

## Brothers and Sisters cook hearty warmth for the soul

**Linda Olsen**

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To quote a biblical proverb, 'Physician, heal thyself.' (But maybe leave the soup-making to someone else.)

Sharon Hampton shares a humorous story of a get-together of one of the non-profit organizations she started, called Broth Brothers.

Volunteers donate their time to make large volumes of homemade soup, which is delivered to those in need of a warm meal, but more importantly, a caring gesture.

On this particular night, a group of men was enthusiastically ready for their night of volunteering, when something went awry. "Three surgeons cut themselves that night!" Hampton laughs out loud. "So, that's the worst thing that's ever happened at one of our events."

Besides that minor mishap while chopping vegetables, Hampton's events have been so trouble-free and well-received in Calgary, and now across the country, that it even has this mother of two surprised, and pleased with the success of a vision that she set in motion just two years ago.

In 2009, Hampton's children were getting ready to leave the nest and head off to university and, as a self-proclaimed nurturer, she knew there would be a major void in her life, but she knew how to fill it.

As someone who had always believed in the healing power of a warm bowl of homemade soup for family and friends, Hampton came up with an idea to make that influence spread even further.

She created a non-profit organization, Soup Sisters, offering a night out for volunteers who make dozens of bowls of soup, which is then donated to victims of domestic violence at the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter.

What Hampton admits is a simple concept, seems to have resonated with people and has now spread to five cities across Canada, proving to her that the message may be more important than the meal.



CREDIT: Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

Sharon Hampton created and runs the Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers non-profit program. Volunteers in the program make homemade soup and give it to social agencies.

"I think it touches something inside of people. They can come in one night with friends and colleagues and feel really like they've made a huge contribution . . . and they have."

As she was developing the idea, Hampton wondered what it would feel like for a mother not to be able to feed her children a warm meal because they had to flee to safety from an abusive relationship. She knew then that the local women's shelter was the right place to share her vision.

"The more I looked into it, the more I realized how hugely prevalent an issue it is, particularly in Calgary and in Alberta, where we have the highest rate of domestic abuse in the country."

And that fact is not lost on those who volunteer their time in the kitchen.

"Sometimes women are very emotional . . . when they really start to get the sense of what we're doing."

With the success of Soup Sisters, Hampton then started Broth Brothers, with the same mandate but these bowls of soup are donated to The Doorway in southeast Calgary, an organization helping teens and young adults in transition from life on the streets.

It may be a simple concept, making homemade soup to warm a troubled soul, but Hampton believes it's an important gesture of support. "It's our way of saying we care."

Linda Olsen anchors Global Calgary's Early News and News Hour and produces the Woman of Vision series, which is in partnership with the YWCA of Calgary. To nominate a Woman of Vision, go to [www.globaltvcalgary.com](http://www.globaltvcalgary.com)

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