



# Red Door

FAMILY SHELTER

## Shelter News

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### Fall / Winter 2008

## Message From The Executive Director

Dear Friends, Supporters and Community Partners:

A shelter is like an emergency room for a family. It provides a place for a family when they have nowhere else to turn. It offers the support and guidance that is so desperately needed in their time of crisis.

At the Red Door, we strive to provide the best for everyone who walks in our door. We take a holistic approach that is non-judgemental.

In both our shelters, we work with the family to ensure they are able to meet their goals. Children are not immune to the situations and surroundings around them and therefore can experience trauma from their homeless situation. This is why we have a case management approach that includes them in the solution.

Poverty is not something that can be blamed away. Our non-judgemental approach allows us to deal effectively with those coming in the shelter without making them feel guilty. Everyone who visits the Red Door is treated with compassion and respect.

At Red Door, we don't turn people away. Instead, we work at maintaining very good relationships with service providers such as lawyers, doctors, psychiatrists and more who can give the support needed to help our clients meet their goals.

The Red Door provides a place where a family can go if they don't have a roof over their head or if they are escaping a violent situation. The average stay is two to three months and during this time, every step is taken to ensure that they can take the right steps for a better life.

### **Shelters are like an emergency room.**

When you give to the Red Door, you are ensuring and being a part of the quality of the urgent care needed by our families in crisis. You are a part of a caring society and are helping to create positive change.

You make this possible!

We at the Red Door will continue to provide the best quality support to ensure that no family is left behind or turned away. And that every family is given a chance for success.

Sincerely,

Bernnitta Hawkins  
Executive Director



## Transforming Lives

I'd like to introduce you to Mary. Mary came to Canada as a refugee claimant from Nigeria, fleeing civil conflict. When she arrived at the Red Door, Mary was 7 months pregnant with twins.

Within days of Mary's arrival, she was told that her unborn twins were in need of a "twin to twin transfusion" in order to keep them both alive. Mary was distraught and afraid for the life of her unborn children. The staff of the Red Door worked hard to support her through the ordeal. They accompanied her to appointments at the hospital twice a week as well as advocated on her behalf with immigration lawyers to ensure her case was heard and successful.

Thanks to the hard work of her Housing Worker, Mary was able to secure a two bedroom apartment with a housing provider that has a community partnership with the Red Door.

During one of Mary's regular visits to the hospital, she was admitted because her doctor felt it was too risky for her to carry the twins to full term. Mary learned that her labour would have to be induced and was afraid, but she was never alone. Mary's

Outreach Worker stayed by her side through the entire delivery process and also worked to connect her to the hospital social worker so that she would have support with her new born children.

After the birth, the twins were kept under observation and Mary's Outreach Worker was there to provide her with the emotional support she needed. After a month she was able to bring one of her babies' home and then the other two weeks later. Her Outreach Worker ensured that Mary had the support she needed at home to care for her little ones, by securing assistance from a Public Health Nurse, getting her diapers, clothing and baby formula and any other items she would need.

Mary has been able to keep her housing and is well established in the community. Her two new babies are also strong and healthy and doing very well.

Mary is forever grateful for the Red Door Shelter and believes that *"the Red Door saved my life and that of my children. The staff who supported me were my family through all of this and I will never forget the love and kindness of those people."*

## Red Door Shelter Reopens to Acclaim

Special guests, volunteers and staff gathered on Tuesday, Aug 19th to celebrate the reopening of the abused women's shelter of the Red Door Family Shelter. After completing extensive renovations over the past year, this fifty bed shelter will provide urgently needed counselling, case management, housing and outreach services and workshops for abused women and their children.

This event recognized everyone who was integral in making the renovations a reality, including volunteers, donors, construction managers and board members.

Attendees included Michael Prue, MPP of the Beaches and East York, who called the renovated shelter *"an oasis of peace"*. Other guests included members of the Ministry of Community and Social Services of Ontario, including Victoria Hilderman, Program Supervisor from the Violence Against Women Prevention Program.

Victoria spoke at the event, saying that *"The new Red Door Family Shelter is an example of what can be achieved when the Ministry and community agencies work together to better serve abused women and their children"*.

The newly renovated shelter upgrades what previously existed, making it more secure and comfortable for those temporarily calling it home. A

number of critical improvements were made to the shelter including a state of the art kitchen, increased storage capacity, a playground and backyard and a new space for child and youth programming.

Another key renovation was the addition of increased security to the premises, including a new camera and monitoring system, a secure perimeter fence and protective glass on the windows; all preventative measures that will ensure the safety of women and children fleeing from domestic violence.

These renovations will help the shelter continue its important work. As well as providing a safe haven for those fleeing from abuse, the Red Door Family Shelter works to help these women get the supports that they need to continue on with their lives.



In this photo: Bernnitta Hawkins and Victoria Hilderman

## Red Door Employee Feature

*I want to make a difference in people's lives and Red Door provides that."*



Phat Adriano has worked for the Red Door Shelter since December 1997. Phat was selected as our featured employee by her co-workers through a peer nomination process. She is one of many Shelter Support Workers who are integral to the success of the Red Door.

Shelter Support Workers like Phat spend their days welcoming the families that come to the shelter, preparing their rooms, helping with their intake and paperwork and other needs like dental, medical, social assistance and more.

Phat is at the core of the shelter, a necessary worker who improves people's lives every day. She is extremely dedicated to the Red Door and loves the diverse clientele. She has a passion for helping people in crisis and she gets to feel this passion every day through her work with the families at the Red Door.

She also loves working with the staff at the Red Door as there's no competition amongst them but rather collaboration. They are all there for one purpose: to enrich the lives of those who need their services.

Phat recounted a story of a woman from three years ago who was in an abusive relationship. She had no status and no escape from her abuser, because he had promised to be her sponsor. It was a dire situation, but one that could be fixed. Phat worked with her to get her on a plan to save the money in order to get her paperwork started.

Not only is that woman is no longer a victim of abuse, but she achieved her status and is now living independently in the community.

It is moments like these that keep Phat working for the Red Door. She is committed to making a difference in people's lives and Red Door allows her to do that.

Thank you Phat for all that you do and for the caring, compassion and dedication that you show to the hundreds of families you help every year!

## Roots in the Community - A Donor Story

*"Red Door is part of my community and I'm part of theirs"*

Betsy Barber and her husband Ron LaConte are unique donors to the Red Door Shelter. They spend their days ensuring that the Red Door's families have everything they need from shoes to toiletries and more.

A self-described 'good old bargain shopper', Betsy has been involved with the Red Door since 2006. Every month she checks to see what the priority needs are and then goes shopping to fulfill those needs.

It can be anything from children's socks and underwear to towels, school supplies and more. Once, she worked with Zellers to help supply children of the shelter with 35 pairs of winter boots. Betsy is making a difference with every purchase she makes.

Once, the supplies needed were pots and pans for those moving out of the shelter and into their own homes. One woman, a recipient of a pot, began to cry and remarked that she had never had a new pot in her entire life. **"It's moments like this that make you value what you have"**.

This is why Betsy is so passionate about her involvement with the Red Door Shelter. She finds it

gratifying to work with families to ensure their needs are met. And the word has gotten around.

Betsy has worked with independent stores to get items for the Red Door and buys both new and used products.

For the last few years, her apartment building has played host to a large yard sale, with the residents providing great items for her to purchase for the Red Door.

It truly is a partnership and as Betsy says "It takes a village to support families."

Because Red Door is local to her community, Betsy can contribute in a way that has the most impact on the people around her.

Enthusiastic and dedicated, Betsy and Ron ensure the Red Door has what it needs to be a continued success.



## Opening Minds and Hearts

***"We have to make a conscious step to see what's out there."***

Talia Rovinski and Christine Allison were introduced to the Red Door Shelter in 2006. Talia and Christine love to volunteer for the Red Door and their experience really began when they visited the shelter and saw the effect that Red Door has on so many people.

Seeing so many happy faces, they were immediately moved. Talia says, *"If it weren't for this organization, where would these people turn? They feel secure at the Red Door, they call it their home and as you are looking into their eyes, all you can see is hope"*.

It was an incredibly touching moment for them, and after meeting the staff and the people who call it home, it was a little mind boggling as well. Talia added that *"The shock when it is realized that these families literally have no place else to go is huge"*.



Talia Rovinski



Christine Allison

This is why Talia and Christine volunteer at the Red Door. Like many others, they lead a busy lives but they urge people to step out of their bubble and try to contribute in any way they can. Contributions do not have to be made in a large way in order to make a difference.

Talia commented that *"it's not about recognition, but rather that internal sense within you, that feeling that you have helped in some way"*. As she says, it's important that everyone be *"socially responsible."* And it's equally important for you to walk in the trenches and see exactly how you are making a difference.

Christine and Talia are currently working on a fundraising luncheon to raise awareness of the issues affecting women living in poverty, raise funds and engage people in the community.

The first fundraising luncheon will take place on November 26th from 12 pm until 2 pm. The luncheon speaker is noted journalist and author Susan McClelland and will be focused on the importance of storytelling in our society as a means of making people aware of the important issues that happen in their communities every day.

*For more information about this event and how to register please visit the Red Door website at [www.reddoorshelter.ca](http://www.reddoorshelter.ca).*

## Fall / Winter Community Calendar

Community involvement is the life blood of the Red Door Family shelter. Our goal is to end family homelessness one family at a time and we would like to invite you to be a part of this by coming to one of our upcoming events.

### **Welcome Tours:**

Tuesday November 4, 11, 18 and 25 (will begin again in January)

Join us for a one hour, Introductory Tours of the Red Door. You will have the opportunity to meet our staff, some of the clients and see first hand how we are changing lives and your community each and every day. For more information or to register please visit [www.reddoorshelter.ca/events](http://www.reddoorshelter.ca/events) or call 416-915-5671 ext 230.

### **The Open Door Music Festival:**

November 20th 2008 @ the Mod Club, 722 College Street

Come out and support great Canadian musicians and support the Red Door Family Shelter. For more information about the Open Door Music Festival and to purchase tickets please visit [www.opendoorfestival.com](http://www.opendoorfestival.com)

### **Luncheon Speakers Series:**

November 26th 2008 - 12 pm to 2 pm @ Tappo Wine and Bar Restaurant in the Distillery District.

Tickets: \$100

Come out and hear noted journalist and author Susan McClelland speak about the importance of storytelling in our society as a means of making people aware of the important issues that happen in their communities every day. For more information about this event and how to purchase your tickets please visit the Red Door website at [www.reddoorshelter.ca](http://www.reddoorshelter.ca) or call 416-915-5671 ext 230.