



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

nourish
dignity



In Times of Despair, a Beacon Shines Brightly

By Julian Daly
Chief Executive Officer

In times of despair, there is often a glimmer of light, and I believe we have seen that beacon shine brightly when it comes to housing. While we remain in challenging times, especially for those who are struggling with homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, and poverty, it is also a time of creative solutions.

We've been working closely with BC Housing and the City of Victoria on some of these solutions to the tents that popped up in our parks. It has been heartwarming to see not only a caring community rally around our less fortunate, but also how it has inspired our government leaders to take bold action.

Our latest two projects are managing a new transitional shelter on Russell Street in Vic West, and the Tiny Homes Village project in the parking lot of Royal Athletic Park. We are also managing three hotels: Muncey Place (formerly Comfort Inn), Howard Johnson on Gorge Road East, and Capital City Centre. BC Housing has purchased both Muncey Place and Capital City Centre to transform them eventually into purpose-built, permanent supported housing.

The Russell Street shelter opened in the first week of May, and Tiny Homes Village in the second week. Staffed 24/7 by Our Place, they offer showers, laundry, three meals a day (made and delivered from the downtown Our Place kitchen) and a safe place to live.

We're proud of our recent accomplishments of being awarded the Non Profit of the Year by the Greater Victoria Chamber and accredited as a Great Place to Work, but most importantly we are happy to find pathways to permanent housing for the folk living there. We'll be working with the new residents over the coming months to get them ready for their own permanent home.

Having secure shelter is an important step in restoring the dignity of folk, but the need doesn't stop there. We will continue to nourish dignity in those we serve by offering nutritious meals, hygiene supplies and hot showers, clean, dry clothes, medical care and nonjudgmental conversation at our downtown Drop-in Centre. However, we also need to extend our reach and bring those services and supports to all our sites.

More people are finally finding a bit of stability in their lives. You can help deliver much needed programs and services directly to them, so they have a chance to turn their lives around. You can help not just for today, but for the best possible future for the people we serve.

It is exciting and heartening to see in our city such substantial investments in providing transitional and permanent housing for our fellow citizens — and we are so grateful to be a part of these changes. We hope you will join us on this journey of healing and restoring dignity to hundreds this summer and for years to come.



Thank you Dodd's Furniture for donating 30 mattresses for residents at Tiny Homes Village!



It's not just at our Pandora Drop-in Centre – the hotels and sites we manage will require supports and services, as well as take-out meals made with love from the Our Place kitchen, to help give folk a hand up as they finally have roofs over their heads for the first time in months, or even years.

TV SCENE INSIDE

Finding Purpose and Dignity through Work



You may be surprised to learn that a really big part of what we do at Our Place is nourish folks’ self-worth, supporting them to find purpose and dignity through teamwork, skills training, employment and development – and it’s been a part of what we do since opening our doors in 2005.

Our kitchen is open to all facing tough times.

Nobody is turned away at Our Place. Your gift supports meals, plus programs and services to help give people a hand up to a better future.

Hand Up

“Many years ago, Reverend Al [a former Our Place Executive Director] came to me with a \$1,200 donation and he said ‘I want you to start a program and hire some of the ‘family’ to work for us’, so it started there,” says Bob Frank, Our Place Manager of Facilities. “I hired five people with that donation. That first guy I hired recently retired as the Lead Outreach Worker downtown! It was really heart-warming to watch him succeed with us over the years.”

Because of the support of many kind donors and supporters, \$1,200 has grown into what’s now the **Hand Up** program, a thriving casual employment program that offers people with lived experience on the street a chance to feel the satisfaction of work and helping others. Like Shirley.

Returning to Victoria after her stay at a treatment centre on the mainland, Shirley applied for a Hand Up job in custodial work. “I didn’t think I was going to get hired because of my past. But Bob gave me a chance and he says he’s glad he did,” says Shirley. “I am giving back here at Our Place. I am looking after people and telling them my story.” Shirley has now been promoted to front desk security at our downtown Drop-in Centre.

At the same time, Our Place gets the benefit of reliable, committed and loyal employees. “We’ve got seven people in the program right now. They do everything from custodial work to maintenance around the sites we manage to outreach [and more],” adds Bob. “They’re just a huge asset to our team.”

Work as Therapy

The power of work is also a significant component of our New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community as residents discover new attitudes, values, and ultimately a new way of life on their journeys back to recovery.

“**Work as Therapy** is a program at New Roads that focuses on giving each resident an opportunity to contribute to the community living environment,” says Cheryl Diebel, Director of New Roads. “Residents learn valuable skills, and also have an outlet to balance the emotional therapeutic work that they are doing with a physical component at the same time.”

Consistent with the peer-supported approach, all residents are responsible for the daily operation of the Therapeutic Community. They do the cleaning, laundry meal preparation, maintenance, schedule coordination, gardening, tend the chickens, and attend planning meetings. The jobs provide residents with opportunities for nourishing dignity through self-examination, personal growth and skill development, as well as vocational and social skills that will last a lifetime.

Scan this QR code



to donate right now!



Our WorkPlace

Breaking barriers, building skills and preparing for employment is where **Our WorkPlace** comes in for those who need extra support starting out in the workforce again.

Our WorkPlace offers a series of five-week co-ed workshops to participants for classroom learning opportunities, as well as one-on-one coaching in preparing to work, finding work and keeping work. They learn everything from resume creation and job search skills to time management tips and ways to become a team player. At Our WorkPlace, finding hope, developing their own voice, improving self-esteem or discovering hidden talents and strengths becomes a definition of success.

“Last month we helped 10 folks get employed!” says Ashley MacDonald, Manager of Our WorkPlace. “When we get to see people evolve and step into their true potential it’s so rewarding for everyone. THEY do the work. They trusted us and then they’re on their way to a fresh start.”



Peers Helping Peers

Another huge asset to our team is our volunteers. Within that group of 350+ volunteers you’ll find a dedicated group called **Peers Helping Peers (PHP)**, a program supported by Island Health. Currently 20 participants (we fondly call “family members”) commit to volunteering 10-20 hours a month. They act as team leads mentoring fellow volunteers in such jobs as handing out hygiene supplies, sorting and distributing clothing, and serving hot beverages at the Coffee Corner at our Drop-in Centre.

The individuals who participate in the PHP program take pride in their work and feel valued because their effort is rewarded. They receive a monthly stipend that not only helps their budgeting, but they also experience how the act of contributing to their community builds up their sense of self-worth, reliability, dedication, belonging, and hope. In many cases this also prepares these individuals for the work environment.

“I really enjoy the family members, that’s my number one draw,” says Dale, an active PHP member. “I’m here for them.” With 36 years sobriety under his belt, and a diagnosis of PTSD at the age of 50, Dale found comfort and stability at Our Place. “Staying loyal is a big one. I feel respected here... it’s like a big family. I enjoy it and feel happy after each shift.”

Nutritious meals, hot coffees, and the chance to meet basic needs of hot showers, hygiene supplies, clean clothes and medical care are primarily the reasons why Victoria’s most hurting, vulnerable people walk through the doors at our downtown Drop-in Centre. But when they get inside, folks discover that Our Place is a community that nourishes, shelters and heals those we serve, whom we call our family members. As people begin to open up and trust us, they can begin to walk a path toward a better life, and that can start right here at Our Place.



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Yes, I want to help nourish dignity in people’s lives this summer by providing a gift to Our Place Society.

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donors@ourplacesociety.com

250-904-5060



Hope and Belonging



Join us for the 2021 Hungry Hearts
Culinary Contest, Auction and
Special Television Broadcast
Dine - Shop - Watch - Support

Special Campaign Calendar
Culinary Competition
August 10-September 7
Auctions begin
August 28
CHEK Television Broadcast:
Saturday,
September 18

Go to our website to find out how you can
participate in Greater Victoria's favourite
culinary fundraising event

www.ourplacesociety.com



Our Place Celebrates Admired Youth

Portrait Campaign Launched June 1

Working daily with people experiencing homelessness, poverty and despair, Our Place understands the need to build the next generation of compassionate and empathetic leadership. Fortunately, today's youth are proving they are ready for the challenge.

To celebrate our region's incredible, hard-working youth, Our Place has launched a campaign to immortalize a few of these young leaders in portraiture created by talented local artist Elfrida Schragen.

In the spring of 2020, Our Place worked with Elfrida to present Admired: Portraits of Influential Women that produced 40 portraits featuring admired women from Greater Victoria who had achieved notoriety in a variety of areas. With Admired Youth, Elfrida plans to highlight between 25 to 30 youth (ages 18-29) who are making or have made significant contributions to social services by improving nourishment, hope and belonging in our region.

"There are so many impressive youth in our region," says Julian Daly, CEO of Our Place. "And this is just one small way for us to shine a spotlight on their talents and time devoted to social services."

An online auction for Admired: Portraits of Influential Women raised over \$47,000 in donations for Our Place. A similar auction is underway for Admired Youth, which launched on June 1 on a local tech platform at hibid.ca.

"People seemed to love the Admired Women fundraiser," says Steven Seltzer, manager of special events and corporate giving. "It was a great way to celebrate incredibly positive local stories during challenging times. The vision and accomplishments of the young leaders we now profile are just as inspiring."

At this time, Our Place is seeking nominations for one or two more inspirational youth for portraits. If you would like to nominate someone, please contact Steven Seltzer at stevens@ourplacesociety.com

The portraits are available for viewing, purchasing and donating to at <https://hibid.ca/events/portraits-of-caring>. As well, they are on display at Hillside Centre from **June 3 to July 15**. Stop by!

