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SPRING NEWSLETTER 2025

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Hope and Belonging

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



Message from Julian

These are uncertain and unstable times in our country and when times are tough in society as a whole, they tend to get even tougher for those we serve. Those we serve are no strangers to uncertainty and instability. That's why the refuge, the port in a storm, that Our Place represents for those we serve, is so important.



Our Place is a place of stability—a place where people can always count on a warm welcome and a sense of home. A place where they can rely on finding a nourishing meal, a warm shower, and a clean bed, offering some comfort and real certainty in uncertain times.

It's a common misconception that Our Place facilities are unsafe or unhappy places to be. If you've visited, you already know that isn't the case. In fact, we pride ourselves on the warm, safe, and welcoming atmosphere we can provide to those who need it most, when they need it most.

Whether it's coming in for a coffee and a few hours of rest in the warm community center, attending regular programs and mealtimes, or staying full-time in one of our supportive housing and shelter facilities – Our Place is a stable and accepting environment for all.

This is the Easter and Spring season which is traditionally a time of new life and renewed hope. Our Place is always a place of hope but this year we have a few additional points of hope. In what may feel like an increasingly hopeless world, we are providing meaningful employment through the launch of Your Place (see more at www.yourplacevictoria.ca), a social enterprise by Our Place, and celebrating the opening of the 20 bed New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community for Women, the only long-term women's treatment and recovery program on the Island.



These initiatives, effectively complementing what we already do, represent real, lasting change—offering people the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity, support, and community.

This Our Place community, of which you are an integral part, is a sanctuary, a place to be relied on and a point of hope for thousands of people. I can't thank you enough for making so much good possible. As you walk by the spring blossoms this season, I hope you take a moment to reflect upon all the lives you've been a part of changing for the better and feel the same hope that I do.

With my 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



SPRING CARE (Clockwise): Manicures at this year's Beauty Day; hundreds of latkes were fried up for the latke lunch hosted by the Avodah Social Action Team; Coldest Night of the Year 2025; Opening of the New Roads Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community; Formerly using Our Place services herself - Naomi Nice returned to Our Place to sponsor a meal; Baha'i Community of Metchosin 18th annual hygiene drive

Our Family

Debra Bell



“It’s a community that none of us has otherwise. It’s got heart. It gives me hope”

The Our Place community centre on Pandora is so much more than a place to find a hot meal. Family Member, Debra Bell, knows this better than anyone.

“I come for the camaraderie,” says Debra. She can often be seen in the dining room at meal time, connecting over a hot lunch with other seniors.

Debra was born and raised in Alert Bay, and her family is Kwakwaka’wakw. Though she regrets that their language was lost, she remains deeply connected to her culture, expressing it through her beautiful traditional art. She fondly recalls growing up with her parents and grandparents in the small fishing village and witnessing how Alert Bay grew as other Indigenous communities lost access to teachers and medical professionals. By the time she was raised, the Potlatch ban had been lifted, but her grandparents and parents still carried the painful memories of systemic discrimination and trauma.

While she treasures memories of time spent outdoors and on the ocean, she also remembers the struggles in her community—alcoholism and, tragically, experiences of sexual assault in her early years.

Yet, Debra chooses not to dwell on these hardships; instead, she speaks of them as part of her journey, emphasizing the strength and optimism they helped her build.

Her career began as an intake officer for the welfare office in Campbell River, later leading her to work with the ministry in Haida Gwaii. Over the years, she remained deeply connected to her community, serving in social services, childcare, libraries, and other support roles. In 1996, she earned her degree in social work, solidifying her lifelong dedication to helping others.

“I think that’s why I’m attracted to Our Place. They’re really good people,”

Debra married and had two sons. Her husband struggled with heart disease from a young age, and at just three years old, her eldest son was diagnosed with a severe heart defect. He underwent three open-heart surgeries at BC Children’s Hospital, but during a family trip to Vancouver, he passed away at only 11 years old. Just five years later, Debra’s husband collapsed in downtown Victoria and died in her arms.

“I was a bird with a broken wing after that,”

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY BUILDERS 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. 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 choose ‘monthly’ when donating online at www.ourplacesociety.com/donate



Today, Debra faces significant health challenges, relying on a wheelchair and oxygen. For a time, she depended on her younger son for care, but as it became too much for him to manage, she sought external support. Though grateful to have housing, she lives alone and struggles to access the medical and social services she needs. Cooking for herself is difficult—when she can afford groceries.

"When I get my pension, I pay my rent, my hydro, everything—there isn't much left for food," she explains.

The first time she was referred to Our Place was just for a meal to ease this strain.

"I had spaghetti, a nice meal. Then I realized, you could go there any time," she says. "The volunteers, the staff, the people, they are all so nice to us."

As time went on, Debra made friends and started exploring other programs offered by Our Place. She regularly spends time with the 55+ group and uses Our Place foot care services to maintain her foot health thanks to volunteer nurses. Recently, she attended Our Place's Beauty Day.

"I just can't get over that Beauty Day," she says, smiling widely. She still sports the fresh haircut from the day and speaks fondly of the manicure and make-up. But, mostly she was happy to spend the time with her fellow women.

"I'm meeting so many elderly [people], especially women, who don't have homes," she says of her friends at Our Place. One of the fastest growing groups in need of support, many seniors experiencing poverty, homelessness, and isolation seek support at Our Place.

"It's a community that none of us has otherwise. It's got heart. It gives me hope."



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS! We currently have a few select daytime and evening volunteer shifts available in the dining room and several clothing sorting and distribution roles. New this year are some fun program support roles as well. It's easy to apply – we now have a user-friendly online application that opens and pauses depending on our recruitment needs as well as an orientation process that enhances your Our Place volunteer experience. Please visit www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer to get started.

Your Place Victoria



Introducing Your Place Victoria: A Social Enterprise by Our Place Society

Through Your Place services, we extend Our Place's mission by providing meaningful, living-wage jobs to those moving out of addiction recovery who are healthy, able, and motivated to work.

Transform Lives with Your Landscaping

By choosing Your Place for your gardening and landscaping needs, you're doing more than maintaining your property—you're helping people rebuild their lives, one job at a time.

Guaranteed, Professional, and Purpose-Driven Services

Led by industry experts, we provide dependable, top-tier commercial and residential landscaping services. We make sure you are satisfied--guaranteed.

Services include:

- Mowing and edging
- Gardening, weeding, and light tree work
- Spring and fall cleanup
- Mulch delivery and replacement
- Top-dressing lawns
- Shaping bushes, shrubs, and hedges

Employment changes lives. Yet:

- 50% of individuals overcoming homelessness and addiction face hiring discrimination.
- Stable employment increases the chance of retaining housing by 45%.
- 63% of people experiencing homelessness need job training to re-enter the workforce.

By hiring Your Place for your landscaping and garden care, you're breaking these barriers and creating real change.

Visit www.yourplacevictoria.ca today. Watch the short video on the homepage to see Your Place Victoria in action!



Sukhdev and Khalsa Credit Union deliver blankets during a cold snap this winter.

Our Donors

Since 2015, every Sunday evening Family Members enjoy homemade masala chai at Our Place thanks to Sukhdev Singh Randhawa and his wife Harpreet Kaur.

Inspired by his service at Singh Sabha Sikh Temple Victoria, and the food insecurity he saw in the city, Sukhdev was looking for new ways to serve the community. Harpreet proposed preparing masala chai tea.

"She lovingly sourced spices like cardamom, ginger, and cloves, while I delivered and served the tea at Our Place," says Sukhdev.

Harpreet passed away quite suddenly in 2022, leaving Sukhdev heartbroken. But, service paused only briefly as he quickly realized that this service honoured not only his desire to help but Harpreet's legacy of faith, selfless service, and support of the community.

"The chai deliveries became a healing act, intertwining grief with purpose," says Sukhdev.

As Sukhdev continued his dedicated service, providing thousands of hours, and countless cups of comforting, delicious tea, his workplace noticed and joined as well. Khalsa Credit Union (KCU), whose Sikh-rooted values of equality, Seva (selfless service), and ethical stewardship that align with Our Place Society's mission, generously provided boxes of blankets during the recent cold snap.

"The warmth and joy I receive from those we serve—their smiles, stories, and mutual respect—are immeasurable. This exchange transcends charity; it is a shared affirmation of dignity. As the saying goes, 'If we want to change stereotypes, we must first change experiences,'" says Sukhdev.

Thank you to Sukhdev, Harpreet, and everyone at KCU for all you've done over the years for our fellow community members.



Monthly Donors

"It's like subscribing to a better community."

Monthly donations to Our Place are a sustainable, reliable source of income for ongoing projects that address homelessness, addiction recovery, and community wellness in our region.



Even a small monthly gift builds over time, making this impactful form of support accessible for everyone. The more people in our community who step up in this way, the greater this solid foundation for Our Place programs becomes.

Thank you to the **Our Place Community Builders** for showing us the incredible strength of community.

Join the Community Builders program with a monthly gift today!

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, write to Janice at janicek@ourplacesociety.com

Get Involved

Hold your own Our Place Fundraiser or Donation Drive!

Do you have a passion for helping others? Do you want to raise awareness while providing warm clothing, hot meals, and other essentials? Consider hosting your own event or fundraising initiative for Our Place Society.

Some of the greatest help that Our Place receives is from families, friends, and groups in the community! Whether it is a warm clothing donation drive, collecting spare change, having a bake sale, or setting up an online donation page – your creativity, and a little effort, could make a big difference for people in need.

A small clothing or donation drive is easier than you might think – you probably already have people around you who would be willing to contribute. If you're feeling ambitious, the sky's the limit on the kind of impact you could have with a community fundraiser!

And doing it together with family, friends, or colleagues? A special experience and great memories to boot!

Visit www.ourplacesociety.com/organize-a-fundraising-event to find more ideas and email Rachel at rachelh@ourplacesociety.com to let us know about your event.

Rachel Hesketh, 250-940-5060 ext. 5108, rachelh@ourplacesociety.com.



Our Place Annual Easter Meal



MEALS OPEN DOORS

For people experiencing homelessness, poverty, or other physical and mental health challenges, getting food can be a challenge. That's why Our Place serves over 42,000 meals every month and is open every day of the year to anyone in need.

As a time of renewal and growth, Easter is a special time at the Our Place Community Centre. Our annual Easter meal is a bright spot of joy and celebration for those we serve.

And beyond the day being special for people regularly relying on Our Place, holiday meals like our Easter meal are shared and talked about widely, bringing in hundreds of people who may not have otherwise walked through our doors. Once inside, they find one-on-one guidance from outreach workers, clean clothing, hygiene services, referrals to addiction recovery and housing, and so much more.

The impact of this one meal can be truly life-changing.

Learn more about upcoming events at www.ourplacesociety.com/events/engage



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

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