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FALL NEWSLETTER
2019

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Chief Executive Officer's Message

There is a problem on our streets, and sadly the fallout is concentrated on the boulevard in front of Our Place.

People are frightened. They are frightened of dying in alleyways and stairwells, and so they congregate in front of Our Place and The Harbour (Island Health's Supervised Consumption Site next door) because they know we are their best chance for survival.

Unfortunately, the public can misconstrue this sanctuary as the opposite of what it is, and often blame Our Place for the homeless situation in our community rather than being one of the few organizations that is attempting to solve these complex issues.

But here's a bold statement: If there were enough overnight shelter beds to accommodate everyone, there would be no need for people to sleep on the sidewalks in front of Our Place and other local organizations.

People sleep there, on the cold cement, because they have nowhere else to go where they feel safe or welcome.

As a community, we have rallied around the model of "Housing First". We hold it up as the gold standard of doing the right thing. Unfortunately, it takes a long time to build housing, and the reality is that for so many people, they just aren't capable of keeping that housing without support.

And while we wait for housing to be



built, we can't sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

Right now, we need significantly more shelter beds. We need sober beds, beds for couples and those with pets, but most of all we need beds with built-in support services for those who are struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

People with addiction issues won't go into a night shelter if they have to use in the middle of the night. If we want to address the street problem, we also need to address the issues surrounding it.

Once people have appropriate shelter, only then can we begin to address the underlying issues that have made people homeless in the first place.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Evans".

Don Evans
Chief Executive Officer



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

50th Anniversary Block Party

You know you're busy when you nearly miss your own 50th anniversary, but that's exactly what happened to Our Place as we quickly planned a **Community Block Party** to celebrate 50+ years of service. "When our 50th anniversary rolled in, we were so busy opening New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal, launching a Next Steps to Employment program, handing over our Overdose Prevention program to The Harbour next door, and

building a new storage facility for people with nowhere to store their belongings, that we forgot to celebrate," says Our Place CEO Don Evans. "But we made up for it with a family-friendly block party." By closing Pandora between Vancouver and Quadra for the day, Our Place and its neighbours took the celebration to the street with a Save-On-Foods BBQ, music, jugglers, and so much more.

New Roads

When the community comes together, the result is transformative. Our Place unveiled two major projects at the **New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community** in July. With the help of HeroWork's incredible crew of 500 volunteers and 120 businesses, we transformed the Therapeutic Recovery Community's main living quarters, including 8 living areas and 24 sleeping suites that will house up to 48 men. In addition, HeroWork doubled the size of the dining room space, added



an arts and crafts room, created an outside food production area and erected a must-see longhouse style pavilion at the facility entry.

Simultaneously to this renovation, a very generous donation allowed for the creation of an amazing **Healing Garden** (Photo: top). What was once an institutional, concrete compound is now a green and serene oasis.



< **PRIDE PARADE:** It was another fun day of diversity at the Pride Parade as Victoria celebrated with a colourful parade downtown, followed by a day-long festival in James Bay. Our Place staff, volunteers, friends and supporters participated by decorating the Our Place van, plus walking in the parade to show support for the LGBTQ2 community.

Our Family

Robert's Story

“ Always borrow money from a pessimist. He won't expect it back. ”

Robert is no stranger to diversity. Life has placed many obstacles in his path, and yet he battles them all with a joke on his lips, and a smile on his face.

Sitting in his wheelchair in the Our Place dining room, enjoying that day's lunch, Robert is quick with a quip:

“There were times my pants were so thin I could sit on a dime and tell if it was heads or tails.”

Born in Victoria, Robert had to “grow up fast” when his father was diagnosed with a brain tumour, and died within two years. Robert was only 16 at the time. He left high school to take over his father's job in maintenance and custodial.

Two years later, however, he went back to school and began searching for a career that spoke to him. He earned both his private and commercial pilot's license, but found the money wasn't great.

He then earned his welder's ticket and worked for several years welding trucks . . . until the contract ended.

Frustrated, he got his Class 2 driver's license and went to work as a bus driver with Greyhound with routes all over Vancouver Island.

That job lasted for 16 years and allowed him the opportunity to build up a repertoire of groan-inducing jokes that he could share with the passengers.

“I have enough money to last me the rest of my life . . . unless I buy something.”

When the bus industry began to shrink, Robert found he had to reinvent himself once again. He worked in Victoria Hospice as a cleaner, and a two-year stint with Empress Taxi that he helped rebrand as Yellow Cabs.

But then, at the age of 54, Robert suffered a stroke in the same area of the brain where his father's tumour had been located.

The stroke paralyzed his entire left side and put him in a wheelchair.

“What do you say to a camouflaged person in a wheelchair?”

You can hide, but you can't run!”



BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE PROGRAM TODAY

Why not join the many donors who have chosen to give monthly? This eco-friendly method ensures the money saved on printing and mailing receipts goes directly to providing food and services for people in need. Plus, you get more control over your giving because you can cancel or alter your gift at any time. And, we'll send you one receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return. Interested? Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 to sign up.



Determined not to let this next obstacle keep him down, Robert polished up his joke book and started physical therapy.

Every day for the last six years, Robert has been working hard to recover, and now his left side is working again.

He still needs the wheelchair, but “I can walk about twelve feet before I fall down. If they named a race after me, at least it would be over quick.”

Unable to work, Robert ended up on disability and living in subsidized housing.

“I have a good view of the Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre,” he quips. “I watched Elton John’s limo drive inside the arena . . . he didn’t wave back.”

Robert never married and has no children “that I know of.”

His disability payments get him through the month, but only with a little help.

“That’s why I come to Our Place,” he says. “I like the lunches. I make my own breakfast and supper, but Our Place’s lunch helps stretch my disability cheque through the week.”

“Plus,” he adds with a sly grin, “they don’t make me do the dishes.”

But it’s not just the meals that brings Robert down to 919 Pandora. It’s also the social aspect.

“I get to crack a few jokes with people and that makes the day go a little easier. It’s a social outing. I eat my lunch and then do my chores for the day.”

Moving forward, Robert is now eyeing some part-time work to supplement his disability income.

“My career isn’t over yet,” he says, “but dance instructor might not be in the cards.”



< COOL CATS - Thanks to the Charlton L. Smith Foundation for its donation towards sports equipment and BBQ supplies, family members enjoyed four baseball games in Beacon Hill Park, featuring Harbour Cats players at the inaugural game in July. A home run!

BASEBALL AFTERNOON

WITH THE HARBOURCATS!

Our Programs

The Diverters

— a pilot program of Next Steps



In Victoria, the sight of a returnable bottle or a discarded paper cup being placed in the trash can ruin someone's perfectly nice day.

"No!" The person whose day is ruined will scream. "Don't you love our planet?"

Well, at Our Place, not only do we love our planet, but we also see an opportunity to help those struggling to maintain regular work.

The individuals that Our Place's **Next Steps to Employment** program works with often don't have success with regular jobs. Because of injury, addiction issues, mental health issues (such as severe anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and trauma), plus other challenges, a 9 to 5 job isn't going to work.

All of which means Next Steps has to think outside the box, or in this case, inside the recycling box.

The Diverters is a group of waste-diverters dedicated to improving their economic opportunities, and reducing the stigma they face as informal recyclable collectors.

Based on the Bidders Project out of Vancouver, **The Diverters** — a name the group picked for itself — consists of 12 active participants in a new pilot project

that is already receiving glowing accolades.

The first companies to come onboard as partners are **Atomique Productions** and **Fort Properties Ltd.** While Atomique hired Diverters for its major entertainment events, Fort Properties contracts two Diverters for two hours, three times per week.

The Diverters job is to sort all of the recyclables, making sure the soft plastics are in one area, tin in another, cardboard in its proper place, newspaper in another, etc.

At the same time, The Diverters positively contribute to our environment by diverting a considerable amount of waste from landfills.

This in turn also saves the company money with lighter loads for disposal, and even saves the waste disposal company in fines for contaminated recyclables.

The Diverters are also examining the company's waste to measure what recyclables are being improperly disposed of, and offering solutions for improvement.

Each Diverter earns \$15 per hour plus, depending on the contract, also gets to keep any returnables. Those returnables go to **The Bottle Depot**, which is also onboard as a valuable partner.

Although still in the pilot stage — and in need of an additional \$15,000 in funding in order to continue — The Diverters is proving to be a win, win, win solution for everyone involved.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

BECOME PART OF A DYNAMIC TEAM of compassionate people assisting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Volunteer orientation sessions happen bimonthly 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 email Bre, our Coordinator of Volunteers, at bres@ourplacesociety.com



Our Donors

“We want to be part of solutions for the challenges that face our region.”

Wilson's Trucking was formed on Saltspring Island in the 1940s and 50s as a general delivery company. In 1962, the business moved to Victoria. Kello Wilson managed the operation while his wife Mary saw her role as making sure the business gave back to the community.

Now owned by Kello and Mary's son, John, **Wilson's Transportation** and the **Wilson Group of Companies** has grown immensely. With a fleet of more than 160 vehicles across Vancouver Island, the family operates a number of ground transportation services including Gray Line Sightseeing Victoria as well as YYJ Airport Shuttle and the newly-minted BC Ferries Connector.

While President and CEO John Wilson steers the direction of the ever-growing transportation empire, he ensures that daughter Samantha takes a leadership role in giving back to the community.

“We have three pillars when it comes to giving back,” explains Samantha. The first is sports (John is part owner of the Victoria HarbourCats, the BCHL's Victoria Grizzlies and the VIJHL's Peninsula Panthers), second is green projects (they strive daily to find green solutions to the region's transportation challenges), and third is family health.

Family health is where the Wilson family support of Our Place shines through.

“We want to be part of solutions for the challenges that face our region,” explains John. “That's why we are strong donors and supporters of the work that Our Place does.”

“You just have to go through the doors and see the good that's being done,” adds Samantha. “When I serve breakfast at 919 Pandora, I'm seeing people from all walks of life being helped and have so much respect and gratitude for the Our Place team”



< **WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS:** Turn it into lemonade and then donate the proceeds to Our Place just like this incredible group of kids did. Amazingly, this young group of friends organized a lemonade stand near their home and raised \$400 for Our Place!



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.

Creative Ways to Give



JAYMAC GARDEN: The Healing Garden at New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community was unveiled to the public at a special open house in July! This peaceful oasis was made possible through a generous donation from a longtime Our Place supporter.

Recent Grants

Our Place Society is proud to recognize the generosity of recent grantors to support people in need:

- **City of Victoria Strategic Planning grant:** \$30,000 for Seniors Inclusion program
- **ALACS Fund:** \$28,600 for fitness equipment for New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community
- **Coast Capital Savings Credit Union** \$25,000 for front-line worker training
- **Greater Victoria Savings and Credit Union Legacy Fund of Vancity** \$10,000 for the
- **Next Steps Women in Progress program**
- **United Church of Canada Seeds of Hope:** \$10,000 for Seniors Services
- **United Church of Canada: Gifts with Vision:** \$6,600 for bus tickets and transportation
- **Windsor Wellness Fund of United Way Greater Victoria:** \$5,000 for the seniors inclusion program
- **The Stewart Fund of the Vancouver Foundation:** \$4,565 for improvements to the Downtown Drop-In Centre

Our Place Save The Date

CBC Radio & Our Place present
A dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' Classic Tale

A Christmas Carol

Music by Our Place and REACH Choir,
& Victoria Conservatory of Music
Suzuki Strings Department

Friday, Dec. 13, 2019
7:00pm / Doors: 6:30pm
at **First Met United**,
932 Balmoral Road

Tickets: \$17.50 (\$5 Child)

Available at:
• Our Place Society, 919 Pandora Ave.,
250-388-7112 Ext. 259
• Buy online at eventbrite.com
or ourplacesociety.com/christmas-carol

Featuring CBC personalities, including:

A Christmas Carol

Presented by
Our Place & CBC Victoria

Friday, Dec. 13 @ 7:00pm
First Metropolitan United Church
932 Balmoral Road, Victoria

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 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 visit the website or call:

250-940-5060



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