



Arrabon house is a group home designed to help young women between twelve and sixteen years of age break the cycles of violence. Arrabon is the Greek word meaning “a promise of things to come”.

Arrabon House is located on Wilson Park Avenue between Queen and King in the City of Toronto. It is a thirteen-room mansion in the City of Toronto. It was established in 1973 by community members concerned about adolescent girls in need of safe shelter and emotional support. The house provides space for six girls, a member of the Loretto Sisters and a live-in counselor.

Sister Maria Lanthier from the Order of Sisters of Loretto, is the founder of Arrabon House. She hopes Arrabon House will help young women establish control over their emotional abuse and begin to develop their own free will. If the girls are willing, which does not happen overnight, they would build a strong self-image, and are taught to interact with and trust others so that they can find some good in such an unfair lifestyle they involuntarily and unfairly experienced. In addition, other major requirements are to attend school, be employed, or be enrolled in a training program. An assigned worker ensures they gain a sense of belonging and follow through with their household requirements.

A commitment is made to live at Arrabon for six months but many stay as long as two or more years. A contract agreement clearly states that three strikes means instant dismissal. The contract also outlines that there is to be no physical violence within the house, the community or against residents, volunteers or staff members. The use of alcohol and drugs, and inappropriate sexual contact or behavior violate this contract.

Group homes are terribly misunderstood by community merchants and residents. Arrabon is the most exceptional group home where the young women are properly cared for with a lot to offer young women from the moment they enter long after they graduate.

Arrabon House is being run exactly as Sister Maria planned. It shows these young women that they can strengthen their image and begin to appreciate themselves while recognizing their talents for positive growth towards adulthood. No other founder could have built a place with

such magnitude such as Sister Maria Lanthier did. She has devoted her life to doing that would benefit the young lives at Arrabon House.

Arrabon House runs smoothly due to the tight schedule it follows. Study hour falls right after the dinner hour, scheduled between four-thirty and five o'clock. Nights are set aside for social functions, house, house meetings, group sharing sessions and activities. The young women are encouraged to participate in these socialized programs that are set up for their development in socialization and life skills. Free nights are Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A curfew hour is set depending on age, and if the girls show they can abide by a curfew. Curfews are between nine and ten o'clock on Wednesday and Sunday nights or between nine and eleven Friday and Saturday nights. Curfew hours are earned and they can be extended Friday night after eight o'clock and by bedtime on Saturdays. In addition, they must also put their belongings away in appropriate places and avoid swearing and rudeness in order to collect an allowance; by doing extra house work such as cleaning the oven, and washing windows.

Memories of times spent with Maria have been recorded by the four girls she raised at Arrabon.

Sue recalls the many times peeping through the stained-glass doorway watching Maria merrily hop down the stairway in her baby-doll pajamas, feather-line heeled slipper with one brightly colour toenail. Sue wondered how she was so afraid of such a kooky house-mum who rescued us every time we were escorted home by Police. "Maria treats my children as a Grandmother and is like a mother to me and never is afraid to talk with me on any sensitive topics I thought my mother couldn't answer. And not once has she allowed me to feel pity or shameful. She encouraged me to live the kind of life I have and believed I could become. "

The real body and soul of Arrabon House would not be complete without tales of the graduates who once lived there. We all seem to concentrate on how successful they adopted the lessons learned about life to obtain positive life skills. I swear no books or parenting class have ever given them the kind of experience needed to live life as much as living at Arrabon House taught us. We learned to accept the struggles life offered and found a way to make our struggles part of an adventure in life.

"I could not have ever learned how a productive loving family works from living with my own dysfunctional family." Barb's memory drills home the fact of how Maria demonstrated the importance of mother's having fun. She's like the glue that held the ground together as it quaked beneath our feet.



When you live in a group home, it is difficult to make friends because the girls come from many different backgrounds and there's a constant turn over. When I lived there I bonded very quickly

with these two girls, Barb and Melinda, we joined four other girls on a camping trip in Quebec, alongside two staff members. The five-hour drive made our experience that much more pleasurable. We spent plenty of time getting to know one another, we clung to each other wherever we went and we anticipated each other's every thought during the best and worst of times.

The staff at Arrabon conducted themselves with utter dedication when handling the young girls. They were well trained in that, the techniques they learned was evident when they handled their most difficult cases. These were key elements that were most helpful teaching the lessons of life, which seems to provide a promise of things to come.

