

Inside



CANADA'S FIRST
CENTRE FOR
ABUSED WOMEN
AND CHILDREN

Summer 2019



A Journey of courage and a moment of celebration

*How your
support helps
BESS participants
succeed*

“Do you know how much courage it takes to go into a room where you don’t know anyone, willing to take a journey?” asks Fazia Mohammed, Community Programs Manager at Interval House. Fazia has seen such courage firsthand in each participant of the Building Economic Self-Sufficiency program (BESS).

“We empower women, guiding them through achieving whatever goals they have...”

Fueled by your generosity, BESS connects women with the tools to rebuild and transform their lives after abuse. By providing access to education, professional training, life skills workshops, financial and housing assistance, job opportunities, professional wardrobe options, and counselling, BESS helps set women at all stages of the healing journey on the path to living independently, safely, and comfortably.

“BESS is about finding the barriers and helping to alleviate them,” explains Fazia. “We empower women, guiding them through achieving whatever goals they have, however long it takes to do that.”

Fazia sees the transformation that takes place as women, each at their own pace, progress from trauma, fear and doubt to discovering and applying their skills and passions. Thanks to your support, BESS participants go from surviving to thriving.

“Success is different for each person but ultimately, it’s about building economic self-sufficiency,” says Fazia. “It means finding a job and a place to live, creating social support systems and being able to live independently. It means helping abuse survivors change their lives, remove barriers and, hopefully, break the cycle of violence.”

Thank you for giving survivors of abuse the tools they need to craft a bright future for themselves and their children!

Celebrating new beginnings: *You helped Lisa start a new life!*

When Lisa* first stood at the door of her very own apartment, new keys in hand, a BESS staff member was right beside her. “She was just so excited for me,” Lisa recalls. Sadly, like many survivors of abuse, Lisa couldn’t enjoy the moment. “*Somebody is going to take this away from me,*” she remembers thinking. It wasn’t until six months later, when Lisa put up new curtains of her own choosing, that she truly felt at home.

There were cheers of celebration as Lisa called the team at Interval House to share the news. Staff understood the milestone those curtains represented in a way few others could.

“I had been in survival mode for so long,” explains Lisa, who had escaped an abusive relationship, leaving her with no home and

no income. She found temporary shelter with family and friends — along with judgment and a lack of empathy. “At that point I was really, really thinking about going back to him,” Lisa recalls. Fortunately, a friend told her about Interval House.

“One thing that’s really amazing with BESS is that you can get an appointment pretty quickly,” says Lisa. “I went in and talked with the employment counsellor, Fiona, and within a couple of minutes, I was just sobbing and crying at her desk.” BESS staff acknowledged her trauma — and her need to heal *before* pursuing employment. “They were some of the most validating points that anybody had made to me in so long,” she says.

At BESS workshops, Lisa found understanding, a safe space and

shared experience. She finally felt seen, and heard. “Because of BESS...because of the consistency and the community and everything that they do, I feel just more and more open,” says Lisa. “I’ve made friends for the first time in years.”

Lisa now feels supported on her journey toward independence. “I feel like I’m rebuilding myself, and no, I’m not the same person that I was before, but I can feel the positive skills from before kind of coming back, bubbling back up to the top,” she says. “BESS will be there when I’m ready.”

Thanks to your support, Lisa has a community of support, celebrating each step of her journey right alongside her.

**Lisa’s name has been changed to protect her identity and safety.*

“I feel like I’m rebuilding myself, and no, I’m not the same person that I was before, but I can feel the positive skills from before kind of coming back, bubbling back up to the top...”



BESS PROGRAM



2018 Impact Report

192
BESS
CLIENTS

127
NEW
CLIENTS

35 CLIENTS
HELPED WITH
EMPLOYMENT



3 WOMEN THAT
WENT BACK TO SCHOOL



2,232 HOURS
OF SERVICES STAFF
PROVIDED TO CLIENTS



5 AWARDS
GIVEN OUT AT
ANNUAL BESS
CELEBRATION



22 WOMEN THAT
FOUND EMPLOYMENT



20
EMPLOYER
PARTNERS

60 NEW
COMMUNITY
PARTNERS

3 OPEN HOUSES
FOR COMMUNITY
PARTNERS



35
AVG. AGE OF
BESS CLIENTS

13
LIFE SKILLS
WORKSHOPS

15 COUNSELLING WORKSHOPS OFFERED

54 COUNSELLING
CLIENTS



120 SUITS & **65** PAIRS OF
SHOES IN CAREER BOUTIQUE

15 FAMILIES
SPONSORED AT
CHRISTMAS

56 CLIENTS
HOUSED

2 HER HOME
CLIENTS

It Takes a Village: *Donor generosity helps BESS lead the way*

In the BESS program, every client's journey is unique — but none are taken alone. Behind every BESS participant is a circle of supporters paving the way for their success.

“When I think back to when BESS was first created, it couldn't have happened without donor support,” explains Arlene McCalla, Executive Co-Director of Interval House. “We knew that women were still poor after leaving the shelter and that helping them find employment was important but we didn't have enough government funding.”

By raising money from individual supporters and corporate donors, Interval House is able to create innovative programs like BESS, the first of its kind. “Our supporters enable our creativity,” says Arlene. “Donors are the reason we can trailblaze and find creative solutions to stop intimate partner violence. Every gift, no matter how small, makes a difference.”

CAPREIT: Partners in heart and home

It takes a community to help survivors of intimate partner violence. Fortunately, Interval House's community includes Canadian Apartment Properties Real Estate Investment Trust (CAPREIT).

From creating job placement and internship programs for BESS participants to making dinner for residents, CAPREIT staff are

helping in so many meaningful and vital ways. "CAPREIT is a company that gives back and we are very proud of our involvement with Interval House," explains Kelly McLoughlin, Senior Director, Commercial Operations. "There are a lot of good charities out there but at Interval House you can actually be involved and make a direct difference. It makes you feel really good."



In the spirit of celebration, we celebrate CAPREIT and their generous spirit of giving. Thank you team CAPREIT!

BESS Career Boutique:

Helping survivors forge a new path — and find the shoes to walk it

When a woman flees an abusive relationship, the last thing on her mind is packing work appropriate clothing. That's where the Career Boutique at Interval House comes in.

The Career Boutique is a retail-style room where BESS participants can start (re)building their business attire for free. Thanya, a volunteer since 2015, works behind the scenes to help empower women to go after the jobs of their dreams.

"The cost of professional clothing is a barrier to getting that interview or getting into that first job where you can build yourself up," explains Thanya. The boutique helps change that. Thanks to Thanya, each donated item of clothing, shoes and accessories is carefully checked for quality, organized by size and placed neatly onto racks. The right outfit, Thanya explains, "can really inspire the confidence that you need to get through an interview."



Having witnessed the trauma of domestic violence on friends and family members, Thanya is deeply committed to Interval House. "Volunteering at Interval House means a lot to me," says Thanya, who appreciates the invisible yet powerful sisterhood among BESS participants and donors. "Whether you are volunteering or donating you are contributing to making this a safe space for people who have gone through a really, really hard time."



120
SUITS IN CAREER
BOUTIQUE



65
PAIRS OF SHOES
IN CAREER BOUTIQUE

Interested in volunteering?
Contact kmosher@intervalhouse.ca



Interval House is a registered Canadian charity with a charitable tax number of 11897 1159 RR0001.

If you'd like more information about how you can support the women and children of Interval House, visit our website www.intervalhouse.ca or call 416-924-1411 ext. 238