



The mission of the Stop Abuse in Families (SAIF) Society is to support those affected by family violence through confidential counselling services; to advocate on behalf individuals in abusive relationships; and to educate children, youth, and parents in the prevention of violence.

SAIF held their annual fundraiser 'Walk An Hour in Her Shoes' on April 30, 2011. There is an old saying: "You can't really understand another person's experience until you've walked a mile in their shoes. 'Walk an Hour in Her Shoes' asks men to literally walk one hour in women's high-heeled shoes. It's not easy walking but its great fun and it gets the community to talk about something difficult to talk about: domestic violence.

SAIF hopes to help men better understand and appreciate women's experiences, thus changing perspectives and decreasing the potential for violence. For healing, it informs the community that services are available for recovery and demonstrates that men are willing and able to be courageous partners with women in making the world a safer place.

Several REALTORS® were in attendance at the event – Rennaye Miller and Linda Wolff along with the Foundation Governor Craig Pilgrim. And yes Craig wore red shoes! St. Albert Mayor Nolan Crouse also braved it and picked out a very elegant pair of shoes to wear!

For the past several years your REALTORS® Community Foundation has been very proud to support SAIF with grants for counseling programs and programs for teens. For 20 Years, SAIF has provided services to clients experiencing abuse and its devastating effects to the family unit.



My first visit to SAIF was 3 months before I started counseling with them. I walked in not knowing what to expect and walked out with information that would help me begin my journey out of the terrible situation I was in. The word abuse was too strong for what I felt was going on in my life, I thought it only happened to other people and that I would know if it were happening to me. But as I reviewed the information from SAIF, and checked off all of the warning signs of an abusive relationship, I realized that abuse was a closer friend to me than I knew.

Eventually I was able to admit what was going on in my life and get over the shame and disgust with myself for getting into such a relationship. When I was able to face the truth, the journey was no longer lonely or impossible. I could reach out and find supports and help that I desperately needed. After someone takes everything you are away from you, it makes sense then that someone else can help you get it back.

My counseling experiences were difficult and exhilarating, I raising an infant while finishing my degree at university after I left my ex partner. The one thing that my counseling always involved was a redirection of my attention back onto myself. It was that one hour on Wednesdays that I could go and sit down somewhere safe and talk about the little bits of myself that I could still recognize. It made me feel strong enough to take the suggestion from my counsellor and attend a group support meeting once a week.

I can't tell you how much I had wished that elevator would have fallen on its way up so that I didn't have to go into the first group meeting. But it didn't, and in actuality the meetings helped to lift me back up on my feet every week when I had inevitably fallen down again. It was my first experience being honest with people who would actually care and understand. No one seems to want to talk about abuse but these people wanted to know and wanted to hear and could say, 'I know, I have been there too.' With the courage and support that I received from those group members I started to recognize myself in the mirror again.

Without SAIF I had no one to talk to and no where to go for help. I look back now and remember thinking I was weak for leaving and had made a huge mistake. I would never have known how wrong how I was without the help I was able to access at SAIF.

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