



ourplace

We're Here For You

By JULIAN DALY, CEO

At social agencies, such as Our Place, we often talk about how many men and women are only one or two paycheques away from needing our help. And now we find ourselves in the midst of a year-long pandemic without a visible end; local businesses are shutting their doors, people are losing their jobs, and rents are still as high as ever.

In these times, I am deeply concerned for those who face the threat of homelessness and poverty for the first time. People who never imagined themselves in this position.

When many people think of Our Place, they often think of our endless triage for people who are suffering on our streets, whether that be due to addiction, untreated mental health issues, or even physical injuries that have left them stranded and with nowhere else to turn.

But Our Place has always been there for everyone who has hit that bump in the road. Many of the people who walk through our doors for a meal, a cup of coffee, or a chat with someone who understands, are not here forever. For them our services are the crucial hand up they need to get their lives back on track.



JULIAN DALY, CEO of Our Place Society

Sadly, this isn't the case for everyone. Without proper medical support, appropriate housing, addiction treatment and in-depth trauma counselling, there are people – far too

many people – who suffer and often die on our streets.

While that may be the bulk of our work, I want you to know that Our Place is here for everyone going through tough times, including people who may have never thought that one day they would need our services.

Inside our doors, folk won't find judgement, scorn or criticism, but a sense of belonging and hope. Many of our staff members have walked the same path as those we help, so they understand the struggles those people face.

We don't preach or expect anything in return, we're simply here to help catch people before they fall too deep into the cracks that cross everyone's path at some time in their lives.

We believe there's no shame in asking for help. In fact, it's a sign of strength.

We're not perfect, and we don't expect the people we help to be perfect either.

For some, we are a pit stop; for others, we are a lifeline.

But all that matters, especially in these difficult times, is that we're here for those who need us – and that might be you, a friend, or a family member. Whoever it is, please remember we're here for all.

THE 2020
CHARITY  100

Our Place Society was recognized by Maclean's magazine as one of the top 100 charities in Canada for 2020.



TV SCENE INSIDE





Taste the Love at Our Place

BY GRANT MCKENZIE

Even after 31 years at the helm of the Our Place kitchen, Brian Cox's motto hasn't changed:

Can you taste the love?

It's a motto that his entire kitchen crew adheres to because feeding 10 million meals over three decades is more than a job – it's a passion.

"Food is love," says Brian. "It's much more than a meal because the people we serve are so grateful, and we get to witness their smiles."

Brian first heard about Our Place in the 1980s when it was known as the Upper Room. He was operating a small catering business at the time when a church friend asked what he did with the leftovers. Having no suitable answer, the friend suggested he look into the local soup kitchen.

Brian decided that was a great idea and began bringing food to the Upper Room. Six

months later, in a strange act of serendipity, the executive director of the Upper Room became his brother-in-law. Soon, Brian began cooking in the kitchen "and it seemed to fit. It felt good and was such a rewarding thing to do."

He hasn't looked back since.

Over the years, Brian has seen many faces come through the doors of Our Place. He has got to know many of them on a first-name basis, and makes note of when somebody is having a birthday or other special occasion.

"We made a cake for one man on his birthday and he broke into tears," says Brian.

"He told us that he never had a piece of birthday cake before in his life."

Brian's eyes crinkle in remembrance. "It's human interactions like that, that make this place so special."

It hasn't always been perfect, however.

"The people really notice quality, but they are so thankful for what you're giving them that sometimes they'll also accept a mistake," he says.

What mistake? Brian was making a large vat of potato soup and, in those days, he used to receive frozen food donations from the hospital.

A large orange bag of cheese

sauce caught his eye, and Brian added it to the soup. However, when he did a taste test, it turned out the cheese was actually peach pudding.

"So I spent the next hour trying to correct the mistake," says Brian. "It wasn't bad, it was just super sweet. I tried all sorts of things to try and salvage it, and then I served it for lunch. Only one guy came up afterwards to say 'Brian, that was the weirdest soup you've ever made me.'"

As Brian tells his stories, it becomes quite clear where the love comes from. And it's this passion that makes the Our Place kitchen the heart of everything we do.

Can you taste the love? A gift of just \$3.11 will help keep bellies and hearts warm and full this winter. Please consider making a donation today by calling 250-940-5060, emailing donors@ourplacesociety.com, or visiting www.ourplacesociety.com/donate.



Brian (right) has been sharing good food, laughs and smiles with the Our Place Family for over 30 years.



Give Hope and Nutrition this Giving Tuesday



Jill Van Gyn understands that those struggling with poverty, addiction and homelessness often cannot benefit from nutritious, high protein foods. When she battled her own addiction, just 10 years ago, neither did she.

“I desperately want to have that conversation about the power of food that’s available to all of us,” says Jill. “For me, it started with my own slow restoration to spiritual, physical and mental health. It helped me realize the ways I could give back as part of my journey. Looking back on my addiction, the only reason I am not dead, institutionalized or in jail is because I was born with immense privilege.”

Now, this dynamic CEO of Fatso High-Performance Peanut Butter is looking to spread her message as Chair of the Our Place 2020 Campaign for Food Security.

Giving hope through food security is one of our two priorities for Our Place leading up to Giving Tuesday – a one-day national fundraising blitz coming up on December 1st.

You can help ensure we provide healthy foods to the members of our community that we serve from local food suppliers, Farmlands Trust and 20 local farms in the Community Food Hub.

Thanks to the City of Victoria, BC Housing and Island Health, we had funding for six months of the year for extending our hours into the evening. But winter is fast approaching and that’s why we need your support in helping us keep people warm, safe and fed during the coldest, wettest time of the year. The first \$5,000 will be matched from our generous Giving Tuesday sponsor, Peninsula Co-op.

“If this pandemic has taught us anything, it’s that health



Jill generously donates a supply of Fatso peanut butter to Our Place.

and wellness is not a given and we need to support those in our community who need a helping hand,” says Lindsay Gaudette, Marketing & Community Relations Manager for Peninsula Co-op. “Food is a basic necessity most of us have regular access to, but there are many in our community who struggle to scrape together one meal every day, let alone a nutritious one. We’re proud to participate in Giving Tuesday

for Our Place by offering one small step towards helping with food security and safe shelter for those most vulnerable in our community.”

Together we are asking the community to help us give hope and nourishment to our family members this Giving Tuesday. Your support means we can extend hours at the Our Place Drop-in Centre, with supportive services available, and help bring people out of the elements, give them a nourishing meal and something warm to drink.

Recovery is possible, and it often begins with a good meal.

Your donation will give hope at a cold and lonely time of year – and, the first \$5,000 will be matched by Peninsula Co-op through our online form. Please visit www.ourplacesociety.com/make-donation/giving-tuesday

Giving Tuesday - December 1st Give the Gift of Hope



Give online
www.ourplacesociety.com
or phone 250-940-5060

Your donation will be matched by



(up to \$5,000 by Dec. 1)

Donate Now



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Will You Walk with Us Once Again?



For the fourth straight year, we are participating in Canada's National Walk for Homelessness. Coldest Night of the Year is a family-friendly walk that raises awareness and money for charities serving those experiencing

poverty and homelessness. With the COVID-19 pandemic, things will be a little different this year but your support and participation in Coldest Night of the Year is just as vital. This year participants will:

- **Book a walking time to ensure there are no lineups (50 people max per ½ hour**

or whatever the Provincial crowd mandate is at the time).

- **Practice social distancing protocols.**
- **Have the option of a virtual walk so participants can show support from their own home/neighbourhood.**
- **Be provided takeaway food and beverages.**
- **Receive help from volunteers to ensure social distancing protocols are in place.**
- **Be asked to bring their own masks (team captains will be provided masks).**

join us on Saturday, February 20, 2021 – either in person or virtually.

Go online here to sign up for one of two walks in February: in Victoria: <https://cnoy.org/location/victoria/> Pandora and in the West Shore: <https://cnoy.org/location/victoriawestshore> in partnership with Pacific Centre Family Services Association. Registration is now open.

Our two organizations will also host a Zoom information session for the public to learn more on Friday, December 4 at 4 pm.

If you are interested in participating, sponsoring or captaining a team, want to register for the Zoom session, or have any questions, please contact Steven Seltzer, manager of special events and corporate philanthropy at Our Place, at 250-940-5064, or stevens@ourplacesociety.com.

We will see you out in the cold!

Last year, walkers and donors helped us raise over \$70,000 between our two walk locations in downtown Victoria and the West Shore and, despite the unique challenges we face this year due to the pandemic, with community support we think we can beat that! Please consider gathering a small team of friends, family, workmates, or congregation members, register online, and



What's Your Activity?

Supporting great causes can be fun and fulfilling. Consider an activity that not only gives back to the community, but helps build your team as well.

Together, feel the unity that comes from helping those less fortunate. Promote good values while building your staff, students, or faith community by helping people experiencing poverty & homelessness in our community

To arrange your activity, contact Steven Seltzer, Manager of Special Events and Corporate Giving for Our Place Society

Phone: 250-940-5064
stevens@ourplacesociety.com
www.ourplacesociety.com

THANK YOU to the Victoria Foundation Community Recovery Program Grant for helping to provide an expanded covered space in the courtyard of our Drop-in Centre to keep vulnerable people warm, dry and physically distanced this winter for daily meals and paramedic outreach services.