



Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald

Sara Connelly, one of 10 women to graduate Friday from a 16-week pre-apprenticeship program, says she learned that "true happiness is within me," thanks to the course's two-pronged approach of counselling and skills training.

Construction training changes women's lives

Initiative breaks cycle of poverty

EVA FERGUSON
CALGARY HERALD

It was only a year ago that Sara Connelly was assaulted inside a truck.

The ordeal drained her completely, as she lost touch with family and friends, left her waitressing job and sank into depression.

Years of savings started to dwindle rapidly. Until one day, on the verge of homelessness, a friend suggested Connelly enrol in construction training through the Vermilion Energy/YWCA Skills Training Centre.

"She said to me 'Sara, you're always doing something with tools, fixing stuff. Whenever

I need anything, I just get you to do it."

"You should try this." Even as a little girl growing up in Saint John, N.B., she spent as much time as she could helping her dad and grandpa in the workshop.

"And I'm so glad I did this. It's changed my life.

"I'm working now, in a job where my skills are needed, and I'm problem solving all the time."

Connelly was one of 10 women to graduate Friday from the \$1.2-million program, funded by the federal and provincial governments and Vermilion Energy.

Since its 2008 inception, the facility has helped more than 100 women break the cycle of poverty and gain marketable skills in Calgary's construction industry.

Connelly, 31, says the 16-week pre-apprenticeship program helped her because

of its two-pronged approach — providing counselling while teaching invaluable woodworking, carpentry and construction skills.

"I learned to look at myself, and see that true happiness is within me, and any questions I have in my mind, I've learned to deal with them, and speak to them. It releases stress.

"I learned that if you stuff your marbles down, one day you'll lose them."

Connelly has already been hired by a local construction firm, and will start work framing houses in the next few weeks.

"I'm with a really awesome bunch of guys.

"They're willing to teach, and also willing to let me make mistakes."

YWCA of Calgary acting CEO Cynthia Wild says programs that address a woman's emotional well-being, along

with helping hone work skills, are critical to success.

"Women who enrol in these programs often have histories of poverty and abuse.

"So the program takes a holistic approach," she says.

"The emotional help component helps them with self-esteem issues, so they can engage with their employers and the community, have a firm handshake and all the other skills we take for granted.

"It makes them believe they do have something to offer after being told for years they're worthless."

Wild added that while only 10 women graduated Friday, their success has a huge ripple effect as they empower themselves, cease collecting welfare and raise successful children.

EFERGUSON@THEHERALD.CANWEST.COM

Pakistan support slow to arrive

City groups struggle to get donations

RICHARD CUTHBERTSON
CALGARY HERALD

As the number of people affected by flooding in Pakistan surpasses 14 million, the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Red Cross and another local group say they're having trouble raising money for the relief effort.

"It's been a bit of a slow go. It hasn't had a lot of pickup in the public," said Steve Armstrong, provincial director for the Red Cross.

So far, the Canadian Red Cross as a whole has raised roughly \$1.5 million for flood relief in Pakistan, Armstrong said. That compares to the \$36 million donated to the charity during the first week after January's Haiti earthquake.

Fundraising woes come despite the fact the United Nations has said this humanitarian crisis rates as the worst in its history.

It has affected more people than the South-East Asian tsunami and the recent earthquakes in Kashmir and Haiti combined, although the death toll is far smaller.

"It's almost two weeks now and it's ongoing," Qamar Malik said of the floods.

Malik is a director of the local chapter of the International Development and Relief Foundation, which is also having trouble fundraising. He attributes that to less awareness around this disaster than with the Haiti earthquake or the 2004 tsunami.

But the needs are a moth, he notes. The nation is involved in a fundraising events, a walk today and a day at a Calgary mosque. Malik worries in that another wave will hit Pakistan devastation will do it is right now.

"I don't know when to end. It's such an scale that is beyond anticipation," he said.

The United Nations about 1,600 people due to the Pakistan Armstrong said the ate needs of those 1 disaster are still being out, but they are basic shelter, first aid. W also be a serious issue.

"That will be the result that comes out of epidemic rates of cholera other diseases that a by water," said the Red Cross.

Armstrong suspects have been slow to come because the Pakistan have developed money whereas the earth Haiti was immediate destruction and quiet headlines.

But also, potentially worry their money help flood victims, but make it into the terrorist groups, strong.

"I kind of think the politics behind it, too. People are concerned who's going to receive money, where's the going, particularly country and its relation to Afghanistan."

RCUTHBERTSON@THEHERALD.CANWEST.COM

Warmest Canadian summer in 63 years eludes Calgary

JEN GERSON
CALGARY HERALD

For John Mabberi-Mudonyi, the weather is beautiful.

When the civil servant looks out his window, he sees sunshine and barren streets. People are at home making lunch for their children, planning baseball games or clam-picking expeditions.

"I'm just wearing my shirt, a pair of pants and sandals. That's how comfortable I

territory of Nunavut, where Friday's temperatures were balmy compared to Calgary's 16 C.

The temperature was expected to fall to 3 C in Banff Friday night — near freezing in what should be the glorious dog days of summer.

Mabberi-Mudonyi has heard about our bad luck: grey skies, thunderstorms, cool temperatures and freak hail.

The weather, "it doesn't like you. Move up here," he said.



according to Dave Phillips, senior climatologist with Environment Canada.

"If you take a look at the period of January to the first of July, this has been the warmest seven months in the 63 years we've been record keeping. If you were to stick a thermometer into Canada, you're going to say we're well done," he said.

Oh, that is, "in every region except the Prairies."

He's spoken to people who

while the East Coast embroiled in a smog-free heat wave.

"The crops are higher. The temperatures in the Great Lakes has been warmer," he said.

The weather even it seems, is fabulous here.

Ronald Leonor, 4 had to dig through to find warm clothes to work on Friday. "It's been so windy," he