

# THE BARRIE EXAMINER

## FAMILY MATTERS

### An Evening for April Showers on tap Saturday

By HEATHER CROFT

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An Evening for April Showers is the kick-off event for the 'April Showers' month-long campaign and is a celebration of strength, courage and new beginnings.

Entertainment from Marilyn Reesor, Bravado!, Dave Hadfield and Friends, Joy Bainborough, The Strolling Youth Players and Catherine Robertson are part of this spectacular lineup who have all donated their time to empowering families in our community.

The event runs Saturday.

Many of us who experience transitions in our lives such as marriage, moving into a new home, or having a first child, are the recipients of generosity from the family and friends who surround us, and who often provide us with gifts for the occasion, either individually, or in the form of a traditional shower. These gifts give us a boost and greatly assist in the challenges presented with the new journey we are undertaking.

There are women in our own community who are taking courageous steps into new beginnings by leaving abusive relationships and by seeking healthy, independent lives for themselves and their children.

Unfortunately, this is an uncertain and often dangerous undertaking, made even more overwhelming by the harsh reality of poverty, social stigma and isolation.

By necessity, these women remain anonymous and invisible, and consequently, forgettable. They live on the fringe of our consciousness, hazy figures of transition and chaos, who occupy the security of the Women & Children's Shelter of Barrie for a brief period of time and then move on to places unknown.

Many women leave the shelter virtually destitute, moving into small, and often, dirty apartments with absolutely nothing -- not even the bare essentials we all take for granted. Some do not have the comfort of the family and friends we also take for granted.

If there was ever a time a woman needed a shower, is this not it? A Shower for 'April' is working in conjunction with the shelter staff who will choose a woman moving out of the shelter and is in need. We have given her the pseudonym 'April' so she will be anonymous, but not invisible.

Shelter workers have compiled a list of items they felt would make the most difference to the women they help. This list is poignant and sad in its simplicity, a wish list of items we likely would not think about twice.

This shower is not intended to try and fix April's problems, or to try and accumulate absolutely everything she needs. This is intended to give her a "community hug" and a small boost to her self-esteem in a manner which affords her a sense of dignity rather than charity, and to acknowledge the strength and courage she has already demonstrated by taking these first steps to a better life.

Please join us for An Evening for April Showers in support of Women & Children's Shelter. This evening of spectacular, engaging talent begins at 8 p.m. at Collier Street United Church.

Heather Croft is the community development coordinator with the Women and Children's Shelter in Barrie.