



## From the frontlines

### An Overview

Welcome to the first newsletter of Ottawa Victim Services (OVS)! With the Winter approaching, we are reflecting on a season of growth and change. Our team of dedicated staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to expand our programs and services to better support the diverse needs of our community in Ottawa.



*"I would like to thank you for your help and tell you how impressed I was with your generous, dedicated, sensitive, empathetic, courageous, resilient and inspiring volunteers that I had the privilege to meet at the Ottawa Courthouse. One of your volunteers started with me on her first day and second day. I couldn't believe that it was her first day as she seems that she has been doing it all her life. Thank you very much. It helped me to see that through a negative experience in life, there is something even more beautiful that is coming out".*

– FROM AN OVS CLIENT





## A Message from the Executive Director



I want to take a moment to express how meaningful it is to be part of an organization that profoundly impacts the lives of those affected by crime and tragedy. Every day, our dedicated team of staff and volunteers at OVS bring compassion, patience, and expertise to those we

serve, assisting survivors to regain a sense of safety and wellbeing while in crisis. With trauma-informed and evidence-based practices, we are here to support survivors as they navigate some of life's most challenging circumstances.

The need for our services continues to grow, and we are constantly expanding our programs and services to empower survivors through every step of their healing journey. I think of the many individuals who have found renewed hope with our support—such as Kim, who was recently able to get a meeting for special priority status on the housing registry thanks to a support letter from the OVS team. Stories like these demonstrate the resilience of the survivors that we serve in our community.

Our work would not be possible without our committed staff and crisis-trained volunteers who stand by survivors and offer guidance and support tailored to their needs. From emotional and practical support to safety planning and advocacy, OVS is here to help each person regain their sense of safety, agency, and healing. Also, our work would not be possible without the assistance of our generous donors. As we prepare for the holidays, we ask for your support to help us meet the growing demand for our services by donating to OVS or becoming an OVS Changemaker as a monthly donor. Every dollar donated goes towards continuing and expanding on OVS programs and services.

If you or someone you know could benefit from our services, please don't hesitate to reach out. Together, we are building a community where no one faces trauma or tragedy alone.

Thank you for being a part of the OVS community. As we look forward to the holiday season, we are more dedicated than ever to strengthening our services, expanding our reach, and supporting all those who rely on us!

Warm regards,  
**Heidi Illingworth**, OVS Executive Director



## Volunteer with OVS

Volunteering with OVS isn't only about giving back—it's about making a real difference in the lives of survivors. In this issue, we are honoured to share the story of Peter, one of our dedicated volunteers and team leaders at Ottawa Victim Services (OVS). His journey is one of dedication, compassion, and a deep commitment to supporting others through difficulties and tragic circumstances.



### Peter's Story

Peter has been a volunteer with OVS since 2004, demonstrating his dedication and compassion for two decades. His journey with OVS began when he searched for volunteer opportunities through Volunteer Ottawa while pursuing his Honours B.A. in Legal Studies at Carleton

University. While balancing part-time studies with a job as an overnight and weekend security guard, Peter found that the punctuality and teamwork required in his role strongly aligned with the responsibilities of volunteering at OVS.

Since joining, Peter has volunteered on countless overnight shifts, often serving as a team leader. Through this, he took evening courses in managing volunteers on his own time, applying this knowledge to effectively support on-call teams. Today, Peter continues as a regular volunteer, bringing the same commitment and dedication to his role, while using his own experiences to help others in the role as well.

Peter reflects on how his OVS work is rewarding: "coming into work on a Monday after a weekend call-out with OVS, I'm not worried about office problems. I feel a sense of accomplishment knowing I helped someone during a tragic time."

Outside of OVS, Peter has many interests and is strongly involved with his community. He volunteers at political events and music festivals and serves as a long-standing board member for a mental health peer support organization - activities which strengthen his commitment to making a difference, whether through advocacy, creativity, or mental health support.

For those considering joining OVS, Peter has encouraging words: "If you enjoy being helpful and can commit to on-call responsibilities, this is a fantastic volunteer role. You'll receive extensive training in various victim-related areas and supportive guidance as you navigate your first calls."

Peter believes volunteering with OVS provides the opportunity to directly support individuals during their most vulnerable moments. He encourages others to step forward, emphasizing the impactful role OVS volunteers play in the community for survivors.

### Remembering Evan

At OVS, we are truly saddened to share about the recent passing of one of our incredible former volunteers. Evan was a dedicated volunteer and team leader at OVS, where he demonstrated his compassion, dedication, and commitment to helping others. Recently, he began his journey with the Toronto Police Service, continuing his commitment to serving his community. We will always remember him as a kind and selfless soul, always ready to lend a hand to those in need.



## Agency Updates

OVS has been busy growing and evolving, and we are so excited to share some of our latest updates! We have recently revamped our website in both English and French, making it easier to navigate and explore our programs and services that we offer. We have continued to update our social media platforms with engaging content to keep our followers informed about what we are up to.

We are also excited to announce our Board of Directors for 2024-2025. Each member brings their own unique skills, insights, and passion to our organization.

### OVS Board of Directors 2024-2025

Board Chair: **Matthew Kennedy**

Vice Chair: **Sandy Wooley**

Secretary: **Jill Broadbent**

Treasurer: **Harpreet Kaur**

Director: **Heather Lachine**

Director: **Sarah Johnston-Way**

Director: **Megan Cook**

Director: **Jooris Ndongozi**

Director: **Tanya Ironstone-Locke**

Director: **Raja Abdel-Majid**

As we welcome some new members, we also take a moment to express our gratitude to those who have recently departed, whose dedication has left a lasting impact. Please join us in celebrating the journey of Meagan O'Hare-Gordon who served on our Board for 6 years as Vice Chair! We wish her all the best on her new adventures and we extend a warm welcome to those stepping onto our team!

### Program and Service Highlights & Updates

OVS currently provides various programs and services dedicated to assisting those impacted by crime and tragedy, and our work is continually involving.

We are happy to announce the launch of our new campaign:

**See It, Name It, Change It**, generously funded by the City of Ottawa! This campaign has been thoughtfully adapted and urbanized from Lanark County Interval House's rural-based campaign of the same name.

This timely bilingual initiative is dedicated to raising awareness about Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) prevention and promoting safe intervention methods as it has now been declared an epidemic in Ottawa. This initiative is an important step in our commitment to creating a safer, more supportive community.

Another exciting development is the upcoming launch of our new multilingual (English, French, and Arabic) **Online Hate Crime Reporting Tool** through our website, generously funded by Ontario's Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism stream! This tool is designed to streamline the process of reporting hate-related incidents, ensuring that every voice in our community is heard and support is provided.

As always, our core services—such as crisis intervention, safety planning, and advocacy—remain at the heart of what we do, with our dedicated team working tirelessly to ensure that no one facing hardship is left without support. OVS remains dedicated to creating a safer, more supportive environment for everyone. Keep an eye on our social media platforms for more updates!

**SEEit**  
**NAMEit**  
**CHANGEit**



## Our mission

To support survivors of crime or tragedy. To provide the resources, guidance, help and referrals for survivors to get back to living their lives. To help people protect themselves and stand up for their rights.

## Our vision

We aim to create a stronger, safer, and kinder community for all.

## Our values

### COMMUNITY DRIVEN

We know that strength lies in teamwork, and that supporting our community means working as a community. OVS is part of a network of local services and organizations that work together to support our Ottawa community.

### COMPASSION

We do what we do because we care. Our team builds relationships with people and partners based on respect, trust, and openness. We listen carefully, guide gently, and never judge. We aim to create a welcoming space where everyone is heard and helped.

### INCLUSIVENESS

Our services are freely available to people of every:

Race · Ethnicity · Religion or belief · Sex · Gender · Sexual orientation · Age · Disability · Marriage & civil partnership · Pregnancy and maternity

We work hard to understand and consider the different cultural backgrounds of the people we serve. We prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in the way we work, from how we deliver our services to how we hire people.

### FREEDOM OF CHOICE

We're here to help you, not control or judge you. We'll listen to what you're struggling with and what you need.

We'll help you understand your options. Finally, we'll support you with what you choose to do. We are here to help, not control or judge our clients. We listen to their needs and struggles. We help them understand their options. Finally, we support our clients with what they choose to do.

We value independence and privacy. We work in partnership with the police, but we are not the police.



## Become a Part of OVS's Story as a Donor

Did you know that 100% of your donation goes to OVS directly toward supporting survivors in our community? We are so excited to announce that OVS is now using Zeffy – an entirely free donor platform with zero fees! Unlike other platforms, Zeffy operates entirely on optional contributions from generous supporters like you. This means that every dollar you donate to OVS will go directly to supporting survivors as they navigate the aftermath of crime and tragic circumstances, without any deductions. Whether you choose to give a one-time gift or become an OVS Changemaker through joining our new monthly giving program below, your contribution helps fund crisis intervention, advocacy, and essential resources for those facing difficulty. Make a donation today at [www.ovs-svo.com/give-today!](http://www.ovs-svo.com/give-today!)

## Become an OVS Changemaker by Giving Monthly

We are excited to announce the introduction of our monthly giving program, making it even easier for you to select a tier of your choice and contribute year-round as an OVS Changemaker.

### Supporter

#### **\$20/month**

Covers mileage to dispatch our 24/7 crisis support volunteers.

### Advocate

#### **\$130/month**

Provides survivors with safety devices, lock changes, or onboarding 15 new volunteers every quarter.

### Ambassador

#### **\$50/month**

Covers volunteer expenses such as parking, meal vouchers, or 2 Uber rides to safety for survivors.

### Ally

#### **Custom Amount**

A custom amount can help provide groceries and basic needs for survivors after fleeing violence.

