

# Our Stories

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2023

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

## Message from Julian

**I'm feeling positive about this new year. Maybe that's because 2022 was rougher than any of us wanted. Or maybe it's simply the eternal optimism we need to have in order to do the work we do.**

I'm sure it's no surprise to hear that we struggled last year; despite feeding, supporting and housing hundreds, more people seemed to end up in a tough spot.

Many seniors visited Our Place for the first time, and I heard of others, especially senior women, who actually had to access shelters because of renovations and rising rents.

The other stories felt familiar and yet darker as addiction continues to take a staggering toll. The street drugs today are stronger and more poisoned than ever before, and the effects they are having on people's mental and physical health is a crisis.

We clearly and desperately need more and better treatment and recovery options as part of a continuum of care for those most unwell on our streets.

I see the care and compassion that is delivered every day by Our Place staff and I want to see them having the tools they need to make a real, sustained difference.

And this is where I truly need your help.

Donations were down in 2022, to the point where we are struggling to make our year-

end budget. Without financial donations, we can't deliver lifesaving or life-altering assistance at our current levels, let alone increase it, which is what is needed.

Yes, we can and will serve meals — over 1,400 per day — because without that, hundreds would go hungry. But a meal should also be the first step to getting other meaningful help, like with access to housing and healthcare, for example.

We need to be doing more to help those who seek it. So if you are reading this message, and you are able to assist us with a donation, please be assured that we will use it to offer more than a helping hand.

We will inspire and support change.

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 many programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!





# Hope & Belonging at Our Place



WINTER CARE (Clockwise): Angel gifts for 494 people; Julian Daly and Gordy Dodd prepare for Christmas meals; new night shelter opens; CBC, TC & CHEK presenters prepare A Christmas Carol; REACH choir perform; Adam preps winter donations.



# Our Family

## Thomas's Story

“

**“The best part of my job,” he says, “is helping people.”**

”

Thomas has never had trouble excelling at anything he puts his mind to, but he has struggled in the past to find true purpose.

That all changed, however, when he first walked through the doors of Our Place some 15 years ago.

The building was still under construction, the very first housing occupants were just moving in, but Thomas felt an immediate connection and sense of belonging.

**“I knew I could make a difference here,” he says. “Suddenly my past struggles and challenges became strengths that I could share.”**

Born in Nelson, BC, Thomas describes his childhood as “not the greatest.” His father struggled with alcohol addiction, and his parents divorced shortly after he was born.

Thomas's father died from an alcohol-related injury at 46, which was devastating for 11-year old Thomas who had only met him for the first time six months earlier.

Raised by a single mom, Thomas had his first drink, tequila, when he was 10. And while the experience made him “turn green whenever anyone mentioned tequila” it

also started him down a path to his own troubles with alcohol.

A rebellious youth, he drank and dabbled in drugs, and eventually dropped out of school following Grade 10.

“I was fed up with school.” He pauses. “But sometimes I wish that I had stayed and finished my education.”

At 18, he began to have a better understanding of his mother's life and past. This brought them closer, but also spiralled Thomas deeper into his own addiction.

He left Nelson for Vancouver where his drinking increased as did his experimentation with street drugs.

“Luckily, I have a big fear of needles,” he says.

Thomas worked a variety of labour-intensive jobs in construction, and travelled back and forth between other cities and Nelson.

“But I always struggled in Nelson,” he says. “I never got in as much trouble elsewhere as I did in my hometown.”

He travelled to Edmonton for a couple of years, then Campbell River and Courtenay, but always returned to Nelson, and started the cycle again.

**“I thought I'd seen a lot of bottoms,” he says. “And I always pulled myself back out. I would always**

## 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 or visit [ourplacesociety.com/donate/monthly](https://ourplacesociety.com/donate/monthly) to sign up.





say 'I'm going to quit', but it was always the same. I would get back into drinking and drugs."

In 2000, Thomas experienced what he calls "his real bottom."

"I really didn't like where I was," he says. "The drinking, the drugging, the life struggles. A lot of pain from my life experiences and the pain I caused my loved ones."

Thomas decided that he had had enough and needed to make a change. He admitted himself into the Comox Valley Recovery Centre, an abstinence program based on the twelve-step model.

However, the program was only 30 days. Thomas knew that wasn't enough time for him, and he would return to his addiction upon release.

"I knew it," he says. "I had tried a treatment

program in '94 and left within a day."

He transferred to Miracle Valley, a 172-bed residential rehabilitation centre near Mission, BC, which closed in 2010.

**"And that's where I found my miracle," he says. "I finally realized that I was sick and tired of being sick and tired."**

After his time at Miracle Valley, Thomas moved to Foundation House, a second-stage recovery home in Victoria.

Thomas returned to the work force, and at 7 years sober fell in love and got married to Darlene. Life was looking up until a workplace injury set him back. The company failed to support him in his claim for disability, and he ended up jobless.

Despite these obstacles, Thomas maintained his sobriety.

Then a friend from Foundation House told

Thomas that Our Place was looking for good people.

Thomas visited and immediately, "It was like I was meant to be there."

Thomas was hired as desk security in the front lobby, a job that entails working with staff, donors, volunteers, housing clients, police and ambulance, and those vulnerable individuals who need Our Place's services.

He sees people on their best days and on their very worst, but he feels like he's making a difference every single day.

"The best part of my job," he says, "is helping people."

**"At my old job, my work was making millions for the company, but at Our Place, I feel like I'm making millions in my heart."**



< **NEWMAN FARM** - With the 2022 harvest complete, Farmlands Trust grew 12,912 lbs of fresh local produce at Newman Farm on the Peninsula and donated it all to Our Place Society kitchens!

**THAT'S A LOT OF PRODUCE**

FARMLANDS TRUST

# Gratitude

## The Great Grant List

**Please join us in grateful acknowledgement of the following funders and partners who provided \$10,000+ in response to grant applications in 2022 for key programs and services across Our Place's various locations.**

In alpha order:

- A & A King Family Foundation
- ALACS Foundation, through the Victoria Foundation
- Alistair S. Thomson Fund through the Victoria Foundation
- Anonymous Donors
- B.C. Addictions and Mental Health
- Big Wheel Burger Community Foundation

- B.C. Housing
- City of Victoria
- Employment & Social Development Canada - New Horizons for Seniors
- F&J Einstein Family Foundation, held at the Vancouver Foundation
- Greater Victoria Savings and Credit Union Legacy Foundation through the Vancity Community Foundation
- Island Health
- James Family Foundation
- JAYMAC Fund through the Victoria Foundation
- Joan Wiggins & Graham Lamb Opportunity Fund, through the Victoria Foundation
- Laurence and Hazel Burt Memorial Fund through the Victoria Foundation community grants
- Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation
- Province of British Columbia
- Provincial Employees Community Service Fund
- Second Harvest Food Rescue
- The Joe Wo Joint Spousal Trust
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation various donor-advised funds
- Viveka Foundation through the Victoria Foundation
- Windsor Family Fund through United Way British Columbia



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

**THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!** We currently have a few select daytime-only volunteer shifts available in the dining room and clothing distribution areas. It's easy to apply – we now have a user-friendly online application and orientation process that enhances your Our Place volunteer experience. Please visit [www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer) to get started.





## Our Donors

**I**f there's one thing Larry Wagner would want to be remembered for, it's loving and caring for those struggling with poverty and homelessness in our community.

And that's why Larry chose to leave one of the largest bequests ever received to Our Place Society. Larry was a very good listener with an open heart who made many friends during his daily walks or bike rides on Pandora Avenue.

He regularly stopped and visited with people on the street. And the more "amazing stories from good people" he heard, the more he realized how easy it is for people who have experienced trauma, physical or mental health issues — or simply bad luck — to fall into poverty and addiction.

He valued the friendships that he forged on the block and was happy to share meals from the neighbourhood McDonald's.

Larry was a practical, hands-on person who loved to fish and enjoyed cooking. He recognized the importance of the nutritious meals and the wrap-around support services that Our Place offers for people going through difficult times.

Larry generously left almost \$767,000, which was most of his estate, to Our Place because he believed in providing emergency meals and compassionate support to those in need. A plaque in Larry's honour will be placed at the Community Centre on Pandora. It will prominently feature his message to all: **YOU ARE LOVED AND CARED FOR.**

*To nourish hope, dignity, and change beyond your lifetime please consider naming Our Place Society as a beneficiary in your will.*

*For a no-obligation discussion of this and other planned giving options, including associated tax savings, please contact Diana Gallivan at [dianag@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:dianag@ourplacesociety.com) and see legacy giving at [ourplacesociety.com](http://ourplacesociety.com).*

### HEART OF THE MATTER

Our Place is excited to unveil the conversations we have been having with community leaders, service providers, Our Place leadership and the people we serve. **The Heart of the Matter** podcasts can be found at <https://www.ourplacesociety.com/stories/video-stories/> with more being unveiled every few weeks.

We welcome your feedback after listening to:

- Victoria Police Chief Del Manak
- BC's Minister of State for Child Care Grace Lore
- Victoria Chamber CEO Bruce Williams
- Moms Stop the Harm, Leslie McBain & Kathleen Radu
- Our Place Manager of Wellness Services Maria Green
- Our Place Director of Housing & Shelters Leah Young
- And more

## OUR GRATITUDE

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to all the kind and compassionate donors and supporters that have helped give hope and belonging to those in need. Each month, we give special recognition on our website to those who have made a major difference in the lives of those we serve.

Please visit the Gratitude page at [ourplacesociety.com/stories/our-gratitude](http://ourplacesociety.com/stories/our-gratitude) for more.

Save The Date - Feb. 25

## Warm hearts on a Cold night

**Our Place Society and Pacific Centre Family Services have once again teamed up for the 2023 Coldest Night of the Year charity two and five kilometre walkathon.**

Together, we are proud to offer families, faith, work, and community groups the opportunity to walk in solidarity and raise awareness and funds to help serve the hungry, homeless, and hurting people in our community.

- Enjoy family-friendly activities both before and after the walk
- Join hundreds of compassionate members of our community participating in Canada's fastest growing peer-to-peer fundraising campaign
- Enjoy hot food and drink on a cold winter's night
- Have a fun warm-up with great local fitness providers
- Get a free toque and gift card to Big Wheel Burger (if you raise funds)

Last year, our community helped us raise over \$150,000 between our two walk locations. With your support, this year we think we can beat it

and make more of an impact on the issues facing our neighbours in need!

Please consider gathering a team together and joining us on **Saturday, Feb. 25** either in person or virtually.

To register please visit one of the following websites (those planning to walk in their own neighborhoods may visit either website):

### Victoria Walk:

<https://cnoy.org/location/victoria/Pandora>

### Westshore Walk:

<https://cnoy.org/location/victoriawestshore>

Our Place is here for individuals and families facing extreme challenges – regardless of the reason. Your support will ensure that we can continue to be a beacon for those in our region experiencing tough times.

If you are interested in creating a team, walking, or have any questions, please contact: **Steven Seltzer at 250-940-5064 or [stevens@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:stevens@ourplacesociety.com)**



## Our Place Sponsor Meals



### HELP SERVE HOPE & BELONGING

You can experience having a direct impact on the lives of those struggling with poverty and homelessness in our community when you or your group sponsors a meal.

It's also a great team building or family bonding activity, and a wonderful way to give back to your community at the same time.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner sponsorships are available starting at \$575. We can now invite groups of up to five people back in to the community centre at Our Place to serve a meal.

Our Place provides over 1,400 meals per day across its locations and sponsoring a meal ensures continued support for the most vulnerable citizens throughout Greater Victoria.

If you or your group would like to sponsor a meal (or meals), or you have questions, please contact contact Melissa at 250-940-5065 or [melissam@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:melissam@ourplacesociety.com).

 **ourplace**  
**Hope and Belonging**

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