

STAFF PROFILE | ASHLEY MACDONALD

SPRING 2022

Ashley has been working at Our WorkPlace for just over 4 years, having started as a part-time Job Coach for the organization and then assuming the role of Program Manager in 2019. “It was my first job after having my son, so it was a big adjustment,” she says.

Ashley was initially drawn to the work by the freedom it offered to see employment readiness along a spectrum. The focus of her previous government job working with people on assistance and dealing with addiction was too narrow and didn’t set clients up for success.

Ashley recognized that Our Place Society provided a broad range of services to its clients and wanted to be part of that kind of organization. As she says, “spreading needed joy is as important as a meal.” She especially appreciates that the organization meets people where they’re at. This carries through her work at Our WorkPlace, and crucially, it allows her to develop stronger relationships with clients. In the course of a work week, Ashley rarely sees the same person every day, and every conversation with a client is different.



which was recognized in 2021 by the provincial Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction partnering with Our WorkPlace to run 4 intakes of the long running, but now full-time, “People in Progress” workshop series. Open to both men and women, the revamped program is demand-driven by other community agencies because, unlike Our WorkPlace, they don’t have the ability to deliver this kind of program. “By expecting participants to attend a 12-week program full-time shows them what a 20-hour work week looks like,” says Ashley. In doing so, participants build confidence, learn time management skills and how to

stick to a routine. The program also focuses on their relationship to money, teaching them that money must be earned and introducing them to ways to save. While most of the program’s participants have realistic expectations, not all of them find work. However, as Ashley says, “that’s not necessarily the goal, and some may, at least in the short term, do better volunteering.” The “People in Progress” program offers a safe space for people to grow in a group setting and allows them to step out of their comfort zone. “For many of our participants, combating isolation can be difficult,” she says.

When asked about the future of Our WorkPlace, Ashley mentioned she’s looking at the potential of some sort of social enterprise that would give clients a safe place to train, practice personal time management and customer service. “Being part of such an enterprise would, I believe, develop confidence and allow people to figure out where they belong.”

Above all, Ashley considers herself fortunate to be working in such a rewarding environment. As she says, “it’s a place where joy outweighs the setbacks.”

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Angela

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“They are people who’ve lived through more than we can imagine, and frankly, they teach us more than we teach them in many instances.”

Ensuring that Our WorkPlace belongs in the “mix” is important to Ashley, and she actively advocates with other organizations and teams engaged in supporting mental health, housing, and sober living. Happily, Our WorkPlace has a proven record

Spreading needed joy is as important as a meal.



SHOUT OUTS!

The goal of everyone who participates in our People in Progress program is to either find a paid job or a volunteer position.

Three out of 5 participants in our last cohort have secured employment, 3 have applied to Camosun College for further education, 1 is volunteering and 1 is waiting to hear about a job.

Here are some of the organizations in Victoria who have generously created opportunities for our graduates to move forward in their lives.



Bin 4 Burger Lounge



Cook Street Activity Centre



*Our Place Society
(front desk security and housing)*



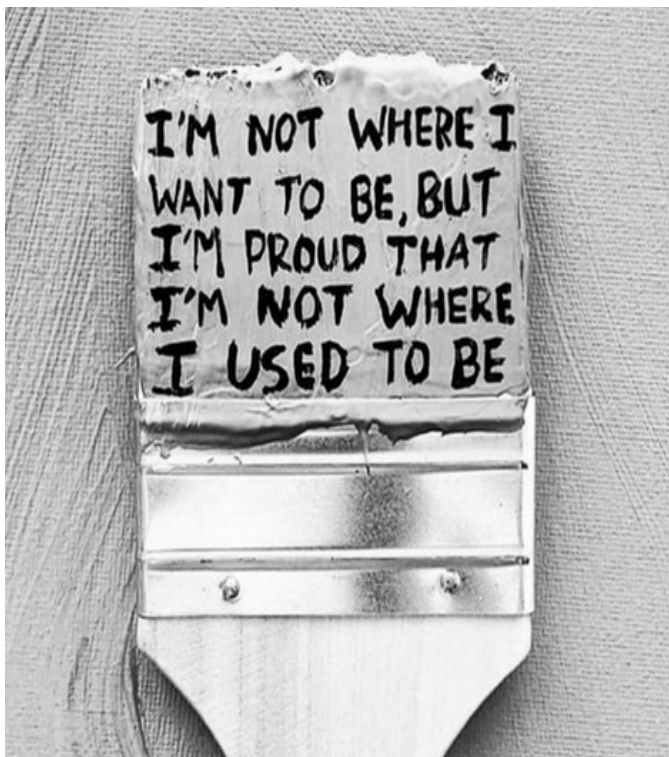
Victoria Downtown Clean Team

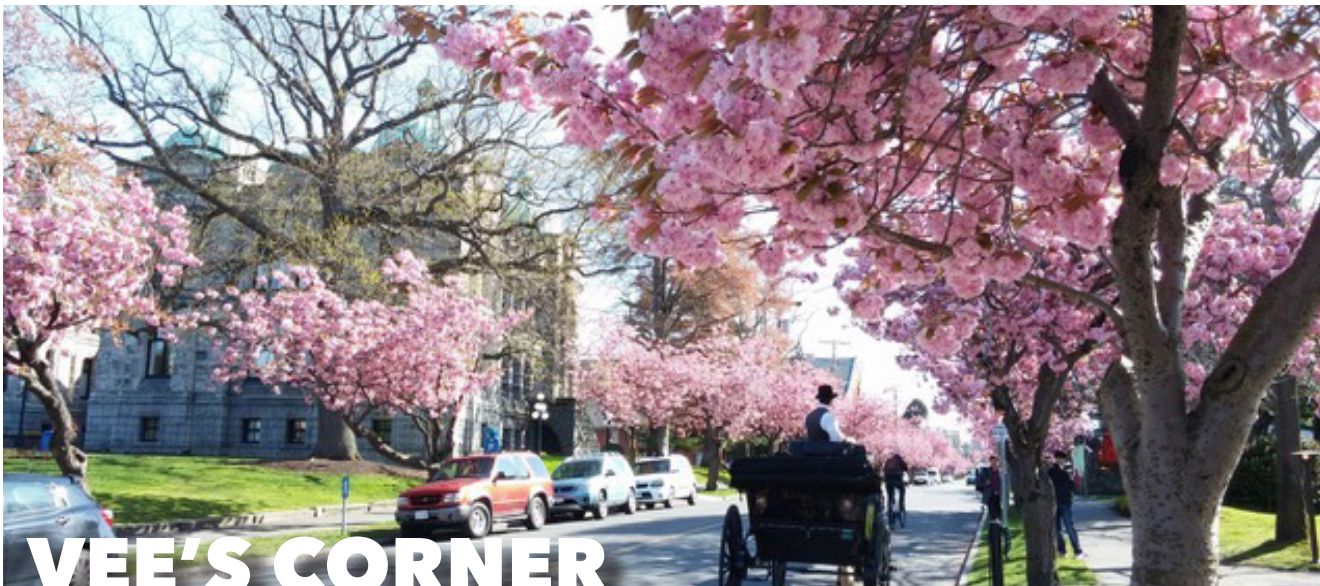


PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS | ANGELA

"I'm in a place where I feel safe and confident," Angela told us recently. However, she didn't always feel that way. When she left an abusive marriage in late 2019, she heard about employment counselling from a neighbour. At the time she was interested in starting a new business in wholistic healing but decided against it during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the encouragement of her counsellor Angela enrolled in a computer skills workshop at Our WorkPlace and then went on to complete the Women in Progress program. She had an interview set up with Walmart but wasn't sure it was going to be a good fit for her. Instead, she decided to ask SOLID Outreach Society in Victoria for a part-time job. At the time, there wasn't a position available, but 3 weeks later, she was offered a full-time job with the organization!

Angela's patience paid off and she now feels she's able to use the skills she's learned along with her life experience to help others. Angela's healing journey creating a safe environment for herself at home and at work is ongoing. But as she says, "I'm working on staying happy and trying to keep others safe."





VEE'S CORNER

Cherry blossoms not only symbolize Spring, but they also remind us that new beginnings are always possible.

Regular readers of "Hire Ground" will have noticed some recurring themes. In this issue, we're including a couple of new ones – "Shout-Outs" and "Voices". It is important to acknowledge individuals and organizations that not only help Our WorkPlace do its work, but also those who participate in our programs.

Just as importantly, we want to include the 'voices of those who are involved in the programs we offer - as participants and as supporters.

Vee



UPCOMING EVENTS

PEOPLE IN PROGRESS (PIP)

JULY 25TH - OCTOBER 14TH, 2022
MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
(10 AM - 3 PM)

DIGITAL JOB HUNTERS

JUNE 27TH - JULY 15TH, 2022
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY
(1 PM - 2:30 PM)

DROP-IN MONDAYS

(10 AM - 3 PM)

SMART RECOVERY



ON HOLD

**FOR THE MONTHS OF MAY AND JUNE,
RESUMING AGAIN IN JULY 2022**

VOICES

"I believe in picking people up because Earth isn't always an easy place to be."

—
- Ian Taylor
(Monk Office)

"I want to be happy and do something that excites me."

—
- Gage
(PIP graduate)

"No matter how many times you fall, you can grow from it and learn."

—
- Laura
(PIP graduate)



NOTE TO READERS:

This newsletter is produced by Our WorkPlace volunteers, with input from staff, clients, and supporters.