

**This is the story of
5,700 women and
children who found
the courage to leave.**



.....

**And the community
that gave them the
strength to move on.**

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Discovery House is a second stage women's shelter that cares for, educates, and supports the victims of family violence.

Every year, we help over 150 mothers and children break the cycle of family violence by providing the shelter, hope, and education they need to begin a new life. These abused women and children often have nowhere to go, and almost no ability to make it on their own. Discovery House not only provides a roof over their heads, but the education and confidence they need to build their life.

She can't go back to him again. But she doesn't have anywhere else to go.

At the end of her sixth stay at the emergency shelter, she's faced with the same dilemma: they have nowhere to go but back to him. Back to the fear and violence that gets worse every time they return. She can't keep doing that to her kids. The two of them – they're so young. They deserve a brighter future. They deserve a change.

She's told there is one apartment available for them at Discovery House. It would be theirs for at least six months. Despite her exhaustion and pain from the most recent violence she endured, she smiles as she accepts.

She knows he's at work, but her heart still pounds as she packs up their essentials. One hand on her daughter's stroller, the other tensely gripping her son's small hand, they approach Discovery House for the first time.

The building is unassuming – there aren't any signs, nothing that makes it stand out from the rest of the neighborhood. Her son points out security cameras as she presses the buzzer to get in. A sudden wash of relief – they'll be safe here. Even if he somehow found them, there's no way he could get in. The butterflies in her stomach start to subside. This is their first real step in breaking free.

We take them in and provide the first steps toward a life free from violence.

We meet with the women and their children at the emergency shelters. Some are able to summon the courage to leave, generally after countless abusive incidents and an average of eight visits to the emergency shelter. We assess their readiness for change, and how well suited they would be to the various services Discovery House offers. As there are only 19 apartments on the premises, the decision does have to be made as to who would benefit the most from the environment Discovery House provides. Given that there are hundreds who require the services of a second stage shelter, this screening process is necessary to ensure that the resources are going towards those who are committed to making long-term changes for themselves and their children.

We make the transition from the emergency shelter to their new residence as seamless as possible, including doing the pre-work to establish connections to social assistance so she can pay the rent on her new place.

Security is of the utmost importance, as it's the primary means of protecting the clients of Discovery House from family violence, women and children alike. Our facility is the most secure shelter in Alberta.



She's fragile after years of abuse, and fears she can't make it on her own.

To her surprise, it's a real apartment. Furnished, spacious and self-contained. The excitement starts to set in – this is where the three of them get to live together.

She meets with her counsellor during her first day there, as her kids go to art and play therapy for the first time. Her initial sessions are difficult – the reality of what she's done is setting in. She has little emotional reserves to call upon. It's hard to talk about the part of her life she always worked so hard to hide. Her counsellor is unendingly empathetic, making the idea of unpacking the stories of the past slightly less scary.

Early on in their sessions, she's asked to consider what she will do if he somehow tracks them down. The thought terrifies her, but she knows she needs to have a plan. The counsellor assures her that she's safe here, and that these are important steps toward long-term safety and independence.

She is also introduced to her follow-up counsellor. She finds it a bit strange that she's meeting the person who will assist her at the end of her stay, but it's reassuring to see how many people are there to help her along her way.

We provide shelter and security so they can focus on healing and growth.

She has made a monumentally important decision in leaving him, and there are many emotional and practical needs to address at this point. She will continue to meet with her counsellor on a weekly basis for the duration of her stay. Together, they develop a week-to-week service plan that includes small steps toward her long-term goal of living free from violence.

Discovery House has created a model that makes sense of every woman's individual background, current needs, and future aspirations. Her plan, and the means through which she works towards her goals, are entirely specific to her needs and circumstances. She is given the opportunity to attend group counselling sessions. There, she learns from the experiences the other women at Discovery House have endured, and shares in their progress and successes.

Domestic violence affects women and families across the socio-economic spectrum. As such, Discovery House utilizes highly individualized approaches, tailored to every client. For example, we employ a designated counsellor to work with immigrant and refugee women, who require unique and specific expertise, whether that pertains to the scope of their trauma, overcoming language barriers, or immigration issues. As the needs of our communities change, Discovery House is prepared to adapt to best serve our clients.



Her children were her reason to stay, and became the best reason to leave.

As she attends her weekly counselling sessions, her son and daughter see their own child and youth counsellors. It's important for her to know how her kids are adjusting, and the counsellors keep her informed.

They say that her son displays behavioral problems, and gets aggressive in some counselling sessions, but otherwise, he is developmentally on par with other seven-year-olds. She knows he can be a sweet kid with a big heart, and his counsellors speak to this too. Her daughter, at two-and-a-half, doesn't yet speak. At her age, she should be talking much more than she does.

It pains her to hear about the specific challenges they both face, as she knows that these problems are related to the violence they witnessed and experienced at home.

We know how violence affects children. And how to help them.

Children are clients at Discovery House, and we help them heal and meet milestones typical of other children their age. They too have their own individualized service plans and approaches. Using art and play therapy, as well as trauma counselling, our specialized child and youth counsellors learn about the child's mental and emotional state, as well as how they are progressing developmentally.

Discovery House is home to 45 to 50 children at any given time. The child and youth counsellors use every interaction with the kids as an opportunity to close developmental gaps. This requires a lot of resources and energy for each individual child. But healing children wounded by family violence is entirely worth everything it takes. Without this timely and early intervention, there would be 45 to 50 people prone to carrying on the patterns and cycles of family violence they had seen modelled in their homes.



She struggles with single parenthood, but is determined to succeed.

Through her weekly counselling sessions, they talk about two areas she would like to work on. She's worried about her son, and isn't sure how to handle his temper when things get bad. He acts up in the evenings, throwing things around, screaming, and shutting himself in his room. Her son's counsellor has also mentioned some problematic behavior in their sessions. She's relieved to hear she will get an in-home support worker, one evening a week, to help her learn how to help him.

Managing the family's money is a source of stress. She wasn't responsible for the finances at home. As they are currently on social assistance, she needs to get by on less money than they're used to. After talking with her counsellor about this, she attends a seminar on budgeting held at Discovery House. The in-home support worker helps her with strategies for writing resumes and searching for jobs. The amount of thorough support amazes her, as she slowly gains confidence to face the challenges of her new independent life.

We give hands-on lessons to develop fundamental life skills.

In this instance, the in-home support worker helps with issues around parenting and money matters. For other clients, the support worker may include instruction on making meals, using transit, or bigger picture considerations like preparing for court and applying for custody of her children. We also help women with their educational goals, like upgrading courses, attaining equivalency certificates, or enrolling in ESL classes.

Discovery House ensures that the counsellors stay in close contact with each other regarding the individual clients and their progress. For example, having established that there are some issues and troubles around parenting, the child and youth counsellor works with the mom's residential counsellor and the in-home support worker to determine the most suitable course of action for the family, and integrate the plans to best serve the children and the mother. The end goal is that each family member has an increased capacity to deal with the holdover effects of violence.



She's haunted by the violence that always followed special occasions.

Her son's eighth birthday is coming up, and she's beginning to get nervous. Back at home, she had simply given up on trying to create a special day for her son. She can't remember a birthday past his third that didn't result in trauma. As his birthday comes nearer, she grows more and more anxious about him acting up again. The two of them have made so much progress, and she fears he will slip back.

Discovery House sends out invitations to all the other families and kids to join in a celebration for his birthday. The party includes a huge birthday cake for him, games and activities for all the kids, and party bags for everyone to take home. He is timid and taken aback at first, but quickly warms up to being the celebrated birthday boy. They even present him with a few beautifully wrapped gifts. His little sister is almost more excited than he is, running around, playing with the other kids. She's even talking a bit now, sometimes excitedly parroting what the other kids are saying. It means the absolute world to her to see her kids flourish, laughing and playing just as kids should.

We use every opportunity to normalize the lives of families.

Discovery House takes special care to celebrate the children. Typically, in households where domestic violence is an issue, there aren't rituals around birthdays and other occasions, or there is a great deal of trauma surrounding those days. Research indicates that children who grow up without these rituals are more likely to experience issues related to depression and social maladjustment, among other things. Discovery House contacts volunteer groups in Calgary that specialize in creating these celebrations. We use these opportunities to provide a sense of joy and fun for the children, to allow kids to be kids. These celebrations often turn in to a valuable opportunity to work with moms and kids in confronting the many issues from the violent dynamic they have left behind.



She's nervous to leave, but excited to start anew.

Their stay at Discovery House is almost over. It's hard to believe the three of them will soon be on their own. She's excited to leave, to get on with their next steps. But she's also scared – she will suddenly be alone, without the routines and daily support that have structured her life for the last many months.

Her follow-up counsellor had been introduced to her when she first arrived at Discovery House. They had met a few times throughout her stay, and she's happy to have a familiar face helping her at this stage. The follow-up counsellor helps her find their new place, and researches nearby schools and daycare options for the kids. Should any need arise, she knows that the follow-up counsellor can be counted on for meetings or phone calls over the next year. Just knowing this option exists boosts her confidence. And there's lots to be confident about.

Her son is much better at controlling his anger, and she knows she can deal with him when he has issues in the future. Her daughter is still slightly behind other kids her age in terms of how much she speaks, but happily she seems to be catching up quickly.

She feels prepared. She walks out the door.

We give the support and confidence to last a lifetime. And it does.

Women stay at Discovery House for an average of six months. In some cases, it becomes apparent that six months is simply not long enough to provide the necessary groundwork for living independently in the community. Some women stay up to a full year when it is mutually determined that she's not ready to move on until then.

Follow-up counsellors ensure that clients are aware of resources within the community that can be called upon if need be. That may mean legal aid for some, the food bank for others, or after-school care options for the kids.

Follow-up is especially important for the children. Even six months of security, routine, and freedom from family violence can feel like a lifetime to a child. This move to family independence can be jarring for children, but having a familiar face checking in with them after they leave Discovery House can soften the blow of the change. The first few months of support are vital to the family's sense of stability and security.

Discovery House's follow-up counsellors stay in touch for as long as they're needed.



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There are thousands more who need this story to come true. Please donate.

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Every part of this story could have been experienced by one of our clients within the last 30 years. This story is timeless, and family violence is too.

Discovery House provides a real solution to a real problem. And your donations make you a part of that solution.

Help us give these women and children a life without the pain of domestic violence. Your donations provide the shelter, hope, and education that it takes to make this story real for thousands more.

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Our Mission

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Discovery House provides integrated residential and community services for abused women with children to enable them to live safely in the community.

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Our Vision

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Our communities are free of family violence.

Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society

Discovery House exists to help the victims of family violence create new lives for themselves. Lives that are not punctuated by trauma and instability.

Our commitment and dedication to this goal drives us to apply innovative approaches to best serve our clients. For example, we are the only second stage shelter in Alberta to provide each adult and child with individualized services based on their needs. We're also unique in offering hands-on, in-home support to clients living at Discovery House. Maintaining the highest quality programs and treatment methodology ensures that women recover rather than regress. Discovery House will continue to apply ground-breaking approaches based on the needs of our clients. We are driven to help them make real, lasting differences in their lives. But the need for change exists beyond our clients' families.

Family violence is not merely a personal issue; it's a social one. Alberta has the second highest recorded rate of domestic violence in Canada, and much of this is due to factors larger than any one family. Boys and girls raised in violent homes are much more likely to be in an abusive relationship later in life. By providing shelter, hope and education to the victims of family violence, we help break the cycle of violence for future generations. This ripple effect will protect thousands of future children from such trauma. We are focused on creating a society without domestic abuse, and we believe that every person has the right to that future.

Discovery House has helped create happier lives for thousands of people in the last three decades, and we are proud of our work.

Letter from the Board Chair & Executive Director

People often think of domestic violence as an add-on to a normal life. But, little could be further from the truth. Family violence makes a normal life impossible because it turns the fundamentals of normal life - like home, family, and safety - into horror.

So, in 1980, The Calgary Family Support Society opened the doors to Discovery House, the first long-term shelter for abused women with children in Calgary. Discovery House began with seven furnished suites, a skeleton staff and volunteer support.

Today, thirty years later, Discovery House is recognized nation-wide as a leader in the domestic violence sector. We are the most secure shelter in Alberta and have advanced support programs to help women and children reclaim their lives. Within our 19 furnished apartments, families are provided intense, individualized counselling, life-skills training and support services. Our breadth of services will continue to grow as we reach outward to the community as leaders for social change.

Our years of success hinge on the vision of our board members, the overwhelming dedication of our staff and the hearts of our many volunteers. Their unending resolve for a better world keeps us inspired and focused. This year, we are sad to say farewell to a number of board members: Nigel Richardson, Barbara Young, Brenda Hill, Angela Wotherspoon, Marguerite DeFreitas, and Jenn Nichols. But, by the same token, we're excited for new minds, direction, and achievements to be had with their successors.

Special thanks to belong to you, our loyal donors and supporters, for continuing to help us achieve our vision of a violence free community.

Lori Topp,
Chair, Board of Directors

Brigitte Baradoy,
Executive Director

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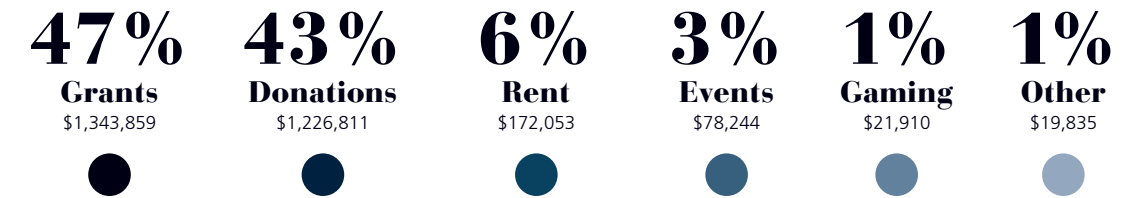
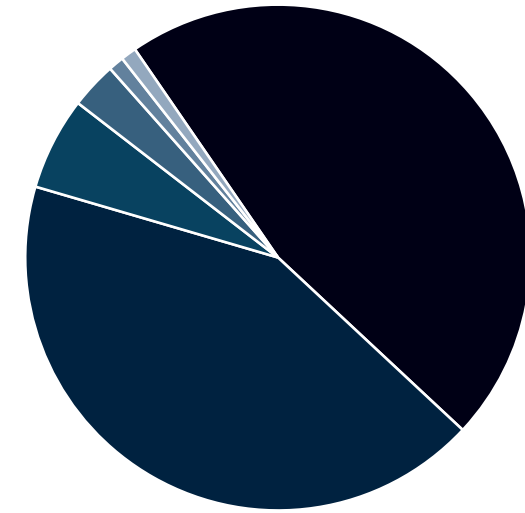
Thank you to those who donated anonymously.

Financial Report

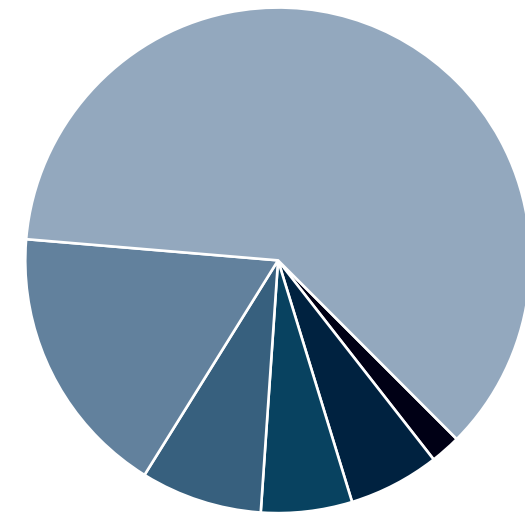
Discovery House is financially stronger than it ever has been. In 30 years, we have seen an incredible growth in income, from grants and donations to special fundraising community events. With pride, we can see that our financial success is indicative of something bigger than just numbers. Our society is growing to view domestic violence as a significant social cause.

We take your donations seriously. It's important to us that you know where your donation is going and what it takes to keep our family violence prevention society thriving. If you would like more detail on any aspect of our operation, please get in touch online and request our audited financial statements.

Income \$2,862,712



Expenses \$1,991,447



* Does not reflect income and expenses for the Housing First Pilot Project
* Reflects building fund revenue of \$655,500

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Connection

Discovery House wants to be in touch with you. A social movement is made through connections, and only with those connections can we build a society free from family violence. We welcome your feedback, thoughts, and interest. Please meet us online, keep up with our events through our blog, or follow us on twitter. All can be accessed through our website.

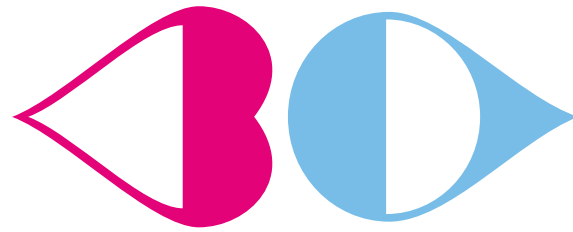
We make it a true priority to engage you and our community, we would love for you to engage with us too.

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thirty
The logo for 'thirty years' features a stylized '3' in pink and a stylized '0' in blue. The '3' is formed by a pink outline on the left and a solid pink shape on the right. The '0' is formed by a blue outline on the right and a solid blue shape on the left. The two shapes are positioned side-by-side, creating a symmetrical, fish-like appearance.
years