

Victims of intimate partner violence and abuse make up hidden homeless

She doesn't have her belongings loaded into a shopping cart, and she's not asking for spare change on Bernard Avenue.

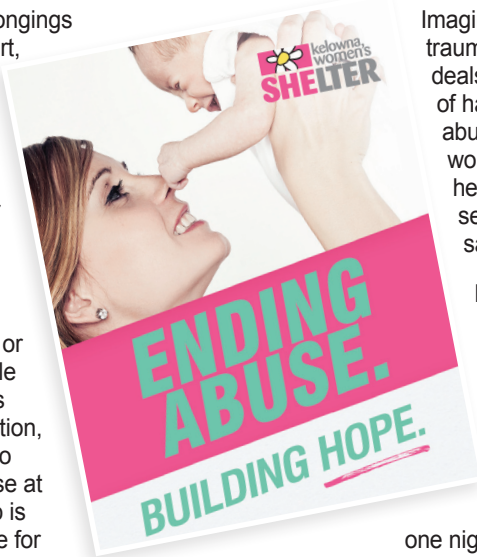
In fact, when she walks by pushing a baby stroller while chatting animatedly on her cell phone, you barely take notice.

But whether you realize it or not, that mom, and her little one, are part of Kelowna's growing homeless population, forced to flee their home to escape violence and abuse at the hands of the man who is supposed to love and care for them.

For the past two weeks, they've found refuge, along with food, clothing and support, at Kelowna Women's Shelter.

They're part of a group that's often forgotten in discussions about homelessness. But make no mistake, victims of intimate partner violence who end up in shelters because they have nowhere else to go, ARE homeless.

And with vacancy rates at all-time lows, and rents soaring, increasing numbers of them are having to extend their shelter stay from the official 30-day maximum to months at a time because they can't find a suitable home.



Imagine the stress on an already-traumatized family as mom deals with the emotional impact of having been in, and left, an abusive relationship while also working to parent and support her children, get legal advice, secure an income, and find a safe, affordable place to live.

In the 37 years since the Shelter opened, thousands of women and children in need from Lake Country to Peachland have walked through its doors.

Last year alone, 201 people spent at least one night in the Shelter. Countless others who didn't need a bed to stay in, benefitted from individual and group counselling, support with safety planning and advocacy, and educational programs, all at no cost.

It's only thanks to the ongoing generosity of government funders, foundations, service clubs, business organizations and individuals the Shelter is able to provide the support it does and help so many women and kids get a fresh start.

To learn more about how the Shelter changes lives, and how you can help, visit kelownawomensshelter.ca.

Karen Mason is executive director of Kelowna Women's Shelter. Contact her at karen.mason@kelownawomensshelter.ca.

Planned Giving A personal legacy that gives back for years to come



Imagine doing something today that will change people's lives long after you are gone. Something you know will have an impact for generations.

To learn more call
778.478.7774
kelownawomensshelter.ca

