



PAYING IT FORWARD:

Operation Grow – Growing More Than Produce

For over thirty years, Huronia Transition Homes (HTH) in Simcoe County has helped thousands of women reclaim their lives from the hardships of abuse, violence and sexual assault by providing shelter, support and counselling. In 2017, after years of brainstorming and planning, HTH launched a unique social enterprise initiative called Operation Grow. One of the first programs of its kind in the violence against women sector, Operation Grow balances environmental, economic and social pillars to address the impacts of poverty, food scarcity and isolation for women with a lived experience of violence.

WHAT IS OPERATION GROW?

Operation Grow operates as a community hub to address the predominant social issues identified by women in the HTH community: social isolation, food insecurity and poverty. The vision for the program came directly from the women who use the support of HTH. The women repeatedly asked for employability skills, more food and hope for a brighter future. They were looking for ways to break away from the trauma in their lives, which is often further compounded by poverty. Approximately 80% of the women HTH serves live in poverty; in some cases, even 3rd generation cycles of violence and poverty.

Using an agricultural method called vertical farming, produce is grown hydroponically, in vertical columns, using state of the art greenhouse technology. This environmentally friendly farming method allows for high-yield, year-round production, using 70-80% less water and no pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers. The result is a sustainable, efficient, and ethical method of producing food.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IMPACTED BY VIOLENCE

Operation Grow addresses not only the demand for local fresh quality produce, but also employs the very women HTH serves. Women are paid to work in the greenhouse, as well as at the retail store located in downtown Midland where the produce and other goods are sold. Produce is distributed locally in both retail and wholesale markets at competitive prices and also sold at a reduced cost to low-income women. Revenue from sales is used to sustain the programs and services of HTH, including a community kitchen with cooking and nutrition workshops, yoga and meditation programs for stress release therapy and employment training programs.

Operation Grow contributes to the overall vitality of the lives of women who have experienced violence, by providing opportunities for greater economic freedom, building real-life skills, increasing confidence and self-esteem, and reducing food scarcity.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Interested in learning more? Visit www.operationgrow.ca to find out more details about this exciting venture. Want to know how you can help? If you live in the area, consider shopping at the retail store, or better yet, make a financial donation on the Operation Grow website and help end the cycle of violence against women.

Staying Connected

Our Offices: Toronto
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