

# OPHELIA

## Her Energy Enters the Room Before She Does

*"The 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' event was designed to raise awareness of rape, sexual assault and gender violence. Although the event has a serious message, we want people to feel comfortable and have fun. The event gives men an opportunity to educate the community about the issue and allows for unity and action in the prevention of sexual violence,"* says Ophelia-Dawn Shona Power, the Toronto event organizer.



**B**efore the event could be finalized, a charitable beneficiary for the Toronto event was needed. Joanne Vannicola, a board member of Ophelia's Love and Director of Youth Out Loud recommended Oolagen Community Services.

*"Joanne told me about Oolagen's work with youth and their families, many of whom were physically and/or sexually abused. I was especially interested in the agency's work with young perpetrators, and gratified to learn that if we can turn even one young abuser around, we can save more than 300\* potential victims,"* says Ophelia.

*"Although other organizations offer similar services, it is usually on a sliding-scale, paid basis. Oolagen's counseling services are absolutely free thanks to some government subsidies and the contributions of private sponsors and donors. The choice to pick Oolagen was not a difficult one, but it was Caroline Sneath's (Director of Development for Oolagen) enthusiasm for the project that convinced me I had made the right choice,"* she said.

### About Ophelia's Love

Abuse is an issue most people find very difficult to talk about. Yet, it is a global epidemic having a devastating impact on the lives of those who have been victimized.

Ophelia's Love is a registered organization dedicated to eliminating rape, sexual assault and gender violence by providing information and advocacy as well as survivor and community support through outreach projects and web-based communications (<http://www.opheliaslove.org>).

*"Right now, Ophelia's Love is facilitated by myself and three board members (Aleksandra Grzywaczewska, Joanne Vannicola and Colleen Dockstader) and offers outreach to Canada and the U.S. The goal is to make Ophelia's Love a household name in the prevention of rape, sexual assault and gender violence globally and to expand our current outreach efforts to include speaking engagements and retreats for abuse survivors,"* she says.


### About Ophelia

In addition to her community outreach work (which involves bi-monthly travel), Ophelia is film-maker/actress Angela Shelton's publicist (<http://www.searchingforangela.shelton.com>).

She is also a student at Seneca College where she is studying Assaulted Women's and Children's Counseling and Advocacy. *"My studies have shown me that I might be a good counselor one day. But, my heart and my radio/television and outreach experience show me I am a great advocate. And, since being good enough is not good enough for me, I've decided to follow my heart, and try to reach people on a larger scale through advocacy hopefully helping to change lives along the way"* she says.

Ophelia, who has been singing from an early age, is also working on her first music CD appropriately titled Emancipation. *"Not enough people are telling their story through music. This CD will allow me to blend my advocacy, experience as a survivor and my passion for writing together, giving a voice to survivors."* Scheduled for release in 2006, a portion of the proceeds will be donated back to Ophelia's Love to continue outreach within the community.

A Victor Hugo quote on her music web site (<http://www.opheliasmirror.com>), encapsulates how she feels about her music project, *"music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent."*

*"It has been an honour and a privilege to work with Ophelia on the 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' project. We look forward to other opportunities to get fired up by all that Ophelia is and all that Ophelia does,"* says Bob Engel, Oolagen's Executive Director. 

\* According to a study done by Abel, Mittleman and Becker, on the average, each offender attempted 582 crimes, completed 533 crimes and had 336 victims.