

Year End Report

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025



Report prepared for:
The Bras Family Foundation

by The Redwood
June 9, 2025



the
REDWOOD

Women in Trades
and Technology

Dear Maggie and Bras Family Board Directors,



It is my honour to send you the 2024-2025 Year End Report on the impact of *The Bras Family Foundation's* support for *The Redwood's Women in Trades and Technology* programs.


I am happy to share that the report is filled with good news – and who couldn't use a little of that these days!

As you will read, Year 1 of The Redwood's **Women in Technology** was a resounding success. And as we move into Year 5 of **Women in Trades**, the program – and its impact on participants – grows stronger and stronger.

I am so glad that you were able to attend our joyous Women in Trades graduation last October – and I am pleased to share a transcript of our valedictorian Jane's address for you all to reflect on. (See page 9.)

An especially touching sentiment for me from Jane's speech is the following:

“What stands out the most is the bond I formed with my colleagues and the students I have had the privilege to tutor. Seeing them succeed and knowing that I play a small part in their journey has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life.”

Jane shows how the impact of your support for **Women in Trades and Technology** begins with one woman then ripples out into ever bigger circles of care! And Maggie, I never cease to think about your own story when I read these women's stories of re-invention. 

Thank you, dear friends. Try as I might, I don't think I will ever be able to express my deep gratitude and respect for all that you have done to transform the lives of women who turn to The Redwood to escape abuse, homelessness and poverty.

With love and the biggest hugs,

Abi 

Abi Ajibolade
Executive Director
The Redwood



Women in Technology: IT Help Desk Technician



As we reported mid-year, The Redwood has received a 3-year grant of \$1.2 million from the Province of Ontario's **Women's Economic Security Program** to help fund our newest training and employment initiative – **Women in Technology: IT Help Desk Technician**.

As with the **Women in Trades** program, the goal of **Women in Technology** is to assist participants to build safer lives by providing a pathway to economic security through work in IT.

We are deeply grateful to **The Bras Family Foundation** for providing The Redwood with generous support to bring this important program to life. Without your ongoing commitment to helping women and children, **Women in Technology** would have remained just a beautiful dream.

Women in Technology: IT Help Desk Technician is a 24-week program that provides participants with tuition-free training, exclusive to Redwood participants and tailored to meet the needs of survivors:

- 3 weeks of in-person, hands-on training on internet wiring at The Redwood
- 3 weeks of academic upgrading at George Brown College to prepare for their studies
- 10 weeks of IT Help Desk Curriculum at George Brown College
- 8 weeks of work readiness and placement



Participants received hands-on training on internet wiring in a workshop set up at The Redwood.

Highlights:

- Over 85 individuals registered for the first information session, introducing the IT Help Desk Technician program to the community
- 21 women were welcomed into the program
- 20 women completed the training, achieving above average scores, in the high 80%'s across the program's complex curriculum.



Participants attended a Mentors Day event at The Redwood to network with professionals in the IT field.

Update:

As we moved into 2025-2026, participants began their 8-week work readiness and placement program including weekly sessions with the IT Department of TD Bank.



Manager, Women in Trades and Technology program, Julia Colucci (far right) and participants take a break during their first trip to TD!

In Her Own Words - Women in Technology: IT Help Desk Technician Participants

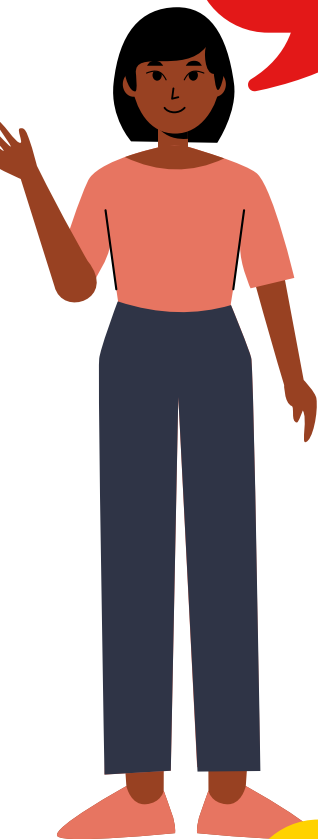
"We were a group of 20 women in this program, and we built a strong bond with each other as well as with our caseworkers. We truly feel blessed to have had such supportive and dedicated caseworkers throughout this journey."



"Working hands-on at The Redwood and interacting with other participants was a truly enriching experience. It was empowering to be in a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone was working toward the same goal. The connections and friendships formed during this time added a lot of value to the journey."



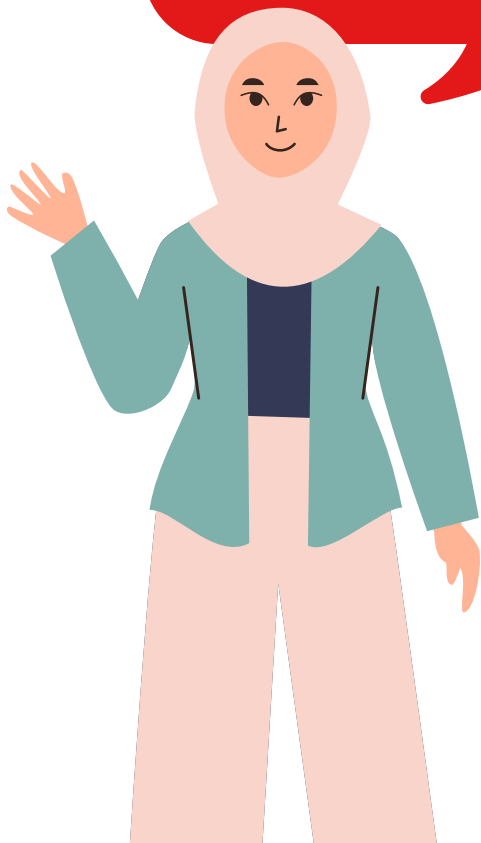
"I was excited to complete the course with a good grade, and it amazed me how quickly we were able to learn and grow. Collaborating with group members and instructors made the experience even more rewarding. The instructors were incredibly supportive and friendly, always encouraging us to stay motivated."



"Our placement at TD was another highlight. The mentors there were incredibly supportive and clear in their guidance, especially when it came to troubleshooting ticketing and hardware issues. Thanks to their mentoring, we gained practical experience and confidence in real-world IT support scenarios."



"Thank you all for your unwavering support. Thank you to everyone supportive throughout my career journey!"



Women in Trades: HVAC Technician

This year saw the successful completion of Year 4 of The Redwood's **Women in Trades: HVAC Technician Program!** As you witnessed first-hand at the October graduation, the initiative, with its goal of achieving economic self-sufficiency for survivors of gender-based violence, is life-changing.

We look forward to seeing you at the next graduation on Oct. 25, 2025!

2024-2025 Highlights:

Cohorts 7 and 8:

12 new participants began their training in the G3 (entry level) Gas Technician program, with 9 participants already obtaining their certification.

This extremely high pass-rate is a result of enhanced academic supports added to the program including a minimum of 15 hours of one-to-one tutoring before participants make their first attempt to pass their exam. (The exam is incredibly challenging, and participants must attain 75% to receive a passing grade. In recognition of the difficulty of the exam, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority allows participants to take the test three times in one year.)



Participants visiting Reliance Home Comfort, meeting with team members and touring the facility.



Participants were welcomed by HVAC employers including UTG Enercare, Reliance Home Comfort, Daikin and Enercare, to visit their sites and learn more about available roles and company culture.

The program hosted a Mentor's Day which featured women in the HVAC industry, and partnered with Local 787, the HVAC/R Union, to deliver an apprenticeship and union information session for participants.

Participants from Cohorts 1 to 6

3 participants continued their training in the G2 (2nd level) Gas Technician program at George Brown College and HiMark Occupational Skills and Training Centre. One participant received her certification, while the others will attempt the exam in the near future.

As more participants obtain their certification, they also are successful in obtaining employment. To date 13 participants have gained and retained full-time or part-time employment in the trade and an additional 7 participants have other kinds of employment.



In Her Own Words:

Jane's Valedictorian Address



“My journey in the HVAC industry has been nothing short of incredible, and I owe a huge part of it to Redwood. As a student in their HVAC program, I found more than just technical training—I found a community. Redwood not only equipped me with the skills and knowledge to excel in the field but also opened doors to opportunities I never imagined.

Through the program, I was able to network and connect with industry professionals, especially women in HVAC, which was truly inspiring. It was at Redwood that I secured my apprenticeship with Enercare and later gained experience with various institutions, ultimately leading me to my current role as a Medical Gas Field Technician at Class 1 Inc. The exposure and mentorship I received helped me grow both professionally and personally.

I later pursued my G2 Gas Technician certification and graduated from HiMark Training Centre, a class full of men, as the second-best student. That experience strengthened my resilience and confidence, proving that I belonged in this industry just as much as anyone else.

But what stands out the most is the bond I formed with my colleagues and the students I've had the privilege to tutor. Seeing them succeed and knowing that I played a small part in their journey has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Redwood didn't just train me—it gave me a family, a support system, and the confidence to thrive in a male-dominated industry.

I am beyond grateful for the friendships, the lessons, and the unwavering support from Redwood. If you're considering a career in HVAC, especially as a woman, this is the place to start. Redwood doesn't just create technicians—it builds leaders.”



Abi presents HVAC valedictorian and peer-to-peer tutor Jane, with a Certificate of Achievement.



Thank you!



P. O. Box 157, Toronto PO C, ON M6J 3M9 | 416.533.9372 | Charitable #: 89172 8867 RR0001

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