

WINTER 2016

YOUR REDWOOD

your gifts at work for women and children

YOU INSPIRE WOMEN TO LEAVE VIOLENCE BEHIND FOREVER

YOU HELPED ESYLN FIND HER PATH TO A NEW CAREER – HELPING OTHERS

“When I came to Canada in 2001, I had no plan. Things were tough back home, and I wanted a better life for my son and me.

It was a challenge from the first day I arrived. I didn't know anyone here, or what I was getting myself into. I didn't feel grounded, or have a place of my own, and I was working wherever I could — in factories, housekeeping, babysitting. But I knew I would make it work no matter how long it took.

A bright spot was that I met a new partner. I was excited to be pregnant with my second child. But as things went on, my relationship grew more and more abusive. I had to escape. I felt there was nowhere left to go — until I found The Redwood. That's when my life started to turn around.

When I arrived at The Redwood, I felt broken and alone. But I didn't give up. With the help of staff I started to feel hope. Opportunities began to present themselves. The Redwood gave me support to live my belief to never give up — to always keep going.

It's still not easy, but I haven't stopped since. The Redwood helped me through the hardest time in my life. When I left the shelter, I needed to be around as many positive people as possible. I found that immediately in the *Women on the Move* leadership program (WOTM).

My experience in the group opened me up, and I found unity and strength in the counsellors and the other women. They empowered me to be more spontaneous, more willing to take risks, and more open to trying new things. I feel more confident now, especially speaking in public. WOTM helped me regain my self-esteem, and gave me skills to



The Redwood helped me through the hardest time in my life

figure out new ways to motivate myself and others. I connected with women in similar situations, and we learned to open up with each other instead of carrying our burdens alone.

When I joined the group, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I began to try new things — I started my first Avon business and I went back to school and finished my high school diploma. Now I'm working in healthcare. I am passionate about working in my community, and caring for the people in it. I'm a Personal Support Worker, and I'd like to go back to school and become a Registered Nurse. I know that no matter what happens, I'm only going to go up from here.

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WOTM helped me to be kind with myself and others. When my clients have a bad day I've learned that I can choose to listen and try to make them feel better. I've become a better mom to my kids too. I'm more patient with them — and and it takes a lot of patience with two kids!

A lot of domestic abuse is never even reported, and a lot of women out there still need help. Thanks to you, the Redwood gives us a place to go, and the support we need.

I am grateful for this chance to thank you, our community, for your continued support. The Redwood is here to offer shelter for women and families who need it, because of you. Please keep giving, because you change lives. And my message to all women — don't give up. **Because there is help. There is hope. There is The Redwood.**"

Learn more about Women on the Move at www.wotm.ca.

YOU GIVE TEENS LIKE REBECCA A SAFE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Being a teenager is hard. Being a teenager and having to spend the holidays in a shelter can be devastating. This is a "secret" you can't share with the kids at school. While your friends grow excited about spending the holidays with their families and loved ones, it can be hard not to feel alone.

With your loving support, teens like Rebecca are able to find comfort and begin to heal at The Redwood.

"When I first arrived at The Redwood, I was depressed, abused and hurt deeply. I felt like it was the end of the world and to be honest, I was ashamed to be living in a shelter. But as time grew... my mind expanded and I began to think differently. I used to look at life tunnel-view like. The Redwood gave me a new perspective and I am glad that has changed in me. I learned that this is just the beginning, and a new chapter I am ready to start.

The Redwood counsellors have helped me continuously, and in untiring ways! When I first arrived, one of the counsellors supplied me with school stationary and a backpack and that was one of my favourite moments to cherish. They also supplied my brother and me with snacks in the early morning when we were in a rush. Lastly, they helped us by getting us tutors and organizing so many different Child and Youth Art programs.

My mom and brother have changed a lot too at The Redwood. My brother has expanded his abilities



with building different objects and creating things because of the supplies the staff have given him to work with.

He seems to think differently and more wisely. I feel proud of him.

I love dancing, and The Redwood has supported me continuously with it. It's a passion for me and I cannot live without it, it always brings me back on my feet when I am down. **Staff encouraged me to perform a dance at the Christmas party and that was the best thing ever! I felt like I was on top of the world and that's all because of them!** I loved the holiday party because we got to have everyone, and all the staff, in the home at the same time

The Redwood is the perfect place to stay and I mean it when I say I will miss this place and all its memories and people. They are one in a million and no one has ever changed my life the way everyone at The Redwood has. Thank you to our donors for encouraging the women and kids here to rediscover their passions at The Redwood." – Rebecca, 17



ANNE-MARIE ENVISIONS A WORLD WHERE ALL WOMEN AND CHILDREN LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

Join us to celebrate Anne-Marie's 23 years of leadership at The Redwood

If you know The Redwood, chances are you know Anne-Marie Gardner: Executive Director, social justice

advocate, and tireless leader. Anne-Marie has inspired and shaped The Redwood to be what it is today — a safe haven for women and children fleeing violence — since the very first day she helped open its doors in 1993.

This year marks her 23rd and final year as Executive Director, but not the end of her lifelong commitment to The Redwood.

Anne-Marie's energy, passion and perseverance in ending violence against women through education and advocacy is contagious. Her presence is a constant force at The Redwood. She takes the time to get to know every staff member, volunteer, woman and child that comes through our doors. Her leadership and outstanding dedication to social change are truly what make us 'the little shelter that could.'

As Anne-Marie prepares for the next chapter in her life, she reflects on what the past 23 years have meant to her.

“One constant beacon and inspiration has been our community of supporters.

The Redwood was built from the ground up by you. By the hands of our community. You continue to help us meet the ever-evolving needs of women and children as they cross barriers and boundaries to achieve their goals and dreams. You help us walk with them to challenge those barriers and make the path easier for other women.

Whatever happens next, we want to make sure we are prepared. Our community of donors reassures me that The Redwood will continue to grow and be ready for whatever, and whoever, comes through our doors.

I imagine a world where all women and children are safe, at home, at work and in their communities. Sometimes this can feel daunting. But I am constantly inspired by the strength and the determination of the women who are rebuilding their lives after fleeing violence. I am inspired by the caring staff, and individuals like you. You support women in leaving abuse behind forever and in creating healthier and safer communities.

Change is possible, and I am so honoured to be a small part of that change along with all of you. Even though I am leaving my role as E.D., my work here is far from done. I have left a gift to The Redwood in my will. This is my way of making sure that I continue to be a leader in preventing abuse and ending violence against women – until the need no longer exists. With you, this hope is possible.”

Join Anne-Marie's lifelong pledge to promise that The Redwood will always be here to ensure a future for women and children free from violence, with a gift in your own will. For more information on leaving a gift in your will, visit our website www.theredwood.com, or contact Wendy Bray, Fundraising Manager, at (416) 533-9371 x 227 or wbray@theredwood.com.

Anne-Marie will continue to be at The Redwood until April. Do you have a special story or memory of Anne-Marie you'd like to share with us before she goes? We would love to hear it! Mail it in to P.O. Box 16023, Toronto, ON, M6J 3W2 or email it to wbray@theredwood.com.

Thank you, Anne-Marie, for your years of commitment to the women and children who have called The Redwood home, and for helping to bring together the wonderful community that supports them.

YOU MADE THE HOLIDAYS EXTRA SPECIAL FOR MOMS AND KIDS AT THE REDWOOD!

Our home was full of joy, laughter, and lots of love this holiday season – all thanks to you, our incredible family of donors.

Your generous gifts throughout the season, and through our Safe Haven store, meant no mom or child was left without a special holiday gift. They had a big festive party, including a delicious feast prepared by Maureen, lots of yummy cake, gingerbread houses, and a big tree with presents for everyone underneath it! The women and children felt the warmth and safety of your love, and beamed with happiness at the joy their families finally got to experience over the holidays.

Your gifts will also help moms and kids year-round with new programs, art supplies, and everyday things like warm clothes and schoolbooks.

Thank you for helping so many families experience a holiday to remember, as they begin the new year — and their new lives — free from violence. To stay up-to-date with all of the amazing activities to come, please Like us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/theredwoodTO and follow us on Twitter, [@theredwoodTO](https://twitter.com/theredwoodTO).

