

**SOFIA House
Executive Director Report
Annual General Meeting
June 26, 2014**

The mission of SOFIA House, working to break the cycles of violence continues to inspire the development of the program design for the agency. This report reflects how the agency has provided;

safe housing for the women and children

a supportive and nurturing environment

opportunities for growth

increase community awareness.

This year was a time for networking and development. SOFIA House celebrated the 25th anniversary of operation and focused on expanding our support in the community. Once that celebration occurred the agency developed a new strategic plan with direction for the future.

Client Programs and Services

SOFIA House provides 4 distinct programs that generally run in parallel to provide multi systemic support

- Housing and Case management services
- Family management program
- Family summer program
- SOFIA House outreach program; SHOP

Housing and Case Management Services

To provide safety to families victim to domestic violence

SOFIA House is designed to address the safety concerns for the families so the Housing program is the top priority. The components of the program include maintenance staff to coordinate furnishings and living essentials for the apartments. The Family Support Shelter workers coordinate the family's financial, medical and legal needs as well as address individual goals for each family.

The Children program workers provide evening support and are available to the children for individual attention through consent from their mom. The on-call service is available 24 hours for emergency response and counselling. The ongoing resources of donations; including monetary contributions clothing, food and furnishings are coordinated by all staff to insure every family have what they need.

During the fiscal year of April 2013 to March 2014, SOFIA House served 25 families, which included 25 women and 45 children with 5 of those children born during the stay in shelter. The agency operated at a 94% occupancy rate. The average length of stay was 7 months per family. However it is important to note that we had 4 apartments where the families remained the same for the entire year. We also had 2 families who were counted in this year who had actually stayed for 2 full years. This turnover includes the families who resided at SOFIA House before and including March 2013 as well as tenants who joined us during the year and still live here.

Family Management Program

To provide opportunity for self development

The group program has always evolved to address the best practices for the client group at SOFIA House. During this year the Family Support Workers facilitated the Family Management program with focus and creativity. This program identifies the need for family leadership and targets the families coping skills and enhances them into life skills. This program includes a Children's version that is delivered in conjunction with the Women's program to provide an alignment in skill development, key words and progress. The Family Support Workers focused on evaluation tools while the Children program workers tried different strategies to deliver the life skill topics. This year's challenge was on the Children's group as the average age of the children was 3 years old. This year the Children's program workers are determined to structure a condensed version with fewer topics so they can focus on a different delivery style.

Family Summer Program

An opportunity for mothers and children to spend time together through recreational activities

During the summer of 2013, the Summer Program received \$10,304 in donations. The top three sponsors include the SK Lotteries Community Grant Program (\$4,854), Greystone Managed Investments (\$2,500), and Access Communications Children's Fund (\$1,000). These donations were obtained via letter requests, online funding applications and formal grant applications. The 2013 Summer Program cost was \$4,950.90.

Both mothers and children indicated what their impressions were of the program and the results were overwhelmingly positive. The favourite activity held by the children included swimming and the mothers voiced their appreciation for being able to take their children on outings they would not be able to afford otherwise. Some mothers also stated that they appreciated being shown the different types of activities they can go to as a family and expressed interest in returning to several locations in the future.

Sofia House Outreach Program (SHOP)

For present and past clients to connect and build a community network

This program welcomes previous and past clients to share in a discussion lead by our Elder Lina and 'shop' through our donations. We have 90% attendance from the current clients and we have an increase of 5 previous clients attending.

Our goal will be to investigate a way to nurture a community network of support for women of domestic violence that can occur beyond SOFIA House.

Governance/Administration

The SOFIA House Board of Directors maintained a strong and vibrant team. Our membership maintained consistency for this fiscal year with all members serving on the Board for a minimum of 2 years. Our Chairperson and Vice Chair served for 5 years and 4 years respectfully. This stability attracted new members and we were successfully able to recruit two new members, including a past client.

During this year the Directors focus was to honour the 25th Anniversary of SOFIA House. On October 25, 2013 SOFIA house hosted an Anniversary Gala. The event focused on the idea of

creating a safe and positive home environment, and with that in mind we invited internationally renowned home designer, Hillary Farr, host of W Network's "*Love It or List It*" for the keynote address. The evening included a formal supper, the keynote address, a vacation package raffle, door prizes, Wall of Wine and silent auctions, as well as a SOFIA House success story, networking and many public relations opportunities.

The event was a great success with 300 new possible donors attending raising a total of \$59,411 for the evening, with a total profit of \$6,616.00 after expenses.

Funding

SOFIA House has managed quite successfully to operate without the assistance of Federal Government funding and received faithful support from the community. We have maintained the funding from the three consistent partners, Leader Post, United Way of Regina and The City of Regina. As well we have maintained a positive relationship with our partner at Regina Housing Authority.

The Leader Post Christmas Cheer Fund raised money beyond their expectations, and we received another substantial donation.

The United Way continues to campaign the Regina community for support. SOFIA House participated in 8 speaking engagements for the campaign, and has achieved an excellent standing in our partnership.

Our support from the community continues to come through in monetary as well as in-kind donations. We received gift cards with a value of \$3,500 from Sherwood Co-op. These cards provide a great support to families as they move in, and for those times when their meagre budget does not make it to the end of the month.

Our Gala event raised a not only a profit but spurred the development of the SCSL Education Bursary. The Sisters of the Charity of St. Louis donated \$20,000 for a bursary fund to be awarded in intervals for women who were residents of SOFIA House to help offset educational fees or tuition. This bursary fund was in honour of the late founder Yvonne Toucane and her vision.

Once the 25th anniversary was acknowledged the Board of Directors focused on the next steps and was able to approve a strategic plan for 2014-17.

Networking/ Community Education

This year SOFIA House focused efforts to reach a new group of donors and achieved the goal by holding a Gala with 300 new donors of contractors and real estate agents. As a result of the success of the evening, we received further donations from Daytona Homes, Greystone Management, and Hillary Farr, plus news of the anniversary influenced an event “SOFIA House Rock” featuring the Fortunate Isles.

SOFIA House also continued our volunteer mentoring with Regina Open Door. We have also continued our partnership with Regina Workprep and hope to assist in designing a select employment readiness program for women in shelter.

Our volunteer pool has been consistent for the Children’s group with an average of 6 young men and women who devote their time on Tuesday nights to play, read, cuddle and sing with the children. We also had the pleasure to host a team from Costco who helped weed and plant in our garden. Then we spent a December day with the staff at MERA group where 25 people helped us, clean apartments, grocery shop, decorate, change light bulbs, move furniture and make 10 pots of soup, 45 sandwiches, 10 lasagnas and 10 batches of cookies.

We also participated in two university volunteer campaigns and had two Nursing students and 4 Social Work students from the Arts Cares program. A total of 64 volunteers have helped out and share our vision for a safe community.

Next steps

SOFIA House will be evaluating and moving forward on the next strategic plan for the agency. Some of the themes we are hoping to focus on may include

- Evaluating Housing First programming
- developing a fundraising strategy
- improving our donor engagement
- identifying the social impact of domestic violence

Whenever a primary need is unmet, energy goes into meeting the need, rather than developing potentials. At SOFIA House we provide the primary needs and design our program to develop the skills required to enhance the woman’s ability to lead her family to a life free of violence.

Respectfully submitted by
Sarah Valli