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ourplace

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Chief Executive Officer's Message

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.

We remain in challenging times, especially for those who are struggling with homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, and poverty.

But it is also a time of creative solutions.

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 in terms of housing.

Nobody wants to see people camping in parks with little to no support, poor access to washrooms, and let's not pull any punches here, in danger.

Our Place has been working closely with BC Housing and the City of Victoria on some of the solutions to the tent cities that have popped up in our parks.

Hopefully by the time you are reading this, all of the campers will be housed and our parks will be returned to their intended purpose.

Our latest two projects are managing a new transitional shelter on Russell Street in VicWest, and the Tiny Town 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 Town in the second week. Staffed 24/7 by Our Place, they offer showers, laundry, three meals a day and a safe place to live.

Most importantly, they are both pathways to permanent housing for the folk living there. We will be working with the new residents over the coming months to get them ready for and to secure their own, permanent homes.

It is exciting and heartening to see in our city such substantial investment in providing transitional and permanent housing for our homeless fellow citizens — and we are so grateful to be a part of it.

With much gratitude,

Julian

Julian Daly
Chief Executive Officer



THANK YOU!

IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC! The introduction of COVID-19 into our world changed the landscape on which we work, live and play. Our Place staff and volunteers had to quickly find the best ways to continue delivering necessary services, such as meals, showers, sleeping bags, clothing, hygiene items, safety checks, paramedic services, and much more. From all of us on the front lines, thank you for your continued support. We can't do it without you.



TINY TOWN - Housing Director Leah Young



TINY TOWN - Julian Daly thanks Dodd's for mattresses

from parks to Housing



WELCOME KIT



CAPITAL CITY CENTRE



RUSSELL STREET SHELTER



RUSSELL STREET - First Nations Smudging

Our Family

Mitchell's Story

"Skating was my higher power, and when that ended it was like my life had ended."

As a young boy growing up in Shawnigan Lake, Mitchell loved sports. In fact, after first donning skates at the age of two, he became so accomplished that he, along with his skating partner, earned bronze medals in figure skating pairs at the 2007 Canada Winter Games.

"I had such an amazing childhood," he says. "I was into all sorts of sports: water skiing, BMX racing, hockey."

But beneath that competitive edge was a shy kid who struggled.

"I started drinking and smoking pot when I was 12," he says. "I kinda had two lives where I was getting into trouble drinking, but also trying to maintain being a competitive athlete."

With aspirations of competing in the Olympics, Mitchell was training every day, and came very close to making that dream a reality.

"After high school, I went to Burnaby and did pairs skating," he says. "We were getting funding from the government as prospects for the 2010 Olympics, but then things happened . . . my coach moved . . . so I went to Ontario to try with a new partner, but it didn't work out."

With his Olympic dreams fading, Mitchell went on tour with *Holiday on Ice*, a European company that took Mitchell to

such foreign lands as France, Netherlands and Germany.

However, "that was when I started drinking heavily," he says.

Mitchell ended up being fired from the tour because of his drinking. He joined *Disney on Ice* but got fired for smoking pot.

"I fell into a deep depression after that," he says. "Skating was my higher power, and when that ended it was like my life had ended."

To cope, Mitchell's consumption of alcohol and pot increased.

"Eventually, I just ended up homeless," he says. "Because of my drinking, I couldn't maintain a job or pay the bills or, you know, manage."

Mitchell ended up staying at the Salvation Army and travelling between the streets of Victoria and Vancouver. He later camped in the woods "drinking and doing drugs."

In 2016, he moved into a tent city that arose on the courthouse lawn in Victoria. A confrontation there got him charged with aggravated assault and he was sentenced to three years in jail. Having hit bottom, Mitchell made a conscious decision to make a change.



"That's when I started getting into recovery," he says. "I went to Guthrie House." *Guthrie is a sister program to Our Place's New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community. Operated out of the Nanaimo Correctional Centre by B.C. Corrections and the John Howard Society.*

"It was amazing for me," says Mitchell. "When I got out, I was doing really well for about a year, but I ended up relapsing. Falling pretty hard, like, I got into Fentanyl and Meth, and within weeks I was homeless and doing crime again to pay for my habit."

"It was really difficult," he adds, "because I reached out for help. I knew where I was going, and I

didn't want to do crime, so I went to detox, but I couldn't get a place."

Suffering from withdrawal, Mitchell ended up in hospital.

"Basically, it felt like I was dying, but detox couldn't take me for another week. I held on for that week, but when I went back, they said I had to wait another two weeks. I said 'Oh, man, I'll be dead by then.' It was really frustrating because I ended up reoffending and going back to jail."

After a month in jail, Mitchell heard about New Roads and applied to join the therapeutic community.

New Roads provided him with everything he needed: stability, healthy food, structure,

one-on-one counselling, and "I learned a lot about addiction."

Mitchell signed an agreement that he would remain at New Roads for one year.

"And that was what I needed," he says. "The first few months, I was still thinking about going out and getting loaded, but I just hung in there and over time I just started liking myself and I was like 'You know what? Maybe I can do this.'"

After 13 months at New Roads, Mitchell has been out in the wider community since October 2020 and is working full-time as a first-year carpenter. And while the COVID pandemic has taken away some of his supports, such as church gatherings, Mitchell now has the skills and determination to rebuild his life.



2008: Mitchell Wallace and Emily Thain skate to a gold medal in Kamloops.
Photo courtesy of Times Colonist

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE PROGRAM TODAY

Why not join the many donors who have chosen to give monthly? This eco-friendly method ensures the money saved on printing and mailing receipts goes directly to providing food and services for people in need. Plus, you get more control over your giving because you can cancel or alter your gift at any time. And, we'll send you one receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return. Interested? Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 to sign up.

Volunteers are vital to our team to serve meals, run programs, operate our facilities, and help the most vulnerable citizens of Greater Victoria. Our Place is in need of volunteers to assist in operational roles, such as serving coffee, sorting and distributing clothing, cleaning tables in the dining room, and helping in the hygiene department.

VOLUNTEERS

WELCOME BACK!

The Frontlines

Shipping & Receiving with Gurpreet Johl

When Gurpreet first walked through the doors of Our Place it was in support of his brother who was accessing services here.

He didn't know it at the time, but soon Gurpreet would become an essential part of the organization.

While visiting his brother in the Drop-In at 919 Pandora, Gurpreet became friends with Jim who was running the Shipping & Receiving department.

"When a truck came in with food or clothing or other supplies, I just naturally grabbed some stuff to help out," he says.

At the time, Gurpreet had lost a long-time career at a local manufacturing company after it was bought out by foreign owners. He had picked up part-time work at a pharmacy across the street from Our Place, which allowed him to keep an eye on his brother and get a taste for what the organization did every day.

When a job opened in the Shipping & Receiving department, Gurpreet applied.

Little did he know just how much the department was about to expand as Our Place grew from one building to ten over the course of just a few years.

"The volume of the food deliveries has grown with the new sites," he says. "Plus picking up all the supplies for the Starter Kits for the family members who are moving into permanent housing."

A proud dad to two young girls, Gurpreet always manages to have a smile on his face, no matter how busy he gets.

"The job is rewarding," he says. "I always get feedback from donors saying 'you're doing a great job', and I always appreciate them for bringing donations to the facility to help the people we serve."

Gurpreet adds, "Plus they even send me Thank You cards and Christmas cards. You don't get that in other jobs."

Job satisfaction also comes when Gurpreet sees the impact that donations mean to the family members.

"One day I received a nice pair of Nike runners," he says. "When I put them out in our free clothing area, I watched as a young man picked them up and his smile was pure joy. That is satisfaction."



PENNY TENNENHOUSE:
Congregation Emanu-El

Our Donors

Sadly, it will be a while longer before Penny Tennenhouse and the team at Congregation Emanu-El can serve their much loved potato latkes out of the Our Place kitchen again.

And her congregation will have to wait until February 2022 before they can walk as a group again in the Coldest Night of the Year walkathon (in support of Our Place), but she can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"We've participated in the [Coldest Night] walk for the past three years and even though everyone had to follow strict health and safety protocols, this was our most successful year," says Penny, who co-ordinates an outreach program called "Avodah" (which means service in Hebrew) at the synagogue.

"Our people just really wanted to get out, participate and contribute as much as possible."

Although her congregation has had do



more things virtually this year, they have remained active in supporting Our Place and the local community.

Jim Rondeau of Central Saanich United Church says his congregation's passion for servicing the community has not slowed down either.

"We have two or three activities going on at all times," says Jim. "We're holding plant sales, clothing drives, and hosted a local walkathon for Our Place."

Giving back to the local community has also been a focus for First Metropolitan United Church.

"First Met has been a key supporter of Our Place from the beginning," explains church board member Emily Macdonald. "We have served meals together, rented our hall to Our Place for overnight shelter, donate to spiritual care programs and New Roads, and recently participated in Our Place's tenant starter kit campaign, providing full household kits to people transitioning from shelters into homes. Whatever we can do to support, we do."

Our Place's success is tied to the continued passion and commitment of our local faith communities and we are extremely grateful.

< **CREATE YOUR LEGACY OF LOVE** : During these challenging times, it's more important than ever to consider how leaving a gift in your will can extend your compassion and values to those who will need a helping hand in the future. After providing for your family, you can include a residual gift to Our Place Society in your will which can make all the difference to others and grant tax credits to your estate. For information, contact Jonathan in confidence at 250-940-5066 or jonathand@ourplacesociety.com



WE ARE HONOURED!

It's Official, Our Place Society is a Great Place to Work! OPS is proud to announce that we have been certified as a Great Place to Work® after a thorough, independent analysis conducted by Great Place to Work Institute® Canada.



DOUBLY

Our Place was awarded Non Profit of the Year by the Victoria Chamber of Commerce on May 15. You can watch the presentation at: https://youtu.be/5c7fB5_4JZU





YOU ARE INVITED TO THE UNVEILING OF GREATER VICTORIA'S TOP YOUNG LEADERS

www.ourplacesociety.com/events/portraits-caring

**JUNE
2021**



Be inspired by the selfless actions of local youth as you peruse the portrait gallery. Support Our Place by purchasing a portrait or donating to the one(s) that most speaks to you. Each portrait has a fundraising goal of \$1,000.

Thank you and our emerging community leaders for taking part in this campaign.

Contact Steven Seltzer, Manager of Special Events
250-940-5064 or stevens@ourplacesociety.com
for more information

During this challenging time, help us celebrate extraordinary young people in an amazing community!

Ways to Give

You can bring hope, belonging and nourishment with your online gift at ourplacesociety.com/donate or mailing a cheque to 919 Pandora Ave., Victoria BC V8V 3P4, or call us anytime!

Make a Donation

To speak with us regarding financial donations, address updates or tax receipt questions, please call:

250-940-5060

A Culinary Competition & Special Event for Our Place

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

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