



ourplace

NEWSLETTER  
Fall2012

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**Inside this issue:**

• *One dedicated volunteer's perspective* • *Glen's road to recovery* • *How you can get involved*



## Executive Director's Message

by Don Evans

Each September, we reflect on a summer of lives transformed. And what an incredible summer we've had at Our Place! I stepped into my role as Executive Director just months before summer hit – and we hit the ground running. Whether collaborating with neighbours, buckling down to eliminate an annual deficit, or building a strong sense of community at our baseball and barbeque days, we've been exceedingly busy. But it's been worth it. Let me tell you why.

Our Place is in a time of transition. Without change, there would be no progress. With that in mind, our staff and community have embraced change, looking forward to the good things this growth will bring our family members. While working hard to expand our programs and services, we consistently cling to our vision: we long to break individual cycles of poverty in our family member's lives. Our desire to bring hope and belonging to a vulnerable population has guided every decision we've made, navigating us through this time of transition. Once the wheels of progress are turning, it's hard to rest until our goals are met – but here is where we pause to reflect.

Because it takes a whole community to provide a sense of hope and belonging, we've been working hard to develop new relationships and partner with the wider community. We've encouraged local businesses and faith groups to use our incredible facilities in creative ways that bring amazing new benefits to our family members. For example, we are very grateful to local organizations and faith groups who are continuing to partner with us to fund and serve meals on statutory holidays. We've created

*Our staff have been living and breathing our vision and mission every day this summer – and these pages tell that story.*

new volunteer opportunities and invited compassionate clergy to offer pastoral care. We've launched a new Sponsor-a-Breakfast campaign, which invites organizations to fund and serve a morning meal. We asked and you responded. We've truly enjoyed strengthening our partnership with you, the wider community. But even more importantly, our family members have really felt it too.

With an abiding sense of hope and an acute awareness of need, we will continue to plan carefully to fight local poverty. We are still working toward expanding our programs, services, and *hours*. Knowing that poverty is an around-the-clock issue, we long to be here for our family members seven days a week. Thank you for partnering with us as we plan to reach this goal.

Our staff have been living and breathing our vision and mission every day this summer – and these pages tell that story. Throughout this newsletter, you'll notice ways that *you* can get involved in what we're doing. We invite you to explore our website to view exciting new volunteer positions. I hope you'll see these as opportunities to partner with us to bring hope and belonging to the most vulnerable citizens in our community. With our holiday celebrations right around the corner, I look forward to kick-starting a new year of hope at Our Place Society.

Warm Regards,

Don Evans  
Executive Director

# Program Focus:

## Art Class



It's a sunny Tuesday afternoon and tables in our courtyard are lined with buckets of water, piles of elastics, and bottles of colour. Julia, our regular art volunteer, is showing Bernie the best way to wrap elastic bands around the fabric. Priscilla, resident tie-dye expert, is methodically shaking dye onto a white shirt that's clearly labeled as hers. Jared, volunteer, and John, family member, are sitting in the shade observing this process as they talk about life and books.

"We consistently have family telling us that art class is the highlight of their week," says Dorothea, Our Place staff. "It's a safe place where people can engage in a positive, healing environment." This class, which began in 2008, has evolved into an organic group of people. Family, volunteers, and staff alike gather every Tuesday to do art and life together. As individuals share their talent and experience, the group's sense of community is strengthened.

This program recognizes that people are in more than just physical need. Creative expression is important for everyone – but can be particularly vital for people who have experienced physical or relational trauma. "There's so much fantastic research out there showing that art is a therapeutic way to help hurting people to express, process,

and acknowledge what they're going through," Dorothea explains. "Art is especially helpful for people recovering from trauma. Creating art engages a part of your brain that physically helps you process trauma."

As well as meeting emotional, relational, and even spiritual needs, programs like our Art Class can be incredibly empowering for a population that isn't always treated with dignity and respect. This class can help someone who has never painted – or never felt confident in their painting ability – recognize their own potential and value. "All of a sudden you'll see someone go from feeling like they had nothing to contribute to society to being prominent, recognized, and respected in their community," says Dorothea. "It's an incredible thing to witness, and even more incredible to experience."

For some of our family members, this class has caused a whole transformation of their person by allowing them to overcome the alienation of this sometimes-cold world. "It uplifts me to just be here each week," says one family member as he hangs tie-dyed fabric to dry. Dorothea recalls one family member who used to see themselves as marginalized from society. "I used to see myself as an outcast – on the outskirts of this city," they said. "But now, I know my role: I'm an artist."



When: Every Tuesday from 12:30-3:30  
Where: Our Place Interfaith Chapel  
Who: Volunteers, Family Members, Staff, Aspiring Artists  
How: Contact [volunteer@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:volunteer@ourplacesociety.com) to get involved.

## Family Focus:

### Glen

by Blythe Hutchcroft

“I came to Victoria four years ago because I wanted to break out of my addiction,” Glen tells me one cloudy August morning. “I was looking for something to work at – some form of recovery, some structure that would really work well for me.” Fast forward four years. Today, Glen lives in Our Place’s transitional housing, where he’s committed to working with counselors and housing staff to achieve a life free of addiction. It’s been a long journey, but Glen’s thoughtful commitment to recovery inspires even the most faithless spectators. “When this is all over, I’d love to work with people in rehab – and people who are where I’m at now – because I can understand them and recognize what they’re going through.” Even on the toughest days, Glen sees the light at the end of this difficult tunnel.

Wearing an ocean-blue shirt, hair tied back in a graying knot and arms sprinkled with tattoos, Glen looks the part of an artist. He was born in Nelson, BC, but the town was more of a home base than a stable home for much of his youth. Glen’s nomadic upbringing has shaped much of his adult experience. When asked about the first night he slept outside, he recalls visiting his mom in San Francisco. “I lived on and off the streets from ages 13 to 18,” he tells me. “When I was 13, I moved down there to try and get to know my Mom, because that’s where she was living at the time. I was hoping to get to know her better.”

When Glen returned to Nelson, he attended the Kooteney School of Art for a short time before moving further West to pursue a Vancouver Island life of tree-planting and child-raising with his



new wife. But that didn’t last. “When my wife and I separated, and my relationship with my family ended – that’s when I got heavy into my addiction,” he muses. “That was about 15 years ago.”

Decades after he first hit the street as a 13 year old, Glen found himself on the street again in the Lower Mainland. But the circumstances were different. Having separated with his wife, and ending his relationship with his Father, Glen was feeling low. “I was living on the streets of Chilliwack and Abbotsford,” he says. “And I was addicted, hard. You think they’re pleasant farm towns, yeah? But it’s different when you’re sleeping downtown. Rougher.”

Feeling like he’d hit rock bottom, Glen decided to come to Victoria to look for something more.

### In Loving Memory

Our Place remembers the family members we lost this summer. We are forever changed for having known these beloved people; they will be missed. Our love and prayers are with their friends and families:

Elaine Androwski  
Sophia Black  
Rob Burns  
Glen Carr  
Stacey Cox  
George Debrow  
Brian “Buzz” Donovan  
Liddia Goodman

Dyhan Hannivan  
Munro Hamilton  
Roy Haslam  
John Holland  
Laurie Hunter  
Colleen Lawlor  
Tarra Lowe  
Jack Manson

Silvia Pelcher  
Debbie Simms  
Diane Nichol  
Tami Turner  
MitseemaTurqtuq  
Thomas Williams  
Mike Zandelli

Our Place also remembers John Ronald, former chair of the board.



We talk about how it's been a long journey for him. "Yes," he reflects. "But it's how I came to be here. I want to advance in my recovery process. And I have the help here. I just fluked out on getting into residency at Our Place. It was all thanks to Kym, my Outreach Worker. She got me into treatment. And when I came back from treatment, she got me a place in transitional housing here."

Glen says he feels incredibly supported here at Our Place. "Inspiring," he says when asked to describe the community here. The relationships Glen has formed with Housing and Outreach staff have helped him reach his potential one day at a time.

For many people struggling with addiction, there are significant personal steps that need to be made along the road to recovery. Glen needed to repair a broken relationship with his father. "My housing worker, Dave, has been really helping me with that," Glen says, acknowledging that while it hasn't been easy, it's been worth it. "I've recently started a relationship with my dad again." Glen tells me, rapping on his clean, white teeth. "Actually, he helped me buy these!" He grins.

Glen has strong relationships with many of the staff at Our Place. "I feel very supported here," he tells me. "Even when I feel like I've messed up, the staff here reminds me that my journey's not done." Recognizing that his artistic practice was integral to his recovery, housing staff encouraged Glen to take a leadership role in the Art Class. "Art is a huge part of who I am and my journey," says Glen, recognizing the enumerable therapeutic effects this project has had on him.

"My housing worker Dave, he really helps me with everything" he says. "He helps me with applications, with grants. But most importantly, he's just a good person to bounce ideas off of. To talk to." And Glen is full of good ideas. Recognizing how his own art has helped him, Glen dreams of starting a studio and collective in Victoria's urban core. "It would help people in rehab – give them something to touch, to work with, to get the ball rolling."

When asked to describe where he sees himself on his journey towards recovery, Glen talks about how Our Place Staff recently helped him with a placement at a Native Treatment Centre. "I'm getting there," he says. "I'm advancing thoughtfully. I'm going at a good pace – but I wouldn't be able to do it if I wasn't here," he says.

Tonight at Our Place, 45 single adults – including Glen – will rest their heads in a place they can call home. The top three floors of 919 Pandora provide 45 units of quiet, transitional housing for Greater Victoria's hardest to house. A retreat from the buzz of our drop-in, these units are a vital link for people coming off the street, or people waiting for detox or rehabilitation programs. Residents collaborate with OPS support staff, addictions counselors, and mental health workers to achieve a more independent, fulfilling life. Glen is just one of many vibrant individuals at Our Place committed to further independent living and recovery.

## Door of Opportunity

Thanks to NorthWest Window and Door, we are auctioning a hand crafted wooden door valued up to \$5000. The money raised from this auction will help OPS provide meals, hygiene facilities, and educational programming. Slam the door on poverty by placing a bid today! Visit [ourplacesociety.com](http://ourplacesociety.com) to participate in this auction.

## Leave Your Legacy: Become an Angel of Hope today

Stories like Glen's are happening all around us. And you can be a part of them for years to come. Imagine knowing that your compassion will make a lasting difference after you're gone. Donating part of your estate is a great way to leave a life-changing legacy. At Our Place Society, we think of all who **LEAVE A LEGACY™** gift as our very own Angels of Hope. To request more information about our planned giving program, contact Michel at 250.388.7112 ext 231.

# A Volunteer's Perspective: Shandy

by Blythe Hutchcroft



We all know how good a refreshing shower can be for our own sense of well-being. Imagine how much more important this is for someone sleeping outside. That's where our Hygiene Facilities come in. Downstairs from our Drop-In, Our Place houses four accessible, pristine shower stalls. Each private stall has expansive, sparkling tiles so that our guests can spend uninterrupted time helping themselves feel refreshed.

But these showers don't stay clean on their own.

Every day, a team of dedicated staff and volunteers are busy folding towels, scrubbing tiles, handing out razors, and reminding people that they're worth it. Waking up on outside, many of our family members wear visible signs of their poverty. Dirt clings. It affects one's sense of self. These showers offer new self-esteem, helping people feel like people again. And they wouldn't run without committed volunteers like Shandy.

"It was busy today," Shandy tells me at the end of his shift. It's late August and the heat is peaking, so many of our homeless family members are in desperate need of a cool, revitalizing shower. "I love seeing the difference these facilities make," he tells me. "Sometimes, you can actually see that people are visibly happier when they get out of the shower. They're refreshed. Clean. Maybe even better able to deal with the facts of life – such as where to sleep or eat that night."

Shandy has been volunteering at Our Place since 2008. "I guess I've always believed that everyone deserves acceptance – that we should treat people with equality," he says. Growing up in nearly twenty different foster-homes, Shandy felt consistent instability throughout his youth. "I always craved acceptance from others when I was growing up, and now I want to offer that to other people – no matter what their life looks like."

He says that volunteering here is a sobering reminder of what his own life would look like in different circumstances. “Both my birth parents struggle with poverty and addiction,” he reflects. “Despite growing up in foster care, I still know them. I guess I’ve experienced a background that’s similar to many of the people who come here. Or close to. And that’s why I’d feel so shameful judging anyone who came here. Because at one point in my own life, I was very close to needing a place like this.”

However, unlike many people who live in extreme poverty, Shandy was fortunate enough to have someone in his life who has supported him through school and life’s transitions. We discuss the importance of recognizing our own privilege – be it socioeconomic status, or a rich community of relationships. Supportive, formative relationships often influence where a child will end up in life. This is a key ingredient for success. But it’s a key ingredient that many of our family members’ lives might lack. “I’ve been close to having to rely on strangers,” he says, chewing on this idea for a bit. “And I guess I just think that you never know what could happen.”

Shandy says it’s the people that keep him coming back every week. “There’s a lot of love here,” he tells me. “And I can’t imagine volunteering anywhere else.”

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## Want to hear these stories throughout your week?

Stay connected! Join the conversation online. We want to connect with you. Follow us on

Facebook  
and  
Twitter:

facebook.com/ourplacesociety  
@ourplacesociety

Hear more of these stories and stay posted on events. Engage by giving us your feedback and knowing you’re heard.

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Volunteering at Our Place has given Shandy an opportunity to form strong relationships and build community while practicing unconditional love and acceptance. It’s given him a dose of selfless perspective, allowing him to partake in something that’s bigger than him. “I’ve learned that people are just people,” he says. “Every individual is genetically capable to do incredible things. People need to be given an opportunity to grow and discover what it is they’re capable of. This place is full of people like that,” he beams, then turns thoughtful again. “The sad thing is, not everyone takes the time to recognize that human potential.”

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At Our Place, our volunteers strive to nurture each individual’s potential by reminding them they’re worth it. We couldn’t do this without our fantastic team of dedicated volunteers.



Do you want to be part of a dynamic team of compassionate people? Do you want to care for Greater Victoria’s most vulnerable citizens? All you need to do is register to attend a volunteer orientation on one of the following dates:  
Oct 11th | Oct 25th | Nov 8th | Nov 22nd | Dec 6th | Dec 20th

All sessions run from 10am – 12pm. Email [volunteer@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:volunteer@ourplacesociety.com) or call Rodrigo at 250.388.7112 ext 243 to register today.

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**DUKE ELLINGTON'S  
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Or purchase online at:  
**www.eventbrite.com**

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[www.ourplacesociety.com](http://www.ourplacesociety.com) This Event Is Co-Presented By: OUR PLACE SOCIETY and THE VICTORIA JAZZ SOCIETY

CBC presents

## Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol

Celebrate the spirit of Christmas with family and friends at Alix Goolden Hall on Wednesday December 5, 2012 at 7:00pm. Enjoy this much loved tale read by your favourite CBC personalities with music by the St. Andrew's Family Choir, Open Door Choir at Our Place and The Victoria Good News Choir with Louise Rose.

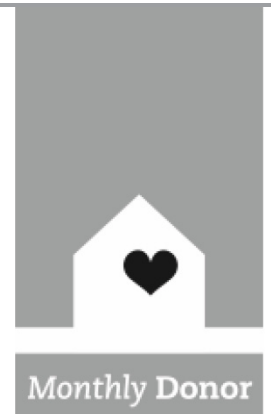
Tickets available for \$15/adult and \$5/child at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) or by calling 250-388-7112 (ext 259). All proceeds to benefit Our Place Society.

## Monthly Donor Program

Become a friend of the family today.

Our monthly donors are our heartbeat of hope and belonging. We couldn't thrive without them.

There are many reasons to become a Monthly Donor, affectionately referred to as a friend of the family. Your donation is automatically withdrawn each month, ensuring peace of mind, ease, and consistency. You can rest assured knowing that you're a vital part of an important cause: providing a sense of hope and belonging for Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Finally, you're helping provide security and stability for us. We love knowing we can count on our friends of the family throughout the year. And we think you'll love being a part of this dynamic circle, too.



To learn more about our Monthly Donor Program, call 250.388.7112 ext 259 and speak with Tracy about becoming a friend of the family.