



Our Stories

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2015

inside



4

3

Our Events

Hungry Hearts delivers hope, fun and finances to Our Place

4

Our Family

John's journey is both heart wrenching and inspiring

6

Outreach Services

Jordan Cooper wanted to spend time with his dad, but he delivered so much more

7

Our Volunteers

Thanks to funding from Victoria Foundation, Yvonne helps the family help each other

8

Creative Ways To Give

Little Eli donates his birthday money to help the less fortunate



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

We thank
Tech Wed Direct
for donating resources
to print this newsletter

Executive Director's Message

Feeding the body and soul of the most vulnerable in our community has always been the foundation of all that we do at Our Place — but this is only the beginning of what we can accomplish.

With the incredible encouragement and support of our donors and volunteers, Our Place is fast becoming a hub of activity that focuses on nourishing the mind, body and spirit.

In the last two years, we have added dozens of new programs in the areas of education, health care, job skills, and addiction recovery aimed at meeting people where they are at, and encouraging them to stretch beyond what they thought possible.

From fun classes, such as creative dance or tai chi — that brighten up an otherwise bleak day and also promote physical activity — to bingo, knitting or cedar bark weaving that encourages social interactivity and more than a few laughs.

And, yes, fun is an important part of the healing process, but sometimes we need to dig deeper to unearth the root causes of addiction and homelessness.

To that end, I am extremely proud of two new programs we have introduced that focus on the victims of abuse — especially the one-third of the people we serve who identify as Aboriginal.

The first program is designed specifically



around counselling for Residential School survivors, while a more in-depth, eight-week program is being offered to Indigenous Women who have suffered from the impacts of violence.

We also understand that not everyone who needs help has the ability to walk through our doors. To meet their needs, our Outreach Team has been expanding its mission to those on the street, while our outreach manager has been visiting local prisons to help break the soul-destroying cycle of prison-to-street-to-prison that so many people without options face in our community.

I'm so proud of these accomplishments, and with your continued support, know that more exciting new programs are on the way.

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 over the past year would not have been possible without the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters. Thank you!



HUNGRY HEARTS: Unique fundraiser raises \$185,990 to help Victoria's most vulnerable.



HOPPING TO IT: Saanich Mayor Richard Atwell and Victoria Police Chief Frank Elsner serve the family.

Our Recent Events

Hungry Hearts

Our signature fundraising event, **Hungry Hearts**, made quite a splash with the business and philanthropic community this year.

Five top local chefs used their culinary expertise and imagination in a fierce competition to see who could create the most tasteful twist on soup and a sandwich – always a popular lunch at Our Place.

"We are overwhelmed by the generosity of the community," said **Don Evans**, executive director of Our Place. "This strong support will enable us to continue with many of our

life-transforming programs and services to assist people in crisis."

Guests were invited to "vote with their heart" in crowning their favourite dish. In a finger-licking finish, Nicholas Waters of **Toque Catering Company** took home the Hungry Hearts Top Chef trophy by creating a gourmet combo of Coconut Black Bean Soup with Chipotle Crème Fraiche, and a Cubano sandwich: Mojo Marinated Pulled Pork with Avocado, Pickle & Swiss Cheese.

"Once people learn of all the wonderful ways Our Place helps the impoverished in our community, they really step up to help," said **Laura Walsh**, director of development.

The event, presented by **PwC** and hosted at the **Inn at Laurel Point**, raised \$185,990. This generosity couldn't have come at a better time as Our Place has experienced a significant increase in demand for services.

The unique event sold out in record time, so keep an eye on our website for news of next year's event.

Easter Meal

Our Place hosted our annual Easter Meal with the support of our fabulous donors, volunteers, staff and local dignitaries. Over 1,000 people showed up to enjoy a family feast of turkey, mashed potatoes, steamed vegetables, stuffing and gravy. For dessert, we served up slices of pumpkin pie. You can view a special video – created and donated by

Derek Ford Photography – on our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/easter-2015



To view all the latest news, updates, videos and photos be sure to visit our website at ourplacesociety.com or follow us on Facebook at: facebook.com/ourplacesociety



< **NEW SIGN:** Urban Sign installs a new LED-lit marquee sign above our main entrance – and best of all, it's free. Our communications director noticed the local sign company was running a social media contest to give away \$10,000 worth of signage, and he immediately signed us up and rallied all our supportive social media followers to make sure we took first place.

Our Family

John's Story



Healing can come from the most unexpected places: planting a tree or mopping a floor, but perhaps the strongest connection is when someone looks into your heart and recognizes the strength inside.

Born into a family of 15 children with alcohol-dependent parents, John Prevost admits he should be dead. A nurse told him once that his hospital chart was a nightmare list of drug overdoses, but "the creator had other plans."

Taken away from his home at the age of five, John was bounced from residential school — where the teachers often referred to him as a "stupid, dumb Indian" — to foster care and group homes.

For the longest time, John forgot that he was part of a family until, at the age of 11, he was told of his mother's death. After "acting out", he was finally allowed to travel to Alert Bay to attend the funeral.

He remembers the flight, looking down at a community he barely remembered and spotting his childhood home. The sight filled him with both delight and despair, for few of his memories were happy ones.

Arriving on the doorstep, his siblings and relatives rushed to welcome him home with

hugs and kisses, but they also gave him something else — his first beer.

"All hell broke loose after that," says John. "I didn't want to leave, but I couldn't stay."

The relationship with his foster family soured, and John ended up in a group home. School fell by the wayside as a combination of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorder and now early-onset alcohol abuse made paying attention impossible.

The downward spiral worsened as John suffered at the hands of the people who were supposed to be caring for him. In the group home, he was beaten, spat upon, and starved. When he complained to a counsellor, he wasn't believed.

In punishment for speaking out against the abuse, John was returned to the group home where he was beaten, shoved down the stairs to the basement, and locked in.

With tears streaming down his cheeks, John ripped up old newspapers and then set them on fire. The fire caught and the house went up in flames.

After everyone got out and the fire department arrived, John was arrested and sent to Juvenile Detention. Inside the prison, he learned how to be a real criminal, a true "rebel without a cause."

Upon release, John's life became a mess of cocaine, heroin and alcohol. But in 2003, he spotted his uncle walking down Main and Hastings in Vancouver.

Although sick from the drugs, he asked his uncle for help.

LEAVE A LEGACY

HOPE AND BELONGING
FOR THE FUTURE

Imagine knowing that it's possible for you to continue to help your neighbours in need for years to come. Naming **Our Place Society** in your will or estate plan is a fantastic way to leave a life-changing legacy that makes a compassionate difference in the lives of Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens for years to come. For more information call Laura Walsh, director of development, 250-413-3161 ext. 283 or visit our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/ways-give/legacy-giving



His uncle agreed to take him back to Alert Bay to work on his fishing boat, saying, "I'm tired of bringing you guys home in a box."

"That gave me hope," says John, who is only one of six surviving siblings now.

Unfortunately, on the drive to Alert Bay, John's uncle received the bad news that a cousin had wrecked the fishing boat, ending any hope of a job.

Not to be deterred, John arrived home determined to make it work. He went to visit a doctor who gave him medicine to help him over the worse of withdrawal, and then he walked into an employment centre. He

had no sooner sat down when the woman behind the counter called out, "Who wants to go tree planting?" When none of the other men in the room raised their hands, John said, "I'll go."

Although he barely weighed 130 pounds, was drug sick, and had no experience, the woman took a chance and told him his ride was leaving in an hour.

John planted trees for the next six years and became a role model for the crew. He kept sober and attended meetings, but a relapse sent him back to jail.

However, it was inside prison that he really recognized how important the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous were. With the support of other recovering addicts, John was finally able to open up about the abuse

he suffered and the anger he was still holding onto.

Today, John is three years sober and giving back.

At first, John volunteered at Our Place in order to complete his service hours, but soon his value and positive influence made him a natural hire when an opening came up on the custodial team.

A talented artist, John has also been busy creating some incredible artwork in our Drop-In and main stairwell. The hummingbirds he paints are messengers of peace that heal the body and soul, and act as guides through life's challenges.

"Our Place," says John, "has given me a lot to live for."

John has found great support and healing in the new First Nations Morning Circle being hosted at Our Place. The healing circle is offered twice a week — Tuesday and Thursday in the Our Place Chapel from 8:30 to 10 a.m. — and encourages everyone to share their stories and receive support in a safe and non-judgmental environment. The healing circle is open to everyone.

**FIRST NATIONS
MORNING CIRCLE**

NEW AT OUR PLACE!



Our Programs

Outreach Services

The compassion that Jordan Cooper has for the family members at Our Place is as bright and shining as his eyes.

Quick with a smile and always ready to jump in and lend a hand where it's needed most, Jordan has earned the respect of everyone who accesses the many services of Our Place.

And as manager of Outreach Services, he has also won the loyalty and admiration of his staff.

"Jordan never asks his staff to do anything that you know he wouldn't do himself," says Benoit, one of Our Place's team of Outreach workers.

As a teenager, Jordan began volunteering at the Open Door (predecessor of Our Place) simply as a way to spend more time with his dad. That dad happens to be Rev. Al Tysick, one of the founders of Our Place and a former executive director.

Jordan was already familiar with several of the family members who frequented the Open Door because his father would often bring them home for supper when they were having a difficult time.

From volunteering, Jordan was soon

recruited to provide street outreach to the vulnerable people who were leery of going indoors. Armed with a backpack filled with snacks, cigarettes, socks and bus tickets, he was able to break down barriers and make a real and honest connection with people.

"They came to trust me, and even looked forward to me showing up." He smiles, and adds, "It reinforced in me that these are just people. Some are down on their luck, others are dealing with addiction, but they're no different from you or me."

Soon Jordan was hired full-time and his education continued to grow with skilled and generous mentors. When Our Place opened in 2007, suddenly Jordan was the one with the most experience and who the family automatically turned to when they needed help.

Today, Jordan leads an incredible staff of Outreach workers who emulate his leadership by going above and beyond for the people who need their help the most.

"Our Place is the only place I've ever worked, and it's the best job I've ever had."



VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE THREADS IN OUR SEWING KIT

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 our Manager of Volunteers at 250-388-7112 Ext. 243.



Our Volunteers

Did you know: the family members who depend on Our Place are also some of our most active volunteers?

For so many of our volunteers, the act of helping others has been inspired from the blessings that life has bestowed. But what if your life hasn't been as blessed?

The less fortunate who need to access the services at Our Place in order to make it through the day don't often have much sunshine or happiness in their rearview mirrors, but every act of kindness resonates so brightly within them that often they want to give back in any way they can.

Naturally this brings its own set of challenges, but thanks to funding from **Victoria Foundation**, Our Place has been able to launch a new pilot program: **Family Member Volunteer Support**.

Yvonne St John worked with Our Place

family members as an Outreach Worker for two years before the new volunteer-support position became available. The opportunity to work one-on-one with people, to advocate for them, and help on their journey to employment, was too much to pass up.

"We're interacting with people at the pre-employment stage," says Yvonne. "And that has its challenges. People come to us with anxiety and addiction issues that have roots in multiple layers of trauma. But volunteering is helping to heal that."

She continues, "Even if some people may never be employable, we're helping them develop the skills needed to lead better lives."

Keeping busy is also a key factor in battling addiction, and Yvonne is amazed by how many of her volunteers will tackle any job that needs doing.

"You watch the transformation," she says, "when people are supported and shown appreciation. Suddenly, they have value, and they want to live up to that."

Thank you Victoria Foundation for your generous support of this pilot program.



Things We Need

- BOTTLED WATER**
- SUN SCREEN**
- LIP BALM**
- FLIP-FLOPS**
- SOCKS & UNDERWEAR**
- FIRST-AID PACKS**
- TENTS & TARPS**
- TOILETRIES**
- BLANKETS**
- DRY GOODS**
- FRUITS & VEGETABLES**
- MEN'S CLOTHING**

SUMMER IS HERE! Our fellow citizens in need will feel the heat of day and chill of night on the streets of Greater Victoria. Empty your closets and garages to bring summer protection, food and blankets to Our Place. Donations can be dropped off at the front desk anytime of day or night. If you need assistance, please call 250-388-7112.

< **ESQUIMALT BIG HOUSE:** Our Place family members attend a drum signing to celebrate the creation of an Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness. In attendance were representatives from the traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw peoples. A drum was signed as a symbolic gesture of support and willingness to engage in a dialogue about solutions and common goals.

Creative Ways to Give



BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR EVERYONE: Young Eli wanted to celebrate his 8th birthday in a very special way – by donating some of his birthday money to the less fortunate. Eli's generosity earned him an appreciative high-five from Greg, and some huge smiles from the rest of our family members upon hearing the news. Way to go Eli! You are our superhero.

Circle of Love

“ Recently, I had the opportunity to join friends on a tour of Our Place to hear more about its programs and services. While I have known about and contributed to Our Place through the Grains Program at my church, I had no idea of the broad scope of its activities. Listening not only to some of the individuals it serves, but also to members of staff, inspired me to go one step further to become a “Circle of Love” monthly donor. There is no question that Our Place is working hard to provide for those most in need and deserves our ongoing support.

Elizabeth Laugharne
Victoria, B.C.

Farmlands Trust

When people envision the type of food that missions serve to the needy, they often dismiss it as cheap, flavourless and the dregs of the kitchen. But obviously they've never eaten at Our Place where our kitchen manager, Brian Cox, teams up with groups such as the Farmlands Trust to deliver hearty soups brimming with vegetables that have, literally, been freshly picked from a farmer's field. Last year, Farmlands Trust donated over \$7,000 in produce harvested from the Newman Farm property in Central Saanich. Run by a volunteer board, Farmlands Trust donates squash, pumpkins, beets and many other vegetables to Our Place on a regular basis. Thanks to the trust's generosity, Our Place is able to offer vegetarian options in season.

Our Place Recent Stats

Meals Served in 2015

January	58,029
February	53,817
March	60,542
April	48,591



Volunteer Hours

January	3,548
February	3,118
March	3,703
April	2,869



Showers in Hygiene

January	1,087
February	1,060
March	1,212
April	1,048



Crisis Interventions

January	192
February	167
March	188
April	115



New phone number

The Development office has a new phone number. To speak with us regarding financial donations, address updates or tax receipt questions, please call:

250-413-3161

To donate clothing or in-kind gifts, please call our main reception number at **250-388-7112** or drop items off anytime at 919 Pandora Avenue.




Hope and Belonging

Our Place Society
919 Pandora Avenue
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3P4
250-388-7112
info@ourplacesociety.com

Join the online conversation!
facebook facebook.com/ourplacesociety
twitter twitter.com/ourplacesociety
Registered Canadian Charity
82709 8344 RR0001



Visit our website: ourplacesociety.com

