

## Charity all in a night's work for 100 Women group

[Sarah Petrescu](#) / Times Colonist

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Sharon Clarke fills out a cheque for NEED2 at the 100 Women Who Care meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 3, 2014. More than \$25,000 was raised for the suicide-prevention group. Photograph By DARREN STONE, Times Colonist

In just under an hour Wednesday night, a group of local women raised more than \$25,000 for a Victoria charity dedicated to preventing youth suicide.

“We’re not a cliquey group. We just want to make a lot of charities a lot of money,” Miriam Byrne, co-founder of 100 Women Who Care Victoria, told the packed Crystal Ballroom at the Fairmont Empress Hotel.

More than 250 women, each donating \$100, showed up for the meeting, the group’s second. The inaugural meeting in September drew 140 women, who raised \$14,000 for the Umbrella Society, an organization that supports people with mental-health and addiction issues.

“The response has been overwhelming. Victoria is unbelievably generous,” Byrne said.

She started the group with her friend Denise Grant this fall. The women, who heard about the 100 Women Who Care concept through friends, wanted to do something simple and effective that would bring women together but not take up too much time.

“There’s so much camaraderie, and it’s nice to put your \$100 into something really huge for a local charity, as so many are struggling,” she said.

The idea is to find 100 women (or more) to commit \$100 each to a local registered charity four times a year. The women are asked to prepare a nomination for a charity. Three names are picked from a hat and the nominators are given five minutes to make their case. The entire group votes and the winner receives a cheque.

The whole process is incredibly fast and efficient. Women arrived to Wednesday’s meeting early to grab a glass of wine and mingle. After a few opening remarks, the names were drawn. Personal and impassioned speeches were given for a group supporting people with Huntington disease, Broadmead Care and NEED2 Suicide Prevention Education and Support.

While a volunteer team — made up of members’ teenage daughters and friends — collected and counted ballots, Gordon Harper, the executive director of the Umbrella Society, spoke about the impact of the funds received from the group last round. At 7:55, the chequebooks came out and the winner was announced.

“I’m absolutely elated,” said Sharon Clarke, the member who nominated NEED2. In her speech, she talked about the painful effects of her father’s suicide 20 years ago and why the prevention of youth suicide means so much to her.

“I can only imagine the pain and suffering a parent goes through to lose a child in that way,” she said. She spoke about the stigma of suicide and the need for resources for local youth. NEED2 offers online crisis intervention for youth and referral services. It has offered suicide prevention services in Victoria for 42 years.

The 100 Women group has inspired a 100 Men Who Care Victoria group and received inquiries from others wanting to start chapters.

The next meeting takes place in March. For more information, go to [100womenvictoria.com](http://100womenvictoria.com) (<http://100womenvictoria.com>).

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