

FTP reports increase in abused women served in Dufferin, Caledon

By Mike Pickford

In what is turning into a disturbing pattern locally, abuse against women is on the rise in Dufferin and Caledon, with Family Transition Place (FTP) reporting an average 10 per cent increase across the board in clients served per program over the past year. It's a statistic that nobody wants to talk about, but it's one that FTP Executive Director Norah Kennedy and the rest of the professionals working out of the local facility are determined to press home.

'We have to face this head on if we are to truly fight it,' Kennedy told the media last week. 'There has been a concerning upwards trend in abuse against women in the region over the past couple of years. We're seeing more women once again in 2017 than we did in 2016, our emergency shelter is consistently full, the need for our services really hasn't been greater.'

The facility provided emergency shelter for 103 women and 65 children between April 1, 2016 and April 1, 2017, while putting up 20 women and 23 children in second-stage housing. As well, 388 women signed up for woman-abuse counselling, 151 women and 22 men enrolled in sexual abuse counselling, while 318 women and five men required transitional support services. In total, FTP received 3,742 calls to its crisis and information lines.

It is perhaps fitting then, as we enter Woman Abuse Prevention Month, that staff at the facility are focused on engaging with and educating the local community about the importance of treating people with respect. As well as continuing with its extensive programming in area elementary and high schools, FTP has also launched Tickets and Ties in partnership with the Ontario Hockey League's Brampton Beast.

The event, taking place Nov. 10, will act as a promotional fundraiser for Family Transition Place. For a limited time, people can purchase a ticket to the game and a purple tie or scarf for \$29.

'November is a great opportunity for us to raise the level of awareness around our programming. We never stop educating, we never stop being passionate about ending the issue, but this gives us another avenue, another way to put this up on a platform for all to see,' FTP Manager of Development and Community Relations Stacey Tarrant observed. 'We're very excited to have the opportunity to head down to Brampton . . . to help promote Woman Abuse Prevention Month at the game. We'll have a couple of educational videos and just try and spread our message further and try and create change.'

Scotiabank has partnered with FTP on the initiative and will have purple ties and scarves on sale from Nov. 6 onwards at both Orangeville locations and in Bolton in an attempt to further raise awareness. Family Transition Place will also be offering the ties and scarves at its locations in Orangeville, Bolton and Shelburne for \$20.

While the organization is putting a real effort into raising awareness this month, Kennedy noted it will take a continued year-round effort to make any sort of impact on statistics, both from men and women.

'There is a real misconception out there against what violence against women is,' Kennedy said. 'Still, even to this day, it is seen as being a women's issue. Certainly, women have been the ones working hard to end it for a really long time, but stats and research shows, for violence against women, perpetrators 90 per cent of the time are men.'

'This isn't just a women's issue, it's everybody's issue,' she added. 'We need as many really good men out there as possible to understand they have a role to play when it comes to talking to their sons, brothers, fathers and neighbours to help get the message across that violence has no place in a healthy relationship.'

'While we're doing all of that and more right now, it's really important to recognize that this isn't something just to focus on for one month of the year, this is something we need to be focused on 24 hours a day, seven days a week 12 months of the year,' Kennedy commented. 'The reality is that there are women who cannot go home. We have an emergency shelter here that has been completely full for four or five years, we have people calling every single day. This isn't just a big city issue, this is here in Orangeville. We're full every single night and we don't want to be, ideally we'd be putting ourselves out of business, but to be able to do that we have to keep educating.'

For more information on Family Transition Place, visit familytransitionplace.ca