

Our Place Progress Growth Opportunity





Message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

In the last year, two emergency situations arose that shone a spotlight on the strength, determination and compassion of Our Place and its staff. The first was a shortage of affordable housing that resulted in the erection of a tent city; and the second was the ongoing fentanyl overdose crisis.

In response to the first, Our Place was able to temporarily house over a hundred vulnerable people before successfully transitioning them into permanent housing. Some people were moved into market accommodation with a rental subsidy, while others needed more support. We continue to do this work today.

In response to the second, which has certainly taken its toll on all our staff, volunteers and family members, we were the first in the city to open an overdose prevention site or POD (Place of Dignity). With over 100 visits per day and 30 overdoses per month, the incredible and diligent staff has prevented hundreds of potential deaths without a single fatality.

As Our Place enters its 50th year, its value has never been more evident. In all that time, the roots of poverty and addiction haven't changed. People fall victim to poor health, accidents, heartbreak, mental health issues, trauma and abuse. Some blunder financially, while others have the rug pulled out from under them with no warning or explanation. But despite the growing numbers of people who cross our threshold, we are inspired daily by the stories of change. We are helping to reunite families; to help someone find a job, or work with a landlord so they don't lose their apartment; to work with someone who is ready to enter detox or treatment, and watch health return to both body and spirit.

None of this, of course, would be remotely possible without your continued support and encouragement. When we were overwhelmed last winter and worried about finances, you responded and we couldn't be more grateful.

We want to personally thank all our donors, supporters, volunteers and staff. With your help, we can and will continue to transform lives.

With much gratitude,

Don Evans
Executive Director

Diana Butler
Board Chair



Programs & Services

DROP-IN CENTRE

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

"I like to hang out in the lobby, chat with people, joke around," says Gordie. A recovering addict who lives in Our Place housing, Gordie says just being around people quiets the urge to use drugs and the dark thoughts of loneliness. Gordie has struggled with drug use since he was a boy, then one day he told his support worker:

"I can't live like this anymore." The worker, he adds, "could see it in my eyes: I wanted to change." He went through detox and has stayed clean for four years. "If I wasn't here, I'd be out using. I'd be dead," Gordie says. "This is a safe place with no judgment."

More than 400 people with no fixed address benefit from receiving mail and phone messages in the Phone & Message Centre.

EDUCATION

Art Group, Art Therapy, Library, Choir, Computer Training, Gardening, Story Collective, Job Skills, Literacy, Knitting, Financial Planning, Math Class, Bike Maintenance.

Douglas says moving from the since-dismantled tent city into the My Place shelter

"Some days, I actually feel like I'm simply being a loving mother," says Drop-In counsellor Thelma.

"A lot of the family members have never had that. They want reassurance, and someone who can acknowledge the uniqueness in them."

on Yates Street likely saved his life. But it wasn't just shelter that lifted his spirits, Douglas also embraced the educational opportunities as volunteers ran a music room and an art program. Until he started to paint, Douglas, who also goes by the name Poet, didn't know he had hidden talent. "I believe that instead of using more drugs, I painted. I had something else to do," he says.

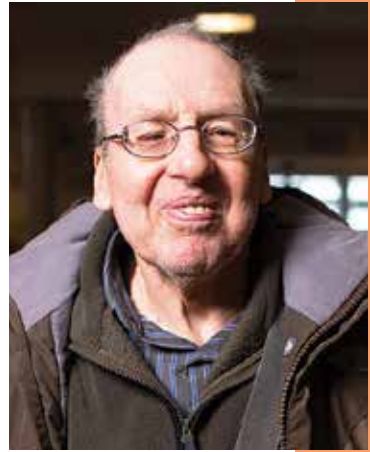
Our Place partners with community groups and volunteers to provide a vast array of opportunities to enrich intellect, develop personal insight, unleash creativity and learn practical skills.



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



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



MEALS

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

Bob has found a family at Our Place. The 56-year-old, who fell on hard times after a work injury, is on staff as a dishwasher in Our Place's busy kitchen. "I'm a steady employee now," he says. An accident kept Bob from working as a commercial painter and he found himself needing the services at Our Place. The organization serves more than 1,600 meals a day to people in vulnerable groups such as the working poor, vulnerable seniors, or those who are homeless. Bob said he started frequenting Our Place as a volunteer and got to know the people there before eventually applying for a job. Employment did a lot for him and his self-esteem, Bob said. "It was a real turnaround, for sure."

With help from local farmers and grocery stores that donate fresh fruit and vegetables, Our Place is 100% compliant with the Canada Food Guide.

OUTREACH

Advocacy, Financial Crisis Support, Field Trips, Hope Fund, Interventions, Sports, Hair Cuts, Showers, Access Pro Bono Legal Services, Overdose Prevention Site, Income Tax, Counselling, Aboriginal Housing Advocacy, Referrals to Employment, Housing, Government Agencies, Medical, Detox & Treatment Services.

"The Overdose Prevention Site has broken down the barrier of stigma surrounding active drug users," says Aura. "And opened the door to really honest conversation."

There are two startling statistics in the first six months of Our Place operating an Overdose Prevention Site in its courtyard. The first is that staff have been able to respond to, on average, 30 drug overdoses per month. The second, and more encouraging statistic during this deadly fentanyl epidemic, is there hasn't been a single fatality. The reason for this is the care and attention of the staff inside the orange POD or Place of Dignity. Working alongside paramedics and harm reduction workers, Aura is Our Place's Outreach Liaison. "The

POD is an extension of the Our Place Drop-In," she says. "So the same supports are needed." The overdose crisis has taken its toll on staff as people they have known and worked with for years have been dying at an accelerated rate. Having the paramedics on site has definitely helped with that fatigue, says Aura. The medical professionals are working alongside staff, which helps with the stress of finding someone you know in medical crisis from an overdose.

Our Place outreach workers meet people where they are at, building trust with a vulnerable population that has often felt at odds with mainstream society.

"It was a natural fit for us," says Eric Charman about having the Victoria real estate community sponsor a series of breakfasts. "Waking up in the cold with nothing to look forward to is about as depressing as it gets. If we can help make someone's day just that little bit better, then it means the world to us."

EMPLOYMENT

Peers Helping Peers, Hand-Up Program, Bus Tickets, Skills Training, Bagged Lunches.

She still remembers getting the call. Shirley was fresh out of a recovery centre and looking for work when she applied for a job as a custodian at Our Place Society (OPS), figuring it was a long shot at best. OPS invited Shirley to an interview and then surprised her by calling to ask if she could start work on Monday. "I was amazed that they hired me," she said, "because they know of my alcoholism." After years of battling addiction, Shirley seized the chance to get off the streets and turn her life around. "This place," she said, "it's a gift to me." Six years later, Shirley is still working at the centre five days a week, raising her two granddaughters and taking classes at Camosun College in the evenings to get her high-school diploma and eventually become a family-support worker. In what little spare time she has, the 54-year-old member of the Pacheedaht First Nation shares her experiences of addiction and recovery.

"I love the compassion and support that I get from my co-workers and family members," says Shirley. "It helps me to move forward and build up my strength and courage and hope and faith for others."

Over 35% of Our Place staff at 919 Pandora Avenue have first-hand experience with needing to access the services and supports of our organization.

HEALTH

Acupuncture, Acupressure, Chiropractic, Craniosacral Therapy, Massage, Therapy Dog, Dental Hygiene, First Aid, Foot Care, Hearing Clinics, Mayfair Optometric Clinic, Doctors, Nurses, Mental Health and Addiction Counselling, Reiki, Reflexology, Showers, Smart Recovery Program.

"Some people have never had healthy human touch," says Gordon, 55, who once slept in the Beacon Hill Park Band shell. "Many people — and including myself for a chunk of time — crave that."

Because he's lived the lonely life of a street person, Gordon can empathize with those who yearn for the touch of another human being. That's what he provides for clients at Our Place. Once a week, Gordon gives acupressure treatments for anyone who signs up. As well, he offers chair massage sessions. Between the ages of 29 and 32, Gordon lived on the streets of Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo. He wasn't a drinker or a drug-taker, but the pressures of regular life would cause him to "overload and crash." One day, Gordon was taken to hospital where doctors had a diagnosis: schizophrenia.

"When I got the diagnosis, it was a relief. It gave me a point of reference." After his hospital stay, he started on the road to recovery with the help of medication, therapy and Our Place.

By transforming a washroom closet into a Medical Room, Our Place now brings nurses, doctors and paramedics directly into the Drop-In Centre.



Our Values

Unconditional Love

We are an organization with spiritual 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

Seven years ago, eight people showed up at the very first Vets for Pets day at Our Place, and Dr. Jane Vermeulen wondered if the program would catch on. Today, Jane is passing the torch to a new team of volunteer veterinarians as the monthly program is so popular that people and their pets are being turned away. "At times, we have had over 100 people lined up with their pets," says Jane. "The demand is incredible."

The Vets for Pets program relies heavily on a volunteer team of 20 to 30 veterinary professionals from different clinics across Vancouver Island.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

"When my anxiety was out of control, the outreach workers and spiritual care team would settle me down, and give me a quiet place to eat," says Miatreya. "Everyone treated me really respectfully."

Grief & Loss Support, Multi-Faith Chapel, Pastoral Care, Weddings & Memorials, Bible Study, First Nations Healing Circle, Residential School Survivors Counselling, Recovery Groups, Smudges.

It's not easy being elderly and impoverished in the heart of the city, but the day can seem better after a hot meal at Our Place plus coffee and a chat with a member of our Spiritual Care Team. Brian is typical when asked what he wants to pray for today. "Just thanks," he says. "Thanks for all the blessings in my life. Thanks for today, thanks for love and God's grace. That's it, just Thanks!"

A team of spiritual care volunteers meet daily with our family members to offer support, advice and often just to listen.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING & SHELTER

Advocacy, Counselling, Referrals to Long-term Housing, Life Skills Training, Residential Support Workers, Mental Health & Addiction Support, Landlord & Tenant Support, Emergency Weather Response.

As a newborn, Kari was diagnosed with brain cancer that caused tumours inside her skull. Surgeons were able to save her life, but the damage was severe. As a young woman, she lived on the streets until moving into our transitional housing program. The top three floors of Our Place contain 45 single-person units. There, residential housing support workers work one-on-one with residents. "There are a lot of rules," says Kari. "But it keeps you stable."

"Living on the street is where I discovered all the different types of homelessness," adds Miatreya. "Poverty, addiction, medical, criminal . . . there are so many ways people end up in the discard pile."

In response to tent city, Our Place added over 150 transitional housing and shelter beds at My Place, Choices and First Met United Church.



A Year in Review

Through hard work and dedication, we meet a variety of critical needs. Here's a snapshot of this past year's services and supports made possible by our generous donors and funders.

*Statistics include Our Place, Choices & My Place where available

Our Place
is open every
day, including
all holidays

Summer: 7am - 6pm
Winter: 7am - 9pm

745,867
meals served

37,072
volunteer
hours

*A savings of
over \$895,000

14,021
hot showers
in Our Place
hygiene

3,004 one-on-one
sessions with
outreach workers

126 residents
transitioned through
our housing program

1131
housing
advocacy
referrals

2,202
crisis
interventions
by trained staff

136
detox and
treatment
referrals
provided

350
employment
referrals

365
legal
referrals

1,368
ministry
advocacy

430
foot baths

1115
medical
services
referrals

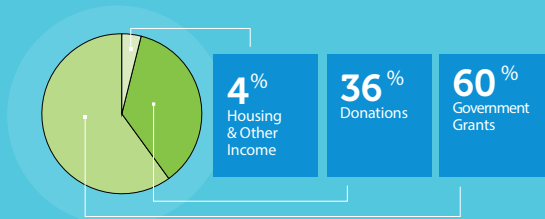
459
financial
support
grants

365
haircuts

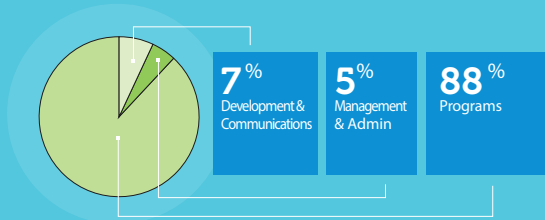
Financial Supports

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
\$9,146,317



Expenses
\$8,865,086



Total Surplus	\$ 281,231
Allocation to Operating and Capital Reserves	\$ 247,734
Net Surplus	\$ 33,497

Our financial information is based on audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2017.

Vision for the Future

Hope. When you think of Our Place, the first word you may think of is Belonging. We accept everyone where they are at. But we also want to give people Hope.

One of the ways we can do that is through a new employment program that will give people the skills and supports they need to not only enter the workplace, but to stay there. We aim to work with local companies who share our vision and are eager to join us in the success and joy that we know is in store.

A second way is a vision to transform Choices — the former Youth Detention Centre in View Royal — into a Therapeutic Recovery Community. Working with Island Health, BC Housing, and the judicial system, I believe that together we can make a positive impact in our community by ending the devastating cycle of homelessness to jail and back to the street.

Our vision is multi-faceted and intended to deliver a long-term recovery program in a safe, structured, therapeutic environment guided by professional staff. Our goal is that every individual who graduates from this program will be in control of their addiction, have a place to live, a job, and all the life skills necessary to not only survive in the wider community, but to thrive in it.

Do you share our vision and want to help? If so, I would love to hear from you.

With much gratitude,
Don Evans,
Executive Director



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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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ourplace

Hope and Belonging

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