



S•W•V•A
Empowering Youth for a Better Tomorrow

“Everything begins with the resolve to take the first step. From that action wisdom arises and change begins. Without action, nothing changes.” *Daisaku Ikeda*

Respectful Relationships evolves

Respectful Relationships ('R+R') is our signature award-winning violence prevention program. Awards include: the *BC School Superintendent's Association*, *Women's Safety Award*, recognition by the *BC Minister of Education for School Board Innovation* as well as citation by the *United Nations Habitat as good practice in youth violence prevention*. The program has also received *endorsement by UNICEF*.



We are delighted to announce that after nearly two decades, Respectful Relationships is evolving!

We have partnered with InsideOut Policy Research to conduct a review and re-design of the curriculum to keep the program contemporary and innovative.

On June 2nd, 2017 we held a Think Tank to engage our staff, board, local community members and parents in the process of the program's re-design. Led by InsideOut Director and Research Consultant Tracy Byrne, Ph.D, this session explored the program model, including delivery methods, length/duration and program content.

We were delighted with the results of this session and are currently in the process of securing funding to complete the curriculum re-design.

Pass it On: Boys - not only for girls!

Boys and young men in rural communities face many barriers to full participation in family, school and community life. This is a result of gender stereotypes, social media pressures, experiences of family and peer relationship violence, racism, poverty and homophobia.

Research indicates that the pressure boys and young men face can place them at risk for underperformance in school, truancy, substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, unemployment and mental health issues including depression, anxiety and suicide.



Feedback to our agency has been clear: **men and boys need to be included in violence prevention work.**

In 2016 we sought and received funding for a pilot project called *Pass it On: Engaging Boys and Men Project*. In this initial phase, we held a series of roundtable discussions to get input from local boys and young men to determine their needs for support as they navigate their way into adulthood. From those sessions we were able to develop a leadership and mentorship program **based on the very successful Pass It On: Girls** program model. 15-30 high school aged and adult mentors will draw from their own life experience and will explore subjects including self-esteem, healthy masculinity, sexism, health and wellness, leadership, academic success and violence prevention.



AGM & SOIRÉE

Tuesday, December 5,
2017, from 5 – 7 pm

Refreshments served 5 - 6 pm
at Twig & Buoy, 321 Fernwood Road

This year's AGM is especially important – we will be updating the agency's bylaws and want to ensure as much of our membership as possible is aware of and present to vote for these changes.

Annual Membership costs only \$10, gives you voting rights and supports the agency. Memberships can be renewed at the AGM.

A transformative year – from caterpillar to butterfly...

Blog post by Kate Nash

Often the effects of a program like Pass It On are not ones you can easily quantify or see with clarity. Yes, there are responses to surveys or the positive comments the girls shout out on the last day about missing the program or loving the time spent there. Truly, the effects of Pass It On are more cumulative, more subtle and more gradual. Even after spending a year with peers outside their usual friend group, learning to share and support one another, the girls may not necessarily see the results of their work immediately.

Once in a while the stories that come back to me are more significant or the results of the program are very tangible. A few years back I had a participant in the program who had struggled with an eating disorder in her early teens, a common problem for many of the young women who come through the program. At the time she said there was no issue - it was something she had overcome. I took her at her word. Every year we have many discussions that involve body image and confidence. This person was able to tell her story in a circle of love and care. At the time I knew we were doing good work and that speaking about it was good for her but I believed that indeed, it was an issue from her past and had been put behind her.

Recently I ran into her and we sat down for tea to catch up. She told me that at the time she was in Pass It On, the eating disorder in fact had been an issue and that it was a very negative part of her life at that time. She admitted she had been in denial about it and had pushed away all her supports under the guise of being cured. Being in Pass It On was a transformative year for her. Listening to other young women share their stories about body weight and

Helping the other members through their own difficulties helped her to see others' needs instead of just looking at her own. The funny thing was, she said that the thing that changed her perspective the most was sharing the snacks every week at the beginning of the meetings.

Watching the other girls eat whole-heartedly and without concern, rather with an appetite made her realize that food was just that: food. It was not something to battle with or struggle against. It was just something to eat, or not, and in the end she chose to eat.

I looked over my tea at that beautiful, vibrant, healthy young woman and thought... <This is an excerpt of a recent blog from our website, please visit www.swova.org for the full story!>

Celebrating International Women's Day 2017



We celebrated International Women's Day with a Tapas & Treats event at Artspring this year, honouring local women volunteers. Nominated by their peers as Changemakers, award recipients were recognized for the time and talent, energy and enthusiasm they have devoted: women volunteers of all ages who make and have made a significant difference to the well-being of Salt Spring's diverse community!