



THE CAPITAL AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

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Cook Mico Navarro cuts turkey in preparation for today's Thanksgiving dinner at Our Place on Pandora Avenue.

ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Thanksgiving dinner for hundreds ready at Our Place

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

More than 600 people are expected to dine on about 250 kilograms of turkey at the annual Thanksgiving meal hosted by Our Place today.

The meal is the first of two Thanksgiving meals this week at the Pandora Avenue facility, which provides support for vulnerable individuals and those who are unhoused. The second, on Friday, is sponsored by Gordy Dodd of Dodd's Furniture & Mattress and his family.

Our Place said in a statement that guests will be welcomed at its "family table" today from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for a traditional Thanksgiving meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, vegetables and gravy "served with warmth, dignity and community."

There will also be a sweet treat, courtesy of Rogers' Chocolates.

The meal will include about 180 kilograms of potatoes, 90 kilograms of stuffing, 22 kilograms of cranberry sauce, 113 litres of gravy and 125 pumpkin pies.

Politicians and members of the media will be among the servers.

Our Place director of communications Grant McKenzie said he has noticed that the Thanksgiving meal sometimes brings in people who are new to Our Place, giving them the opportunity to learn about the assistance that the agency can provide.

"It feels a little bit less intimidating for them because it's a community kind of event," he said. "So it's a good way for us to connect with people and let them know the different services that are available."

Our Place chief executive Julian Daly said in a statement that people are invited to "enjoy a festive meal, make connections and begin that

journey from surviving to thriving."

"While the world around us may feel increasingly unstable, our dedicated team is working harder than ever to ensure that Our Place's Community Centre remains a constant, somewhere people can count on for a hot meal, a warm shower and a sense of belonging," Daly said.

Our Place provides more than 500,000 meals per year — about 1,400 each day — to people in need, and runs 500 housing units and shelter spaces.

On Friday, Gordy Dodd hosts his 27th annual Thanksgiving dinner at Our Place, starting at 4:30 p.m.

"I am honoured to have partnered with Victoria's Our Place Society since 1998," Dodd said.

He said his family is "humbled and blessed" to have served more than 26,000 meals over the years the dinner has been held.

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Saanich group hopes to endorse candidates in municipal election

ANDREW A. DUFFY
Times Colonist

A Saanich neighbourhood group that has scored a couple of significant political wins is about to step into the ring for the main event.

Save Our Saanich hopes to endorse candidates in the 2026 municipal election, after helping to thwart the District of Saanich's attempt to borrow \$150 million for a new operations centre, and to send the district back to the drawing board on its Quadra-McKenzie Plan.

SOS president Nancy DiCastrì said the group has been given the mandate from its membership to file papers to register as an elector, or political party.

Registration, which must be approved by the chief electoral officer, allows the group to endorse candidates, receive campaign contributions and incur election expenses.

It allows SOS to issue income-tax receipts and be identified on ballot papers.

Save Our Saanich would be just the second elector organization in the district. Currently, only the Conservative Electors Association is registered for Saanich.

DiCastrì said the level of dissatisfaction in the district is high. "A lot of people are just feeling that their voices aren't being heard, or that there's changes that are happening that are too far, too fast," she said.

DiCastrì said taxes are "getting out of control" and people are looking for change.

Save Our Saanich organized a campaign to get residents out in force to oppose Saanich borrowing up to \$150 million through an alternative approval process to redevelop its aging public-works site at Borden and McKenzie. Just over 10,600 Saanich voters submitted forms opposing the borrowing, well over the 8,735 needed to kill the plan.

During that campaign, SOS organizers were asked if they would get involved in the next election, DiCastrì said.

"So we felt that this was probably the best way to hopefully have our voices heard," she said. "We're a grassroots organization — this was the only way we could see of actually maybe effecting some change."

The group has also been a loud and constant critic of the district's Quadra-McKenzie neighbourhood plan, pushing back on proposals for higher density in some areas, including the potential for towers up to 18 storeys near major intersections and six-storey apartment and condominium blocks amid single-family homes.

In August, Saanich council voted to reject a 110-unit housing project in the north Quadra neighbourhood, and district staff are now in the midst of public engagement as they rework the Quadra-McKenzie plan.

DiCastrì said a number of people in the organization are considering running for municipal council next fall.

Once it's established as an elector, Save Our Saanich will decide as an organization if it will endorse those candidates, she said, adding they're not out to get any member of any political party.

"We're just getting our cues from the public and the community at large," she said.

As for DiCastrì's own political ambitions, she said she doesn't have any.

"That's a hard no," she said when asked if she is considering running for municipal office. "I really respect people that are prepared to do it. And we're hoping that we can give those good people that are prepared to do it as much support as we can."

In order to register as an elector, Save Our Saanich will have to submit an application, ensuring there are at least 50 electors as residents, appoint a financial agent, open a campaign bank account and have at least two consenting principal officials, Elections B.C. said. There is no cost to register.

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Former CHEK anchor dies after battle with cancer

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A former CHEK News anchor and founder of a Victoria media company has died.

Mike Walker, who died Saturday of brain cancer, joined the CHEK TV newsroom in 2010, and later founded Roll.Focus Productions, which created media content for local brands, including the University of Victoria and the Royal B.C. Museum.

Amanda Eyolfson, Walker's wife and business partner, said in a post on social media that he died in the early morning with friends by his side.

Eyolfson said she appreciates the support offered by the community throughout Walker's nearly two-decade-long battle with cancer. "Thank you for all your love and support for so long," she said.

The couple met at the British Columbia Institute of Technology



Mike Walker at the CHEK News studio in December 2024. VIA CHEK NEWS

broadcast journalism program and created the Roll.Focus brand while still at school.

They put it aside while working other jobs before jumping into the world of small-business ownership in 2015.

Walker, who was in his mid-30s, had first been diagnosed with cancer at age 20, but in 2017, his tumour grew, and he was handed a terminal diagnosis this summer.

In an interview with CHEK's Paul Haysom in January, Walker talked about his love of sports broadcasting and the "eye-opening" experience of being in the arena when Sidney Crosby scored the gold-winning goal at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

Walker brought that passion to CHEK and Roll.Focus, creating sports broadcast content and partnering with Canada's rowing, diving and hockey teams.

He told Haysom that he wants to be remembered as a genuine man full of kindness.

"If people remember me as that smiley guy who was nice and kind and good to work with and shared a smile with, then that's great — that's a great lasting memory, I think."

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