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SUMMER NEWSLETTER
2018

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ourplace

Hope and Belonging



We thank
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to print this newsletter

Executive Director's Message

At Our Place, we do "belonging" extremely well. But as we battle against stigma, poverty, mental illness and a heart-breaking death rate associated with the fentanyl opioid crisis, I believe we need to provide more hope.

Our first step was moving over 100 people from Choices, the transitional housing shelter we operated in the former youth custody centre in View Royal, into permanent housing.

As **Robert's Story** on Page 4 illustrates, once people are no longer in survival mode, they can focus on regaining their health, settling matters of the heart, and begin contemplating their next step.

When they're ready, we now have our **Next Steps to Employment** program up and running with its second intake of participants.

This unique program is designed to help men and women with multiple barriers to employment, and you can read more about it on Page 6.

Further down the road, we are working diligently to turn the former Choices facility into a **Therapeutic Recovery Community**.

With the blessing of BC Housing, we have applied to the Town of View Royal to have the property rezoned to permit Therapeutic Recovery Community, and accessory uses that include a Market Garden, Commercial Kitchen, Craft and Artisan Trades, and a Service Store. With community consultation



underway and support growing, we feel it's just a matter of time before all funding and lease of the facility are in place.

We are so encouraged about this life-transforming opportunity that we recently hired Dana Young to oversee the project. As the former program manager of the successful Guthrie Therapeutic Community at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre, Dana comes to us with extensive experience.

And most of all, Dana shares our vision of hope because she has witnessed its transformational power first-hand.

If all goes to plan, and with your continued support, we hope to open the doors to our first Therapeutic Recovery Community residents by year's end.

With much gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Don Evans".

Don Evans
Executive Director

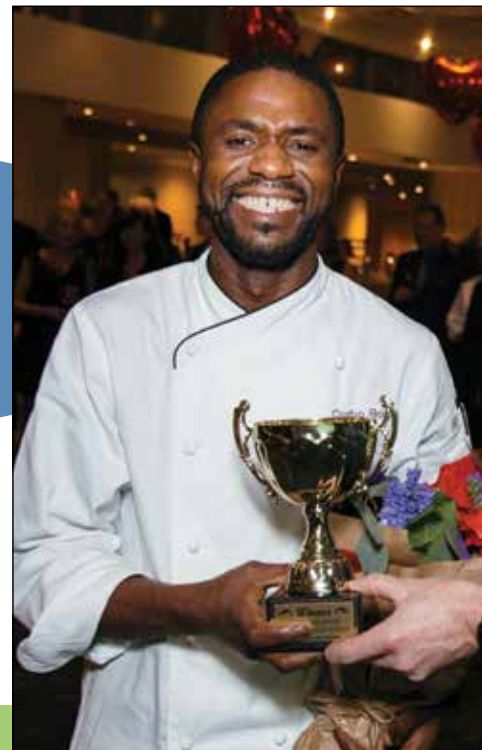


THANK YOU!

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, services and outreach offered would not have been possible without the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters.



HUNGRY HEARTS: Unique fundraiser raises \$145,000 to help Victoria's most vulnerable.



Our Events

Hungry Hearts

The vibrant business and philanthropic community came together for the fifth anniversary of Hungry Hearts, a unique fundraiser aimed at raising both awareness and funds for Our Place to serve the most vulnerable of Greater Victoria.

Five top local chefs used their culinary expertise and imagination in a fierce competition to see who could create the most popular, sea-inspired savory bite.

"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, Chef Castro Boateng (top right) of House of Boateng catering took home the Hungry Hearts Top Chef trophy for the third time by creating a gourmet twist on African Fish and Chips.

The sold-out event, presented by PwC Canada and hosted at the Inn at Laurel Point, raised \$145,000.

The other competing top chefs were: Tyler Paquette of Fish Hook, Austin Lu of Inn at Laurel Point, Nicholas Waters of Toque Catering, and Kevin Macneil of Whole Foods Plus two Our Place chefs, Casey and Erica, created a special vegetarian dish, and Cakes Etc brought wonderfully decadent desserts.

The event was MC'd by the delightful Terry Farmer, and entertainment was provided by local singer-songwriter Lola Parks.

Easter Meal

Our Place hosted our annual Easter Meal with the hard-working support of our fabulous donors, volunteers, staff and local dignitaries.

Hundreds of people lined up to enjoy a family feast of baked ham, scalloped potatoes, and garden vegetables. And for dessert, Victoria Cream chocolate eggs donated by Rogers' Chocolates. You can view a special video — created in-house — on our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/easter-2018



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



< **AN OCEAN OF GIVING:** The cheerful crew from Ocean 98.5 rolled into Our Place with containers of Tim Horton's coffee and boxes of doughnuts as a special treat for the Our Place family. The radio crew had saved up their winning Roll Up The Rim To Win cups and got Tim Horton's to match their winnings to make for a festive courtyard picnic. Family member Gordie, third from left, certainly enjoyed it!

Our Family

Robert's Story

"I've got a giant hole in my heart — not being in contact with my kids, not being in touch with my family, my sister. . . ."

— Robert Stewart

When men lose control of their lives, there is a tendency to hide away. Whether that's shame, embarrassment or just a heaviness that makes it difficult to hold up one's head, it can take a long time to do the only thing that truly works, and that's asking for help.

"This is the best thing that's happened to me in a long, long time," says Robert Stewart as he sits by the window of his new, ground floor room at the former Tally Ho hotel on Douglas Street in Victoria.

Robert is one of over 40 residents from Choices, the transitional shelter that Our Place operated out of the former youth custody centre in View Royal, who were recently housed in the renovated Tally Ho.

Robert's journey, however, began long before he landed a place at Choices.

Born in Toronto, Robert had his eye on studying law enforcement, but the college bar held more appeal than the classes. After a change in disciplines, he graduated as a hardwood lumber grader.

Following college, he hitch-hiked around the

country before getting married in his early 20s. His first child followed shortly thereafter.

After moving west to Tofino, Robert got a job shrimp fishing and "loved it."

When his wife became pregnant with twins, they moved to Port Alberni for more affordable housing while Robert travelled for work.

And then things began to fall apart.

"I wrecked it," he says. "I was too young and too stupid."

His marriage crumbled and one of his children, a fraternal twin, died of illness.

He brushes away the sorrow, the pain of it heavy in his eyes and in the timbre of his voice. "I don't want to dwell on it." He indicates the rooms to either side of his own. "Everybody's got a sob story here."

Robert moved from job to job, mostly in the construction trade in Victoria, but kept up with his children through their teens. Falling behind on child custody payments, however, caused him to lose his driver's license, which limited the

 **a legacy of love**
Provide 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 Dawn Kloster, senior development officer, at 250-413-3161 or visit our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/ways-give/legacy-giving



work he could take on, and he fell deeper into despair.

The weight of broken pride and shame made him seek isolation.

"I lived in the woods for eight years," he says. "It was cheap and convenient."

A View Royal landowner gave him and a friend permission to camp on his land until a condo development moved in. "Then, the pressure was on for us to move. Luckily, Choices took us in."

Robert admits that moving into Choices wasn't easy at first. His years in self-imposed exile made it difficult to return to a shared space filled with people.

"I had to learn how to live in a community again," he says. "And that took a big

adjustment." He credits Choices coordinator Jeni Temple with helping him. "I wouldn't be here without her help. She really saved my ass."

Feeling his age, the 54-year-old knew he had to get back into the rhythm of society, and that meant swallowing his pride and asking for help.

"Jeni cut through all the red tape, and went above and beyond to help me out," he says.

With his basic needs — shelter, hygiene and nutrition — being met at Choices, Robert was now able to get his teeth fixed, and seek medical help for a variety of ailments. When he felt healthier, he reached out to his children again.

His son, 30, and his 29-year-old daughter both live back East, so Robert has been teaching himself how to use a smart phone and a computer to stay in touch.

He's also working with a local church group to fix one of the biggest holes in his heart by purchasing a headstone for his dead child.

"That's always weighed heavy on me that I never did that for him, that I screwed that up."

As he looks around his room with its private washroom, shower, mini-fridge and microwave, he says, "I got real lucky. You've got to ask for help in this life, and I'm so glad I did."

The popular Vets For Pets program is moving from Thursday afternoons to the second Sunday of every month starting in May. Vets for Pets offers free veterinary care to the dogs and cats of homeless and low-income pet owners of the Victoria area. Please register at 11:00am at Our Place Society at 919 Pandora Avenue. Pets are seen in our courtyard starting at 2pm.

VETS FOR PETS

MOVES TO SUNDAYS!



NEXT steps to employment

Our Programs

Next Steps to Employment

Joining the workforce after a long absence can be a struggle at best, but when you also suffer from multiple barriers such as homelessness, brain injury or addiction, the hurdles can seem unsurmountable.

A new program at Our Place called **Next Steps to Employment** wants to change that.

"We've just begun our second intake," says Next Steps Program Manager Jeremy Ball. "The program lasts for 12 weeks and is aimed at helping people break through multiple barriers to get back into work."

Next Steps is a unique program in that it meets participants where they are at and shapes itself around the five senses to find the best path to learning.

"People learn in different ways," says Jeremy. "And we need to support that because they don't want to be reminded of a place where they didn't feel welcome, or where they weren't successful."

This nurturing environment is aimed at rekindling the hope of working again.

"Some people haven't worked in 10 years, while others have never held what would be considered a real job," says Jeremy.

He smiles when he adds that one participant went for his "first ever job interview" in his 50s. "Imagine how scary that was for him? And how trusting he was that we were there to support him."

Often, the first step is basic life skills. If, for example, you didn't grow up with a parent who made you get up each morning, brush your teeth and go to school, your concept of the "importance of being on time" would be different.

"When people complete the program, we don't abandon them either," says Jeremy. "We are there to support both the new employee and the employer to make sure that any challenges are dealt with in a way that is positive for everyone. We want to create an environment where companies are excited about hiring our participants."

For more information, visit: ourplacesociety.com/how-we-help/next-steps-employment



JEREMY BALL

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE
THE LEAVES IN OUR TEA POT

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, our Manager of Volunteers, at 250-388-7112 Ext. 258.



Our Board of Directors

Did You Know: Our Place's board of directors is made up of volunteers from all walks of professional life?

The Our Place Board of Directors is dedicated to the governance and future vision of the organization. The Board's directors contribute to the society through their passion, dedication, experience and business acumen.

This governance board is responsible primarily for: developing, leading and guiding the organizational vision and strategic priorities; providing guidance, oversight and evaluation of the organization's executive director; and ensuring organizational compliance with fiscal and legal responsibilities.

At present, there are 13 members working on the board. This includes:

- Former mayor of Oak Bay and urban planner, **Diana Butler**, is Chair.
- Retired provincial court judge **Ernie Quantz** is Vice Chair.

ALL SMILES: Members of the Our Place Board of Directors pitched in for Coldest Night of the Year.

- **Andrea Jakeman Brown** is Treasurer, and comes with a wealth of experience in the financial world.
- Long-time volunteer and professional communicator **Scott Daly** holds the position of Secretary.
- Past Chair **Susan Haddon** has been with Our Place since 2011 and is a former director of College & Community Relations at Camosun College.
- A founder of both Edgewood and Cedars Addiction Treatment Centre **Neal Berger** is one of 8 board directors. The other directors are: **Karen Adams** (mentor with Restorative Justice Victoria), **Susan Abells** (member of the Committee to End Homelessness), **Bill Cantelon** (Minister of Cordova Bay United Church), **Cairine Green** (former municipal councillor), **Brett Hayward** (veterinarian and Vets For Pets volunteer), **Linda Ryder** (Angel Gifts coordinator), and **Ansley Tucker** (Dean of Christ Church Cathedral).

Visit ourplacesociety.com/about-us/leadership to learn more.



< **FEEDING FROM THE HEART:** Members of the Ahousaht First Nation and other Nuu-chah-nulth communities celebrated all that Our Place does to help their nation members in Victoria by cooking and serving two traditional First Nations feasts accompanied by traditional drumming and entertainment.



Things We Need

**SUMMER CLOTHING
SUN SCREEN
LIP BALM
FLIP-FLOPS
SOCKS & UNDERWEAR
FIRST-AID PACKS
TENTS & TARPS
TOILETRIES
BLANKETS
SLEEPING BAGS
BOTTLED WATER
FRUITS & VEGETABLES**

SUMMER IS ALMOST 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.

Creative Ways to Give



COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR: Over 240 walkers on 28 teams raised more than \$49,000 for Our Place's first ever Coldest Night of the Year walk for homelessness in February. "On the coldest nights, we try to get as many people indoors as possible," says Our Place Executive Director Don Evans. "But, unfortunately, there are still people left outside. This walk allowed the community to come together and show how much they care about the most vulnerable members of society." **Save The Date for next year's walk on Feb 23, 2019.**

Winter Hours

Winter is always a challenge for Our Place as there is no worse feeling than sending someone out into the wet and cold because it's time to close our doors for the evening.

For the second year in a row we were able to open extended hours (6am-9pm) for 6 consecutive months, from the chilly rain showers of October all the way to the flower blossoms in March.

Thanks to Jim and Kath Thomson, Butler Brothers, John McEown, David King and the Drent Family, who all came together and matched donations, plus a \$50,000 grant from the City of Victoria, people always had a warm place to stay this winter.



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 up to 350 family members. Our talented kitchen staff prepares a cooked breakfast. A small fee of \$500 covers the cost of the food, and we encourage a financial donation on top. Lunches, dinners and summer barbeques can also be sponsored.



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

Our Place From the Heart



FOX IS BEARY SPECIAL: To celebrate her 5th birthday, Fox wanted to donate all of her birthday money — \$34 — to those who were less fortunate.

And to make sure we celebrate everybody's birthday at Our Place, Congregation Emanu-El dishes up cake and ice cream every month.

Make a Donation

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.



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Hope and Belonging

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

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Visit our website: ourplacesociety.com

