



Our Stories

SUMMER NEWSLETTER
2025

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SEAN



Hope and Belonging

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

Julian's Message

Our Place CEO

While we would have liked to come to you with street homelessness fully addressed, we can't. We've seen real progress and hard-won successes—but far too many people are still unhoused, and the crisis continues to grow.

Some days, the weight of it all feels overwhelming. I imagine you've felt it too. Systems shift, policies change, and too often, the solutions don't keep pace with the need. The people we serve can't wait. They need something more lasting—support that is steady, reliable, and deeply human.

At Our Place, we've built something unique: real pathways of care that stretch across meals and shelter, medical and mental health services, long-term recovery, transitional housing, employment, and, ultimately, reconnection—with self, with family, and with community. It's not flashy work, but it is life-changing. And it's only possible because people like you continue to believe in it.

For more than 50 years, we've walked alongside those who need us most—offering consistency, compassion, and care. Everyone's path is different. That's something we've always understood. And our commitment is to meet people where they're at—whether that's a hot meal, a warm bed, a pathway to recovery, or simply a moment of dignity and connection.

We have our dark days. But even then, hope shows up—sometimes quietly, sometimes in the form of a familiar face coming back to say thank you. Sometimes it's a former Family Member who was once living on the street, now employed and rebuilding their life. Those moments remind us why we keep going.

Right now, hundreds of people are living in Our Place housing. We've helped hundreds more move off the street this past year—into shelter, then into stability. And every day, our community centre opens its doors to hundreds more—for food, clothing, showers, health care, and the kind of connection that only community can provide.

And because of your generosity, that support doesn't stop there.

At New Roads, in our long-term addiction recovery program for men, we see deep transformation. And once a resident completes the program, the journey continues. At Jaymac House—our second-stage recovery home—we've welcomed several new residents this year. Our recovery coordinators walk alongside them even after graduation, offering consistency, connection, and care. Many have gone on to work across Our Place or join Your Place—our new social enterprise that provides living-wage jobs and dignity to New Roads graduates. We continue to celebrate their sustained recovery through alumni gatherings and ongoing support.

Just a few months ago, we opened the women's addiction recovery program at New Roads—the only long-term recovery program of its kind on Vancouver Island. All 20 beds are now full. These women are focused on healing, rebuilding, and finding their way back to themselves. Every time I visit, I leave feeling hopeful. These pathways work.

With the launch of the women's program and the momentum of Your Place, we've stretched our arc of care even further. But we're not stopping here.

We're now turning our focus to what's next: a dedicated home for women who have completed the New Roads recovery program and are ready for the next step—reuniting with their children and rebuilding their lives together.

While at New Roads, many of the women are already working with social workers, lawyers, and the Ministry to begin the process of getting their children out of care. But reunification only happens if the mother is sober and has safe, approved housing.



That's where we come in.

This next stage—what we're calling the Reunification House—will offer structure, safety, healing, and the support women need to parent again and thrive. It's a chance to break generational cycles and rewrite futures. And I can't wait to share more with you in the months ahead.

If this project sparks something in you—if you want to be part of making it real—I'd love to talk.

Even when our community feels grim, there is still light. Hope shows up in the people, the progress, and in the partnerships that make this work possible.

Everything we've built together—and everything we're dreaming of—happens because you continue to walk alongside us. Thank you.

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!



Summer is Smiling

SUMMERTIME (Clockwise): Our Place celebrates at the Victoria Pride Parade; My Place celebrates community with a summer BBQ; Free haircuts and lunch in time for Father's Day; New Roads resident and Our Place volunteer, Derek, serves coffee; Easter lunch at the Our Place Community Centre; Our Place staff and Family Members come together for baseball and BBQ—even Jango gets in on the fun!

Our Family

Sean

Today, Sean is full of hope.

If you attended Our Place's annual Coldest Night of the Year walkathon in the past two years, you would have heard from an inspiring New Roads graduate. Sean Woodford is a charismatic public speaker and whenever he has the opportunity to share his story, he does it with humility and a refreshing openness.

But, on his journey through addiction and recovery, things looked much different for Sean.

"Growing up we traveled around a lot, I never learned how to maintain relationships with people"

He describes a childhood fraught with fear and stress, as he and his mother spent most of his young years in hiding from his father. At the same time, his mother's own addiction issues meant she wasn't able to reliably care for him. Most often, he would spend stints of time with relatives, especially his brother who was 13 years older and who he credits with raising him in earnest.

"I was part of the generation of 'suck it up and have a beer,'" he explains, when asked about how he dealt with such a hard childhood.

Barely out of his teens, Sean married young and welcomed two daughters with his first wife. Through his marriage and bringing up his children, Sean spent much of his time on the road as a salesman. He kept a rolodex beside his bed with reminders of the date and his location, as the constant movement left him disoriented and isolated.

"It was way harder on me than I knew at the time. The isolation, the loneliness"

Things first became untenable during his divorce and increasingly being away from his children. He participated in several of the common 30-60-90 day addiction recovery programs after this. Nothing ever worked out.

"When I first hit a detox program, they explained the risk was that I could blow up my life or cause some health problems. Nowadays, the risk is death."

Through the years, Sean did his best to keep his head above water. But, after a tumultuous second divorce, extreme strain on his mental health, and subsequently being forced to temporarily live in his car—it seemed impossible.

One day, several years ago now, he drove down to Victoria where his older daughter and grandchildren had been living for many years. He held on with hopes of just saying his goodbyes to the people he cares about most. He didn't expect he would make it even a few days more.



NEW ROADS MANAGER, LEE SUNDQUIST, SUPPORTS SEAN WHILE HE TELLS HIS STORY AT COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR 2025

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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

Here in Victoria, in a local hotel, Sean experienced a breakdown like never before. But, in what he thought were his final moments, the thought of his daughters and grandchildren spurred him to reach for help one more time.

His memories of this night are blurry, but Sean remembers 9-1-1 was called and he was taken to the hospital. As he recovered, he was visited by a representative from a partner of Our Place in recovery, the Umbrella Society. They referred him to New Roads, and he gratefully moved into his new home.

His first days were hard. Sean admits he felt extremely guilty just for focusing on himself when he entered New Roads—a feeling that had been a barrier to recovery his whole life.

Things started to change after one of many heart-to-heart talks with Manager, Lee Sundquist, who now manages the new women's program.

"I always thought I would do the treatment, then go back to the work and life I knew, and just try again"

But, New Roads is a turning point for its residents, and through the guidance of Lee and his counsellors, Sean made that change.

Instead of going back to how things were after graduation, he moved into Jaymac Place—the extremely successful second-stage home made available to New Roads graduates by Our Place. Brooke, his Continuing Care Coordinator, meets with him regularly to support him. He also applied for every available role at Our Place until he was hired on as a Housing Support Worker at the Community Centre at 919 Pandora Ave.



SEAN CELEBRATES SUMMER WITH HIS GRANDCHILDREN

Today, Sean is full of hope. He aspires to ultimately get the training and qualifications needed to apply at New Roads where he wants to be a case worker for new residents. As an alumni, he is always welcome to come back and visit, in particular for the regular celebrations held for graduations and milestones.

And his relationship with his daughters and grandchildren? "It's 10x better!!"

He's proud to not only have reconnected with them, but thanks to his stability—he feels like he can once again be a parent and support them when they need it.

From crisis to stability, he's a perfect example of where the pathway can lead at Our Place. When asked what strikes him most about all the praise he has received for his speeches and the good work he's doing now, Sean smiles and simply says,

"It's such a cool thing when you get to a place where you're finally just content with yourself."

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.

Albina Stories

There is a lot of good news coming out of Albina St. housing, which recently celebrated 2 years of operation with a summer BBQ!

As supportive housing that is home to over 50, Albina is a crucial step of the journey for every resident. But, we don't just celebrate the end of the road. At every step, milestones mark the way. The staff collected some favourite milestone moments they've seen in just the last few weeks. We'd like to share them with you.



GARDEN BEDS THRIVING AT ALBINA ST HOUSING



CELEBRATING 2 YEARS AT ALBINA WITH A RESIDENT BBQ

Turning Points

Dylan* – He is now accessing counselling on site. Such a huge benefit for us to have a counsellor who comes in once a week to chat with any resident who wants.

John* – When he turned 65 years old, after resisting for a long time, he is now accepting help and getting more support from geriatric services.

All of our LEAP (life skills, employment readiness, and awareness program) participants who have regularly attended the biweekly sessions, both on and off site. Many of them have taken the skills they learned here and are using them in their volunteer positions giving back to the community!

Moments of Connection

Carl* – He bought and put up all sorts of posters on his wall and he really wanted to show our team and go through each poster and why he liked it! Seeing residents decorate their rooms and make them their home is so meaningful. You can really see their personalities shine through.

Bill* – We jokingly say he is our on-site handyman and live-in gardener. He always makes things for the staff office, brings us flowers for the office, and makes sure the front of the building is taken care of. Yesterday he washed all the outside first floor windows so everyone could enjoy the sunny weather!

Don* – reconnected with his daughter and is now a part of his grandchild's life! He was painting a tricycle for him the other week.



Staff and residents build community through shared activities like one-on-one basketball

Unseen Wins

Everyone – lately I've seen so many residents taking out the garbage in their rooms and common areas without any prompting from staff!

Ellen* & Paul* – Planted strawberries in the Albina garden with a homemade irrigation system. Very innovative and cool!



TAZ THE POMERANIAN IS ALL SMILES AT HIS NEW HOME AT ALBINA ST HOUSING

Hopeful Changes

Dan* and Eli* – We just had an update from these two who advocated for themselves to go to detox/treatment—taking the steps themselves and now both of them are at New Roads and loving it.

Our Donors

We're so grateful to the Y. P. Heung Foundation for supporting the Healing Garden at our Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community. Their generosity is helping to create a vibrant, welcoming space where women in recovery can reconnect with nature, learn new skills, and find moments of peace on their healing journey.

This garden will grow food, flowers, and hope for years to come, nurturing women who are working hard to build new futures for themselves and their children.

Thank you, Y. P. Heung Foundation, for planting seeds of possibility in our community.



**Y.P. HEUNG
FOUNDATION**

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of residents*

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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

Diverse faith communities across the island have been longtime friends and partners of Our Place. This year marks the centenary for the United Church and we received a unique visit commemorating this milestone with love.

Longtime Our Place volunteer, Margaret Schaffer, and Oak Bay United Church Minister, Sarah Fanning, collected over 200 pairs of socks and underwear to deliver personally as a gesture of support and love for our community.

"Our Place is hope in action," Fanning said. "So it was an easy decision to partner with them to celebrate our 100th birthday—not with fluff, but with compassion and purpose."

But, they didn't stop there! Margaret and Sarah issued a challenge to all United Churches and all other faith communities across the island to get together and run their own drives in support of the Our Place family.

"Let's celebrate by giving with love," Fanning said.

The need is high for socks and underwear right now and we want to extend our gratitude to everyone participating!

Donations of items and monetary gifts can be dropped off at 1027 Pandora Ave Monday through Friday from 8 to 4.



Our Place Events

Hungry Hearts 2025 and Royal Victoria Marathon



We are looking forward to many more events and opportunities to support Our Place in 2025! This year's Hungry Hearts will be transitioning to a series of more intimate gatherings that resonate deeply with our mission and purpose. We look forward to sharing more information soon!

Make your miles count by registering to run and fundraise on behalf of Our Place at the Royal Victoria Marathon. Island Savings 5K and Thrifty Foods Kids Run are particularly accessible options if you're interested in getting involved. Marathon weekend takes place in October, but it's time to register and start training today!

To learn more and register, visit
www.runvictoriamarathon.com

Keep an eye on our events page
at [www.ourplacesociety.com/](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/events)
events



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