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FALL NEWSLETTER
2016

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



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

Executive Director's Message

No sooner had the last resident of tent city moved off the courthouse lawn when people began asking: "What's next?"

And it's a good question. Throughout the tenure of tent city, Our Place experienced continued growth in the use of its facilities with vulnerable people accessing food, programs and services.

Our meal program has grown by over 100,000 meals year over year with 2015/2016 hitting a record 680,804 meals served. The 2016/2017 year began on April 1 and we're already on track for another 100,000 increase.

If this pace continues, Our Place will be serving an astounding 1,000,000 meals per year within two years.

Thankfully, we have a dedicated team of staff and volunteers that knows how to stretch a food budget. But along with filling this essential need, Our Place also wants to do more about breaking the cycle of poverty.

When tent city arose, we responded to BC Housing's request for emergency housing by opening My Place and Choices transitional homes. These facilities, along with overnight shelter at First Met, are still in operation, and at capacity, but at present we don't know what BC Housing's long-term plans might be.

Until more permanent housing options come online — and many are in the early stages of development — it is up to us to think of, and suggest, creative solutions.



So how do we help break that cycle of homelessness?

One answer we have been exploring is the opportunity to transform Choices into a Therapeutic Recovery Community. Our vision entails working closely with the courts to divert people who are homeless from going to jail. So many people who end up in institutions suffer from childhood abuse, trauma, mental illness, and addiction.

A recovery centre would focus on healing those wounds, plus empowering individuals with life, social and work skills in order for them to regain the ability to function better in society.

If approved, this would be an exciting next step in the Our Place story.

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 increased programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!



Our Events

Aboriginal Day

We celebrated **National Aboriginal Day** with traditional First Nations food, music, dance, games and crafts. Our Place residents, Renee, Linda and Marie (pictured above) enjoyed making traditional cedar roses, while the Esquimalt Dancers & Drummers took over our courtyard for an incredible performance. Lunch was fresh salmon from Finest At Sea. One quarter of our family members identify as Aboriginal and appreciated having their unique culture celebrated. Thank you to Vancity for its contribution toward the event.



Moss Street Paint-In

Our Place artists (both family members and staff) participated 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. Art has also played a large part in helping to transform lives at Choices Transitional Home in View Royal. Residents, fresh from tent city, embraced the opportunity to open the art room and discover their untapped creativity. Volunteers have been teaching art classes and pottery workshops at the former youth detention centre.

Food Truck Gala

Local businessman Scott Burley had so much fun hosting a special **Food Truck Gala** last summer that he brought it back bigger and better this year. "I want everyone to be treated with kindness and respect, regardless of their income or station in life," says Burley who



owns and operates **2 Burley Men** moving company. "When you're living on the street, you don't often get a chance to try out some of the great food we have in this city." The fresh-made lunch included burritos from Taco Justice, gourmet burgers from DeadBeetz, and pizza from Ali Baba Pizza. For dessert, Saltchuck Pie Company dished up fruit pies, while Judy's Snack Shack served Sno Cones, and Graphic F/X provided soft drinks.

< **PRIDE PARADE:** It was another great event as Victoria celebrated Pride with a colourful parade downtown, followed by a full day of festivities. Our Place staff, volunteers, friends and supporters participated by decorating the Our Place truck and van, plus walking in the parade to show support for the LGBTQ community.

Our Family

Lloyd's Story

“ **If you've never been broken, you can't be fixed.** ”

Lloyd freely admits he has made his fair share of mistakes, but for the most part he was able to stand on his own two feet while supporting a wife and two children — until the day his wife died.

“Without my wife, I just wanted to die,” he admits.

At age 54, and married for 23 years, the hard-working bricklayer was brought so low by his wife's death that he returned to a lifestyle that he knew well, a lifestyle that had tripped him up in the past.

“I was suicidal, super depressed, and began using drugs,” he says. “I planned to take some heroin and take myself out.”

Each time he hit a new low, however, something inside made Lloyd reach out for help.

“I entered detox nine separate times in four years,” he says, shaking his head in disbelief.

“But never got referred to

stabilization even once. I was put back on the street over and over again.”

Finally, he managed to get into the transitional housing unit at Our Place.

“I was so glad to get a shot,” he says. “I'm so very, very pleased to be here.”

Working with his housing support worker, Lloyd, 57, is attempting to put his life back together again.

Although his own childhood was troubled — his parents' marriage breaking up when he was 12; his father having become an alcoholic — Lloyd says he's always been “very grateful to have my mom,” adding, “she's very candid” which, with a twinkle in his eye, means she calls him on his bullshit.

As for his own children, a daughter and a son, Lloyd smiles and says, “They're doing good. I'm a grandfather now to two beautiful baby girls.”

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.



He looks down in a moment of self appraisal and adds, "I'm the one who needs all the repair work. But, you know, if you've never been broken, you can't be fixed."

Lifting his gaze again, Lloyd says, "I'm working my way back — and at Our Place I finally have a safe place to do it."

One of the ways Lloyd is working his way back toward his goal of independent living is by taking a part-time job at Our Place with the custodial team.

"I chased the job," he says. "When I heard there was an opening, I jumped at it because I've always liked to stay busy."

He adds, "I got my first job at 11 years old, washing dishes at White Spot here in Victoria. I've also done landscaping, demolition, painting, and earned my red seal in brick laying."

Visitors may spot Lloyd washing the pavement in front of the Our Place building on Pandora Avenue. Every day, he takes either the hose or the power washer and clears all the dirt and discarded cigarette butts from the main entrance.

"Of all the drugs I've ever done, cigarettes is the one I regret the most," he says.

Keeping the area clean is part of Our Place's commitment to being a good neighbour.

When he's not working, Lloyd enjoys the support from his fellow residents, especially as an active participant in the peer-led SMART recovery program.

A large part of the SMART program is learning to change self-defeating thinking, emotions and actions.

"I've kept my sense of humour," he says. "I like to laugh at myself, and enjoy being upbeat and optimistic. I don't want to harm myself anymore. I am truly grateful. I want to live now."



< A MANLY TREAT - Erin is the organizer of our very popular Beauty Day for the women of Our Place. So when the men decided fair play dictated they deserved a bit of pampering, too, Erin reached out to local businesses and supporters to donate manly items to create a special day just for them.

HANDSOME DAY

NEW AT OUR PLACE!

Our Programs

Vets for Pets
with
Dr. Jane Vermeulen



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 struggling to bring more veterinarians on board because 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. “Which is why we had to get people to start registering. The demand is incredible.”

Jane relies heavily on a volunteer team of 8 to 15 veterinary professionals from different clinics across Vancouver Island, but she desperately needs more veterinarians to join the ranks.

“It’s so good for our profession,” she says. “We help so many vulnerable people, and stop communicable diseases from spreading among the animal population.”

Some of the most popular treatments are vaccinations and flea treatment. However, these are also the most expensive.

“We don’t receive any government grants,

so all our funding is by donation. Some pharmaceutical companies have made donations of product, which is great, as flea control can cost between ten to twenty-five dollars per pet.”

Having a record of flea control and vaccinations is an important ingredient in helping people find housing, too.

“Landlords that allow pets want to make sure the animal has a clean bill of health,” says Jane. “And without Vets for Pets this would be near impossible for those living on the street or in poverty.”

The popularity of the program has reached beyond Victoria, and now Jane is receiving calls to help set up similar programs in other municipalities.

“This is the first of its kind in B.C.,” explains Jane. “We’re fully accredited, and each appointment lasts about five minutes due to the sheer volume of pets we see. The people we interact with are very friendly and very appreciative, as are their pets.”

Jane and her team try to see a maximum of 60 animals on each clinic day. Pet food is also collected and distributed by the Pet Food Bank at Our Place, which is run by a great team of animal-loving volunteers.

Jane can be contacted, and donations made, through the program’s new website: <http://vetsforpetsvictoria.com>

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE RAISINS IN OUR OATMEAL

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 Julia, Manager of Volunteers, at 250-388-7112 Ext. 243.



Our Donors

“You don’t know what to expect, but it was such a surprise how many individuals came up and said thank you.”

Alison Wedekind is a senior sales manager for Concert Properties whose first experience with Our Place was serving breakfast to a hungry crowd as part of a special four-day Sponsor A Breakfast program sponsored in partnership by four local companies: Concert, Farmer, Colliers, and Stantec.

“I absolutely loved it,” she says about being part of the breakfast team. “Along with being a great opportunity to serve such an appreciative population, it was also a chance for us to connect with some of our business partners in a very meaningful way.”

With a staff of five, Concert is one of the smaller businesses, so they also appreciated

being part of a larger partnership that was spearheaded by Stantec.

Stantec, an engineering, architectural and environmental services firm, is known for its philanthropy, and is an important sponsor of Our Place’s annual Hungry Hearts fund-raiser. After serving its first breakfast, the company quickly saw what a rewarding team-building opportunity it offered.

Also, for the third year in a row, the local Stantec team coordinated a clothing and toiletry drive for Our Place. Employees volunteered to collect and deliver dozens of boxes of winter clothing, blankets, soaps, shampoo and shaving supplies that provide for the needs of hundreds of homeless and impoverished individuals.

Companies can sponsor a hot cooked breakfast to kick start the day for over 300 family members for only \$500. As that amount only covers the cost of the food, additional donations are very much appreciated as they help fund support for people accessing our services.



< **AON WORLD SERVICE DAY:** Long-time supporter, AON Insurance Brokers, celebrated its World Service Day at Our Place by donating and serving a great barbeque lunch for family members, including food prep, cleaning the courtyard and outside windows, plus donating a new power washer — as our old one gave up the ghost — to keep our courtyard and sidewalks in great condition.



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



SPIRITUAL DREAM TEAM: Julianne and Oceanna welcome Rose, right, to the Spiritual Care Team at Our Place. Along with a team of volunteers, Julianne, Oceanna and Rose offer a ministry of presence for our family members, including an expanding number of regular programs, from study and discussion groups and healing circles to outings and connections to cultural and spiritual events in the community, to memorial services and grief support.

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

2015/2016

Meals Served
680,804



Volunteer Hours
37,559



Showers in Hygiene
13,323



One-on-One Sessions
2,051



Crisis Interventions
1,149



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


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