Message from the Chair

Chairperson's Message:
This year marks Tearmann Society's 32nd Annual General Meeting and I am pleased to be part of Tearmann Society for Abused Women as Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The committees, both board directed and ED working groups continue to work diligently toward the common goals of our Strategic Plan.
Thank you to all board members, staff and volunteers. It has been a privilege to work as a team towards eliminating violence against women.
Fundraising has continued to be a priority; a successful Fashion Show and the Annual Art Celebration was once again sold out this year. Tearmann was honored to be the recipient of the 100 Women Who Care donation. Tremendous energy has gone toward raising awareness of the services Tearmann has to offer; a lot of effort has been put into in the branding of the Society; the launch of the updated website has proven very successful with the continued support of the staff to ensure it is maintained with current information.
This year the board of directors was honored to recruit Donna Smith as the new Executive Director and on behalf of the Board of Directors, I am proud to welcome Donna, who will lead her team of staff and volunteers dedicated to our mission to preserving and promoting the dignity and human rights of abused women and their children.

Laurel Rockey
Chair – Tearmann Society

Message from the Executive Director

This has been an exciting year having accepted the position of Acting Executive Director in Jan 2016 and then appointed the Executive Director in March 2016. I will move forward with our strategic plan which supports our vision, mission and values of promoting a feminist philosophy to address the violence against women that exists in our society. I have been employed at the shelter as House Counsellor since 2002, and it has been and continues to be a privilege to work with and for the women and children we serve.

Tearmann Society continues to collaborate with our community partners, organizations and agencies to enhance the safety and quality of services to our residents and outreach women. Provincially, we continue to work with our provincial organization THANS and through THANS meet with our funders, NSACSW, to meet our collective goal of addressing issues affecting the lives of Nova Scotia women.

Tearmann Society was very fortunate to work with 5 student placements from NSCC Campuses from across the province. Students were able to participate in child and youth programs, resident groups, outreach services, advocacy, counselling and experience the work of the transition house and the support services that Tearmann Society offers.

This year Tearmann Society was well supported by our community. Fundraising events were overwhelmingly successful and donations from individuals in our community have been extremely generous. We have also been greatly supported by our volunteers, board members, local businesses and our community partners in supporting the work we do with women and children experiencing violence in their lives.

I would like offer a special thank you to the staff members of Tearmann Society for their dedication and commitment with supporting women and children experiencing violence and abuse in their lives. The complexity of issues surrounding violence against women has been identified through our dialogue with women. It is through this dialogue and listening to the voices of women that reinforces our feminist approach with meeting women where they are and working with women from a trauma informed practice. Our team at Tearmann Society continues to focus on professional development, learning and educating, and developing community partnerships to better serve those who access our services.

Donna Smith - Executive Director

ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Governance

The Governance Committee with our mandate and strategic plan developed a work plan in October 2015. The committee conducted an orientation session in October to familiarize new board members with Tearmann Society's complementary model of board governance.

Board self-evaluations were completed by members in November, 2015 and May 2016. This is an important tool for the Governance Committee to evaluate how we perform as a board and to direct us on ways to improve board member education. The Governance Committee coordinated the review of the committees' terms of references and the development of the following policies: Executive Director's Performance Appraisal and Development, Tearmann's Retention and Destruction of Board Documents, Board Members' Liability Insurance, and the In Camera Minutes and Meeting Policy. In addition, updates were made to the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Tearmann Society by-laws were reviewed and revisions are to be presented to the Society for approval at our Annual General Meeting in June 2016. We are pleased with our work plan accomplishments this year and in September, 2016 will continue with further new policy development and review and update of existing policies.

Finally, the work completed by the Governance Committee has truly been a team effort as we researched and presented information to our board members. It has been a pleasure to serve with Joni Roper and Jayne McCarthy who provided expertise and sound counsel and to Donna Hargreaves who worked diligently with the nomination process this year.

Dianne Hack,
Governance Chair

Finance

Committee Members: Heidi Jamieson – Treasurer, Darcy MacDonald, Heather Maddigan, Brenda Parker, Donna Smith

The Finance Committee was very busy this year. We focused on improving our financial reporting by incorporating financial forecasts and reviewing our financials on a more frequent basis. We also prioritized ensuring appropriate financial controls and oversight during the transition of our Executive Director. The Annual BOD Finance training was completed during the year. As always, we reviewed the annual budget for next fiscal year and quarterly financial reports were presented and reviewed with the BOD. We continue to face pressure on our operating costs without increased government funding, and the Finance Committee has worked collaboratively with the ED to ensure we bring transparency of this challenge to our Board. The great success of events such as the Celebration of Art, donations from our generous donors and the 100 Women Who Care funding made a big difference in ensuring we were able to meet the needs of our clients this year. The Committee also began the process of assessing how best to practically launch our Investment Policy and Investment Committee. Further work to be completed this fall.

Heidi Jamieson-Mills, CPA, CA Treasurer

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has met monthly to set the agenda for the Board of Director meetings and to address issues as directed by the Board. The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson, Laurel Rockey; Vice Chairperson, Joni Roper; Treasurer, Heidi Jamieson and Secretary, Dianne Hack. The Executive Committee has worked closely with Donna Smith, Executive Director as she transitioned into her new role with Tearmann Society for Abused Women.

Laurel Rockey
Chairperson

Nomination Committee

Thank you to retiring members, Donna MacDonald who has served four years and Heather Maddigan and Rachel Tree who have completed their three-year term with the Tearmann Society Board of Directors and to resigning members Liz MacIntosh and Charles Tourneur who have served two years and Allister Webster who resigned in February.

The Nomination Committee has interviewed five individuals whose names will be presented to the Society at the Annual General Meeting for nomination and election to the board. We are pleased with the diversity and enthusiasm of these individuals. As per our Society by-laws (#41), election of officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer) will take place immediately following adjournment of the Annual General Meeting by the new board.

Dianne Hack

Joint Occupational Health & Safety

Committee Members: Joni Roper, Donna Smith, Lori Miller, Elizabeth Acker, Patricia Perry

The JOHS Committee met monthly throughout 2015-16, with five members: three representing staff, the Executive Director and one Board Member. The committee worked collaboratively to address and resolve identified safety issues. Monthly workplace safety inspections were completed by staff. Fire drills and testing of panic alarms were also conducted on a monthly basis. The Committee made several recommendations which included the purchase of a 911 sign to identify the shelter's civic address and the purchase and installation of new recycling/waste bins to replace old ones that presented a significant hazard. Two issues have been referred to the maintenance committee: repair of the roof access which presents a water run-off/ice hazard and replacement of the gate opening mechanism at the back of the house.

Joni Roper

Maintenance

Committee Members: Chris Meadows (Chair), Charles Tourneur, Donna Smith

The Maintenance Committee met regularly to ensure the repairs and maintenance of the shelter were completed. Thanks to the volunteer time of the maintenance committee, door knobs were installed, gate was repaired, unused file cabinets were removed from the shelter, desk was replaced, outdoor recycling receptacle was replaced, and quotes for repairs and renovations was researched. The Committee's next project will be to replace/repair the roof over the upstairs fire exit that has been leaking. We hope to have this work completed by the summer's end.

Thank you to all committee members for your time and work on this committee.

Donna Smith

"Being at Tearmann House changed my life." -Resident

SPECIAL EVENTS

Fantasmagoria Fashion Event

The Fantasmagoria Fashion event held at Wellness Centre on September 20, 2015 surpassed our fundraising goal due to the success of the raffle ticket sales which totaled $1360.00. 185 tickets were sold. Total proceeds were $4625.00.
We were well supported by members of our small business community, in particular: Essential Elements Massage Clinic, Inglis Jewellers, Seafoam Lavender Farm Leslie's Finery, Christina Illsley – Stella and Dot.
Aphrodite (Antigonish), Steinharts Distillery (Arisaig).

We appreciate the help of board members to sell tickets and encourage everyone to do so in future. The committee met to debrief: while there were several details requiring thought and /or change, we were satisfied with the overall outcome. People attending have expressed an interest in an annual event of this sort.
Donna Hargreaves

Our Resident's Christmas Party

The Tearmann Christmas party was held on Dec 5th and was well-attended event. The Dock Gang were back to provide seasonal music and to support the few brave carol singers.

There was plenty of food provided by both board, and CUPE Local 4459. The pizza disappeared quickly while waiting for the guest of honor to appear.

All moms and children received a gift from Santa and everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves as they given a final gift of a cupcake and chocolate milk on the way out.

Donna MacDonald

Celebration of Art

The 22nd Celebration of Art 2016 held on May 6th, 2016 to a sold out crowd, was once again successful. It is a much anticipated event in Pictou County.

There were 34 pieces of art given away in the draw. 37 pieces of art were up for sale in the Silent Auction with only 4 remaining at the end of the evening unsold.

This year's event was our most successful one ever as far as financials go so well done to the committee, the volunteers, the board and last but not least the artists. Everyone put forth a great effort.

Liz MacIntosh

Pictured below: Donna Smith and beautiful artwork by Jaye Oulette

A Tearmann House resident attended the Celebration of Art and won a beautiful painting.
When asked how she liked the event she replied, *"I felt like a million bucks!"*

House Counsellors & Night Support Counsellors

At any given time, Tearmann House can be a buzz of activity. In the frontline office, we may have 2 phones ringing, a doorbell buzzing, a resident in crisis or needing assistance with something…and the list goes on and on. This office is staffed by one person at a time and the shifts rotate between 3 House Counsellors, 2 Night Support Counsellors and 7 Casual Staff. When a woman arrives at Tearmann, whether it is morning, afternoon or the middle of the night, the first person they meet is usually one of these staff members. As you can imagine, women may sometimes feel apprehensive and afraid of what is to come. We strive to maintain our feminist approach by providing an atmosphere that is comfortable, non-judgmental, supportive, and empowering. We feel it is important to meet women where they are within their own journeys and support them in their choices. While at Tearmann, women have an opportunity to participate in a core group program that focusses on understanding abuse, power & control, healthy relationships, and safety. Recognizing that women who leave abusive situations struggle in various ways, we work with women on enhancing personal development including things like self-esteem building, budgeting, developing/ building upon coping strategies, self-care, basic computer instruction, and internet searches. This personal development and skill building assists women with feeling more equipped to move forward into the next phase of their journey.

A special highlight from this past year has been the technology upgrades that provides the residents with a new computer with internet access. This particular upgrade has enabled us to empower women in a different way. In the past, residents would have to walk to the local library to access the internet and in many cases, it was simply unsafe for them to do so. Women can now independently and safely search online for housing, jobs, and complete family court documents. Some women are learning new computer skills, including online banking, and accessing their personal information from CRA.

We are fortunate to have a team of people with various experiences and skill sets to provide diverse opportunities to the residents. Many people often say, "Your work must be so difficult." However, we often see it is a privilege to work with the women who come to Tearmann House and witness the personal growth, development and resilience of the women and their strength motivates us and reaffirms our commitment to this work.

Patricia , Sharon, Elizabeth, Louise & Sandria

"I was at Tearmann for some of the worst and saddest parts of my life. I don't know how I would have gotten through it without you guys." - Resident

Follow Up Support & Brenda's Place

In 2015 - 2016, 59 women have accessed Follow Up and/or Brenda's Place. Brenda Place offers 6 units available to women and their children. Brenda Place, in partnership with Eastern Mainland Housing Authority, provides safe affordable housing, with supportive programs who have left their homes due to physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or financial abuse. Individual counselling as well as weekly groups are held for women on a variety of topics. Group sessions consist of many topics for women who are starting over such as: budgeting, resources & supports, the court process, and personal growth. Guest speakers for Brenda Place have included New Leaf, Pictou County Solid Waste, and Pictou County Centre for Sexual Health. Women at Brenda Place Second Stage Housing have worked on activities such as creating dream catchers, Christmas crafts, and "Busy Boards" (who I am/who I aspire to be). We also made 72 bottles of pickles for the tenants using the vegetables shared with Tearmann Society from a local community garden.

As a part of my work as Follow-Up Counsellor, I have extended an invitation to the Pictou Landing Health Centre to discuss co-facilitation of group sessions based on the needs of the women. In May, I attended the Pictou Landing RCMP Community BBQ, which emphasized celebrating community partnerships.

Paula Gerrior
Follow Up Counsellor &
Brenda Place Coordinator

"I am so grateful to be at second stage. Without this help and support I don't know how I would have coped with the trauma of having to leave my home. It has been an amazing and enlightening experience. I am emotionally, mentally and financially so much better off having been able to live here." -Brenda Place Resident

Outreach

Tearmann's Outreach office creates a quiet, safe space for women who are dealing with abuse issues to come and talk about their experiences and learn about themselves beyond the limits abuse creates.
One on one counselling sessions are scheduled according to the women's needs. An attempt is made to have new referrals seen quickly as it is an act of courage to pick up the telephone and ask for help.
We are currently holding Open Group sessions for the months of May and June, 2016.
Some feedback we have received from participants include:

"I like the warmth of the room."
"I left with a feeling of safety and a new sense of hope."
"What I liked most about the group is that it showed me I could change my way of thinking."
"Thank you for providing a safe spot for me to put all my tools and knowledge to use without judgement or being invasive."
"I needed this space at this time to find the happiness I deserve."

I feel privileged to sit with women on a daily basis as they explore the challenges in their lives and open to the potential that is within them at all times.

Lori Miller
Outreach Counsellor

Child & Youth Programs

Tearmann House Children and Youth Services offer three categories of programming: in-house programming while children or youth are shelter residents, follow-up programming after they have left the shelter, and an outreach program to children or youth needing services and support in the community. Together, the three programs offer services and support in ways including but not limited to: individual counselling; therapeutic programming; safety planning; coping with separation; ongoing violence within the family; building self-esteem; childcare while families are Tearmann residents; behaviour issues; and advocacy for youth and women within the Provincial Court, Income Assistance, Child Welfare, and case conferences. Tearmann's Children and Youth Services also offer support to mothers through a variety of mediums, such as: a moms group; support with behaviour modification and consistent, appropriate discipline; parent support meetings to discuss their child's progress; and providing information on the Children and Family Services Act and the effects on children witnessing violence. The outreach program provides presentations on relationship violence in schools in our catchment area, which has resulted in some youth in need coming forward to access the services and support they need.

Many women and children access our services whether they are living in the shelter or accessing child /youth services have shared they feel very fortunate to access support services. many youth access our school counselling program.

One student stated, ***" I don't know what would have happened to me if I couldn't t talk about my boyfriend abusing me. I I feel relieved that I know I have a safe place to go if I need to."***

A mother attending Mom's Group within the shelter said***," I never realized how much a child is affected by witnessing violence at our home. I don't regret leaving especially when my child seems happier and is talking about the violence, I know I made the right decision."***

A five-year old child accessing services stated***," I am glad I am safe, I love my Dad, I just don't like it when he hurts us."***

Our services provide children an opportunity to express themselves in many ways, whether it is through verbal dialogue, using art activities and creativity and through play to express themselves. We receive referrals from many agencies such as Child Welfare, School Personnel, self -referrals from families, youth and our local Police Departments. A teacher shared***, "We are so lucky to have community agencies such as Tearmann to provide information on Dating Violence with our youth. The importance of educating our students about violence is pro-active and very helpful."***

Stephanie Duggan
Child & Youth Counsellor

"I was trapped. I never knew there was any help until I found Tearmann. I now try to value my life every day." –Resident

TEARMANN STAFF

Executive Director:
Donna Smith

House Counsellors:
Sharon Maloney, Patricia Perry, Elizabeth Acker

Night Support Counsellors:
Louise Crockett, Sandria Crosby

Child & Youth Counsellor:
Stephanie Duggan

Follow Up Counsellor
Paula Gerrior

Outreach Counsellor:
Lori Miller

Casual Staff:
Flo Hayden, Michelle LeBrun, Barb Reddick, Susan Peebles, Jean Brinn
Tiffany Hargreaves, Tamika Borden, Leslie Lynch, Jamie Fraser

This year, we said "farewell" to Shelley Curtis Thompson who accepted a position as Executive Director at the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Center. Shelley was employed with Tearmann Society for nearly 25 years.
Thank you, Shelley for your many years of service and best wishes in your new career.

VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS

Volunteers assist us in many ways throughout the year. We have some who volunteer for special events and some who volunteer weekly. This is a huge part of our ability to deliver services to the women and children we serve.

Jean Brinn has been assisting with grocery shopping throughout the years since she became involved with Tearmann. Jean has also returned to Tearmann as a casual staff member. Welcome back, Jean.

Amanda Eve MacLeod has been volunteering consistently for over 7 years. Amanda Eve assists with phone coverage during group programs and also during staff meetings. Amanda has also volunteered during the Celebration of Art and other special events.

Reta Heron has been volunteering for 27 years. She has assisted in many capacities and we are so grateful for her dedication.

Thank you to our faithful volunteers. The work you do is so valuable. We are very appreciative of your continued dedication and commitment to the work at Tearmann House.

Each year at Tearmann, we have partnered with Nova Scotia Community College and St. FX University to provide student placements. This year we had a number of people join us and we hope their learning experience is as helpful as our experience of having them work with us.

Thank You to the following students:

- Tiffanie Cameron
- Andrea Thomas
- Lori Goodwin-Chapman
- Brittany Robinson
- Tyra Denny
- Chantal Pye

Some interesting facts about our services 2015-16:

- We received 1018 crisis & information calls
- We had 138 people were admitted to Tearmann House, 34 children and 104 women in 2015-16, 93 of these admissions were new to us.
- Of the women & children staying at our shelter 63.2 % stayed up to 30 days or less and 36.8% up to 120 days
- 33% identified psychological abuse & 14% physical abuse for their stay
- We received 81 Police referrals
- We accompanied 21 women to legal appointments including Provincial & Family Court.
- 3 Emergency Protection Orders were granted.

Thank You!

We have an incredibly supportive community that makes a huge impact in the lives of the women and children who access our services.

100 Women Who Care
Sobeys
NSCC CCA Class of 2016
CUT Foundation
Kinettes Club of New Glasgow
Web Builders Group
W.A MacLeod Consolidated
Christ Church
West Pictou Consolidated
Canada Helps Org.
Atlantic Superstore
CUPW
United Way Pictou County
Canadian Women's Foundation
Poolin' Around
Our Lady of Lourdes CWL
Master's Hands Ministry
Bergengren Credit Union
Eastern Tire Services
Sir Frederick Banting IODE
Pictou & Area Lion's Club
St. Luke's Presbyterian
St David's Ladies Aid
Gail's Fashions
Winners
Shepherd's Lunchroom
Doug and Dean Robertson