

# HELPING SISTERS IN NEED

## Women That Give (#WTG) host fundraising gala

by Mike Beggs

photography by Steve Uhraney

Women That Give (#WTG) is a federally registered, Mississauga-based not for profit group through which women helps sisters in need.

And more than 300 people turned out to support their second annual Economic Empowerment and Equality fundraising dinner, on June 8 at the local Versailles Convention Centre. They enjoyed a Mix 'N Mingle, buffet dinner, inspirational speeches, a performance by promising Toronto Bollywood Pop singer Shobha Shekhar, a fashion show by noted Canadian designer Shibani Sahney, a DJ and Open Dance Floor, silent auction and prizes.

Derived out of a round table discussion several years ago, Women That Give's slogan is, "Driving Change By Giving Back."

"We're 100 per cent volunteer-based, dedicated to helping out women in distress, and other citizens who are marginalized," explains founder and CEO Fawzia Khan. "I've been fortunate to meet some women who were willing to unite together on a larger scale, delivering our culture of kindness one act at a time."

Proceeds from this event will go to help fund the Interval House of Hamilton Shelter, and upcoming donations to keep continuing to



deliver workshops for women in distress, and to sponsor intellectually disabled athletes with Special Olympics Ontario.

WTG has impacted over a dozen women in shelters, whose quality of life had been eroded by domestic abuse and violence, poverty, fear, and feelings of helplessness. The group offers workshops in such areas as Technology, Art, Jewellery Making, and Painting to help rebuild their self-esteem, job skills, and hope for the future.

"If you are living in a shelter, you need to

have the self-belief you can always get out there and rebuild your life," Khan says.

The evening's guest inspirational speaker Nikole Belanger herself experienced such a life crisis. She now sits on the Women That Give board.

"I didn't have too many friends, when I went through my divorce," she relates. "I went straight to a shelter. I said to myself, 'I really have to do something for my two children, to get out of there.' I started to do something to pay the rent."

"I feel for them, those women who don't have all of the same information. Information is power. Living in a shelter, you're not really ready for taking over, because you've gone through so much trauma."

She suggests every woman with a husband and children should have some of this information "ready for a rainy day," in case things go wrong.

"It might never happen. But, it's a start," she advises. "Give us a call, because a phone call can do everything in that moment."

Of the workshops' value, Shekhar, also a #WTG Board member observes, "Suddenly their life changes. They have not had hope. The shelter has put them in a (better) place. This is what Women That Give is aiming at, to give them back their lives by offering ways (forward) and continuing to get them work ready."

One of the attendees Fran Druxerman was among those attending this fundraiser for the first time.

"Our very good neighbour, and friend decided it would be a good place for the girls to get together for a Friday night out," she said. "Then we read a little bit about it. We liked the name, Women That Give, and we're interested to learn more about it."

Last year, Women That Give also sponsored Special Athlete Carol McKeon, of Mississauga, to play softball at last summer's Special Olympics Ontario Summer Games.