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FALL NEWSLETTER
2023

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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

There is something about Fall that makes me think of change in a positive way.

Often folk are frightened by change, resist it or think change can never happen. At Our Place, however, we are all about change, believing in people's ability to change, and supporting them to do so.

This year, we have seen a lot of change that fills me with hope and a deep belief in the power and possibility of positive change.

I'd like to share a few examples of those points of hope with you.

This Fall, there are 52 people who were once huddled on the streets, living rough, who are now peering out a window from inside a warm, dry, permanent home of their own at our beautiful new supportive housing facility on Albina Street in Saanich. And there are more buildings like this on the way.

Just the other day, I received a wonderful letter from a mother and father who strongly believed they had forever lost their son to the scourge of addiction.

They wrote: "His addiction had taken him to a place that we felt he was never coming back from."

Thankfully, their son was accepted into our New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal where he put in the effort and time to turn his life around.

The letter continues: "In our opinion your team and program saved our son's life. We are so thankful. Since he left the program, he has been living with us and attending meetings every day, eating well and working. We have seen a level of responsibility in him that we have not seen for years. As parents of an addict, we felt

powerless to help, [but] he is [home] now and continuing to follow the steps. Our message to you and your entire team is, Thank You!"

And, honestly, this is why we do the work that we do, and likely why you support us in that work, because people matter and change, for the good, is possible.

Every person struggling on our streets today is somebody's son or daughter, and they all deserve a chance at rebuilding their lives and relearning how to be recipients of that love.

It's not easy work, but every time we return a lost child, no matter their age, to their family, we know it's the reason why we do it.

I hope that these few examples fill you with the same hope that they fill me with.

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



CLOCKWISE: Our Place staff, volunteers, supporters and family members participate in this year's Pride Parade.

Handsome Day was a big hit with the men receiving haircuts, pizza, pampering and prizes.

Baseball returned to Beacon Hill Park with sunshine and hotdogs.

Artist Tanya Bub created a unique art event (and documentary thanks to Ross Whelan and Haus of Owl) *Sitting With Grace*. Tanya donated the proceeds from the show to Our Place.



Fun Summer at Our Place



Our Family

Bruce's Story



“I’ve quit drinking 151 times in my life. It’s always been a struggle.”

Housing changed everything for Bruce. Not only did it get him off the streets, but it gave him the courage to change his life.

Born in Zimbabwe to military parents, Bruce describes his early childhood as “a bit of a disaster.”

His mother struggled with addiction to the point where his older brother was born with fetal alcohol syndrome. His parents divorced when he was four, then his mom packed up the kids and headed to Canada when Bruce was six.

His mother had been born on Vancouver Island, so that’s where the family ended up. His father remained in Africa.

“Mum’s life was chaotic,” he says, thinking back. “My brother was a nightmare right from the start due to fetal alcohol, and she didn’t have the skills or support to handle him.”

The family settled in Oak Bay, but the brother ended up in foster care with weekend visits home.

Amidst this chaos, Bruce always felt alone and that, “I came in last.”

He developed anxiety at a very early age, and began counselling when he was only seven.

“My mother, like me, was stubborn, anxious and impulsive,” he says. “And then to add insult to injury, she lost her eyesight at the age of 40.”

His mother lost her job and went on disability, and Bruce became the parent for his mother and brother before he was mature enough to handle it.

“Things got worse,” he says. “My brother began having a passion for lighting fires. He would light the fire, then call the fire trucks and tell them where the fire was.”

The police soon caught on and his brother was incarcerated.

“Somehow,” he says, “I was able to graduate high school.”

Bruce and some friends took off for Banff to find work, parties, trouble and freedom, but with his anxiety barely held in check “that’s when my drinking really took off.”

“My relationship with my mother deteriorated badly,” he says. “I turned into a ‘bastard’. I quote my mother when I say that word because that’s what I was called a lot of the time.”

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.



"She was right," he adds, "but I didn't know what to do anymore. My mother always said 'You were born depressed'."

Struggling on his own, Bruce went through a cycle of "bad jobs and bad relationships." But within that spiral, there was always something, an inner child perhaps, that was desperate for calm, acceptance and love.

"I've quit drinking 151 times in my life," he says. "It's always been a struggle."

One time, Bruce stopped drinking for 8½ years, but when he fell off the wagon again, he spiraled into homelessness.

He lived in his car until he lost his license and it was towed away. Bruce turned to the Sobering Centre and Our Place's night shelters.

He found work through temp agencies and got sober for a while, but then the cycle would turn and he would end up drunk and annoyed that "all my bosses were 25."

He started collecting recyclables, and after a while "I started to get pretty good at it." He would "get up from the Sobering Centre, go and collect empties for five hours, collect my 40 bucks for my beer and my cigarettes, and repeat."

"I didn't feel hopeless," he says. "I just got into a habit." But that also meant, "I lost sight of housing. I lost sight of getting my life together."

Then something unexpected happened. BC Housing purchased hotels with a plan to build permanent housing. It was the motivation Bruce needed.

"I never felt like I would ever be housed," he says. "But then I realized that I needed to show them I want to get out of this, I was ready to work for this."

His hard work paid off and Bruce is now living at the former Capital City Centre operated by Our Place. He has been sober for over 8 months, collecting disability due to a bad knee, and he's working hard every day to bring his life to a place of peace and tranquility.

"This was an opportunity that may never come around again," he says, "and I plan to make the most of it."



< **WELCOME** - Neighbours were welcomed to tour our new 52-unit permanent housing facility with 24/7 supports on Albina Street in Saanich. Our staff BBQ'd some hotdogs and the residents were on hand to show off their new accommodations.

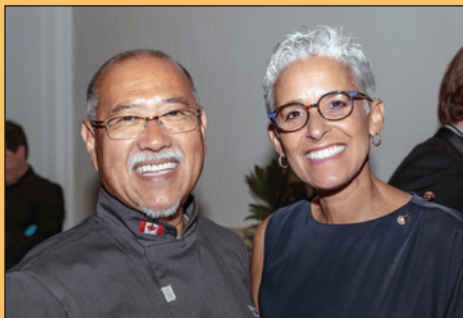
**NEW
HOUSING**
ON ALBINA

Hungry Hearts

What a night!

CLOCKWISE: Congratulations to this year's co-winners Sysco Foods and Zambri's.

- Guests sampled fantastic dishes from eight of the region's top chefs.
- Four of the evening's hosts, Julian Daly, Tony Joe, Ian Batey and Corrie Barclay.
- Chefs each served over 260 dishes to support Our Place.
- Our Place volunteers like Chef Takashi and Theresa Ito helped make the gala a great success.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS! We are continuing to recruit **NEW** volunteers on an ongoing basis; our needs are highest evenings and weekends in fun food service or clothing distribution roles. We have an easy-to-use online application and orientation process for safer and easier access to the Our Place volunteer experience. Please visit www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer



Our Donors

Photographer Dominic Hall has been looking through the lens of compassion at Our Place for nearly three years.

"After arriving in Victoria, we drove down Pandora and were amazed at the level of poverty," he says. "Having just come from Jakarta, Indonesia, my wife and I were surprised to see third world living conditions on the streets in a first world country. We wanted to learn more about the problem, so she started volunteering in the [Our Place Community Centre] dining room sanitizing tables, and soon after I began volunteering my photography."

Many of the photos you see used in Our Place publications, the website, and on social media are Dominic's work in action.

"That first session triggered something in me,

and I needed to learn more," he says. "You could tell just walking into the Community Centre that it's not all people using substances. There are people there who are just in a bad situation, who had fallen through the cracks because of mental health or financial hardship."

While his work in commercial photography fills a financial need, it doesn't fill his emotional need.

Adds Dominic, "My business is mainly food photography and portraiture, but what I really love is engaging with people and seeing and feeling the rawness of what's going on. When I do a project with Our Place and I get to go in there with my camera, I get to meet people, talk to them, capture their images, and it just humbles me. It brings it so close to your heart. That's why Our Place is for me."

Donating to Our Place comes in many ways. In the past three years, Dominic has given us hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars' worth of his time and talent, and for that we are truly grateful.



Heart of the Matter

The Our Place podcast, **Heart of the Matter**, is designed to bring local experts and thought leaders together to discuss the issues surrounding homelessness, addiction, poverty, and mental health challenges in Greater Victoria.

Our goal is not only to inform our donors of the changing nature of the struggling population that we serve, but also to be a voice that seeks solutions.

A new conversation will be uploaded every 2-3 weeks. Stay tuned by visiting the Our Place website or <https://anchor.fm/ourplacesociety> plus Apple, Google, Amazon, Spotify and other podcast sites.

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



SPONSORED MEAL FALL-WINTER MENU

WE HAVE INTRODUCED THEME MONTHS TO SUPPORT OUR SPONSORED MEAL SERVICES

SPONSORING A MEAL IS A GREAT TEAM-BUILDING OR FAMILY BONDING ACTIVITY

OCTOBER
HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

NOVEMBER
EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

DECEMBER

LOCAL GROUPS WHO WOULD LIKE TO HELP US PROVIDE HOLIDAY CHEER

BREAKFASTS
\$600
LUNCHES
\$700
DINNERS
\$850

WE INVITE ALL BUSINESSES, FAMILIES, FAITH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT BY SERVING MEALS TO THOSE STRUGGLING WITH POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK, CALL 250-940-5065 OR EMAIL MELISSAM@OURPLACESOCIETY.COM

Creative Ways to Give

December: Dickens – The return

Tickets will be on sale in October for this festive tradition. Radio personalities from CBC Victoria and special guests present a reading of the classic Dickens tale, A Christmas Carol. Sing along with the Reach Choir to classic Christmas carols and help Our Place make the season special for those in need.

<https://www.ourplacesociety.com/christmascarol/>

February: Coldest Night of the Year

The popular walkathon campaign will return to downtown Victoria and the WestShore on Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024. Our Place Society and the Pacific Centre Family Services Association host the 2 & 5km charity walks. Together, we are proud to offer everyone the opportunity to raise awareness and funds to help the homeless.

<https://www.ourplacesociety.com/events/coldest-night/>

Our Place Keeping warm

CLEANING OUT YOUR CLOSETS?

As the weather changes, we are accepting donations of warm weather clothing, such as long-sleeve shirts, pants, socks, warm shoes and boots, jackets, sleeping bags, toques and scarves.

Just drop them off at Our Place (919 Pandora Avenue) and your donations will go right where they are needed.

250-940-5060



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