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FALL NEWSLETTER
2022

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ourplace

Hope and Belonging

We thank Mail-O-Matic for donating resources to print this colour newsletter

Chief Executive Officer's Message

At Our Place, we talk a lot about hope and belonging. But what is hope? The answer often depends on where you are at in life.

Over the last two years, we have managed to house over 500 people. For many of the people who were previously on the streets or camping in parks, that bed in a shelter, Tiny Town, or individual room in a hotel was their first taste of hope. But it was also the start of the toughest leg in their new journey.

That first burst of hope – a safe place to live – needed to be nurtured as people now struggled to grasp the depths of their addiction, mental-health struggles, domestic situation, loneliness, and despair. Our empathetic staff quickly saw this need and built connections to help in the best way they could. In this environment of nutritious meals, restful sleep and safety, most of our residents thrived. Others, however, continued to struggle.

For those who are thriving, the hopeful promise of permanent housing looms on the horizon. But what happens to those who are still struggling on our streets? Where is their hope?

This is a question that plagues us as we witness tents being erected on Pandora Avenue – staying within line-of-sight of Our Place for safety from violence and fear of a poisoned drug supply – and people curling up on sidewalks with a sleeping bag or tarp



to cover themselves. These are the ones who have been left behind; those who, for a multitude of reasons, have not been able either to find or thrive in transitional housing.

These folk get up early every morning and head inside Our Place where we continue to offer showers, food, washrooms and clothing. By doing this, we seek to reignite at least a spark of hope. Even if that spark is fragile, it can be the starting point in a journey toward health, peace, and some happiness.

In these challenging times, hope is rarely easy, but I know it is necessary.

And with your continued support, I also know it is possible.

With much gratitude,

Julian Daly
Chief Executive Officer



THANK YOU!

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU. We are truly grateful to everyone who contributes to Our Place. We appreciate the care and compassion shown by donations of time, talent and money that benefit our family members. The over 60 programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!



CLOCKWISE: Our Place staff participated in this year's Pride Parade while wearing new Pride T-Shirts designed in-house for the occasion. It was wonderful to share the day with so many passionate Victorians and supporters.

National Indigenous Peoples Day was celebrated across our sites with buttons and bookmarks designed using art by Patrick, one of our New Roads graduates. The staff and residents at Capital City Centre pulled out all the stops with food, music and dancing.

Busy Summer at Our Place



Our Family

Maree's Story

“ I felt a calling to go into nursing, just like I feel a calling here at Our Place. ”

While Maree is a beacon of sunshine as a volunteer in Our Place's computer lab, it's her grit and determination that make her story resonate with those she helps.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, as the eldest of five siblings, Maree first noticed something wasn't quite right after going through puberty.

"I suffered from depression, but not all the time. At school, I would burst into tears," she says. "I had a reason to cry, but it was very embarrassing in front of the other students."

A diagnosis of bipolar disorder, combined with learning difficulties, meant that Maree struggled to get high marks at school. She ended up leaving at 16 to work in the accounting department at Victorian Railways where her father worked.

After two years, Maree felt a calling and became a nursing assistant at the Spastic Children's Society (a common but now outdated term for children suffering with cerebral palsy).

Despite that calling, Maree continued to struggle. Her bipolar flared and she found the work environment difficult.

"I got along with the patients and the residents beautifully," she says. "But the staff said I was too slow. And that made me cry."

Sadly, Maree was fired from her position, but her passion for helping others remained unabated.

She returned to hospital work in the instrument sterilization department, and then decided to enrol in a program to become a qualified nurse.

Maree married a Canadian during that time and emigrated to Victoria in 1996 ("The year of the snowstorm," she says) after deciding she preferred it over Vancouver.

In Victoria, Maree became a Community Health Worker. Despite sticking it out for 10 years, Maree describes her time in the field as "a disaster."

"I worked all around the community," she says, "but ended up nursing two challenging psychiatric cases, and I ended up not too well myself."

Maree took a seven-month leave and went to work for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

"And that was a beautiful job," she says. "They loved me there."

With a comfortable home in a local mobile

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 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.



home park, Maree decided to semi-retire in 2008 at the age of 56.

Living on her own, however, hoarding started to become an issue until the owner of the park sold the property to developers and Maree's home, where she had lived for 19 years, was demolished.

"That was sad to see my house go," she says. "I took it pretty well, I think. I had help from a lady friend who goes to my church and she helped me to move."

After moving into an RV park where she currently lives in a 5th-Wheel trailer, Maree saw a computer class being offered by Camosun College and decided to take it.

Enjoying the class, Maree learned one of the professors was also teaching classes at Our Place, and needed an assistant. That was

nearly 10 years ago, and while the instructor has since left, Maree has stayed on.

"I discovered that I enjoyed the job," she says with a bright smile. "Our Place was happy with me, so they just let me keep on doing it."

Maree has since made the computer lab her own by keeping everything clean and reminding people that food and drink aren't allowed — especially near the keyboards. She also appreciates the colourful stained-glass windows created by Reverend Al Tysick, which remind her of her faith in God.

"Our computers are wonderful now," she says. "Even the keyboards."

With 12 workstations for people to enjoy, Maree gets to greet her regulars four days per week and catch up on their lives. For the last two years, she has also been part of the Peers Helping Peers program.

The most common activities she notices the computers being used for are job searches, rental unit searches, Google questions, and playing games.

"I'm happy in there," she says of the computer lab. "It reminds me of the nursing profession, serving people, and it brings me great joy."



< OH HONEY - Everybody is buzzing at New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community as the first hives of honey bees arrived. Residents are excited to learn all about caring for these wonderful pollinators. We're very thankful for the generous donations from Bill Fosdick of Capital Region Beekeepers Association and Buckerfield's.

THINGS ARE BUZZING

AT NEW ROADS

Hungry Hearts

Sept 10, what a night!

Clockwise from top: Tony Joe lead the auction; Mikala Kristensen shared her story of hope and belonging; Eight chefs acknowledged for their participation and commitment to our community; Hungry Hearts Champion Chef Rob Cassels of Saver; The team from PwC, our presenting sponsors, joined us for a great night.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS! We are now actively recruiting NEW volunteers and we are looking forward to developing opportunities in new site locations in supportive housing. We also have a new online application and orientation process for safer and easier access to the Our Place volunteer experience. Please visit www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer



Our Donors

This year's donors are a reason why we're feeling grateful this Thanksgiving.

Our Place donors stepped up this summer after extensive local news coverage revealed that we were facing a 35% increase in people lining up at our kitchens for meals, and that several regular food suppliers had warned our food manager of a 30% increase in food costs. Over 300 gifts totalling \$194,591 were offered by generous donors – and now the pantry at Our Place is stocked for the next few months!

We are also grateful for the fresh produce harvested from the Farmlands Trust (pictured above) and purchasing from 32 other local farms through the Community Food Hub. We wanted to be accountable to you, and report on the outpouring of community support that was so heart-warming.

Join us to celebrate:

- 57 brand new donors and 33 former donors returned to support that appeal
- 27 new monthly donors pledged a total of \$967 per month
- Current donors called in and made gifts ranging from \$20 to \$10,000 from a former IT executive to an astounding \$30K from the F & J Epstein Fund through the Vancouver Foundation
- An anonymous Foundation that pledges \$20K/month renewed for two more years

Food reduces the stress and stabilizes the day for people experiencing tough times in one of the most expensive regions of the country. The Fill the Fridge fall campaign and Hungry Hearts gala and auction proceeds will add to this incredible surge of support.

Change often starts with a meal and leads to opening doors to opportunities along the continuum of care at Our Place. *You are making a difference. Thank you!*

Why Donors Give?

A recent donor survey asked donors this question and here's what some told us:

"I have been impressed over the years with the sustained and ever-growing outreach Our Place has provided to the growing population of people with addiction, mental health and poverty."

"I give because Our Place is always there, on the front lines, day in and day out."

"I am deeply moved by the work that the employees and volunteers undertake on a daily basis."

Call us at 250-940-5060 or email donors@ourplacesociety.com to learn how you can get involved.

LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT
CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

OUR PLACE DONORS ARE COMPASSIONATE, kind, and loyal. Living these values like you do is what makes our work possible. You can extend these values beyond your life and create a Legacy of Love for the future with a gift in your will. For more information, visit ourplacesociety.com/legacygiving or write to legacy@ourplacesociety.com

Creative Ways to Give



Events are a great way to get involved with your community while supporting a great cause. Our Place holds events throughout the year including our Hungry Hearts gala in September, the dramatic reading of A Christmas Carol in December, and the Coldest Night of the Year walk in February (above). Small groups can also join us at our downtown community centre to serve a meal to those in need. Call 250-940-5064 for more information.

Our Place Keep us open



YOUR HELP IS NEEDED THIS WINTER
Moving into the fall and winter, the need to keep our community centre open into the evening will add over \$200,000 to our annual budget. To make this possible, we need your caring and compassion to keep vulnerable people warm, safe and fed during the cold, wet months ahead. If you can help with a financial donation, please visit ourplacesociety.com/donate, or call 250-940-5060.

HOW WE HELP



3 Meals Per
Day



Hot Showers &
Clean Clothes



A Listening Ear



Shelters



New Roads
Therapeutic Recovery
Community



Permanent
Housing



Transitional
Housing



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Hope and Belonging

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