

**In January 2003**, Aventa's Board Chair, Susan Cassidy, wrote a letter to the Calgary Herald in response to Don Braid's column, "*Province priorities VLTS over health care*". In his column, Braid noted the province's decision to spend \$105 million dollars to upgrade VLTs while hospital beds and seniors' homes were over capacity, and schools were being denied funds for much needed equipment. Experts agreed that VLTs remained different to other forms of gambling for their ability to engage people so quickly into a gambling addiction.

The Board Chair's letter to the editor served to provide awareness to the fact that Aventa was the only gender-specific treatment program in Alberta and one of the few in Canada for gambling. With Aventa's operating funding from AADAC being frozen for two years, it was disappointing that funds were available to upgrade VLTs, but not for those with addictions to gambling on VLT machines.

As the capital campaign moved forward, Aventa updated its logo once again, with a more refined image of a woman moving forward towards a bright and exciting future.



**On April 24, 2003**, Aventa began the first of its monthly *Alumnae Birthday Celebrations*. The night's events included dinner, followed by a guest Alumnae speaker, and Clients received medallions as they celebrated their recovery birthday. It's important for Clients to have a strong support network as they transition into long-term recovery. Aventa encourages Clients to stay connected to other women who are living a substance-free lifestyle. Aventa's Alumnae program offers Clients the opportunity to have fun and socialize with other women in recovery, while learning from those who have been successful in their journey to sobriety. Each year, Alumnae are invited to Aventa's Stampede BBQ and the Alumnae Christmas Party.

**In May of 2003**, demolition of the Extendicare Scottish Nursing Home began. This substantial renovation took nearly 10 months to complete and included some small design changes, as well as a few construction challenges.

**By October 2003**, the capital goal of raising \$4.6 million had been met! A donor wall was created with a gemstone theme and the client rooms in the new facility would be named after gemstones. In November, the agency held a Walk-A-Mile workshop for all Staff in order to facilitate planning about the day to day operations of the new building as well as Client programming.

Sadly, Aventa's Executive Director, Cathy Wood, passed away due to cancer during the renovation phase of the project. Community partners, Aventa Staff and Board of Directors wanted to honour her memory, and her commitment and dedication to Aventa and the women in need of addiction services. A tribute ceremony was held for her friends and family, and three beautiful pieces of artwork portraying women were purchased with donations made to Aventa in Cathy Wood's memory. These paintings were as beautiful as was Cathy, and serve as a daily reminder of a great visionary, community leader and friend.

**In February 2004**, Aventa submitted a proposal to the AADAC Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy, Education, Prevention, Cessation and Protection Action Grant, which provided funding for Aventa's "*Catching Our Breath*" and "*Clear the Air*" smoking cessation and support groups.



**Aventa's new facility opened its doors in March 2004!**

The realization of the vision to offer enhanced programming and expansion of women's addiction services was very rewarding. Made possible by an amazing team effort and the hard work of Aventa's Staff, Board and Project Manager, the new facility provided a 187% increase in Residential beds (from 16 beds to 46 beds), a 100% increase in Day Program spots (from 20 to 40 women served each month) and an additional 100% increase in Outpatient services. With this expansion, Aventa saw an immediate significant decrease in its historical 4 month waiting list for services.



**Aventa March 2004**

The larger facility allowed Aventa to develop four distinct treatment programs: a Crisis Stabilization Program, a 4 week Intensive Treatment Program with inpatient and outpatient Clients, a 3 month Long-Term Treatment Program, and a 1 year Long-Term Support Program.

Aventa's Crisis Stabilization Program was the first gender-specific program of its kind in Alberta and provided women, especially pregnant women, with immediate admission into a safe environment. This program not only allowed Aventa to treat pregnant women immediately but also to stabilize methadone maintenance Clients, and offer a bed to a large variety of women in various forms of crises while they waited for admission into the treatment program.

Aventa also offered a wide variety of Outpatient Programs, including a weekly Aftercare program, providing weekly process groups and peer support to help facilitate ongoing recovery maintenance skills; Aventa's Parenting program, providing women the opportunity to explore parenting issues in the context of recovery, and Aventa's Family and Friends program which helped women to learn the skills to build healthy families and healthy home environments.

**Aventa's Grand Opening – May 14, 2004**



Left to Right: Lorenzo Donadeo (President & CEO, Vermilion Energy Trust), Howard Dingle (VP Production, Imperial Oil), Kim Turgeon (Aventa Director of Development), Nancy Foster (VP Human Resources & Corporate Services, Nexen), Hon. Iris Evans (Minister of Children's Services, Province of Alberta), Hon. Ron Stevens (Minister of Gaming, Province of Alberta), Marlene Graham (MLA Calgary-Lougheed & Chair AADAC), Susan Cassidy (Aventa Board Chair), Collin Jang (Representative, Government of Canada National Homelessness Initiative), John Currie (Board Chair, Calgary Homeless Foundation).