



# SISÏTERING

## Annual Report

### 2017/2018

**Changing lives, one woman at a time.**

# SISTERING

## OUR VISION

A world where all women, in all our diversity, are safe, respected, valued and treated with dignity. All women have equitable opportunities to thrive and participate in inclusive communities.

## OUR MISSION

We create a safe, welcoming and non-judgmental space for women. We are guided by principles of feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression. We offer practical and emotional support to women who experience social isolation, homelessness or precarious housing, trauma and violence, discrimination, substance use or need mental health support. Our equitable programs and services enable women to take greater control over their lives. We work in collaboration with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger women's welfare.

## OUR VALUES

Our model is trauma informed, guided by feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles, and the following core values:

**Dignity:** Each woman has dignity, is equal and is treated with respect.

**Equity:** All women are provided access to equal opportunities depending on their individual needs.

**Inclusiveness:** Sistering's program and advocacy work is directed by participants' needs, interests and creativity, and we value the participation and contribution of each woman.

**Aspirational:** Programs, advocacy and administration are proactive, innovative and committed to supporting women in achieving their goals.

**Solidarity:** Women help each other with the unique friendship, caring and respect that they give to each other. The unfair treatment of any woman affects the lives of all women.

We use an inclusive definition of "woman" and we welcome trans women, genderqueer women, and non-binary and gender expansive people. We recognize that gender is an evolving concept and we will work to be inclusive.



# Board of Directors

WITH THANKS TO OUR  
TIRELESS BOARD  
OF DIRECTORS FOR  
THEIR LEADERSHIP AND  
COMMITMENT TO THE  
WOMEN WE SERVE.

Anne Chappelle (Co-Chair)  
Judy Gabriel-Virgo (Co-Chair)  
Pat Craig (Secretary)  
Lynne Woolcott (Treasurer)  
Lyneisha Adams  
Alicia Leyva Arcos  
Cynthia Daley  
Ida Hersi  
Sabrina Jeria  
Sue Kelleher  
Stephanie Mazzocut  
Sharon Nicholls  
Joey Noble  
Heather Smyth  
Nicole Walton

We are generously supported by:



Charitable Registration Number: 10798-3009-RR0001

# Foreword



**Patricia O'Connell**  
Executive Director



**Anne Chappelle**  
Board Co-Chair



**Judy Gabriel-Virgo**  
Board Co-Chair

## Anne Chappelle

Anne Chappelle, who has served tirelessly on Sistering's Board of Directors, the last six years as Co-Chair, has reached the end of her term. She has been a fearless advocate for the women we serve and a strong voice in support of Toronto's most marginalized citizens. Anne is an unbeatable Sistering Ambassador, supporting a family at Christmas and inviting her friends and colleagues to join her in making sure participants know they are valued. On behalf of the Board, participants and staff at Sistering, thank you for being a member of the family.

## Constance Schwenger

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Constance Schwenger on February 21, 2018, in her 93rd year. Constance enjoyed a remarkable career in social work and counselling at George Brown College. A fierce social activist, Constance advocated tirelessly for Toronto's most marginalized citizens, especially those with mental health issues. Constance was a founder of Sistering, and her legacy lives on in the work we continue to do on behalf of poor, homeless and precariously housed women.



Sistering has a history of advocating at City Council and on the front lines for the human rights of Toronto's most marginalized community: poor; homeless; and precariously housed women.

Our 24/7 Drop In welcomed as many as 50 women a night. We aren't a shelter, and we don't have beds so women sleep on mats on the floor, under tables, or sitting on chairs.

Why are so many women staying with us overnight? Because shelters are full, we're in a housing crisis, and women have nowhere else to go.

So this past year, our focus was especially on keeping women safe. We ramped up our call for low-barrier women-only shelters, more affordable housing, and women-only safe injection sites.

We presented deputations at City Council, lobbied Councillors and wrote letters to provincial and federal ministers, because ensuring that vulnerable women receive the service and supports they need is a partnership.

Our efforts caught the attention of the media: the Toronto Star; Now magazine; CBC; City News; Global News and other outlets rallied behind us.

At the same time, the 24/7 Drop In and Parkdale Outreach continued to create supportive communities that helped more than 2,500 individual women feel valued and respected. Some women came to Sistering to enjoy a nutritious meal, others to meet with a Community Support Worker, family physician or trauma counsellor, and still others to take a shower, wash their clothes and spend the night in a safe and welcoming space.

But we didn't stop there.

Companionship and social interaction are as important to wellbeing as nutritious food and a safe place to sleep, and thanks to our generous supporters, we were able to offer participants the opportunity to take part in group outings, celebrations and social recreational activities.

The work we do is only possible because of our committed Board of Directors, dedicated team of staff and volunteers, and of course, our community partners, government champions and never-say-no donors.

Thank you for your caring, compassion and can-do attitude. Together, we are changing lives, one woman at a time.



# 24/7 Drop In & Parkdale Outreach

WE SUPPORT WOMEN FROM ACROSS TORONTO WHO EXPERIENCE FIRST HAND THE IMPACT OF MARGINALIZATION AND POVERTY.

## FIRST PERSON Molly, Outreach

“My name is Molly. I am from the West Indies. I have been living in Canada for 25 years. When I lived in Trinidad, I never heard of Valentine’s Day. When I came to Canada, I worked at BiWay for \$3.25 an hour. I had two small children and no husband so I had very little money to buy candies. No one ever brought me Valentine’s Day candy. This year, Rook and Yvette opened the cupboard at the Drop In and we saw big heart-shaped boxes of candy! I never thought I would get a whole box for myself. Finally, at the age of 56, someone gave me a Valentine’s Day gift! Thank you to all the good people in the world who think about people like me.”



## HIGHLIGHTS

Our monthly Black Women’s Hair Salon was offered by volunteer hairstylist and participant Sylvia P., with generous donations from Cloré Beauty Supply. Services included braiding, ponytail extensions, cuts and styling!

Each Friday evening, the Drop In team ran a Dance Party, inviting participants to socialize, dance, listen to music and let loose. Thanks to a generous donation from The Slight Family Foundation, the Drop In has surround sound speakers, television, sound mixer and laptop – plus a state-of-the-art Karaoke machine to really get things moving.

Sistering partnered with Neighbourhood Link Support Services to bring the well-established PAID ID Clinic to our Drop In once a month. The Clinic helps participants complete Identification Record Requests and associated financial costs. Between five and 10 participants attended each session.

Sistering offered summer trips to Wasaga Beach, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls. Our trips gave participants a respite from hectic urban life and an opportunity to socialize and engage with community members.

Every Sistering participant received a special Valentine’s Day surprise – a huge heart-shaped box of Russell Stover chocolates thanks to our friends at Lindt & Sprüngli (Canada).

## IN BRIEF

- Homeless vs. At Risk of Homelessness: **43% vs. 57%**
- Visits to 24/7 Drop In and Parkdale Outreach: **95,253**
- Meals served at 24/7 Drop In and Parkdale Outreach: **152,365**
- Personal care items distributed: **22,594**
- Social events and outings attended: **6,326**
- Lunches served at Outreach daily: **70-75**



## Multicultural Celebration

Participants asked the evening staff for an opportunity to learn about the cultures represented by the women who come to Sistering.

We listened – and worked collaboratively to host a multicultural celebration with an emphasis on Acceptance, Respect and Inclusion. Community members and staff created flags representing different countries as well as LGBTQ2S+ to decorate the Drop In.

The evening kicked off at 5:30 with music and dancing by participants and group agencies representing our Latin American, Aboriginal, Caribbean and African communities.

Dinner featured dishes including roast chicken, roast beef, mashed potatoes, coleslaw and salad, zucchini and eggplant lasagna, guacamole with tortillas, rice pudding, Portuguese custard tarts and a special punch.



## FIRST PERSON Tina, Drop In Peer Support Worker

“My name is Tina and I have worked as a Drop In Peer Support Worker for the past year. Building relationships with the women at Sistering has had a powerful impact on my life. As a person with lived experience of mental illness, I could relate to many of the women when they were experiencing delusional thoughts or active symptoms of psychosis. Sharing my experiences with these women and listening to their experiences created a beneficial environment for mutual learning and sharing. With one of the women, I shared a story of how I had lost an Indian cookbook with a lot of authentic recipes after my mom passed away nearly four years ago. The woman I shared my story with bought me an Indian cookbook for Christmas! I was so touched by that gift because I realized she had really listened to that story. Working at Sistering has definitely improved my listening skills and taught me what it’s like to work on the other side in the role of service provider. I have to say, it is quite a different perspective! The most important thing is learning that in spite of my experiences (and perhaps because of them), I can still contribute to society. Sistering has also encouraged me to become more socially and politically active. I presented a deputation at City Hall requesting more shelter beds for the homeless. Moreover, because of my work at Sistering, I was able to get a part-time position helping out as office support for an organization that does social advocacy for the clients at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.”



# Community Support Workers

WE INVEST IN THE WOMEN WHO COME TO SISTERING, BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS AND PROVIDING EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT.

“I’ve been coming to Sistering for years now and if it weren’t for the staff, Patricia especially, I wouldn’t be where I am today. I have a nice little apartment and a place to go and see friends, have coffee, something to eat, and feel like I belong somewhere. Thank goodness for Sistering.”

– Participant

## HIGHLIGHTS

The team continued to support approximately 400 marginalized homeless and precariously housed women to stabilize their housing and improve their wellbeing.

With additional funding from the City of Toronto, we increased our follow-up support team from 2.5 positions to 4.5 positions, enabling us to provide increased outreach-based support to women accessing the 24/7 Drop In as well as women recently housed in the community.

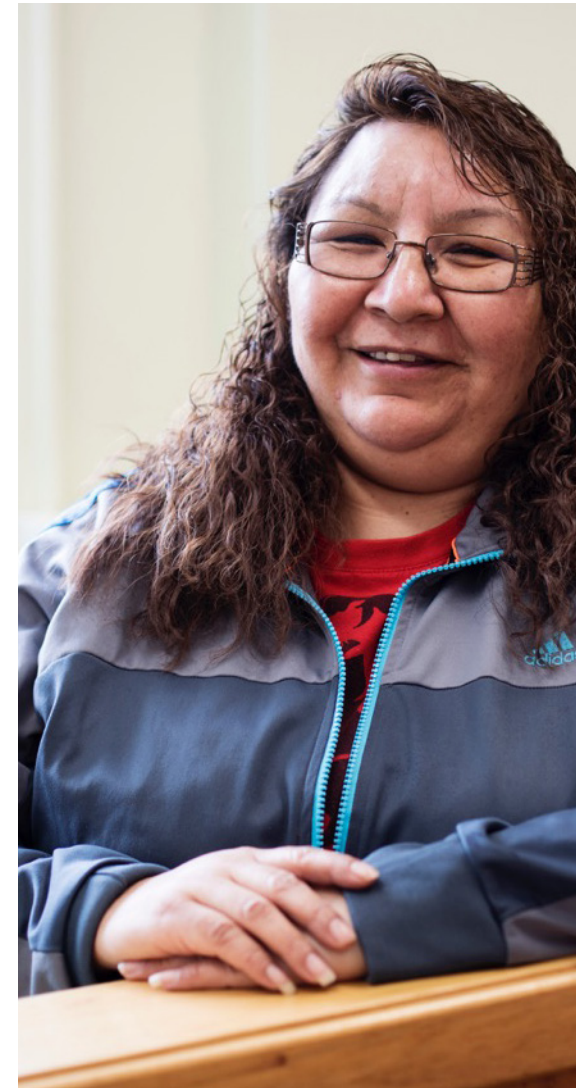
We helped to secure housing for 60 women this year thanks to our housing help/housing access worker based out of the 24/7 Drop In.

In partnership with Inner City Health Associates and Jean Tweed Centre, we piloted and then launched a successful evening primary care clinic once a week to provide additional access to physicians and counselling services in the evening hours.

We continued to offer ongoing supports to the 30 women housed through our housing partnership with St Clare’s Multifaith Housing.

## IN BRIEF

- Housing referrals: **800**
- Shelter/hostel referrals: **576**
- Landlord mediations: **30**
- Housing applications completed: **320**



## WRAP: Wellness Recovery Action Plan

This program helps women monitor their feelings and plan out responses to reduce, change or eliminate some of the identified challenges in their lives. The program creates a sense of community, and brings the women together as language-specific group to discover their own cultural experiences of wellness, increase personal empowerment and improve quality of life.

When we asked about the impact of the program, one participant told us “When I first came to Canada in 2016 from Syria, I was very depressed. Then, I met Rosa Elena at Sistering. She showed me how to use WRAP - Wellness Recovery Action Plan - and I started to find myself again. Then, I started mindfulness meditation. It made me happy. I was able to meet other Syrian women who had similar experiences. Nightmares, depression, anxiety. My trauma started to become easier to manage. We started to communicate in our own language and support each other and together, we became as a family. When I faced sorrowful moments, Rosa was a counsellor and a listener. Sistering has been taking care of me.”

“Sistering has been an amazing support system for giving me shelter through a storm, a new-found purpose to keep building a better tomorrow for myself and to encourage fellow women to do the same.”

– Participant

“I came to Sistering from a very bad situation with my ex-husband, and having a place to stay with my pets was very important to me. I came to Sistering with only what was on my back. Sistering has helped me with many things: employment; learning skills; job development; housing; gaining self-respect and feeling like a normal person in society. Without Sistering, I may still be experiencing homeless; now I have a beautiful apartment.”

– Candace, Participant



# Sisters Kitchen

THE KITCHEN IS THE HEART OF OUR HOME, AND OFTEN A PARTICIPANT'S OR VOLUNTEER'S INTRODUCTION TO THE SISTERING SPIRIT.



## HIGHLIGHTS

**R**oasted Sweet Potato, Cauliflower and Garlic Soup, one of our best-loved recipes, was selected from over 80 agency submissions to appear in the first-ever Second Harvest Agency Cookbook, due out this summer.

In celebration of Chinese New Year, our participant volunteers made over 1,000 vegetarian dumplings.

Our Black History Month meals are legendary and this past year was no exception. One evening, participants enjoyed a banquet of oven-fried jerk chicken, rice, Jamaican beef patties, roti, homemade fruitcakes and vanilla ice cream. For lunch we served goat curry (175 lbs!), rice and peas, fried plantain, red bean soup with dumplings and coconut bars for dessert. Our final special meal featured potatoes and salt beef, Jollof rice, baked chicken, fried plantain, steamed bok choy, cauliflower and carrots, Creole sauce, crispy fried jerk tofu and pastries. Plus: Drumming as entertainment!

Through Creating Health Plus, a program that augments the healthy food available to non-profit agencies, we now receive regular donations of milk, eggs, yogurt, vegetables, fruit and meat.

We recently purchased an industrial fridge and freezer for our pantry and a VitaMix Blender – a welcome addition – courtesy of Creating Health Plus.

Participants working in the Kitchen have successfully completed the Food Handler's Course and have started to attend Healthy Eating Seminars offered by Toronto Public Health.

## IN BRIEF

- Meals served: **150,000+**
- Turkey roasted for Winter Holiday Lunch: **500 lbs.**
- Christmas Day & New Year's Day lunches served: **550**
- Meatballs made for one meal: **1200+**



## IN PERSON

### Amanda, Sisters Kitchen

“I work in the Kitchen cleaning, doing dishes, prepping. I keep things going so they can keep things going. I have bad anxiety and panic disorder. I'm also ADHD. Working in the Kitchen has taught me how to deal with all that. I've learned about teamwork. I've learned organizational skills and how to finish what I start. I get left alone to make sure things get done and people say, 'Thank you Miss'. I used to sleep on the floor here; I was struggling just like everyone else. Now I go to work – and it feels special to know I have done a good job. We're a sisterhood here; we're family. We don't walk away from each other.”



## BACKSTORY

### Shabnam, Sisters Kitchen

Shabnam was a successful real estate agent in Iran when the law changed: women were no longer allowed to work in the profession because they might find themselves at a showing, alone with a man.

When she arrived in Toronto, Shabnam was referred to Sistering. She works in the Sisters Kitchen, putting food in the pantry, prepping and cooking. She likes the work, she says, because the team supports each other.

She has made friends at Sistering, Shabnam says, and is ready to put down roots.

“Toronto is home now.”





# Harm Reduction

OUR PEER-FOCUSED INITIATIVE HELPS WOMEN INVOLVED IN SUBSTANCE USE AND/OR SEX WORK BUILD RESILIENCY AND IMPROVE OVERALL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.

## HIGHLIGHTS

This past year, we offered three anonymous, point-of-care HIV and Hep C testing clinics: 45 women took part.

Peer Workers are the lifeblood of our program. On average, 32 Peers a month were paid to make Harm Reduction kits, a first step towards employment. Peers took on 80 outreach shifts in Parkdale and provided weekly outreach at three community housing locations. Peers also created and managed 20 low barrier, social recreational evening and early morning activities for 200 women in the Drop In.

Our Peer Harm Reduction Peers identified a desire to have a participant-led space where members of the harm reduction community could socialize, support and inform each other. Called Kicking Isolation Supporting Sisters (KISS) this group offers a variety of activities to promote discussion and reduce isolation. The program is run entirely by the harm reduction community and Harm Reduction Peers.

We continue our partnership with KAPOW (Knowledge and Power of Women), a support group for women-identified sex workers in Parkdale, sharing resources, knowledge and providing peer support.

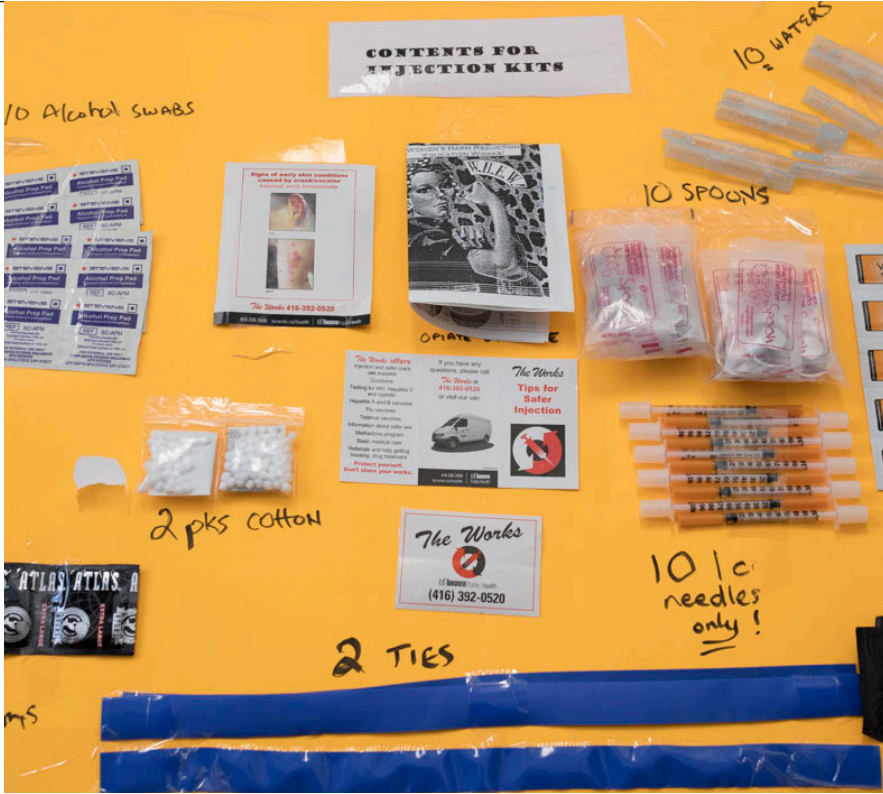
## IN BRIEF

- Injection kits made weekly: **200**
- Workshops presented: **24**
- Syringes safely returned to the Drop In: **15,000**
- Narcan administration/overdose prevention training: **150**
- Narcan kits distributed: **800**
- Crystal pipe kits distributed containing crystal meth alerts: **1000+**

## IN PERSON

### Kathy, Harm Reduction Peer Support Worker

“My name is Kathy. I am a Peer Support Worker at Sistering and I am truly grateful for being part of a wonderful organization. Being employed by Sistering has added so much meaning to my life. My self-esteem is boosted by completing the administrative tasks like recording statistics of supplies and distribution – and knowing that my work is appreciated. When I see the results of my hard work, I am proud to be part of the great Harm Reduction family.”





# On The Path To Employment

ON THE PATH TO EMPLOYMENT IS A PRE-EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAM HELPING WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA AND VIOLENCE TO PREPARE FOR THE WORKFORCE.

“I think you are my lucky star. I’m going to start working Monday.”

– Participant



## HIGHLIGHTS

We hosted a Micro Business Workshop Series that included a visit from Rise Asset Development to discuss a Peer Mentorship Program and small business loan opportunities.

Representatives from the Ontario Disability Support Program Parkdale Office are offering quarterly outreach and information sessions.

One hundred and thirty-five participants received one-on-one counselling for resumes, job search, employment counselling, volunteering, education and income support.

Income Tax Clinics offered participants the opportunity to have their income tax filed by a volunteer accountant, including back taxes.

We hosted two big events, one recognizing the Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women, and the other celebrating International Women’s Day with open mic for comments and cake made by participant Peer Debra Neil.

## IN BRIEF

- Participants, Employment Group and Micro Business Workshop Series: **40**
- Women who gained employment: **14**
- Women, income support: **75**
- Women, support in volunteering/pursuing further education: **20**

## BACKSTORY Participant, On The Path

When A’s husband died, her life fell apart. He had been her anchor. She came to Sistering looking for solace and support, and found that and more: a community that has become like the family she lost. Seven years later, A is an active participant in Spun Studio, has learned to knit, crochet and sew – in fact, she alters her own clothes now. We helped A. craft her first resume, and she obtained work in Sisters Kitchen.

# Spun Studio

OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE TEACHES SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SKILLS SO MARGINALIZED WOMEN CAN EARN A LIVING AND LIVE WITH DIGNITY.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Spun participants were invited to participate in a weaving program sponsored by the U.S. Consulate and held through the Textile Museum of Canada; a number of pieces created by participants were on display at the public event.

The new craft program, including quilting, sand art and card making, is introducing new participants to Spun Studio’s fibre arts programs – knitting, sewing, weaving and crocheting – in a safe and welcoming environment.

Spun Studio’s pop up sale at the First Unitarian Church offered the opportunity to meet many new customers and brought more exposure to the one-of-a-kind textile products participants make at Spun.

## IN BRIEF

- Spun participants: **83**
- Spun Studio participants who gained employment: **14**
- Baby blankets made: **62**
- Sweaters knitted: **67**



## BACKSTORY Aramis, Spun Studio

Aramis’s journey from her native Iran to Canada was a difficult and complicated one.

“Iran doesn’t accept trans people,” she says, “and the abuse was terrible.”

Aramis fled to Turkey, where she applied for refugee status, hoping to be relocated to Canada.

While she waited, Aramis stumbled upon a craft cooperative – 30 vulnerable women were engaged in creating a variety of beautiful handcrafted items, including jewellery.

“The women were so friendly,” she says. “They were all working together; they had lunch together. I bought a bracelet and earrings

and then I said, ‘I want to make jewellery. Please teach me’.”

Aramis returned the next week and started to learn the art that would become her passion: making beautiful earrings, bracelets, necklaces and more.

She arrived in Canada two years ago and met Shabnam, a Sistering participant. Today, Aramis is an active member of the Sistering community, spending time in Spun Studio making her one-of-a-kind pieces. She sells her work at craft fairs and community events, and dreams of creating a Sistering cooperative, passing her skill on to other women and helping them earn an income.





# Advocacy

THE WOMEN WE  
SERVE DIRECT OUR  
EFFORTS, AND WE  
FOCUS ON INITIATIVES  
THEY IDENTIFY AS  
CRITICAL: POVERTY  
REDUCTION AND AN  
INCREASE IN SAFE,  
AFFORDABLE, LOW  
BARRIER HOUSING.



## HIGHLIGHTS

In partnership with other drop ins, shelters, Street Health, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Inner City Health Associates and the Interfaith Coalition-Out of the Cold programs, Sistering staff, participants and peer workers deputed at the Community Recreation and Development Committee, the Board of Health, the Budget Committee and the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council.

Due to sky-rocketing rents and the lack of available housing, people have nowhere to go, and we presented the urgent need for low barrier shelters and drop ins, as well as affordable women-centered housing with appropriate supports.

We worked tirelessly to help members of Council understand women's experiences of homelessness – often hidden - and that women's homelessness is fundamentally different from men's. Women couch surf, stay in abusive relationships and live in precarious housing rather than sleep outside and the emotional and physical toll is enormous.

Giving participants a voice and helping ensure they are heard, is a fundamental Sistering principle. We ensured that each time we spoke to City staff and to the community, Sistering participants and peers were supported to share their views.

Social Action Group, facilitated by a Peer and staff, as part of the Maytree Foundation's CivicsXChange Program, included workshops on How to Make a Deputation, and Media Spokesperson Training.

We were involved in a number of initiatives to end violence against women, including an event at Sistering for the International Day to End Violence Against Women; speaking at City Hall during the UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence; attending the December 6 National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women Vigil at University of Toronto; and speaking on the HIV Panel at the International Anti-Violence Forum for Peel Region. We also contributed to, and promoted, the Bad Date Book, and addressed home violence.

We participated in the Homelessness and Mortality Research and Advocacy Coalition and supported efforts to understand and prevent the death of homeless individuals every year in Toronto.

We took part in Orange the World, organized in part with the UN and local groups, to speak out against violence to women and girls, internationally, especially towards those most marginalized.

As a founding member of the Fair Fare Coalition, we fought throughout the year to see money in the budget for the Fair Fare Pass, including a rally in October (Ride for Respect), and a budget rally in November. Sistering participants and staff took part in two deputation days and organized a flyering day of action on January 30 at Ossington station. (Fair Pass was implemented on April 4, 2018, giving a \$30 discount on metropasses and a \$1 discount on tokens to those on Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program.)

## IN BRIEF

- Number of deputations at the Community Development and Recreation Committee: **5**
- Number of community actions in support of low barrier shelter spaces for women and trans people: **8**
- Number of rallies/actions in support of low barrier shelter spaces for women and trans people: **5**
- Number of deputations to support the Fair Pass and affordable transit from a gender equity lens: **4**
- Number of Harm Reduction Peers and Sistering staff who took part in rallies and activism, including Reclaim the Streets, National Housing Day of Action and the Strawberry Festival for Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: **80**





# Volunteers

WITHOUT OUR  
DEDICATED TEAM OF  
TIRELESS VOLUNTEERS,  
WE WOULDN'T  
BE ABLE TO OFFER  
THE PROGRAMS  
AND ACTIVITIES  
PARTICIPANTS HAVE  
COME TO COUNT ON.



“Being a volunteer in the Kitchen at Sistering for the past six years has taught me to reflect, to learn and to exercise humility. Every layer of an onion I peel, while tearing up, has taught me that all of us have so many layers that need to be honoured and respected.”

– Zarina Decambra

## HIGHLIGHTS

Raha Javanfar, who serves breakfast at Sistering, plays in a number of Toronto bands. She asked band mates of Jah Doo, a Ska/Iranian Afrobeat band, to play a set at Sistabana 2017 – the perfect chill on a sizzling summer afternoon.

Margaret Ebifegha, a member of Student Parents Alliance (University of Toronto), a group of students who are also parents, organized volunteers to offer salon services including manicures, mini-makeovers and makeup giveaways, one evening a month during the summer.

The medical clinic added evening hours and friends Alena Ravenstein and Kali Mullins provided medical reception support.

A shout out to the army of volunteers who helped set up, decorate, prep meals (40 volunteers for prep alone!), serve meals and tidy up after the event.

Many young people are passionate about contributing to their communities. Nine high school students from the Civics and Citizenship course at Oakwood Collegiate came with teacher Victoria Bekiaris, to learn about Sistering and how they can support the work we do. Terrific engagement at Sistering for future leaders!

## IN BRIEF

- Number of ESL lessons taught: **512**
- Number of necklace/earrings sets made: **320**
- Number of massages: **288**



“I’m a registered massage therapist, and I’ve volunteered at Sistering for eight years, offering chair massage. The staff and the women really make me feel appreciated and valued. I don’t have a lot of money to donate, but I’m glad to have a skill to offer, which gives the women a chance to experience safe and therapeutic touch. I feel like I make a small but real difference.”

– Christine Malec.



## IN PERSON

### Pat Craig, Volunteer

“I first became aware of Sistering when a neighbour told me she was donating clothing. What a good idea, I thought, and I followed up with a donation from my closet. I took a tour and heard about the services Sistering offers some of Toronto’s most marginalized women. I knew that I wanted to be a part of the Sistering family. I had been a Special Education teacher so volunteering to teach English As A Second Language once a week seemed like a natural way to contribute. One activity led to another and 15 years later I’m still teaching ESL classes but I also prep in the kitchen, fundraise and serve on Sistering’s Board of Directors. I receive as much as I give. Everyone has a life story and being a part of so many stories with my Sistering friends – staff and participants – is important to me. Volunteering with Sistering is a privilege.”

“I believe in the meaning to be found in making art or a craft, and I am reminded of my belief every time I facilitate the beading program. I see the pleasure the women experience from the creative process, making their own piece of jewellery, often leaving from the class proudly wearing their creation.”

– Vivienne Jones





# Donors

YOUR KINDNESS  
AND COMPASSION  
TOUCHES EVERY  
WOMAN WHO  
WALKS THROUGH  
THE SISTERING  
DOORS.

“DBRS is proud to be a supporter of Sistering, Sistering has been doing important work with at-risk, socially isolated women for more than 35 years and we are pleased that we were able to help make the lives of these women better.”

- Doug Turnbull, Vice Chairman and Country Head Canada, DBRS



## HIGHLIGHTS

You helped raise more than \$685,000 last year! Community friends, neighbours and people throughout the GTA; corporations; foundations; unions; and faith-based organizations united and gave generously to support the women who count on the services we offer.

The Shoebox Project donated over 1,300 treasure-filled “shoeboxes” that were distributed to the women over the holiday period in December. Filled with toiletries, cosmetics, jewellery and warm items for the winter months, each box contained a hug and a lot of love.

Many of you organized innovative events to raise awareness and funds for our sisters including book launches, comedy nights, readings, concerts, fashion shows, holiday markets, dinners, fitness workouts, community street sales, and more.

## IN BRIEF

- Third party events raised: **\$52,000+**
- Community Friends Monthly Giving Program: **200+ friends with annual gifts totalling \$50,000+**
- Number of Sistering participants who become donors: **5**

“I chose to support Sistering because I believe the work you do is important; it’s immediate and directly impacts and supports our community. Sistering helps a segment of the population that is most at risk and sadly underserved. I love the fact that the order of priority is so well defined – from immediate harm reduction all the way to independent housing and gainful employment.”

- Hugo Croft-Levesque,  
Community Friends Monthly Donor



## IN PERSON

### Dr. Marnie Luck, Fundraiser

“I live in the neighbourhood, and walk by Sistering every day on my way to work. You don’t realize how privileged you are until you meet women who aren’t. We aren’t all dealt the same hand. Life is about experiencing joy and connection and if you can help other people get to that place by supporting a safe space, where women can access food, shelter and the support services they need, the gratifying feeling you get in return is truly meaningful. What is really important about Sistering: vulnerable women come from across the city to get what they need, any time of the day or night. There is no Closed time. That’s why I throw fund raising events – The Vagina Dialogues at The Drake on International Women’s Day was supported by 200 people and raised more than \$7,500. But just as important, it raised awareness of the issues and the work that Sistering does, and offered proactive ways for people to get involved.”

## BACKSTORY

### Bobbi Jo Quigley, Fundraiser

Bobbi Jo Quigley has seen Sistering from both sides – as a participant, and as a donor and supporter.

In 1996, when she needed a safe and respectful place to get her life back, she arrived at Sistering, when the agency was on College Street.

“It felt like walking into someone’s home,” she remembers. “I didn’t have to explain why I was there. Caring and compassionate people welcomed me, no questions asked. I could use the phone. I could enjoy delicious meals. I felt supported and resected.”

Bobbi Jo took advantage of the craft classes Sistering offered, and discovered a passion for fibre arts – especially knitting, her “respite” she says.

“I have learning disabilities,” Bobbi Jo explains. “But I was finally in a place where I could go back to

school. It took me a long time to finish my high school credits. I worked at Street Helpline for nine years on the night shift and got my homework done between calls – but I graduated.”

Bobbi Jo went on to study nursing at the University of Toronto with a partial scholarship from Covenant House.

Today, she is married, the mom of three, including twins. She works at South Riverdale Community Health Centre, and also supports Sistering participants and KAPOW in her nursing role, including Hep C testing. And she has coupled health education with arm knitting and finger crochet.

Two years ago, Bobbi Jo turned her love of knitting into a business, opening Porch Swing Yarnsomniacs (yarnsomniacs.ca), offering all things yarn including Stitch Circles and knitting classes.

Bobbi Jo is also the current torchbearer for Yarn Hop, an annual yarn-filled funfest that brings together knitting and crochet fans from across the GTA and beyond, with proceeds from the event going to Sistering, raising more than \$6,500 in the past six years.

Bobbi Jo believes in accepting help and giving help, which is how she got by, she says. That and her mad-yarny coping skills.

“I want to thank everyone who helped me along the way, especially Sistering,” Bobbi Jo says. “They have all contributed to who I am today.”



# Statement of Operations

YEAR ENDED  
MARCH 31, 2018

REVENUES	2017	2016
City of Toronto	\$ 1,780,035	\$ 1,019,641
Local Health Integration Network	1,297,367	1,297,367
United Way of Greater Toronto	408,261	430,668
Donations	318,324	287,336
Miscellaneous	112,252	10,475
Ontario Women's Directorate	90,000	90,000
West Neighbourhood House (LHIN Peer)	87,026	107,916
Foundations	74,102	90,718
Ontario Seniors Secretariat	58,249	49,224
Trillium Foundation	25,221	25,000
Interest	5,009	3,841
Fundraising	12,884	66,310
Federal grant	-	4,620
Regent Park	-	900
Amortization on deferred capital contributions	184,730	181,628
	4,441,912	3,688,547
EXPENSES		
Wages and benefits	2,801,305	2,192,924
Programs	410,354	292,532
Purchased services	359,471	366,826
Building occupancy costs	325,544	290,280
Repairs and maintenance	140,688	124,680
Office and general	77,132	61,691
Professional fees	39,660	43,722
Fundraising	35,037	96,667
Insurance	19,258	16,109
Promotion and publicity	4,857	1,663
Volunteer	501	743
Amortization	187,128	193,139
	4,400,935	3,680,976
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$ 40,977	\$ 7,571



S – Seeing  
I – In  
S – Sisters  
T – Truths  
E – Evolution  
R – Respect  
I – Integrity  
N – Never Giving Up  
G – Graciously Going Forward

Thank you, my sisters here.

*- Crystal J., Participant*



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**SISTERING**

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