

[Autos](#) [Careers](#) [Classifieds](#) [Homes](#)

[SSEMTC.ca](#)

Over
1.2 Million
websites hosted.



Social issues at heart of local Women's Day discussions

By DOUG HEMPSTEAD, OTTAWA SUN

Last Updated: March 7, 2010 8:12pm

Talking about women's issues can be covered in a single afternoon, but addressing those issues takes up to six months.

That's the message of the Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre, which, to mark International Women's Day Monday, will host an expert panel debate featuring five high-profile women.

Catherine Fortin LeFavre of Amethyst — the region's only women-only treatment centre — said the No. 1 issue facing women in Ottawa right now is waiting lists for services.

"We've seen an increase in the number of women who need help," she said.

Women who come to her organization looking for help with their drinking, drug or gambling addictions get placed on a waiting list that's up to six months long.

Fortin LeFavre said funding is needed to make sure women in Ottawa get the help they need, closer to when they ask for it.

"It's a huge step to open up and ask for help and they might not be up for it later," she said. "People are very vulnerable when they are suffering with addictions."

But Monday's event is not about offering counselling, it's about drawing attention to the counselling gap and talking about the connection between feminism and addictions.

"We link the addictions of our clients to their unequal place in society," Fortin LeFavre said, adding 90% of the time Amethyst counsellors find Ottawa women's addictions are caused by physical or emotional abuse.

The approach taken to help these women is more aggressive than traditional 12-step programs available to both sexes elsewhere.

"It's unique treatment for women. We teach them to empower themselves, be more assertive and take control of their lives," Fortin LeFavre said.

To that end, Monday's panellists have been asked to come up with their own interpretations of feminism and debate its modern meaning.

The panellists include University of Ottawa Institute of Women's Studies Prof. Dominique Bourque, Ottawa Sexual Assault Centre education co-ordinator Concillia Muonde, Women Against Slavery founder Anna Besch, Girls Action Foundation executive director Tatiana Fraser, and the managing director of Dialogue Partners, Stephani Roy McCallum.

The event gets underway at 12:30 p.m. at the University of Ottawa's Desmarais Building on Laurier Ave. East, room 3120.

On Monday morning, City Hall will be the site for a discussion on International Women's Day issues. Crime Prevention Ottawa hosts a talk by Kate Rexe, national director of the 'Sisters in Spirit' initiative which addresses violence against aboriginal women. The campaign focuses on the rates of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada. The event runs from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

doug.hempstead@sunmedia.ca

Copyright © 2010 Ottawa Sun All Rights Reserved