



The Pregnancy Help Centre of Durham

In 1989, discussions began out of Steeple Hill Community Church to establish a pro-life response to the increasingly promoted option of abortion to young women who were in crisis due to an unexpected pregnancy. It was felt that Durham needed a place where all the options in a pregnancy situation could be explored safely, with honesty and respect taking into consideration the importance of the life of the expectant parents and the value of the new life in development. In about 1992, we began operating our first center located in Whitby.



We believe that a pregnancy itself is a life-altering experience that begins a very adult journey. We understand that all the choices in an unplanned pregnancy are difficult and they require careful consideration. We want to be available to provide wise counsel and loving support to people experiencing difficult times.

We know that children may be unexpected or unplanned, but that God is never surprised.

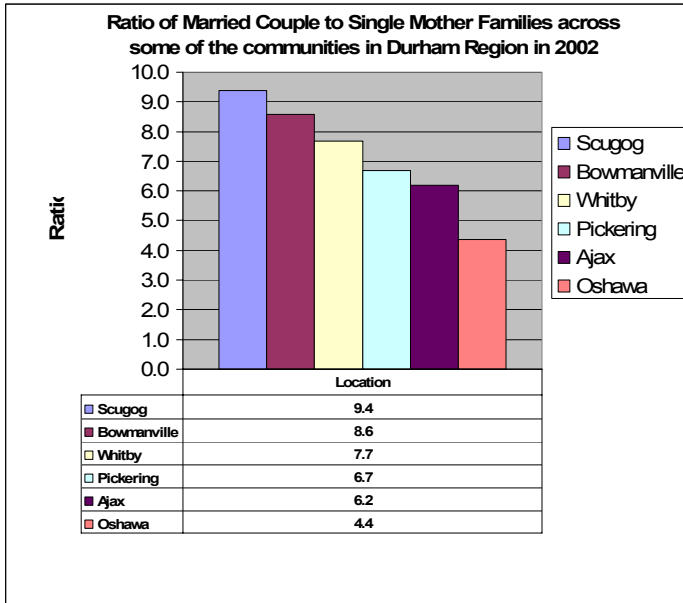
The Pregnancy Help Centre's trained staff and volunteers speak confidently with young people about the exploration and possible consequences of all their choices. Our services are primarily delivered by trained volunteers, overseen by three part-time staff on location.

We relocated to Oshawa in 1998 and found that, although we were still working with pregnancy decision-making, that there were a growing number of young single parent families coming in for material assistance and emotional support. We have had over 10,000 visits to the Pregnancy Help Centre with over 1750 clients registered since we began operating.



This trend was a reflection of the large number of single parent families located in Oshawa as demonstrated in the chart on the following page reflecting census figures for Durham region collected from Statistics Canada for the year 2002.

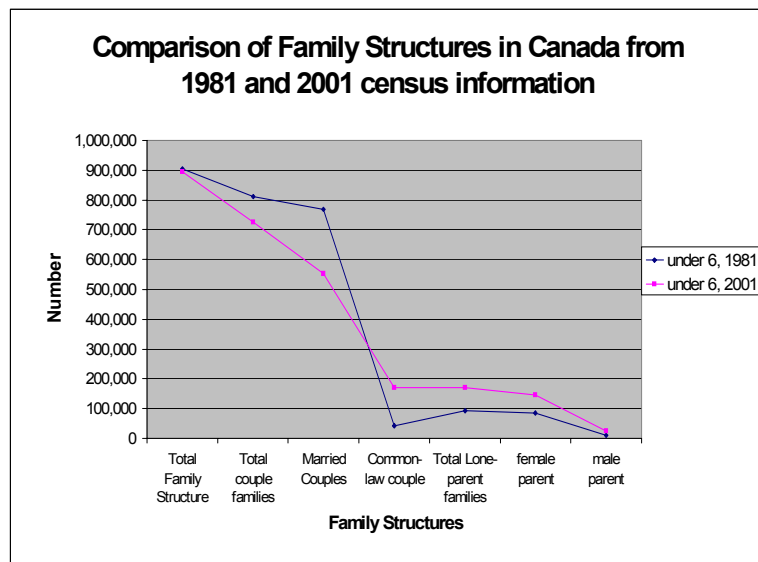
There is a ratio of one single mother family for about every four married couple families in Oshawa.



Many of these young families are living in poverty, struggling with unemployment and limited social supports. With a reduction in couples choosing to marry across Canada over the past 20 years, less stable family units are being developed. As demonstrated in the chart below, also from data compiled by Statistics Canada, there are fewer couples (with children under the age of six) getting married now than twenty years ago. Many of these young single parents have limited funds and accessibility to our help. We decided that the centre needed

additional sites strategically located for improved access if we were going to impact the entire region. In 2003, we opened our second site in Ajax.

In Ajax, we have seen younger clients on average using our services discovering they are pregnant while living in the family home. Abortion continues to be a serious choice being made more frequently by young women aged 18 to 19. In 2002, there were 7,573



total pregnancies reported for this age group in Ontario with 4,189 ending in abortion. In the past few years, there has been an increasing trend of young women deciding on an abortion

55% of these pregnancies are ending in abortion, up from 46% in 1992.

plan prior to becoming sexually active (although in our experience, many have no understanding of what

the procedure is or the fact that a baby is a baby no matter how small).

Although we want to be available to support poor families in need and to assist in decision-making during frightening times, we also want to encourage teenagers and pre-teens to consider the seriousness of sexual involvement and its consequences. Over the past two years we have been developing abstinence initiatives in an effort to impact the youth community of Durham region through school and church youth group involvement.

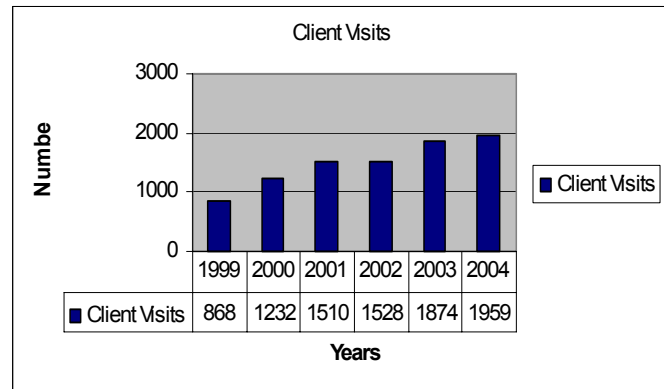
Ways that we help...

In supporting expectant families and their choice of life, we offer a variety of services:

- ✓ maternity and infant supplies and equipment are available to low-income families
- ✓ pregnancy tests and education are available to those suspecting that they may be pregnant
- ✓ information regarding abortions and alternatives
- ✓ educational materials and resources
- ✓ support in a friendly drop-in environment
- ✓ relationship skills and prevention efforts in the teen community
- ✓ mentoring relationships through our WINGS program
- ✓ access to other programs offered at our main office in Oshawa.
 - Prenatal
 - Premarriage Training and Skills
 - Parental Expectations

Post-abortion counselling and relational crisis counselling are also available upon appointment with a counsellor.

On average we see approximately 200 new clients per year and have seen our annual visits increase by about 125% over the past five years. On a visit, people (usually a mother, the infant, a friend or a boyfriend or other family member) will come in to access supplies, discuss their options or issues with parenting, get emotional support and spiritual instruction or just talk.



A Client story...

She had just turned 18 years old. She had left home a couple of years earlier and had become involved in a gang. She decided her life was getting too dangerous so she returned home. Shortly after, she was alarmed to find out that she was pregnant. When she came in, she was about 10 weeks along. Her boyfriend, who had rescued her from the gang, was not prepared for fatherhood and had decided that her best option was to abort. But when she came into the office and saw the fetus model of an infant at 10 weeks development, she was willing to discuss her other options. She had not realized that a baby was truly growing within her!

She bravely shared the news with her family and, despite her boyfriend's lack of support, they rallied around her. Over the next several months, we supported her as she made her decisions and helped her as she returned to the family and rebuilt her relationship with her mother.

She gave birth to a healthy baby boy, returned to high school and remained at home with her mom. Her relationship with the baby's father is still not great- but she hopes! In the meantime, she came to embrace her pregnancy and her baby as God's way of helping her move out of her old life into a new and safer one.

A Post Abortion Letter

Despite the fact that abortion is presented as a “no-cost” option in an unintended pregnancy, we have requests to help our clients cope with the aftermath usually five to ten years later. At that point, it becomes evident that life has not returned to normal; that there are regrets; that a child has been lost. As part of our work, we provide post-abortion counseling and support. Hear the pain in our client’s own words as we share an excerpt of a letter to a preborn child to help the mother begin her grieving journey many years later:

Dear Emma,

This is my third attempt at this letter. The thing is, I'm not quite sure how to put a broken heart down on paper.

If I were you I would have two questions, why? And did you ever love me?

Unfortunately the why is easy to answer. Although from a vantage point of over 10 years later, what made so much sense at the time seems so obviously flawed. You see, I honestly believed at the time that I was doing the right thing in terminating my pregnancy. I was told you were nothing more than a few cells starting to divide. Deep down in my heart, even then, I knew you were a baby even if you were just a few cells but I pushed my gut feelings aside. So I did this horrible thing because I was young, because I was alone, because I was terrified and because deep down inside I really thought you would be better off not born than to have me as a mother. I am so sorry for the pain I've caused you. The horrible physical pain of your death as well as the emotional pain of not being wanted or cherished as you should have been. I would take it all upon myself if I only could. I am so very very sorry

As to the question of did I love you... a thousand times yes. Even though I was devastated when I found out I was pregnant a little corner of my heart, against my will and knowledge, already started to belong to you. And though we have never met but in dreams, you take over a little bit of my heart each and every day. At Christmas I walk through the toy aisles and wonder which toy you would have wanted this year. When our family is gathered around the holiday table I'm sometimes gripped with the feeling that someone is missing. The feeling is so strong that I search the faces around the table one by one only to find that everyone is there and then it hits me. It's you! You're missing. There is a sadness and a longing for you I can't even begin to express. Every November I cry torrents of tears for you on the 14th, the day you died, I feel like I can hardly breathe. The rest of the years my tears fall like gentle rain.

I know that your tiny soul is somewhere in heaven, I have to believe that. I'm trying very hard to be worthy enough to meet you one day. So until that day, know that I will always think of you I will always wish I had been stronger. I will miss you everyday. I love you and miss you so very much,

Your regretful mother

PS When we meet I will know you by your green eyes and the sound of your laugh that wakes me from the soundest of sleeps, please don't forget my voice.

Board of Directors

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Executive Director

Katherine Michel
(1997)



Directors

Alexia Watkins (2006), Oshawa
Mentoring Coordinator
Kelly Cameron (2004), Ajax
Abstinence (BOLD) Coordinator

Volunteers

Volunteers provide the majority of the support and help to our clients at the sites.

Volunteer meetings are scheduled regularly and trainings are conducted quarterly. All volunteers must be trained prior to involvement with the clients.

We are an interdenominational ministry with many of our volunteers recruited from local churches.

Gifts and Support



Pregnancy Help Centre of Durham
29 Drew Street
Oshawa, ON L1H 4Z7

Phone: 905-720-3252
Fax: 905-720-3253

Email: phcentre@durham.net
Website: www.pregnancyhelp.ca

We are a registered non-profit Christian organization (BN# 89674 0768 RR0001). We do not receive government funding and operate mostly on the basis of donations of individuals, businesses and Churches.

We are affiliated with CAPSS (Christian Association of Pregnancy Support Services) and Heartbeat International.

Site Locations

Oshawa

29 Drew Street
Located one block south of King Street and one block west of Ritson Road, on the corner of Drew and Athol Streets



Ajax

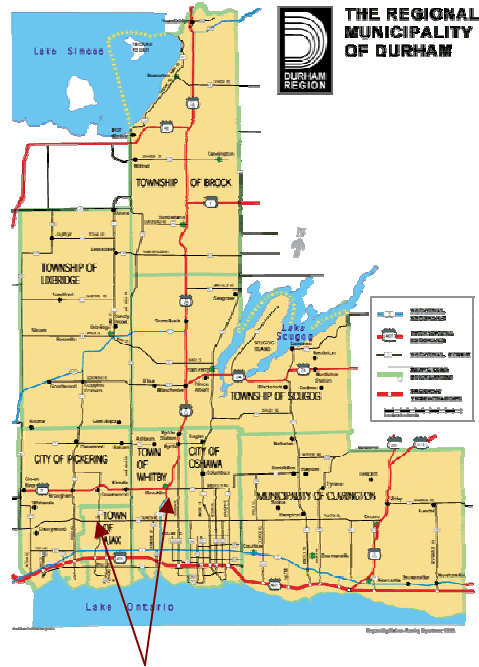
Unit 2, 835 Westney Road South



Located south of Highway 401 on Westney Road between Monarch and Finley

Looking to the future...

The Pregnancy Help Centre of Durham has developed a model of service that allows us to keep administration centralized while adding an additional site. We expect that there may be increasing need for our services within our demographics in Durham as the GTA continues to sprawl and urbanization of the region continues. There will be continued growth of the region's population of 18-25 year olds with the development of Durham College and the UOIT. We will be watching regional demographics as we look to future sites and programs of the PHC, doing what we can to teach young people about the importance of delaying sexual involvement until marriage.



We need your help to develop our programs and ensure a lasting impact across Durham Region for years to come.

Ways You Can Help...

Financially

Corporate Sponsorships are appreciated for our special events held semi-annually. It can be a wonderful way to contribute to our community and make a difference in the lives of expectant parents and those in poverty.

Planned Giving and Bequests can ensure that you continue to make a difference into the future. We realize that you may not be able to give right now, but you want to contribute to the lives of others who are threatened by the circumstances they find themselves in.

Individual or Corporate Donations will be receipted at year-end, but will make a difference today.

Prayerfully

Bi-weekly Email Prayer Chain and Prayer Group meeting in Whitby is a great way to make a difference as an individual or church group. It is a privilege to honour our client's requests that we pray on their behalf by passing those along (confidentially) to you.

Volunteer

We hope to give others an opportunity to realize a ministry-calling in their lives and make a difference in the lives of others.

Our Purpose

The *Pregnancy Help Centre of Durham* was established in Durham Region to demonstrate God's love and mercy to all who may be distressed due to pregnancy.

To provide support and education to individuals and families who may find themselves in a crisis pregnancy situation.

We attempt to educate individuals and couples regarding alternatives to abortion when faced with unwanted pregnancy and provide them with support as they make their decisions. We also provide support for other family members that may be struggling with the situation.

To provide a loving and caring environment for women in distress as a way to comfort and support them, showing them God's love in very practical ways.

We encourage women and their families to recognize the **sovereignty** of God, even in difficult circumstances, and turn to Him for help.



We have established a walk-in centre that is accessible to the community. At this facility, we are able to provide free pregnancy testing, educational materials, clothing, food, supplies, as well as information regarding other agencies that may be able to help.

To support the local church in fulfilling Christ's commission by giving its members an opportunity to minister in the community.

Our services are provided mostly by volunteers who are members of the church community in Durham Region. The volunteers are trained prior to their involvement and we are committed to continuing their education throughout their involvement with our ministry as a way to provide the best possible care for those who come to us for help.

