

OAK BAY NEWS

Victoria volunteer honours church's centennial with 100 garments for Our Place

[Liam Razzell](#)

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Margaret Schaffer, who has volunteered at Our Place Society for 17 years, poses with some of the underwear the church collected. | (Liam Razzell/Oak Bay News)

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In the front room of Margaret Schaffer's Victoria home, 100 pairs of underwear and socks sit packaged neatly in reusable shopping bags.

Next week, the woman will help donate the essential garments to Our Place Society – an 18-year-old non-profit dedicated to providing food, clothing, job-skills training, healthcare and addiction-recovery services to Greater Victoria's most vulnerable.

A member of the Oak Bay United Church, Schaffer began collecting the new clothes after the congregation's minister, Sarah Fanning, approached her for help.

To celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the United Church of Canada, Fanning asked Schaffer to spearhead a plan to mark the occasion, focusing on helping those in need.

"Knowing that I volunteer down at Our Place, she asked if I would head it up," said Schaffer, a volunteer at the non-profit for 17 years. "That was a great honour for me."

The Victorian leapt into action, asking the other members of the congregation to pass along new socks and underwear – items urgently needed by Our Place.

In just one week, Schaffer gathered dozens of items, though her work was far from complete. Over the following days, she bundled pairs of socks and underwear until each package was neatly bound with an elastic band.

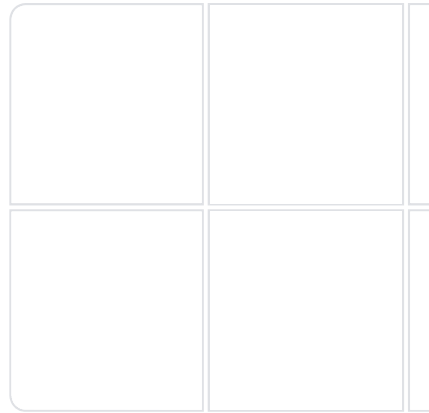
On July 3, just under one month after the United Church of Canada celebrated its June 10 birthday, Schaffer and Fanning will drive the packages to Our Place's 919 Pandora Ave. facility.

"They have an office further away and we could deliver it there, but I chose to deliver it to the Pandora outlet because I want to show the public that this is not a place to be afraid of," she said. "It's a place that needs compassion, love and understanding."

Janice Kalin, Our Place's director of philanthropy, expressed thanks for the church's efforts.

"This partnership truly reflects what community care looks like – and we're incredibly grateful," she said in a news release.

As for what has kept Schaffer volunteering at Our Place for so long, she cites her upbringing.



Canada Day Clearance
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"I came from a family where my parents did volunteer work a lot in Alberta," she said. "It was part of me, and this is something that I have been striving for since I was little – I wanted to give back."

Schaffer hopes the church's efforts will inspire others to lend a helping hand to those in need.

"Volunteering gives you more than you can give," she said. "It keeps you young, it keeps you involved and it helps others."

About the Author: Liam Razzell

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