On June 24th we celebrated another successful Triathlon of Compassion, VSAC’s signature fundraising event! This year we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Triathlon. We had more participants and fundraisers than ever before. Over 170 children, youth and adults came out to swim, bike and run in support of survivors. The participants brought their energy and passion making the event a great success.

We had a group of phenomenal fundraisers who, together, raised $32,300 to ensure survivors of sexual assault have access to free and confidential support services; and that violence prevention education is continually provided in the community.

Top Fundraisers:
I want to take a moment to celebrate our top fundraisers. Jules Wilson returned this year for his 12th triathlon and was the event’s top fundraiser once again, raising over $8,000! Jules’ total fundraising through the Triathlon has now surpassed $41,000! Colette Reimer, high school student and Canadian Junior Elite Triathlete, raised over $2,000. She is a powerhouse triathlete and fundraiser. Our third place fundraiser, Melani Reimers, raised nearly $2,000 for the Centre. On race day she came up to the VSAC booth with over a $1000 in cash that she raised through her community!

Thanks to Human Powered Racing:
I want to recognize the event’s planning committee: Rob Dibden (Race Director), Mike and Donna from Human Powered Racing. This is the 9th year that Human Powered Racing has organized the Triathlon creating a fun, family-friendly event for athletes and first-timers of all ages. We couldn’t do the Triathlon without all their hard work!

I am blown away by the incredible effort that each and every racer and fundraiser puts into the Triathlon of Compassion. I feel honoured to be part of a community that is so dedicated to supporting survivors. Its amazing what we can accomplish together. Thank you to everyone who came together to support the 25th anniversary of the Tri.

Sincerely,
Carissa Rupponen

Thank you to our
Tri sponsors:
Robert Cameron, Law, Peresola
Cloyd, Fisk, Front-runners,
Equinox Parks & Recreation,
Country Grocer, Arbitus
Physiotherapy & Health Centre,
the Q, the Zone, Pas-sion Sports

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS:

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For 36 years the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC) has worked in partnership with our community to provide direct services to survivors and prevention education that transforms lives and shifts culture. Donations from community members such as yourself ensure we can continue providing these services to the community. Thank you.

Our work focusses on three inter-connected elements: healing, education, and prevention. Addressing the impacts of violence on the lives of individual survivors is fundamental to our mission. We attend to this need by providing our direct client services including: support groups, counseling, victim services, and our SART and clinic services. These programs create intentional space where clients can safely connect to themselves and each other, tap into their inner resources, and begin taking steps towards recovery. We know that connection is a vital part of healing from the impacts of trauma.

Providing individual support to find healing is only one aspect of our work to end gender-based violence. We recognize the criti-cal role education plays in preventing sexual assault. We work alongside youth in our community to create communities free from violence through our violence prevention program, Project Respect. Sexualized violence can only be prevented when the whole community commits to creating a culture of respect where everyone has the right to sexuality without violence.

Please read on to learn more about the work that your donations make possible.

Sincerely,
Makenna Rielly
Executive Director
This article was written for our blog. To keep up with all of our blog posts, check out: www.vsac.ca/blog/

At Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC) we believe in respecting a survivor’s right to choose their path to healing and justice. There are many pathways to recovery for survivors and our goal is to provide support through each step of a survivor’s healing journey. From contemplating making a police report to accompanying a survivor to court, VSAC Victim Services workers can support survivors at every stage of the criminal justice process.

Only a survivor can decide if they would like to report to police. For many survivors it is a really difficult decision, one that comes with many questions: “What happens after I make a police report?” “Will everyone find out?” “How long does this process take?” “Do I have to testify in court?” “Do you think they will believe me?” It’s important for survivors to know they have options. VSAC’s Victim Services staff is here to help answer those questions and support a survivor regardless of what decision they make.

“There are no stupid questions. Especially since there are many myths about the criminal justice system perpetuated by the entertainment industry and mass media,” says Shannon Weinkauf, Victim Services Worker at VSAC.

A survivor may decide to report for many reasons. Sometimes it is because they feel like they need to do something about the assault, but they may not be sure exactly what to do. It may be one way to hold the person who has caused harm, accountable. For others, it’s the first or last step in their healing process, or perhaps a survivor wants what happened to them on record. We respect the victim’s choice to report or not and will support the victim through either process. There are also options to file an anonymous police report.

If a survivor decides to involve police but is uncomfortable receiving updates about their case from them, VSAC’s victim services support workers can be the point of contact for police and inform the survivor about the progression of the case. Victim Services can also help clients become oriented with court and attend court proceedings with survivors if they wish to have that support, as well as support filling out Crime Victim Assistance Applications. We can assist in navigating jurisdictional issues if the assault[s] happened in other provinces or countries.

Support workers can be involved as much or as little as a survivor wants.

Whatever a survivor decides to do after a sexual assault, whether it has been several days or twenty years, VSAC victim services workers are here to support their healing.

“Working with victim service workers and engaging in the criminal justice process is one way for survivors to use their voice and regain control in a situation where their power and voice was taken,” explains Shannon.

Survivors can report to police at VSAC. Below: Hallway to police interview rooms in our Clinic space.

Right: Interview Room

Left: Soft room where VSAC support workers provide clients with options and support

EDUCATION

A key component of the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre’s work is providing prevention education in an effort to put an end to violence. We do this work through our violence prevention program, Project Respect. Project Respect is a youth-led and adult support program that provides consent-based violence prevention education to youth in Greater Victoria. Our goal is to create a Respect Revolution!

We believe that working in collaboration with youth is essential. Project Respect creates a space where youth can identify the issues that most affect their lives, and then we support them to address those issues through the creation of curriculum, workshop, and arts-based programming that is delivered in middle and high schools and to the broader community.

Project Respect has initiated a new and exciting cyber-violence prevention project. Youth have been telling us that cyber-violence including controlling and manipulative messaging, non-consensual sharing of photos, rumors, and predatory behavior on social media is one of the most prevalent forms of violence in their lives.

This summer we began meeting with youth to discuss ways to effectively address this violence in ways that are youth-centered and trauma-informed. We have identified a group of youth leaders and our next step is to develop violence prevention interventions this fall at your youth social action camp! Camp is a two-night event where youth leaders and adults work collectively to develop workshops, trainings, and online learning tools to be shared with the community.

We can’t wait to tell you more about the outcomes of camp. Stay tuned for more info in upcoming newsletters, check out the Project Respect website (yesmensyes.com), or sign up for the VSAC e-newsletter (vsac.ca/subscribe) to stay informed!

Stay Connected & Get Involved! Now!

• Donate. Donors are part of our community that are working to end sexualized violence and ensure that there is support for survivors.

• Volunteer. There are many ways to volunteer including the SART team, in our office and on our Board.

• Host an Event. 3rd party events are a creative way to get involved and to raise funds and awareness about sexualized violence.

For more info, check out our website: www.vsac.ca/get-involved

PREVENTION

VSAC is often asked about tips on violence prevention. We believe that we all have a role to play in ending violence. Here are some ways that we can all take action in our everyday lives to prevent sexualized violence.

1. Talk to boys and men about gender, challenge expectations about what it means to “be a man”, and question ideas of “femininity” that devalue women.

2. Practice consent: only yes means yes. Consent is a mutual verbal, physical, and emotional agreement that happens without manipulation, threats, or head games. When there is no consent, it is not sex, it is assault.

3. Be an active bystander. Consider it your responsibility to intervene (with regard to your safety) when you see or hear sexist, racist, and homophobic attitudes, behaviours, and comments. These are violent acts that make our community unsafe.

4. Don’t fund sexism. Don’t buy magazines, movies, video games, music, or other products that portray women in degrading ways. Be critical, these messages can be subtle.

5. Say no to slut-shaming. There is no such thing as a “slut”. When women’s sexuality is judged, controlled, and degraded, it promotes a culture of violence against women.

This article was written for our blog. To keep up with all of our blog posts, check out: www.vsac.ca/blog/