



Sistering

www.sistering.org

A Woman's Place

Co-Chairs Message

Settling into a wonderful home on Bloor Street West over the past year has allowed Sistering to take up new challenges and add service innovations that improve our ability to meet the needs of women in our communities. This year, Sistering increased advocacy, not only for much-needed programs, but also for political change to reduce poverty.

The year began with a dynamite Dynamic Divas show that reminded us of the breadth, depth, talent and strength of women working together and of the Sistering community. While Angela, our Executive Director took a well-earned sabbatical, Sistering staff and volunteers hosted Sistabana in Christie Pits, survived a surprise internal flood after a freak storm, renovated the Outreach kitchen and expanded programs and program hours to suit new groups of women finding their way to the Bloor location.

With a focused campaign, advocates managed to extract a promise of a Poverty Reduction Strategy from the Liberal party before they were returned to power in the fall provincial election. At the same time, Sistering joined the *Colour of Poverty Campaign*, which draws attention to the racialization of poverty in Ontario and mobilizes communities, and the *25 in 5 Network*, which continues to press for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for Ontario.

A generous donation from the Owens family through the estate of Lucille Owens will help Sistering purchase a



Shakura S'Aida shines at 5th annual Funny Girls & Dynamic Divas.

new van for the Outreach program and enhance our ability to break social isolation for older women with mobility difficulties. We offer our deep thanks for this life-changing gift.

Named by *Now Magazine* as an organization that "makes a difference," Sistering continues to meet an increasing demand for meals, pointing directly to women's need for better incomes and action on poverty. While we celebrate, once again, all that Sistering has accomplished, we also call on our government for systemic change to reverse the feminization of poverty and bring an end to women's homelessness.

France Ewing
& Margaret Hancock,
Co-Chairs

annual report 2007-2008

Sistering is a women's organization that offers practical and emotional support to women through programs which enable them to take greater control over their lives. Guided by the principles of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression, Sistering works to change social conditions which endanger women's welfare.

Executive Director's Message

Sistering has been in our new home a year, reaping the benefits a stable home can bring — peace of mind, opportunities for development and implementation of priorities and to deepen community partnerships.

Taking full advantage of our new home, we opened on four statutory holidays this year — Thanksgiving, Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Women's attendance confirmed the need for communal holiday spaces to breakdown isolation and loneliness on holidays. A heartfelt thank you to the numerous volunteers and staff who spent holidays with Sistering women, sharing laughter and tears and providing human contact and care.

With support from our donors and United Way Toronto, we also extended our Drop In service hours later two days per week. This expands access for growing numbers of women who are employed, but still need basic laundry, clothing donations and food support services to make ends meet. Our extended hours provide a safe space for women using the hostel system until intake begins in late evening.

For the second year, Sistering provided gift bags with toiletries and treats to women at Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay through a partnership with artist-activist Faith Nolan and the local Elizabeth Fry Society. Most incarcerated women fit Sistering's service mission: socially and economically marginalized women, and typically at the Lindsay Centre, single parents under 30.

By all reports, conditions are worsening for women who are low-income and poor. We see this in the increasing numbers of women who access our services for basic needs — food, clothing, transportation support and community. Daily, we serve meals to an average 210 women. Successful donor appeals and strong financial management allowed us to provide 500 women each with 5 TTC tokens in their well-stocked gift bags at the December Holiday Party. On a monthly basis, we distribute 1900 adult and 1300 senior TTC tickets to women who tell us TTC tickets and Metropasses are equivalent to gold, a measure of freedom for women who are homeless and those living well below the poverty line.

Sistering's work is not just about delivering services. We also work to change the social conditions that endanger women's welfare. Sistering joined community partner campaigns like *The Colour of Poverty, 25 in 5*, and *No One is Illegal*, to further public awareness of the differential impact of poverty on women's lives.

Sistering's success is testament to the hard work and commitment of staff and volunteers dedicated to support the community of women. A big thank you to all our funders and donors, many of whom have been supporters over Sistering's full 27 years. Your generosity inspires, encourages and enables us to respond to ordinary and extraordinary needs of women.

The opportunity to retreat and reflect is often not afforded to those in social services. With deep appreciation I offer my thanks to the Metcalf Foundation for my six month Renewal Fellowship sabbatical. Strong support from the Board of Directors and from Terry Guerriero and Susan Clancy, who shared the role of Interim Executive Director, made it possible. Your collective support allowed a much-needed respite that sharpened my personal and professional commitment to equitable social change for women and marginalized communities.

Sistering believes in ensuring that women's dignity is not eroded by poverty and homelessness. Our work is to continually impact the wider system so that individuals don't have to fight "rights battles" over and over again. As we settle into our new home, we recommit to these beliefs, working for and alongside "ordinary women in extraordinary circumstances."

Angela Robertson



Angela Robertson at 25 in 5 Network Forum.

Sistering Services

Drop In

This year at the Drop In women who are homeless accessed **stress reduction and self-care programming** such as therapeutic touch, yoga and a full annual spa day with haircuts, manicures, and makeup. Many women come to Sistering because they are being abused and are suffering through sexual, emotional or physical violence. One of Sistering's responses is the on-going **Expressive Arts Therapy** project run in collaboration with the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Arts, artist Suzan Low-Beer and art therapist Suzanne Thomson.



I was a Salesperson
selling clothes.

Pei Chuan Yu, Mayworks 2007.

The move to 962 Bloor Street West brought increasing numbers of women with **addiction issues** to Sistering. Our program response is an **on-site harm reduction** program. Women accessing this service receive safer options for risk behaviors. Women have received support and training through a model similar to peer outreach, providing a greater sense of self-esteem and support for their community.

Our **Feelings Group** is an opportunity for women who experience mental health issues to get support and learn healthy ways of expression and techniques for dealing with blocked emotions.

The **Clutter Group** was revived this year to address hoarding, a behaviour that can jeopardize women's housing. This open group uses an approach that addresses issues of trauma behind hoarding.

Parkdale Drop In & Outreach

We continued to serve largely homeless and marginalized senior women in the heart of Parkdale with meals plus on-going weekly programming in yoga, beading, massage, reflexology and haircuts. Healthy living workshops were conducted by the Immigrant Women's Health Centre and Parkdale Community Health Clinic. Weekly visits from Sistering housing workers were key, as was the monthly women's meeting. Summer brought a community gardening program in partnership with the Hope Garden. In December, support from Merrill Lynch Calls for Seniors allowed senior women unlimited overseas phone calls. Through a partnership with Chartered Accountants of Ontario, we held an on-site an Income Tax clinic.

In memory of Andrea & Mahese.

Housing Highlights

The **Bed Program** delivered refurbished beds from In Kind Canada to women throughout the city. Housing workers attended tribunal court to advocate and help **prevent evictions**, meeting with mediators and duty counsel alongside clients. We assisted women involved with CAS to **navigate the court system**. Through the **VAW Rent Supplement Program** Sistering found women housing. Our housing team **advocated** for women with Ontario Works, ODSP, OAS, CPP, Toronto Housing Connections and landlords and **accompanied women** to appointments at the ID clinic, social services, with doctors and to view apartments. We provided **referrals to supportive housing** providers and other agencies for counselling and support, and on-going support to women through our partnership program with Houselink and St. Clare's Multi Faith Housing for the location of Pears and Leonard.

SUPPORT FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING WOMEN

Staff offered an increasing number of Spanish-speaking women face to face emotional support, resource support for immigration issues, housing referrals, access to Ontario Works and ODSP, links to employment and a weekly group meeting. Many Spanish-speaking women came to Sistering this year experiencing difficulties coping with the consequences of abuse and facing barriers of language. Our case support focused on partnering with agencies like Women's Health in Women's Hands, St. Joseph's Health Centre and Toronto Western Hospital.

Case Support

Poverty, trauma, addictions, and long-term health and mental health were the core issues that women sought assistance from Case Support this year. Case support staff also worked on harm reduction, the Expressive Arts Therapy project and the Clutter Group.

Income Support

Inspirations Studio

This year, Inspirations Studio successfully expanded marketplace opportunities for our members, adding mainstream arts and crafts markets such as the Beaches Jazz Festival, CBC Craft Show, Scarborough Art Fair, and 900 Bay Street to our established marketplaces. Consignment relationships expanded, while established relationships with Wonderworks, Queen's Park Gift Shop and Toronto Women's Bookstore remained strong. Wonderworks once again hosted a pottery group show for the members. We completed a custom wedding order for 150 branded bowls in August and have been able to supply higher end products.

Participants generated \$38,666.86 in sales, exhibitions and commissions. Members contributed financially through commissions on work sold by the studio, fees for materials used and contributions to rent costs of sales events. Our eight new members have already begun to produce and sell work and will quickly take full advantage of studio services — one sold \$200 worth of products at her first sale. Members have taken art courses at Central Technical School, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Toronto School of Art. Studio members continue to peer-teach within the Salvation Army shelter system, at Christie Ossington and at Sistering.

Repeat business continued from customers such as the United Way, Common Ground Cooperative and the Learning Enrichment Foundation. Foot traffic and drop-in sales increased, sparked by our building signage and ads in Now Magazine and the Liberty Gleaner. Additional funding came from the Toronto Funding Network and a George Brown College fundraising event.

English as a Second Language is now in high demand at our Bloor Street location, classes are drawing large numbers.



Participant Board Member Edith Kettle serves up a tray at Funny Girls & Dynamic Divas.

EMPLOYMENT HELP DAYS

To help women with general employment concerns, the Drop In is initiating Employment Help Days. The Job Developer will be available in the Drop In to answer questions about employment and set up personal appointments with women.

On The Path

On the Path, our pre-employment support program with a sewing incubator, continued to respond to input for changes from our participants. To provide more individualized instruction and allow women sufficient time to complete several items, we cut class sizes in half and extended the number of class weeks from eight to ten. The incubator of women with skills to take on contracts is running well. Our Job Developer continues to source contracts specific to our women's sewing strengths and capabilities while the Sewing Instructor oversees technical and quality control aspects. On the Path is maintaining contracts with the Who is a Nobody Doll, a Toronto District School Board character education program and Shingle Baby Mats and is doing alterations and tailoring for the general public. On the Path encourages women to supplement their income by producing accessories like shopping bags and home décor items.

Volunteer Update

A busy and phenomenally talented group of volunteers supported Sistering this year, generously donating thousands of hours to Sistering programs, events, committees and the Board. Last November, Sistering held our Volunteer Tea Party at The Gladstone, to honour and thank our fabulous volunteers and the many programs and activities they made possible:

- High quality weekly programs to meet women's social and health needs.
- Daily hot meals and access to thousands of donated items.
- Our Drop In December Holiday Party.
- Celebrations of cultural events and holidays from Chanukah, to Kwanzaa and the Chinese New Year.
- Funny Girls and Dynamic Divas.
- Board of Directors and committees.

Many corporate friends and business sector partners supported our activities from flood recovery to Sistas and Thanksgiving. To all our volunteers over the past year, who so generously donated their time, sweat, tears, and laughter we offer our deepest thanks — we could not have done all this without you!

The girls get funny at *Funny Girls & Dynamic Divas*.



TIMERAISER

Development Coordinator, Deborah Barretto, and Volunteer Coordinator, Ellen Bercovitz, were invited to Toronto's Timeraiser Event, an art auction where young professionals bid on pieces of art with volunteer hours, rather than money. In the coming year, we'll welcome 21 professional women who chose to donate their volunteer hours with Sistering.

DONOR RECOGNITION

Sistering gratefully acknowledges the generosity of many individuals and the following supporters:

GOVERNMENT

City of Toronto
Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care
Ontario Women's Directorate
Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative
Toronto Enterprise Fund
United Way Toronto

BEQUESTS

Estate of Elizabeth Charlesworth
Estate of Lucille Yvonne Owen

FOUNDATIONS

Canadian Women's Foundation
CHUM Charitable Foundation
EJLB Foundation
Emerald Foundation
Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation
MAZON Canada
Strategic Charitable Giving Foundation
The Derick Brenninkmeyer Charitable Foundation
The Rainbow Foundation
The George Cedric Metcalf Foundation
The Hermant Family Foundation
Tides Canada Foundation
Toronto Community Foundation

COMPANIES

Alterna Savings
Alternative Grounds
Bennett March Inc.
Best Secretarial Service
Bruce Rusnell Contracting
CURA Communications
Dimock Stratton LLP.
Front Door Organics
Grant & Bernhardt
Ivey Design Concepts
J.S. Cheng & Partners

Judy Brase Research Inc.
Leon's Furniture Ltd.
McCarthy Tetrault LLP
Nick Porretta - Broker
Ontario Power Generation
Paul Billings & Associates Immigration Consultants
Price Waterhouse Coopers
Strategic Communications
Sienna Films
The Cook's Mate
The Metrix Goup

CHURCHES & RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Beaver Bible Class
Bellefair United Church Women
Church of St. Clement, Eglinton ACW
Fairlawn Avenue United Church
Grace Church-on-the-Hill
Humbervale United Church Women
Knox United Church Benevolent
Lorretto Sisters
Rosedale United Church Women
St. Anne's Group ACW
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Women's League

UNIONS, COMMUNITY GROUPS & SCHOOLS

Canadian Press Broadcast News Employees Charity
Central Commerce Collegiate Institute
Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
Elementary Teachers of Toronto
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers L.U. 353
Women in Life Learning



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and Drop In**

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Heather Guylar

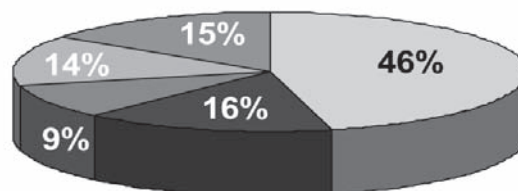
**Sistering
Board of Directors
2007-08**

Margaret Hancock, Co-Chair
France Ewing, Co-Chair
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Bridget Sinclair
Lisha Van Leeuwen

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year Ended March 31, 2008

REVENUES	2008	2007
Ontario Ministry of Health/Local Health Integration Network		
Mental Health Programs and Services	1,198,588	1,061,300
Long Term Care	44,938	38,688
Capital	-	72,592
United Way of Greater Toronto	444,456	455,573
City of Toronto	234,444	243,203
Donations	212,877	286,387
Bequests	137,500	-
Foundations	102,350	67,120
Ontario Women's Directorate	90,000	90,000
Youth Challenge Fund (UWGT)	74,622	-
HRDC - SCPI/HPI	33,240	59,721
Fundraising	25,647	30,732
Interest	13,086	22,365
Miscellaneous	4,832	9,535
Ontario Trillium Foundation	-	34,500
Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions	<u>77,232</u>	-
	<u>2,693,812</u>	<u>2,471,716</u>
EXPENSES		
Wages and Benefits	1,625,297	1,370,971
Programs	299,907	289,784
Building Occupancy Costs	194,380	341,583
Purchased services	98,492	108,543
Office and General	90,679	68,547
Youth Challenge Project	74,622	-
Repairs and Maintenance	68,105	48,339
Fundraising	62,180	57,111
Professional Fees	14,553	15,990
Insurance	10,851	9,823
Promotion and Publicity	5,224	6,657
Volunteer	2,419	2,011
Moving Costs	-	18,382
Amortization	<u>86,121</u>	<u>9,419</u>
	<u>2,632,830</u>	<u>2,347,160</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	<u>\$ 60,982</u>	<u>\$ 124,556</u>



- 46% Ministry of Health/LHIN
- 16% United Way
- 9% City of Toronto
- 14% Individuals
- 15% Other funding agencies, foundations and misc.

Charitable registration #10798-3009-RR0001
Sistering is a United Way member agency.

