

Our Stories

FALL NEWSLETTER
2017

inside



3

Our Events

Pride Parade, Handsome Day, Paint-In, and more

4

Our Family

When you've been married for 32 years, the idea of living apart seems unfathomable. And yet that's exactly what happened to Greg and Tracy

6

Our Programs

It was only after his own personal experience with therapy that Craig Extine realized he wanted something different for his life

7

Our Donors

The simple task of dropping off refundable beverage containers to Bottle Depot created a wonderful impact in our city

We thank Tech Web Direct for donating resources to print this colour newsletter



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

Executive Director's Message

When I look out the windows at Our Place, I see a veritable flock of cranes constructing new buildings in our downtown core.

While part of me relishes the thought of more and much needed housing, another part of me wants to turn this economic boom into a positive for the most vulnerable population in our community.

It's far too easy to dismiss people without jobs as being "lazy", but that hasn't been my experience. Instead, I see all the barriers that must be hurdled in order to secure employment in the first place. The people who I see on a daily basis at Our Place shouldn't be lumped together as facing the same challenge. Some have been abused from birth and never stood a chance at school; others have anger issues stemming from trauma and mental health issues; some have suffered injury and/or brain damage; and others have been told all of their life that they are worthless.

We're going to change this.

The groundwork has been laid, and beginning this fall a unique Employment Program is being piloted at Our Place to address all of these hurdles – and I couldn't be more excited.

This comprehensive approach, new to our community, is designed specifically for those who are facing multiple barriers to both training and employment, including the



community members at Our Place who are often among the "hardest to employ."

Best of all, Our Place's support won't end there. We want to ensure that people don't just have a job for one day, but that they can have a career. To that end, we will work with and support each employer and employee to overcome any hurdles that may occur.

The bottom line is, we want this to be a positive experience for everyone involved. Together, we will celebrate every milestone along the way, and we will be there as a partner in every success.

Yes, we plan to teach individuals to fish even if they've never dipped a toe in the ocean before.

With warm regards,

Don Evans
Executive Director



THANK YOU!

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU. We are truly grateful to everyone who contributes to Our Place. We appreciate the care and compassion shown by donations of time, talent and money that benefit our family members. The over 60 programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!



Our Events

Pride Parade

It was another fun day of diversity at the **Pride Parade** as Victoria celebrated with a colourful parade downtown, followed by a festival in James Bay. Our Place staff, volunteers, friends and supporters participated by decorating the two Our Place vans, plus walking in the parade to show support for the LGBTQ community.

Aboriginal Day

We celebrated **National Aboriginal Day** with traditional First Nations food, music, dance,

games and crafts. The Esquimalt Dancers & Drummers took over our courtyard for an incredible performance. Our kitchen prepared delicious bison burgers for lunch and venison stew for supper. Over one quarter of our family members identify as Aboriginal and appreciated having their unique culture celebrated. Thank you to Vancity once again for its contribution toward the event.

Moss Street Paint-In

Our Place artists (both family members and staff) participated again in this year's **TD Art Gallery Paint-In** on Moss Street thanks to an invitation from Fairfield United Church. The church generously provided the space, while the artists delivered the inspiration. And this year, the event organizers allowed us to expand our presence to the street.

Hey Handsome

Handsome Day for the men was another great success with haircuts, manicures, pizza, gifts and more.



Sikh Spirit

It has been wonderful working with the Gurdwara Singh Sadha and Sikh Youth of Victoria as they have prepared several delicious meals for our family members. The Khalsa Diwan Society of Victoria also pitched in with preparing the langar, while the Sikh Spirit Punjabi School Campers, pictured above, stopped by with some peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the Our Place family.



< **BASEBALL & BBQ:** As a special treat during the summer months, the Outreach crew rents a field in Beacon Hill Park to host several days of baseball. Spread over July and August, the Our Place Drop-In closes from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (except for the Overdose Prevention Site) while we promote friendship and fellowship through baseball and a barbeque provided by the ever-creative kitchen staff.

Our Family

Greg & Tracy's Story

“After 30 years together, we were living apart, and not by choice.”

When you've been married for 32 years, the idea of living apart seems unfathomable. And when those decades have been as turbulent as Greg and Tracy's life has been, your partner becomes your rock, your only anchor in the storm.

Greg and Tracy met when they were both in their early 20s. They were both “hard partiers” with a dark undertone that would shape their lives ahead.

Greg was coming out of a divorce, while Tracy's journey had seen her fresh out of hospital, the victim of an abusive boyfriend, sex work, and a cloak of depression that nearly ended her life.

“I don't know what the hell happened,” she admits. “But I had a bullet lodged in my skull. They (hospital staff) told me it was a suicide attempt.”

Tracy was 23 and a single mother at the

time. Her son, Danny, was living with his grandparents, and that's where he stayed.

Shortly after meeting at a local Victoria bar, Greg and Tracy moved in together and then quickly tied the knot. Their common ground, however, was alcohol, which soon escalated into heroin.

“It was the drug I was looking for all my life,” says Greg as he describes the euphoria and escape he felt when using.

To support their habit, Greg sold Hydromorphan pills, a strong opioid he could buy for \$5 and sell for \$50.

“I was making good money,” he admits. “Until the habit got too much.”

They both ended up serving jail time for theft.

When Tracy got pregnant with her second son, Michael, their lifestyle didn't change. When Michael was 18 months old, family services took him away. After some struggle, they managed to get their son returned, but lost him again when their addiction fought back.

After the second time, Greg and Tracy entered the methadone program. When they were both stable, Michael was

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE PROGRAM TODAY

JOIN THE OVER 700 MEMBERS of our Circle of Love program today! Our Place is grateful to our monthly Circle of Love donors who spread out annual donations over 12 months, which helps us plan and budget more effectively, and reduces mailing and environmental costs. Monthly donors receive a single consolidated charitable tax receipt annually. Monthly giving via credit card or direct debit from your bank account is simple to set up — please give us a call at 250-413-3161 to find out more.



returned to them. And 30 years later, they are both still on the program.

Sadly, Michael passed away from an overdose in 2016 at the age of 28.

"He kept his heroin use a secret from us," says Greg, the pain still evident in his eyes. "He only told us about it a couple of months before he died."

After his death, the parents discovered that Michael had overdosed four times previously on fentanyl-laced heroin before his death in a stairwell off Fort Street.

"His friend, the person he was using with,

panicked and left him there," says Greg. "If he had only called 9-1-1."

To make matters worse, Greg and Tracy were living apart at the time of their son's death. Not through choice, but circumstance.

They had both been sleeping on mats in a gymnasium at First Met United Church on a night shelter program being run by Our Place, when health problems meant Greg had to be on oxygen.

He was given a room at Salvation Army in order to have an oxygen tank, while Tracy remained on the nightly mats.

Fortunately, they could spend their days together at Our Place where they would meet up for breakfast and supper. In

the afternoons, they would both sleep wherever they could find a space.

Recently, however, Our Place managed to move them both into its fifth floor housing where they have rooms directly across the hall from each other.

Greg grins as he says Tracy comes and knocks on his door every morning so they can spend the day together.

With the help of the Our Place housing support team, the next step, they both say, is to move into a one-bedroom apartment where they can be together always.



< **FUN WITH VINYL** - Thanks to a grant from Vancity Community Foundation and private donors, Our Place's new delivery van was purchased from the good folks at Suburban Motors and wrapped in cool Our Place graphics by GraphicFX Signworks.

NEW VAN GRAPHICS

NEW AT OUR PLACE!

Our Programs

Mental Health
with Craig Extine



It was only after his own personal experience with therapy that Craig Extine realized he wanted something different for his life. He wanted to help others.

As the drop-in mental health counsellor who volunteers with Our Place every Monday, Craig now helps the family members with many of their issues: addiction, anxiety, grief and trauma.

Having recently moved to Victoria from Los Angeles, Craig decided that Our Place was exactly where he wanted to volunteer his time.

"I wanted to be part of my new community. I could see that Our Place was a great organization. It also was an opportunity for me to begin my practice as a new therapist."

Craig was born in Texas and then spent six years as a youth living in Tokyo. His family returned to the U.S. when he was 16. His experience living in Japan profoundly shaped him, leaving him with both a sensitivity and understanding of cultural differences.

After high school, Craig worked as a musician along with numerous other jobs to support his musical career. But after his own personal

experience with therapy, he realized he wanted something different for his life.

"I discovered the power of what can happen in a therapy room – that it had the capacity to influence changes that I didn't know were possible."

"I was curious when I began my practice at Our Place how quickly the family would engage. It's gone so smoothly. There are quite a few family members who are utilizing counselling as a consistent resource to identify goals and to report their progress, as well as their challenges."

"Trauma is the underlying issue for many of the symptoms presented by the family. My work is to focus on establishing safety in the moment, and highlighting and working to expand the strengths and assets that are always present in the family member, in spite of seemingly overwhelming difficulties."

Craig is also enjoying his time here.

"I enjoy getting to know the Our Place family. I recognize so much resilience and strength in them. I believe there is a power in honouring their experience as best as I can. It's been very rewarding."

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE
THE MARSHMALLOWS IN OUR COCOA

BECOME PART OF A DYNAMIC TEAM of compassionate people assisting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Volunteer orientation sessions happen every month and are the best way to find out more about who we are, what we do and how you can get involved! For more information, visit our website or call Mark, Manager of Volunteers, at 250-388-7112 Ext. 258.



Our Donors

Thank you to Bottle Depot and our wonderful community for raising an incredible \$5,390 during the Month of June!

The simple task of dropping off refundable beverage containers to Bottle Depot created a wonderful impact in our city – we were able to provide nutritious meals for over 1,700 people through this great community event.

We are excited to announce that our partnership with the Bottle Depot is continuing. The first community Our Place Society Charity Bin has been placed on Blanshard Street between Foo and St. Andrew's Cathedral.

We encourage you to drop off refundable beverage containers to this bin throughout



the year and help us continue to turn refunds into meals.

If you can't make it downtown to the charity bin, you can still take your containers to the Bottle Depot and request your refund be credited to the Our Place Society charity account.

Thank you again to everyone at Bottle Depot for your support, hard work and commitment to helping make our community better.

Do you or someone you know have a business or a great location that would be a good fit for an Our Place Charity Bin? Please call Alyson at 250-413-3161.



< BUYING LUNCH FOR EVERYONE: The Hotel Association of Greater Victoria dropped by Our Place to donate a cheque for \$7,800 in order to sponsor 12 days of lunches (1 per month) for the most vulnerable in our community. Thank You!

Things We Need

**MENS CLOTHING
SOCKS & UNDERWEAR
BOOTS & SHOES
GLOVES & SCARVES
TOQUES & HATS
WARM JACKETS
BLANKETS & TENTS
SLEEPING BAGS
NAIL CLIPPERS
TOILETRIES**

Winter is coming! Our fellow citizens in need will feel the cold and damp on the streets of Greater Victoria. Empty your closets and bring your warm coats and jackets, blankets and sleeping bags to Our Place. Donations of new underwear and socks are always greatly appreciated.

**Contact Tracy at
250-388-7112 ext. 259**



Creative Ways to Give



PASSING THE SQUEAKY TOY: After seven years, Dr. Jane Vermeulen, third from left, is passing on the squeaky bone and catnip toy of Vets For Pets to Dr. Kristin Zajackowski, second from left, who will continue to lead the very popular program at Our Place. Kristin and her incredible team of volunteer professionals try to see a maximum of 60 animals on each clinic day, which is held on the second Thursday of each month.

Sponsor-a-Breakfast

This popular morale-boosting and team-building opportunity invites your group to sponsor and serve a warm, nutritious morning meal to kick-start the day for over 300 family members. Our talented kitchen staff prepares a nutritious, cooked breakfast. A \$500 fee covers the cost of the food, and we encourage an extra donation to help fund support for people accessing our services.



For more information, visit our website or contact Tracy at 250-388-7112 ext. 259

Create A Legacy of Love

Once you have provided for loved ones in your will, perhaps you would consider including a charitable bequest to Our Place Society. Research shows that more than 1.5 million Canadians alive today have made charitable bequests and another 1 million are considering it. A gift in your will is a cost-effective way to ensure that the people and charitable causes most important to you are remembered. At Our Place, legacy gifts provide vital, stable support for our work, and will play a key role in the coming years as we continue to deepen our engagement with, and service to, the community.

For more information, please contact Lori Angelini at 250-413-3161

Our Place Recent Stats

2016/2017

Meals Served
745,867



Volunteer Hours
37,072



Showers in Hygiene
14,021



One-on-One Sessions
3,004



Crisis Interventions
2,202



Your Help is needed this Winter

Moving into fall and winter, the need to open our Drop-In floor and Nutrition Bar into the evening will add over \$200,000 to our annual budget. To make this possible, we desperately need your help to keep vulnerable people warm, safe and fed during the cold, wet months ahead. If you can help with a financial donation, please call:

250-413-3161


Hope and Belonging

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