



Hands Up! Summer 2011 - The Anniversary Edition!

Our Founder: Charlotte Semple

Charlotte Semple is a woman of vision. A survivor of family violence who chose to leave an abusive relationship and start a fresh new life for her and her kids, she was a firsthand witness to the ways in which financial barriers can inhibit women's journeys toward safety and self-sufficiency. Her own journey would lead to her to the Victoria Women's Transition House, the Single Parent Resource Centre and the Bridges For Women Society. The support and relationships she developed there would be transformational.

An enterprising woman by nature, Charlotte quickly developed a vision of a 100% self-funded organization providing resources and support for women in transition by helping them meet the basic material needs of their families.

"...there was a gap when women left transition houses. Sometimes, after going through everything, the last straw was setting up all over again and, often, they returned to abusive relationships. They had left everything behind, and starting over was just too much for them."

Meeting these basic needs would enable women to move on to their higher needs, and at the same time provide meaningful employment opportunities for women in healthy and sustainable communities. She set out to do something huge, and thanks to her creativity, determination and vision, WIN was born.

With the help of her friends

Twenty years ago, Charlotte enlisted the help of friends Carole Fast and Michelle B. Young and together with two other women they formed the Victoria Women In Need Society. Not strangers to family violence, it was clear that all families need



WIN founders Michelle B. Young, Charlotte Semple, and Carole Fast celebrating WIN's 20th, July 2011

WIN is successful because of the incredible support of people like you for all these years. Thank you. We couldn't have done it without you.

Charlotte Semple:

Founder of the Victoria Women In Need Society, 1991
Business Woman of the Year 1994 by BPW Club
Beta Sigma Phi Woman of the Year 1995
Woman of Distinction Award 1996

Memories of Community-Building

Years ago, during renovations after purchasing the Cook Street store, Charlotte Semple was on her way to the lumber yard one day to purchase a sheet of plywood when suddenly one flew off of the truck directly in front of her! Both drivers pulled over, and Charlotte explained the purpose of WIN and the errand

support, encouragement, and opportunities to be self-sufficient. WIN got off the ground thanks to a small personal loan from Nick Bobocel, Carole Fast's father.

The first WIN location, a small store on Hillside Ave, opened in April of 1991. Women staying at local transition houses could call WIN and let them know what they were in need of – as the donations came in, they were matched with their recipients and delivered using a truck borrowed from a volunteer. The sale of other donations soon paid back the startup loan and began generating revenue for the society. To date, donations from the community have been WIN's sole source of revenue.

Growing WIN

Not having to worry about the basic household furnishings was a huge factor in many women choosing not to return to abusive partners. This was the birth of the WIN New Start program, which now delivers complete household startup packages of furniture, linens, dishes and kitchenware to approximately 100 women every year.

"In 1991, abused women had few options. At that time, once a woman 'abandoned' her home, she couldn't return to remove any of her things, the children's clothing or other household necessities. Charlotte believed that if a woman had access to the basic furnishings of a home, she would have more options to improve her conditions—the main one being she didn't have to return to a violent situation." – Michelle B. Young, 2008

The next year, WIN moved to the Cook Street location, a larger space which required a great deal of elbow grease and TLC, and remains a North Park neighbourhood fixture to this day.

Toward the Co-operative Model

The society grew from one year to the next, opening up new locations and providing support for more women each year—not only through WIN programs, but by employing more and more women and providing volunteer opportunities that often became bridges to employment.

As with any organization, it eventually came time for the original founding directors to look at their coming retirement. After two years of deliberation and evaluation, a conclusion was reached: the WIN Society would gradually phase out and a non-profit

she was running. The other driver's response was simply "Where do you want it delivered?"

On Self-Sufficiency

Did you know that WIN does not receive government funding? We rely solely on the generosity of donations from the community to grow and provide support for women. For more information on how you can help WIN support women in our community, see www.womeninneed.ca/donate

"There is no price you can put on being a self-sufficient woman"

-WIN Self-Sufficiency Bursary recipient

Memories of inspiration and integrity

Years ago, a string of "imitation" pearls was sold from the Cook street store for approximately \$20. But that was not the last we would see of them! They turned out to be genuine, and the woman who had purchased them was guided by her conscience and brought them back and enabled us to achieve the revenue potential they warranted.

On Starting Fresh

"I was sincerely moved... made me feel special and worth something again. This program truly works if you don't want to go back."

-WIN New Start recipient

social cooperative would take its place. It became apparent that the society had, in many ways, been operating like a cooperative for a long time due to the close proximity of management and staff and therefore the shift to a workers' cooperative seemed a natural fit.

WIN Today

Today, with the leadership of Clare Yazganoglu, Executive Director, along with Nicole Fast, Director of Business Operations and Michelle Young, Volunteer Coordinator and an amazing team of staff and volunteers, WIN has expanded its impact in the community through additional programs and a focus on environmental stewardship in the community. WIN is now governed by the voices of the membership of the WIN Cooperative, made up of staff and volunteers who have spent at least nine months with WIN and are committed to WIN's mission. Stay tuned next month for a closer look at some of our environmental initiatives and new programs!



Today's WIN leadership:
Nicky Fast, Director of Business Operations,
Clare Yazganoglu, Executive Director, and
Michelle B. Young, Volunteer Coordinator

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Building Bridges

Michelle B. Young, Volunteer Coordinator, recalls one woman's bridge to gainful employment: "She came to volunteer, but wouldn't go near the cash register. Her arthritic hands made her nervous and she would make mistakes...I coaxed her to stand and bag [purchases at the till] for me. Eventually she rang in one sale and gradually she felt confident to work the cash register independently. I still remember when she told me she had submitted a resume in a card shop and got the job. I was so proud of her!"



Ashley Godin, Annika Nielsen and
Hazuki Tasaki celebrate WIN's 20th anniversary



Laura Rowe, Mara Szyp, and Carly Mackay celebrating
at WIN's 20th anniversary staff & volunteer dinner