



UNBREAKABLE



Photos and Story by Gail Paquette

It took nine years for forty-seven year-old Veronica Hendrick-Lockyer to feel self-assured that the decisions she had been making were right. When the father of her four children walked out of their lives in 2003, her journey as a single mom went from no food in the cupboards to the opening of Glass Office Tower Corporations, a company dedicated to ending poverty for woman.

GTOC has a house in Prince Edward County, that Hendrick-Lockyer refers to as Rosehall with four bedrooms and nine acres. She sees the future of her corporation as many houses helping many women.

“The more I communicated my beliefs in women, the more I discovered there were more women out there like me that would benefit from more guidance throughout the process to regain their dignity in self-sustainability versus the system’s cycle of poverty,” she said.

The breakup of the family was not only an extreme financial and emotional hardship, but for Catholic-raised Hendrick-Lockyer, it was an extreme failure.

“I wanted all of it. I was a good Catholic girl and I believed in staying in the relationship, regardless,” she said. Hendrick-Lockyer has become transparent. She has opened herself up albeit through tears and the process was slow.

“When I first went to collect my assistance cheques, I would hide in my car till the coast was clear and on the way in the door, I would think of stories to tell in case I ran into people I knew,” she said.

It is those moments that made her stronger.

“Your kids give you the strength to be something better than you are,” she said.

It was about her pride and what people thought at those moments. She was the sole supporter and breadwinner with four mouths to feed.

At first her children took it out on her. “I could not take the blame. We were all hurting,” she said. As loving as she could be, she had to explain to them how bad things were.

Hendrick-Lockyer said her life is bouncing from one child to the other. The worst thing she has had to live with is the reality that her ex-husband took away the kind of mother she wanted to be.

Based on her own experiences, she knows there are women who want to get help but the government system is not set up to succeed.

“I believe in women. I believe there are women out there, just like me, looking for the path of dignity that the social assistance system guidelines cannot offer them.”

What pushes her is her kids. What gives her much-needed strength is her own mother. Panic and worry make her climb above her fears.

“GTOC is helping me through helping other women. I know that and I don’t hide it,” she said.

“The system was not created for women with drive and ambition. A disadvantaged woman could be anyone you know, your sister, aunt, mother, grandmother or daughter. I want to end the cycle of poverty that I experienced and provide dignity where dignity is scarce.”

Top clockwise: “I believe in women. I believe there are women out there just like me, looking for the path of dignity.”

A portrait Veronica painted of her ex-husband 10 years ago is all that remains of his existence in their lives.

“Going to church on Sunday mornings makes us a stronger family.”

Left: Veronica’s home office allows her to spend as much time as she can with her children.

Below: The worst thing Veronica Hendrick-Lockyer has had to live with is the reality that her ex-husband took away the kind of mother she wanted to be.

