

Women showing they care

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By Cherise Jetson

SAINT JOHN - A group of Saint John women is showing how much they care.



**Kelly Patterson and Debbie Rathwell,
Founders -100 Women Who Care- Greater SJ.
PHOTO: KâTé BRAYDON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL**

One Hundred Women Who Care of Greater Saint John is the group's fifth chapter in Canada. The goal of the group is to bring together 100 or more women together for four 60-minute meetings a year. Each of the women commits to donate \$100 per meeting, leading to a minimum \$10,000 donation going to a local charity voted on by the group.

Debbie Rathwell said she started the group because she wanted to find a way to give back that was right for her.

"I found there were a lot of things I wanted to get involved in, but then I could never find that I could commit the time, and I was kind of always beating myself up for that," she said.

"When I heard about this, it absolutely resonated with me that I could give back to my community. I really felt that this was something for me and I felt that there were probably a lot of other busy women out there that might be looking for the same opportunity to be able to give back the community." The charities are selected from suggestions made by the members at the meeting. Representatives from three randomly selected charities will each give a five-minute presentation to the group. The members then vote by ballot for a charity.

Kelly Patterson, co-founder of the group, said she hopes the group will contribute to helping some of the city's charities involving animals and children.

"I think there is so much need in our community, and I think that personally what I'm most encouraged by is to see so many resources focused on young children who are living in poverty and it seems to be coming from multiple angles," she said. "And I think it's going to be real fascinating to see 10, 15 years down the road what a difference it's made in those kids' lives and their outlook and the possibility they see for themselves."

Rathwell said the group is an easy way for busy women to collectively make a big impact in the community, "Women are juggling a lot of balls in the air, and I really think that women generally want to give back whatever it is to their community, whether it's time, whether it's money," she said. "And I really think it's an attainable way for people to still juggle all their balls, but there's a nice balance to it." With 124 women already signed up, Rathwell said she is excited to see the group in action.

"I also think the power and the magic of being able to see \$10,000 four times a year minimum come together and impact a charity right there on the spot, I think that is magical. I can't wait to be a part of that first meeting," she said.

The group's first meeting will be on June 4 at the Lily Lake Pavilion from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. To receive an invitation to the meeting, women must fill out a commitment form on the group's website at <http://www.100womensj.com>. Women are asked to sign up by May 28.