

Our Place Progress Growth Opportunity

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At Our Place, we serve our family with love and respect. We work for social justice for Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens.



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Message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

During the past year, the theme that has resonated most clearly with everyone at Our Place is teamwork. Our strong team of staff, volunteers and supporters has come together, through hard work, fellowship and discussion, with a unified vision of what Our Place means, and where we are headed in the future. Our mission remains strong: to provide a sense of hope and belonging to Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens.

Change can be challenging, but when done right, it can reinvigorate an organization with fresh enthusiasm and excitement. Such is the case with Our Place. With a fiscally responsible and proactive leadership, plus a team of impassioned outreach, housing, custodial, kitchen, security and maintenance staff, the future has never looked brighter.

Over the last year, we have witnessed an increase in the number of people accessing programs and services at Our Place. This has been reflected in a recent 30-percent increase in the number of meals served (40,000/month). We responded to this increase from a position of strength and opportunity. Reaching out to both our long-term and new supporters, we secured an increase in the amount of donated food that flows into our kitchen. We also increased awareness of our successful Sponsor-A-Breakfast program, which saw a satisfying boost in the number of full breakfasts served every week.

To meet demand, we opened our busy hygiene area earlier in the morning, plus added many new programs and services in areas of mental and physical health, job skills, recreation, education, and more. Our participation in the province's Extreme Weather Response program also posed a challenge as we were called upon to open our Drop-In for nightly shelter through much of the winter. But, again, this challenge allowed us the opportunity to evaluate our role during those wet, cold nights when we are normally closed.

The collaborative teamwork and support of our dedicated employees, volunteers, community partners, donors, supporters and stakeholders overwhelmingly demonstrate the positive change we can achieve when we all work together. Thanks to you, Our Place will continue serving our most vulnerable citizens with unconditional love and dignity.

With much gratitude,

Don Evans
Executive Director

Susan Haddon
Board Chair

Programs & Services

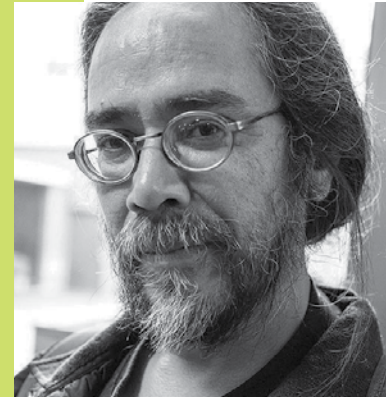


DROP-IN CENTRE

Coffee & Community, Computers, Clothing, Games, Library, Phone & Message Centre.

"When I arrived in town, I didn't know where to go," says Taj. "I was sleeping in a doorway when a guy told me about Our Place." Taj arrived in the Drop-In Centre looking for warmth and food, but he discovered much more. "I didn't know how people would react to me," he says with the flicker of a smile. "But the Outreach workers were really chill. I asked one if he could help me write a letter to let my family know where I was, and he did. I've been coming back most days, and got to know the staff better, and last week there was a letter for me. It was from my sister, and she put photos of my two nephews inside. People probably thought I was crazy 'cause of the grin on my face, but I was just happy." *More than 400 people with no fixed address benefit from receiving mail and phone messages in the Phone & Message Centre.*

"The Drop-In, for me, means a hot coffee, something to eat, and a chance to catch up with friends. The staff are always around to help when things aren't going so good — and I really appreciate the bus tickets," says family member Gus.



Our Mission
We offer our most vulnerable citizens a place to call their own, where we live, share and grow together.



EDUCATION

Art Group, Bookmobile, Choir, Computer Training, Gardening, Story Collective, Job Skills, Writing, Knitting Group, Financial Planning.

"I've always been intimidated by the computer," says family member Theresa. "But after taking a few classes, I'm feeling more confident. The instructor is very patient."

"I have a place to live," says Emma, "but I'm on my own there." Emma's pension doesn't quite stretch to a full month, so her first exposure to Our Place was via our daily meal program. "I like the soup," she says, "but on the weekend there's a knitting circle where us older gals can have a laugh. There's even a few men joining now, too. Guess they don't want us having all the fun." *Our Place partners with community groups and volunteers to provide a vast array of opportunities for family members to enrich their intellect, develop personal insight, unleash their creativity and learn practical skills.*



Our Vision Nourishment, hope and belonging for all in Greater Victoria.



MEALS

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner, Bagged Lunches, BBQs, Birthdays, Holiday Feasts, Nutrition Bar.

Greg has been a volunteer in our kitchen for over five years now, and he's witnessed a lot of changes in that time. "We're serving a lot more meals," he says.

In fact, meals jumped from 360,000 in 2012/13 to over 420,000 in 2013/14. But it's not just the sheer number of meals that makes Our Place special. "A lot of people are really appreciative of the new vegetarian options," says Greg. "I never knew we had so many vegetarians until we added that option."

Breakfast has also become something special via our Sponsor-A-Breakfast program. While we always have hot oatmeal available in the Nutrition Bar, our kitchen staff has been creating delicious, full-breakfast options for those days when the meal is sponsored by a local business or individual(s). "I like the pancakes," says Greg before quickly adding, "and the sausage."

"It's a great organization, lot of love and laughter and support. Our Place is something everyone uses when they are on the street. Food, clothing, hygiene, in the winter is especially important," says Pinky.

OUTREACH

Advocacy, Emergency Food, Financial Crisis Support, Field Trips, Interventions, Sports, Tax Preparation/Filing, Referrals to Employment, Housing, Government Agencies, Legal, Medical, Detox and Treatment Services.

"The staff are wonderful people, they always go out of their way to help. People should ask for help because it is there if they need it," says Chris.

"Do you think God will forgive me for doing this?" a family member asks an Outreach worker as he shows her fresh cuts on his arms. The man is suffering with schizophrenia, and tortured by delusions. All he wants is to get into a facility where he hopes he will feel safe.

Outreach work is stressful and intense. To the same degree, it is also incredibly rewarding. Each Outreach worker at Our Place brings a diverse range of training and expertise to the team. Half began as volunteers while others have walked in the same shoes as those they now help.

Family members develop trusting relationships at Our Place, inspiring them with the hope and confidence they need to succeed. Thousands of referrals are arranged by outreach workers to ensure family members' needs, arising from trauma, mental health, addictions, isolation and poverty, are addressed. As one family member relates: "The workers provide direction and open doors, but we still have to do the work."

EMPLOYMENT

Bagged Lunches, Bus Tickets, Clothing, Job Referrals, Resume Preparation, Research, Work Boots, Job Skills Training.

"I was scared," says Shawn about the first time he came to Our Place for help. "But there was lots of support there."

After completing a recovery program, Shawn returned to Our Place as a volunteer. "People noticed I had changed," he says, "and that I could have a future."

Our Place encouraged Shawn to apply for funding to learn a trade. "So, I made that leap and applied for college." It was hard, he admits, but he successfully completed a Metal Fabrication certification and now works full-time for a major aircraft construction company in Victoria.

"Shawn had the willingness to do whatever he had to do to change," says Bob, facilities manager at Our Place. "That saved him. We just gave him the platform to recover."

HEALTH

Acupuncture, Acupressure, Mental Health and Addiction Counselling, Chiropractic, Dental Hygiene, First Aid, Foot Care, Hair Cuts, Life Ring, Narcotics Anonymous, Showers, Vision testing.

"A lot of people at Our Place have never been touched in a healthy way before — in a way that is respectful," says acupressure practitioner Gordon Hawkins. "It's the language of touch — a conversation between me and my clients about how it feels to be healthy."

Alexandria works at Victoria Massage Therapy & Health Solutions, and volunteers her time at Our Place because, "You get to hold everyone's hand, and it's such a strong connection." All of the health services at Our Place are provided at no cost to family members by volunteers and professionals from the medical and health community.

"After finding out that a family member was a whiz at reassembling old computers, I put in a good word to a local business owner who hired him," says Outreach worker Roman. "He gained experience, and then opened his own shop fixing computers. We don't see him anymore because that's what happens once people find work. They want to live their new life, and leave the old one behind."



Our Values

Unconditional Love

We are an organization with Christian values and principles. We believe that everyone should experience unconditional love in a non-judgmental way.

Hope

We are founded on the belief each individual who comes through our doors will find inspiration, support and comfort. We believe in the potential of all and provide opportunities for positive change. We advocate for social justice.

Teamwork

We value the contributions of our staff and volunteers and ensure they are well trained and supported. We work together as one team committed to our mission, vision and values.

Belonging

We strive to create a nurturing atmosphere of home and family, where all are welcome and can experience a sense of hope and belonging. We are inclusive. Our doors are open to those of all cultures and beliefs.

Safety

We believe all who enter Our Place should feel secure and free from harassment or mistreatment of any kind. We endeavour to create a safe atmosphere where everyone can experience a sense of well-being.

PET CARE

Vets for Pets, Pet Food Bank.

When a family member's pet Rottweiler gave birth to nine puppies in the Our Place courtyard, he was at a complete loss as to what to do. Fortunately, Dr. Jane Vermeulen volunteers her time to run the popular Vets for Pets program at Our Place. At her regular monthly clinic, Jane and her wonderful crew of local veterinarians and student practitioners were able to vaccinate all the puppies and give them a clean bill of health. Pet owners can also access the Pet Food Bank, operated in partnership with the Sooke Animal Food and Rescue Society. SAFR organizer, Kai Yates, helped dispense nearly 17,000 lbs of pet food in the past year.

"Sometimes it feels like Bussy, my dog, is the only one who really loves me," says Albert. "When I'm having a bad day, I just need to look into his big eyes, and I know I matter — at least to him. If it wasn't for the pet food at Our Place, I'd skip meals to make sure Bussy was fed."



SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

First Nations Programs, Grief & Loss Support Group, Multi-Faith Chapel, Pastoral Care, Weddings & Memorials, Psychotherapy, Bible Study, Decolonization Circle, Life Ring, Meditation.

"Spiritual support is being there to listen and share," says Chaplain Julianne Kasmer. "People need, and want, to be heard at a heart level." After decades of struggle, Shirley has found a reason to live. From family member to working full-time at Our Place, Shirley is doing everything she can to help her grandchildren stay out of the mire, abuse and addiction she went through. And she has a community here. "I am giving back here at Our Place. I am looking after people and telling them my story. People will ask me how I work here and go home and not drink or use drugs anymore and I say, it's because I work by my higher power. I believe in my higher power."

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Advocacy, Counselling, Referrals to Long-term Housing, Residential Support Workers, Mental Health & Addiction Support, Landlord & Tenant Support.

Transitioning people from street entrenchment to stable housing. "I had a rough life," says Gordie, the pain glistening in his eyes speaking volumes. Retired now, he worked the same janitorial job for 30 years, while trying to keep his drug addiction a secret. But, as most addicts will attest, the secret became a nightmare of destructive thoughts that left Gordie wishing, "I wasn't around anymore because then the pain will stop." Thanks to the support he's found at Our Place, Gordie's been clean now for 11 months.

"It's remarkable," says Resident Support Worker David. "Gordie is finally learning the life skills he needs to be a vibrant member of his community again."



A Year in Review

Through hard work and dedication, we meet a variety of critical needs. Here's a snapshot of this past fiscal year's services and supports.

Open Monday to Friday 7 am to 5 pm

Open for drop-in on Sundays from 11:30 am - 4:00 pm

421,688 meals served

*61,252 increase from 2012/2013

9,935 hot showers taken

*2,460 increase from 2012/2013

2,729 one-on-one sessions with outreach workers

27 long-term residents successfully transitioned through our housing program

1,321 housing advocacy referrals

*621 increase

31,837 volunteer hours

*A savings of over \$1,000,000

82 detox and treatment referrals provided

473 employment referrals provided

864 acupressure & acupuncture treatments

1,417 ministry advocacy

Open lunch & dinner on statutory holidays

1,241 medical services referrals

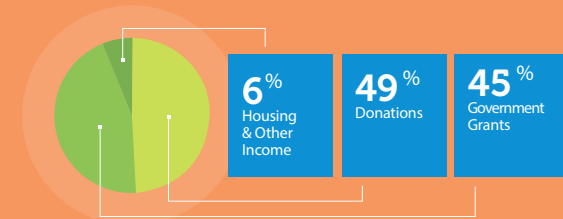
16,988 lbs pet food servings dispensed

1,893 crisis interventions

Financial Supports

Thousands of caring supporters joined us in helping Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Here's the breakdown of how we carefully used donor dollars to support our mission:

Revenue
\$4,262,224



Expenses
\$4,073,493



Total Surplus	\$ 188,731
Allocation to Operating and Capital Reserves	\$ 180,000
Net Surplus	\$ 8,731

Our financial information is based on audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2014.

Vision for the Future

This past year has been about cementing a solid foundation upon which to build our vision for the future. And that vision is bright.

Our goal is to open our doors from morning to night, seven days a week.

We have ambitious plans to make this a year of growth and expansion without losing any of our heart.

Our vision remains strong, and we invite you to partner with us.

With your generous support, Our Place can continue to bring hope and belonging to our community's most vulnerable citizens.

