



nourish hope

Fresh, nourishing meals are a part of the recovery process for residents at New Roads.

How your gifts are nourishing lives

Meet some of the cooks who feed our community's most vulnerable

*Food has the amazing gift of bringing us together. Gathering for a meal and sharing with others around us is a universally joyful experience. Here at Our Place it's no different. Serving over 1400 meals a day, 365 days a year, is no easy feat – but we love doing it because we know that for those we serve, it means so much more than just food on a plate. It's a chance for people to seek some comfort and feel they are a part of something more than the troubles they face each and every day. So, who are the people behind the counter creating hundreds of meals a day? Please take a moment to meet some of them here. Together with **Casey, Mike, Danika, Jenna, Leah, Jackson, and William**, they share their love of food with those we serve every day.*

Brian Cox, Our Place food services manager

Brian is a familiar face to many – he's been making meals at Our Place for over 30 years. Brian puts his heart and soul into the food he creates, and it shows. He purposely creates the most nutritiously dense meals as possible, working with a dietitian to make sure the balance is the best it can be. "I throw in everything I can that people wouldn't normally eat separately, like spinach, squash, beans, lentils, all that good stuff," says Brian. "We're always integrating local farm produce into the recipes we make. Anyone have any ideas of what to do with the 400 pumpkins out back? We'll come up with something!"

The chefs and cooks that work with Brian at the Pandora community centre and at other Our Place locations share Brian's creativity, and care, with the meals they make for the people we serve.

Erica, 919 Pandora community centre

Erica worked in restaurants for many years before coming to Our Place eight years ago. "Seeing the people who I cook for every day and interacting with them is really what keeps me here," says Erica. "It's really rewarding. There are some people I've seen almost every day for the past eight years, and we definitely have a connection." A Red Seal trained chef, the biggest compliment Erica's ever received at Our Place is being told her meal was "just like my mom used to make it."

Adds Erica, "We are the people there when some of them are going through the hardest times of their lives. That home cooked meal we provide means everything sometimes. My goal every day is to provide 15 minutes of dignity for someone. It feels like a real privilege to be able to do that, and it feeds my soul to feed other people."

Kirk, Capital City Centre

After 20 years "hiding in the back" at different local restaurants, Kirk started in the kitchen at Our Place's New Roads (then Choices) seven years ago before working at our transitional shelter My Place, then the kitchen at Pandora. Most recently Kirk has been starting up the new kitchen at the Capital City Centre (CCC) site. It wasn't until he cooked in the Pandora kitchen that he felt the true impact of the work he's doing here at Our Place.

"When you see hundreds of people coming through for every meal, every day, it's pretty



Here, Erica and the Our Place kitchen team were making lasagna for hundreds for dinner. Every meal she and the other cooks prepare is filled with nourishing, nutritious ingredients, as well as a generous portion of compassion and love.

frantic,” Kirk says. “I didn’t realize the scope of it all, how many people we’re helping, how many people really need it. That escaped me until I worked at Pandora. I’m a completely different person because of it.”

Kirk prides himself in cooking as much from scratch as possible and is eager to serve the 90 residents at CCC. “Imagine you’re putting out something to someone that’s from you, and they notice and appreciate that.” He adds: “You see a lot of inspirational stuff, aside from all the pain and suffering. There’s pockets of inspiration you see every day.”

Nancy, My Place Transitional Shelter

After the hustle and bustle of a lifetime spent working in kitchens, including her family’s restaurants, 67-year-old Nancy has been cooking at Our Place for six years, most recently at My Place on Yates where she prepares breakfast, lunch and dinner for the 55 residents who live there.

“It’s really nice here, I really enjoy preparing home cooked meals for people that I know they enjoy,” says Nancy. “It’s a challenge to come up with things every day that people can eat. They love my chili and chicken Caesar wraps and coleslaw because I make it so they can eat it.” Adds Nancy through a gap-toothed grin: “A lot of people have teeth and mouth issues, just like me, but that’s no excuse and I tell them that every day. If I can chew it, they can chew it, so come on and eat your vegetables!”

Zeno, New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community

Zeno heads up the kitchen at New Roads where, for the past two years, he’s mentored the 35 residents by teaching them the skills necessary for feeding and caring for themselves outside of recovery. A Red Seal chef with a history in fine dining at places like the Union Club and the Victoria Golf Club, Zeno made the decision to move away from that sector and hasn’t looked back.



Oh my gourd! After recently receiving a hearty supply of giant squash donated from Royal Roads University, what’s Zeno’s answer to their kindness? “Soup!”

“There’s an opportunity here to help people, and I like seeing the growth in the guys,” says Zeno. “I like the teaching aspect, to be able to teach them simple things. If I can share a bit of knowledge and experience with them, those are lessons that they might actually take away when they leave here.”

Zeno supervises a kitchen crew made up of the residents – two coordinators, four cooks, three dishwashers, and one stocker who spend a couple of hours each day preparing the day’s meals, and learning invaluable skills from Zeno and each other. Zeno adds: “It’s like reinventing simple lessons in life through food.”

Zeno’s Charred Brussels Sprouts (feeds 30)

- 5 lbs Brussels sprouts
- 2 cups diced shallots
- 2 cups chopped walnuts or pecans
- 2 cups dried cranberries
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/4 cup balsamic reduction
- Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350°F. Wash and cut Brussels sprouts, then toss with oil, salt and pepper. Roast until slightly charred (about 20 min). Add chopped shallots, cranberries and nuts, and continue roasting until well charred (another 10 - 15 minutes). Finish with balsamic reduction. Serve hot or room temperature. Enjoy!

Providing meals to those who need it most has been the core of what we do for more than 50 years. With those meals comes the care and support to help people find their way to a better place, all because of your donations.

Please join us in nourishing hope through warm, nutritious food, clean, dry clothing, kind, listening ears and open hearts and minds.

From its humble beginnings as a simple downtown Victoria refuge, Our Place has grown from an inner-city community centre to employing 275+ staff and 300+ volunteers who operate a continuum of critical services in 10 locations throughout the CRD.

- 919 Pandora Avenue
- Muncey Place on Blanshard Street
- Capital City Centre Hotel on Douglas Street
- Howard Johnson Hotel on Gorge Road
- Tiny Homes Village on Caledonia Avenue
- Russell Street Shelter
- My Place Shelter on Yates Street
- New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal
- Jaymac Place Recovery Home in Saanich
- Our WorkPlace on Quadra Street