

Family Transition Place recognizes International Women's Day through Phenomenal Women Campaign

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International Women's Day (March 8) is a global celebration of the accomplishments of women and, in honour of the day, Family Transition Place (FTP) made sure phenomenal women in the community were recognized.

Driving in Dufferin County, signs reading 'phenomenal women work here' or 'a phenomenal woman lives here' can be spotted in front of houses and businesses. The signs are part of Family Transition Place's second Phenomenal Women Campaign, which looks to acknowledge the community's remarkable women.

The local organization normally hosts an annual event for International Women's Day (IWD), with a luncheon, vendors market and guest speakers, but switched to a community campaign in 2021 due to the pandemic.

Norah Kennedy, executive director of FTP, said they chose to bring the campaign back for another year after seeing success among resident response.

'One of the things that really appealed to us about this campaign was that it was in the public eye,' said Norah Kennedy. 'So often the work that women do goes unrecognized, and a lot of the challenges are not necessarily visible. By putting out the signs we're drawing attention to the fact that at least on this one day of the year, if not every single day, that women's work and lives are being really recognized, acknowledged and celebrated.'

Each year, International Women's Day is based around a theme and this year it's was focused on #BreaktheBias, which highlighted the need to address gender bias, discrimination, and stereotyping of women.

'The conversation around [the theme] is what are the biases we encounter that are holding women back, what are the assumptions really impacting the lives of women of colour, BIPOC, transgender, and LGBTQ+ folks, and getting in the way of allowing all of us to fulfill our biggest potential,' explained Kennedy.

Working for an organization that addresses gender-based violence, Kennedy noted biases within current world conflicts have resonated this year's IWD theme for her.

'In the view of all of the bias, the potential for misunderstanding, and hatred that is built on top of it, right now more than ever we need each other as women to really take the time to not only examine our own biases but also help others examine their own and understand the impact they are potentially having on the world and on each other,' said Kennedy.

Over the last two years, a strong narrative surrounding women's rights has been the disproportionate impacts of the global pandemic, many of which continue to be felt.

In 2021, the Canadian Women's Foundation narrowed down four areas of impact that have been gendered about the pandemic including gender-based violence, economic stress and instability, increased burden of caregiving and house work, and reduced access to support services.

According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2021, the time needed to reach gender parity increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years.

Stats Canada reported in 2021 that more than four in 10 women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence. A report from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) showed that 173 women and girls were killed by gender-based violence in 2021, an increase from the recorded 160 in 2020 and 118 in 2019.

"I hate to say it, but in some ways, I think we are losing some of the grounds that we've gained," said Kennedy. "It makes it that much more important that we take the time to acknowledge and celebrate each other as woman and to find ways of supporting each other as women. We still have to take the time to really celebrate the achievements that individual women have made throughout the years even while we're looking at the need to perhaps recommit and step up our efforts."

While International Women's Day is now over, the entirety of March marks Women's History Month.

Concluding another International Women's Day celebrating women's accomplishments, Kennedy said,

"I hope the women in our community got out of this, if absolutely nothing else on the big heavy side, a little bit of a feel-good moment and seeing the signs out made somebody smile."