

## FTP to host 8th annual International Women's Day fundraiser



By Mike Baker

With International Women's Day (IWD) taking centre stage tomorrow, March 8, Family Transition Place (FTP) is preparing to welcome the community to its 8th annual IWD Luncheon in celebration of the worldwide event.

Taking place at the Best Western in Orangeville, the event is one of FTP's primary fundraisers. This year, those in attendance will be joined by comedian and writer Anna Gustafson, who will serve as the event's keynote speaker. As well, FTP's Executive Director Norah Kennedy will provide her annual update on the organization's programming and service delivery in the community.

"This year is shaping up to be another successful event. We have Ana Gustafson coming in - she will be sharing her life story and talking about the importance of International Women's Day," said Stacey Tarrant, Manager of Development & Community Relations with FTP. "This year's theme is Balance for Better. Again, just like we have done for the past couple of years, it will be talking about closing the gap on gender parity."

In a stunning report released by the Global Economic Forum in early 2018, it has been estimated that gender parity will not truly exist in our world for another 200 years - roughly six generations.

"That is an absolutely ridiculous statistic," Ms. Tarrant said. "It's frustrating too, because I know and have heard a lot of people who aren't in this line of work and who don't see the things we see on a daily basis, say that we have achieved gender parity. We have seen a lot of shifts in society, but a lot of people don't realize there's still a lot of work to be done."

Since arriving in the community back in 1984, FTP has provided critical services to thousands of women and children who have experienced abuse and been exposed to unhealthy relationships. While there has been "great progress" made in many ways since then, according to Ms. Kennedy, the local facility still finds itself in a position where demand for its services is on the rise, rather than on the decline.

Since the beginning of 2016, FTP has reported close to a 15 percent increase across the board in clients served per program, with a 13 percent increase in the number of callers to the organization's support information line over the past year alone.

"Things haven't really changed over the past year," Ms. Tarrant said. "Our emergency shelter is still full, we still receive calls from people every single day asking if we have space and we're constantly working with women to find safe, affordable housing. In terms of programming, we're bursting at the seams. There's a big demand for almost everything we do here in Dufferin County and Caledon."

The facility provided emergency shelter for 82 women and 47 children between April 1, 2017 and April 1, 2018, while putting up 14 women and 12 children in second stage housing. 377 women signed up for woman abuse counselling, 107 women and 19 men enrolled in sexual abuse counselling, while 324 women and one man required transitional support services. In total, FTP received 4,305 calls on its crisis and information lines.

While FTP is partially funded by the provincial government, Ms. Tarrant estimated the organization has to raise in the region of \$400,000 each and every year to pay for all it does in the region.

A significant chunk of that is set aside for the organization's Rural Response Program and Youth Education programs, which are, currently, completely unfunded by the government. In its last annual report, FTP noted 104 women had made use of the Rural Response Program, while 1,534 students had been engaged through its Youth Education Program.

?Our Rural Response Program was developed just a couple of years ago. We have space in Shelburne and we use it to serve women in nearby areas,? Ms. Tarrant said. ?The service model looks a lot different to the one we use at our facility in Orangeville. We allow for up to six crisis counselling sessions, providing women with abuse education, safety planning, and appropriate community referrals.?

She added, ?The exciting thing about this program is that it allows our staff to meet and serve women in the community. We have seen a significant uptake in the number of people reaching out to us through this program, and have heard some powerful testimonials from people saying they wouldn't be alive without the support they received.?

Regarding the Youth Education program, FTP has a presence in all schools in Dufferin County, connecting with students from Grades four to six.

?That program is all about educating our youth on what a healthy relationship looks like. Unless we educate our youth, the cycle of violence against women will continue,? Ms. Tarrant said.

While FTP has a significant presence in Dufferin-Caledon, with an satellite site also in Bolton, Ms. Tarrant noted the organization's ultimate goal is a unique one.

?Ironically, the goal of FTP is to put ourselves out of business. We want to live in a world where violence against women doesn't exist,? Ms. Tarrant said. ?But, until then, we will never rest on our laurels because we give people new beginnings and new hope each and every day. There's nothing more powerful than that.?

For more information on Family Transition Place, visit [familytransitionplace.ca](http://familytransitionplace.ca).