



1 in Four founders Cassandra Henry, Cathy Watts, and Jennifer Price (left to right)

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Website connects women with support services

It takes courage for women to leave abusive relationships and reach out for support.

Domestic violence survivors Cathy Watts, Cassandra Henry, and Jennifer Price recognized this gap. That was how 1inFour.ca came to be. An online resource hub focused on domestic violence support services, the site connects women with social services and other survivors, while highlighting the seriousness of domestic violence through statistical data.

"We are the vehicle and the service providers are the destination. We're going help get you there," emphasized co-founder Henry.

As single mothers who had been through abusive relationships, the three friends quickly realized how challenging it was for vulnerable women to ask for help.

Walking out of the door was just the beginning for Henry. Feeling powerless, Henry went from Orangeville to St. Catharines before finally settling in Hamilton with her 8-year old daughter. As she moved between cities, she felt lost, without any idea of which services

she could turn to next for support.

"If you're not linked to any support group, it can very quickly become isolating," explained Henry.

There are a multitude of support services in place, said Watts, citing local services like Good Shepherd, Inasmuch House, and the Sexual Assault Centre; but there is also stigma attached to them. A registered nurse living with her abusive husband, Watts was driven to seek refuge at a local shelter in 2010 after numerous outbursts, including incidences where she had to lock herself in the room to escape from his

anger. But she initially thought of shelters as "the last resort" – dirty and ill-equipped places where homeless people and drug addicts congregate. While she lived there for six months with two of her three children, Watts soon realized how misguided her idea of shelters was. Through 1 in Four, she hopes to defeat that stigma by sharing videos clarifying that shelters are in fact clean, well-staffed, and safe places for both women and children.

Additionally, Watts and Henry are aware of language, cultural and

religious barriers faced by abused newcomer and immigrant women.

"Domestic violence doesn't discriminate across culture – it's not a 'white' problem," exclaimed Watts. Mindful about these specific challenges, they hope to translate important facts about domestic violence in different languages and showcase them on their site.

It has been years since they made a conscious decision to leave. Yet, both

recognize that recovery from abuse will always be an ongoing journey, as they weigh in their children's safety and continue to advocate and break the silence about domestic violence.

"I don't believe I should be quiet about this. If it is just to save myself from dealing with [my ex-husband], that puts me back as a victim. I'm not a victim. I'm a survivor," Watts ended.

■ Alyssa Lai, *Women's Press*

*"I don't believe I should be quiet about this... I'm not a victim. I'm a survivor."*

pop quiz?

1. Why did they decide to create a website?
2. How do they hope to further include non-English speakers?

**Discussion:** Why is support important when dealing with domestic violence?



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