide Loss day.

Nancy is excited to be a part of this year's organizing team. The theme of the conference, to be held at Metro Hall, is Support Through Connection: A Healing Conference. It will focus on the long-term journeys taken by survivors in the aftermath of suicide. Nancy believes that survivors, even a few years into their loss, long for the experience of a shared community. They want to be in a place, free of judgement, where they can share their stories. That is the type of connection that is healing.

At last year's gathering, Survivor Support Program volunteer counsellors facilitated conversations about suicide loss and its impact on families. For those survivors who participated, insights and struggles were shared. For volunteers, as Nancy puts it, "You're called upon to be the keeper

of hope for others. So that others can navigate without getting lost".

Nancy also believes that a survivor conference of this type is a place where hope can be felt. For her, it is about the community, the connection she first felt in the Survivor Support Program. She believes that for those taking their first steps after a loss, or for those a few years in, it's important to reach out, to find a place of trust, a place to share stories of loss and a meeting point for those navigating through their losses.



*For more information on the Survivor Support Program or the conference, please contact Alex Shendelman at 416-595-1716, or email [Alex@torontodistresscentre.com](mailto:Alex@torontodistresscentre.com) or our website at [bit.do/dc-ssp](http://bit.do/dc-ssp).*

## DIFFERENT WAYS TO GIVE

Distress Centres programs and services help tens of thousands of individuals throughout the GTA and beyond and, for this, we are most grateful. We wouldn't be able to do this without the generosity of supporters like you.

But we won't stop here. Distress Centres strives to offer the most impactful front-line services to those in needs. To do this, we need your help. Please check out the different ways you can partner with Distress Centres to help make a difference.

### Donate Online

Giving online is the fastest way to give. You can give any amount you feel comfortable with, any time of day. As well, your information is safeguarded and not shared with any other agencies or individuals. To donate visit our website at [bit.do/dc-donate](http://bit.do/dc-donate).

### Volunteering

If you have the time, are a good listener and want to help those in your community, then volunteering with Distress Centres may be the right opportunity for you. To find out more about the types of volunteering opportunities available, please visit our website at [bit.do/dc-volunteer](http://bit.do/dc-volunteer).

### In Honour & In Memorial Donation

Making a donation to Distress Centres is meaningful way to acknowledge a loved one. Their legacy will live on in the impact the gift creates for those in need. For more information call our Resource Development office at 416-598-0292.

### Third Party Events

Wish to host a third party event in support of Distress Centres? If you do, reach out to Distress Centres and let us know what you're planning and we will be happy to assist you with Distress Centres information and materials. For more information visit our website at [bit.do/third-party](http://bit.do/third-party).

### Become a Monthly Donor by Joining the Lifeline Alliance

Monthly donations allow donors to have the maximum impact and allow Distress Centres to meet both the ongoing and immediate needs of our service.

For more information on the Lifeline Alliance or to join please visit our website at [bit.do/lifeline-alliance](http://bit.do/lifeline-alliance).

Here are some examples of what a monthly donation can support at Distress Centres



**\$10**

a month allows us to support 35 individuals annually through our 408-HELP Line



**\$30**

a month adds up to keeping our 9 phone lines running for 8 hours



**\$20**

a month allow us to provide over 50 hours of training to a volunteer each year



**\$40**

a month supports one individual through 8 sessions a year through the Survivor Support Program

 **416.408.HELP**

**14**

**MORE CALLS EACH AND EVERY DAY**

**500**

**DIRECT SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**87,524**

**CALLS RESPONDED TO BY DISTRESS CENTRES' 408 HELPLINE IN 2015**

**9%**

**INCREASE OVER 2014**

# THANK YOU

## TO OUR 2016 DONORS AND SPONSORS



RBC Capital Markets  
project funding through  
United Way Capital Grant

### B.A.D. Ride Sponsors

Artik  
Beard Winter LLP  
Bentall Kennedy  
Cybility Studios  
Dave and Buster's  
Davies Harley-Davidson  
Hero Certified Burgers  
Hooters  
Incredible Printing  
Jacox Harley-Davidson  
Lake Simcoe Arms Pub  
& Restaurant  
Lamorea Productions  
Lettieri Espresso + Bar  
Mackie Harley-Davidson  
Mackie Moving Systems  
Markham Fairgrounds  
Motolimo

Motorcycle Mojo Magazine  
Motorcycle Supershow  
Neal Brothers Foods  
Percel Inc.  
Petite Thuet  
Q107 Classic Rock  
Ralota Technologies Inc.  
Ready Honda  
Ready Powersports  
Riders Plus Insurance  
Rogers Communications  
Stitchy Lizard  
Terraplan Landscapes  
Architects  
The Motorcycle Show  
Toronto  
Yamaha Motor Canada

### Foundations

Dylan French Hope  
Foundation  
E.W. Bickle Foundation  
Eva's Thanksgiving Fund at  
the Toronto Foundation  
Jackman Foundation  
Longo's Family  
Charitable Foundation  
Martha Mallon Foundation  
Sony Canada Charitable  
Foundation  
The Andrew Ferrone  
Memorial Fund  
The B&B Hamilton  
Foundation  
The BLG Foundation  
The McLean Foundation  
The Sharp Foundation  
Vancouver Foundation

### Corporations

Bell Canada  
Fairmount Properties Ltd.  
Hydro One Inc.  
IBM's Employee  
Charitable Fund  
Moringstar Air Express Inc.  
Ontario Power Generation  
Rogers Communications  
TD Bank Group  
U.C.W. Group B

### Churches and Service Clubs

Asbury and West  
United Church  
Rosedale United Church  
The Rotary Club of Toronto,  
Charitable Foundation



### Distress Centres

10 Trinity Square  
Toronto, ON M5G 1B1

### 24 hour Help Line

416-408-HELP (4357)

### Survivor Support Program

Tel: 416-595-1716

Tel: 416-598-0168

Fax: 416-598-2316

info@torontodistresscentre.com

www.torontodistresscentre.com

Twitter: @DC\_TO

Charitable Registration No:

10702 1016 RR0001

### Upcoming Events

#### World Suicide Prevention Day

September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016

#### Distress Centres Volunteer Conference:

Living on the Margins: Supporting those in Need"

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016

#### International Survivors of Suicide Loss Events

(Events hosted by the Survivor Support Program)

#### Flag Raising Ceremony at City Hall at 12:00 p.m.

Friday November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016

#### First Annual Survivors of Suicide Loss Conference Support Through Connection:

A Healing Conference for Survivors of Suicide Loss

Saturday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016