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DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN DO DROP IN

The Newsletter for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

JANUARY 2001

FREE

The Staff at DEWC



wish you a HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

News From Your Advocates

We decided to rerun this advocacy item that first appeared in the *DEW Drop In* October 1997 issue. Why print it again? Well, for one thing, the information is still as true today as it was 3 years ago. Also, the Women's Centre is now running programs that encourage and teach women to take action and create change. The ongoing Wednesday night Popular Education group is a great program to check out if you want to learn about group activities that can make positive changes in your world. The End Legislated Poverty groups that sometimes run on Tuesday nights provide another place to learn about social (in)justice and social action.

What is the point of getting together to talk about social action and learn how to create change? Well, having information gives you more power - your power to make change only works when you use it. Your voice is not heard if you don't speak. Your vote doesn't count if you don't put it into the ballot box.

The provincial government will call an election soon and **YOU** have the power to create change. Decide what is important to you. Talk about it with someone else. Take the time to raise your voice to the people running for office. Remind them that you are here and that you matter. And VOTE!!

Now, here is the Oct. 1997 article ...

What do the DEWC's Mental Health Advocates do?

The Centre's Mental Health Advocates are here to provide a variety of services to women who live in the Downtown Eastside. In addition to our education in Mental Health/Mental Illness issues, we have been trained to provide the following information and services:

- BC Benefits (welfare) advocacy for crisis grants, appeals, and help with Disability Applications;
- Information about and help filling out other financial forms such as CPP, UIC, and WCB;
- Housing applications and referrals;
- Landlord/Tenant information and advocacy;
- Help accessing emergency housing, food, clothing and furniture;
- Help with bus pass applications and obtaining identification;
- Help with employment/education or medical/dental referrals;
- Outreach services to help you with appointments out of the Centre (time permitting).

We also offer short-term counseling and Out-of-Centre counseling referrals on such issues as:

- Mental Health and/or Mental Illness issues;
- medical concerns;
- Alcohol and Drug issues (also referrals to detox, recovery and treatment);

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- Grief issues - death, terminal illness and family matters;
- Depression, stress and suicidal feelings;
- Someone to talk to about violence and sexual assault (if Marlies Wester or Carol Martin isn't available);
- Any of life's problems, big or small, that you need or want to talk about.

Poverty is a Mental Health Issue

After reading this list, you may wonder why the DEWC's Mental Health Advocates' jobs involve so much more than counseling and referral to the various Mental Health services offered by the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board. We provide many services that at first glance, may seem to have little to do with Mental Health. However, if you think of all of the issues that can cause stress in your daily life, you will see that we deal with most of them in one fashion or another. Your Advocates are here to help you improve your mental health, by helping you to deal with some of the stresses you encounter as a woman living in the Downtown Eastside.

One of the common denominators of all of the issues we deal with, and one that affects everybody living and working in this community, is **poverty**.

Living on welfare, having inadequate housing, worries about how to feed yourselves and your families, working the streets to make ends meet, addictions and poor health, being jobless and untrained for good work, and the other issues we deal with are often a result of, or at least severely complicated by being poor. The effects of poverty are made worse by government cutbacks, rotten job training, and government and media poor-bashing which misinforms the middle class, teaching them that their tax burden is the result of people living on welfare (Actually, less than 5% of the government's annual budget is spent on welfare).

The good news is that **YOU can make a difference** by joining others from your community in telling our neighbours and our government that we matter, our children matter, and poverty matters. The government counts on people from this area to remain silent and make no objections about the treatment they receive, so that they can blame **you** for the deficit, for the conditions in which your children live, for your illness and pain - they need your silence so that they can blame you for your own poverty and demonize you to the middle and upper classes. Refuse to remain silent. Get informed. Get involved. Join the protests taking place in the community. **Raise your voice and make your opinion heard.**

December 6th is not the only day of the year to speak out about violence. Here are a few words of advice from our Stopping the Violence Counsellor, Carol Martin.

There is no Excuse for Abuse!!!

Violence is an emotional topic and can be hard to talk about. Violence isn't something that happens to other people. It happens to our friends, our neighbours, ourselves. We maybe concerned about someone else who is experiencing some form of violence. It may be very difficult to discuss this issue because it may bring back memories.

Violence is a behaviour that endangers the survival, security, or well-being of another person. Violence is everywhere and takes place within families or in an intimate relationship. Such abuse takes many forms, including dating violence, wife abuse, abuse and neglect of older adults, child sexual abuse, and witnessing the abuse of others.

Abuse may be physical, emotional and sexual. Neglect and financial exploitation are other aspects of abuse. People most often affected by violence are women, children and older adults. We all know about violence. It's an ongoing issue and an issue which most of use know about. It has both immediate and long term effects. It has an impact on our communities. Our children living where abuse happens suffer emotional abuse as a consequence of witnessing abuse.

Violence is not related to economic status or to ethnic, racial, social or particular age groups. Violence crosses all ages and social boundaries: cultural, religious, financial, geographical. Nobody deserves to be hit or hurt and no one has the right to abuse another person, regardless of the circumstance. You are entitled to live in a safe environment. Offenders must be held accountable and take responsibility for their abusive behaviour.

You can set boundaries, be assertive, claim your rights, and take control of your life. Trust yourself to try. Remember that it is Okay not to be liked by everyone and that people will have more respect for you if you have boundaries. Many people have benefited from your nonassertiveness. They have used you to meet their own needs at their expense. Those people will be the first to criticize you for setting and enforcing boundaries. That is Okay. You do not need them. You will be making new, healthy relationships in which you respect one another's life choices. Remember once you learn assertiveness skills you can choose if and when you want to use them. Your whole personality does not have to change, you simply now have a tool to use in directing your life.

MY RIGHTS

I AM NOT TO BLAME FOR BEING BEATEN AND ABUSED.

I AM NOT THE CAUSE OF ANOTHER'S VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

I DO NOT LIKE IT, WANT IT, OR HAVE TO TAKE IT.

I AM AN IMPORTANT HUMAN BEING.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY NO.

I DESERVE TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO LOVE AND BE LOVED.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUT MYSELF FIRST.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO MY OWN FEELINGS.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO MY PRIVACY.

I HAVE POWER OVER MY OWN LIFE.

I CAN USE MY POWER TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF MYSELF.

I CAN DECIDE FOR MYSELF WHAT IS BEST FOR ME.

I CAN MAKE CHANGES IN MY LIFE IF I WANT TO (INCLUDING CHANGING MY MIND)

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE MISTAKES.

I AM NOT ALONE. I CAN ASK OTHERS FOR HELP.

I AM WORTH WORKING FOR AND CHANGING FOR.

I DESERVE TO MAKE MY OWN LIFE SAFER AND HAPPIER.

Here is some inspiring words of wisdom that encourage each of us to strive for the best in the New Year.

There are years that ask questions and years that answer.

-Zora Neale Hurston

New Year's Day. A fresh start. A new chapter in life waiting to be written. New questions to be asked, embraced, and loved. Answers to be discovered and then lived in this transformative year of delight and self-discovery.

Today carve out a quiet interlude for yourself in which to dream, pen in hand. Only dreams give birth to change. What are your hopes for the future as you reflect on the years that have passed? Gradually, as you become curator of your own contentment, you will learn to embrace the gentle yearnings of your heart. But this year, instead of resolutions, write down your most private aspirations. Those longings you have kept tucked away until the time seems right. Trust that now is the time. Ask the questions. The Simple Abundance path brings confidence that the answers will come and we will discover- day by day- how to live them.

Take a leap of faith and begin this wondrous new year by believing. Believe in yourself. And believe that there is a loving Source- a Sower of Dreams- waiting to be realized.

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DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE

44 East Cordova Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1K2

Front Desk: 681 - 8480 Women's Line: 681-7458

**LUNCH SERVED
DAILY AT 12:30**

JANUARY 2001

REGULAR PROGRAMMING

Learning Group - Every Monday, doors close at 5:15. Exploring different ways of Learning with elder, Bernice Hammersmith.

Battered Women Support Services on Tuesday nights from 5 - 8:30, support for women affected by violence in their lives.

The **Street Nurse** is here every Wednesday from 10:30 – 12:00 to give you information on all kinds of health issues.

Popular Education Group - Wednesday from 5:00 - 8:00, Share the skills that you have to make changes in your life. Meet with like-minded women to organize events.

Women's Voice – Every Thursday. 1:30. Let us know what you think about the Centre. Your opinions and ideas are needed.

Women Surviving Together – Every Thursday, 5 pm. Healing Circle and support group for women. Facilitated by elder Reta Blind and Stopping the Violence Counselor, Carol Martin.

Creative Writing Group – Every Thursday, 6 pm. Metis performer & playwright, Marie Clements, offers her talents to women interested in creative writing. She will meet women at the Centre at 5:50 pm and walk over to Firehall Arts Centre (280 East Cordova) for the group.

Support Gathering for Women who are HIV+/AIDS – Every Friday, 12:30 – 3:30 pm. Meshell and Donna (from DAMS) will be facilitating this group at DAMS (167 West Pender). Join us for good food, great conversations and company as we focus on different topics and issues concerning the daily lives of women who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

ARTS & CRAFTS WORKSHOPS: Materials provided.

Beading with Leona - Every Monday, 1:30 pm. Learn how to bead, expand your skills or just share ideas.

Fabric Arts with Freeda - Every Friday morning, 10:30. Learn to do your own sewing and alterations and also to knit and crochet.

Dreamcatchers with Beverly and her friend, every Thursday at 1:30. Expand your skills and share stories with other women.

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|---|---|--|--|--|----------|
| | 1 PANCAKE BREAKFAST! 1:30 Beading | 2 5:00 Battered Women Support Services (BWSS) | 3 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education | 4 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Dreamcatchers 5:00 Healing Circle | 5 10:30 Sewing etc. 12:30 – 3:30 HIV+/AIDS Support Group at DAMS (167 West Pender St.) | 6 |
| 7 | 8 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group | 9 5:00 BWSS | 10 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education | 11 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Dreamcatchers 5:00 Healing Circle | 12 12:30 – 3:30 HIV+/AIDS Support | 13 |
| 14 | 15 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group 5:50 Creative Writing Group (Firehall Arts Centre) | 16 5:00 BWSS | 17 CHEQUE DAY 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education | 18 Centre Closed for All-Day Staff Meeting 5:00 Healing Circle | 19 12:30 – 3:30 HIV+/AIDS Support Group. | 20 |
| 21 | 22 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group 5:50 Creative Writing Group | 23 5:00 BWSS | 24 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education | 25 1:30 Women's Voice 2:00 Dreamcatchers 5:00 Healing Circle | 26 10:30 Sewing, etc. | 27 |
| 28 | 29 1:30 Beading 5:00 Learning Group 5:50 Creative Writing Group | 30 5:00 BWSS | 31 10:30 Street Nurse 5:00 Popular Education | OUTINGS TAKE PLACE ON THURSDAYS. LOOK FOR SIGN UP SHEETS ON THE OUTING BOARD! | | |

us to
Tomorrow's fortune yet to come.
The cons were smiling sweetly, as Their
Souls were slowly dying.

e
Young boys with care free swagger,
Hid their fears behind obscenities
And she herself who saw and heard,
Their bitter shame and pain was broken
Also by the winds of time
So very long ago.

June 1984 -Sharon Butterworth

Sweet Abundance of Life

R
Sweet abundance of life...
 Glance at me
Sweet abundance of life...
 Dance with me
Sweet abundance of life...
 Your romance is a fantasy
Sweet abundance of life...
 Take a chance with me
Sweet abundance of life...
 Enhance your beauty before me
Sweet abundance of life
 Glance at me
 And whisper softly;
 That you are ready...
 To set me free
You have given me beauty
As I absorbed your purifying
 Serenity
All the goodness and kindness you fed me

OUTINGS

We have had a fantastic three months, with outings from Alder Acres Pumpkin Patch, the Riefle Range Bird Sanctuary to ones closer to home, such as the Firehall Arts Theatre for the play “the Unnatural and Accidental Woman” and Camosun Bog in Pacific Regional Forest. I encourage those of you who have not signed up for an outing to do so in the New Year! We will be going on some exciting ones, including a day trip to see the Eagles at Brackendale, and also tobogganing at Cypress, skating at Britannia, and more! To wet your appetite, and your boots, here are some great photos from past outings (my photos didn’t turn out of the previous few months’ outings) and one of our events in October!

January Outings: (Every Thursday Afternoon- watch for sign up sheets and the time of departure on the Outing Board- near the Chalkboard)

January 4th: Skating at Britannia Community Rink!

January 11th: Eagle Watching at Brackendale!

January 19th (FRIDAY!!): Tobogganing at Cypress!

January 25th: Swimmy, swim, swim. Lets spa the day away!

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Newsletter news, write letters, ideas, stories

This is a call to all women for submissions to the Newsletter. Some women have expressed that they want to hear from more women. The Newsletter is YOURS, anything is possible. The editor has placed a newsletter folder outside of Office E. If you have any submissions please drop them in that folder. Submissions can be any piece of creative writing, or opinion- however, they must be respectful. The deadline for submissions is the second last Friday of every month. The newsletter is an important forum for YOUR voice- embrace it!

Upcoming Newsletter ideas:

1. **Volunteer of the Month:** This is something that is currently being discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator. We are hoping to see this begin in February (pictures and stories and everything!!).

2. **Women writing the Newsletter:** Once we get our new computer lab in the new Bridge building, I would like to see a group of women take over the compilation of the newsletter. There will be time set aside on a computer so

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women can create, write, and compile the monthly letter. This opportunity will enable all women to shape the newsletter in a way that better reflects their interests and concerns. Also, it will enable women to learn some new computer programs, and foster peer learning skills!

If you are interested in becoming a part of the newsletter team in late Spring/early summer, please let Jennifer know. Any other suggestions, just drop a note in my folder, or come and see me!

Type, type, type...

your editor.



January Feast!

FOOD HAMPERS: Friday January 5th!

When: Friday, January 5th

Time: 3 pm.

- One bag per person!

Festive Food