

# Our Stories

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FALL NEWSLETTER  
2025

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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

**Walk down any main street and you'll see it: tents, people in crisis, open drug use, and businesses struggling with the impact.**

Street homelessness and a degree of disorder in our downtown is undeniable. What's harder to agree on is how we respond.

Too often the debate is reduced to a false binary: compassion on one side, enforcement on the other. But this framing gets us nowhere. The truth is more complex—and the solutions have to be, too.

I know this is an issue and concern close to our supporters' hearts.



Housing alone isn't enough. We need to stabilize people with health care and addiction recovery before they can sustain housing—and we must balance compassion with accountability.

Seventeen years ago, when I began this work, most people we helped were struggling with alcohol. Today, fentanyl and meth dominate—substances designed for maximum addiction and devastation. They kill quickly, and for those who survive, they often leave permanent brain damage. The drugs changed and this changed everything.

The fact is the majority of people who are entrenched on our streets—and who are the sources of real and perceived disorder; the people screaming threats and in psychosis; the people lying prostrate on our sidewalks and slumped in our doorways—are there as a result of untreated mental illness and addictions.

And the impact goes beyond the streets. At Our Place, we serve more than 500,000 free meals a year—but many who need them most, especially low-income seniors, are now too frightened to come inside.

At the same time, longtime donors have told me they've stopped giving because they believe we've somehow created the very disorder outside our doors. That perception is painful—and incorrect—but it costs us dearly. The result is a double cost: the most vulnerable people are denied services they need, and our community loses the resources required to provide them.



For years, we've embraced Housing First as the answer. And for many, it has worked. But for those most unwell, housing alone doesn't stick. Without addressing addiction, trauma, and illness, housing is often lost.

We need a Health First approach to stabilize people before housing them. That means addressing the addiction, mental illness and trauma that make housing unsustainable. It means giving people a real chance to succeed once they are housed, rather than setting them up for failure.

Street disorder is not inevitable. It is the result of choices. And that means we can make different choices.

This is not naïve optimism. I have seen it work before. And I believe, if we act together, it can work again.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Julian".

**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!





**CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP):**

**FALL WARMTH:** Family Members find clean and warm clothing at Our Place

**DOG DAYS:** Even our furriest residents receive care at Muncey Place housing

**ALL SMILES:** Our Place is a place of comfort and joy for 55+ volunteers and Family Members

**GREENHOUSE INSPECTOR:** Jango inspects the gardens at New Roads for tasty carrots

**THANKSGIVING:** Everyone was welcomed and embraced by the community for the holiday

# Fall at Our Place



# Our Family

## Lorelai's Story

“My mother kicked me out when I was 12. I don't know what I ever did to her, but she just did not love me.”

**We all deserve to be home and amongst loved ones for the holidays. For Albina St. Supportive Housing resident, Lorelai, this year—she will have both.**

Lorelai is a child of residential school survivors, and her upbringing was coloured darkly by generational trauma.

“My mother kicked me out when I was 12,” she says. “I don't know what I ever did to her, but she just did not love me.”

Lorelai took up drugs at a young age, and by the time she had her children she was already deeply entrenched in addiction. Her son's father left before his first birthday and she lost custody as she was not able to provide a stable home at the time.

She remembers visiting her children while they lived in foster care, and despite her own challenges, spending hours baking for them. Her apple pies (with their names carved into the crust) were a point of particular pride.

But, away from her children, her addiction still had a hold on her life. She became estranged from some of her children. And as her youngest son aged out of foster care and became

an adult, she was dismayed to see him fall into the same patterns as she had.

**“Watching your son go from a sweet little boy to an intravenous drug user—it was heartbreaking.”**

Without the right tools, Lorelai didn't know how to help herself or her son. For many years, nothing changed.

Until one day, when they were out together and she heard him screaming for her. He had gone off to smoke with a friend and was witnessing his friend overdose in front of their eyes. Though Lorelai primarily uses a wheelchair due to hip injuries, she pushed herself out in this moment and began chest compressions. Thanks to her quick action, and the arrival of paramedics moments later, the young man survived.

She thought of herself and her son in this moment and she was scared.

**She didn't want to ever feel this fear again. She knew a change needed to happen.**

## 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.

Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 or choose 'monthly' when donating online at [www.ourplacesociety.com/donate](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/donate)





From that day on, they both felt more committed to finding sobriety and finally reached out to organizations they knew could support them. She first reached out to Umbrella Society who connected her to Our Place.

### **Here, she found a home.**

Lorelai is now a resident at Albina St. Supportive Housing, where she has been able to maintain her sobriety and start focusing on her future. She accesses services like meals, counseling, recovery support, and LEAP (Life skills, Employment readiness, and Awareness Program). She works on the building's clean team and is inspired to keep strengthening the community in the building herself by starting a Friday night craft night.

Her son is also sober, and her children visit her at the building. She has even reconnected with her six (going on seven!) grandchildren.

### **"I do it all for my children and grandchildren now,"**

And her community isn't restricted to just Albina St. She also visits the Our Place Community Centre at least twice a week for the 55+ group meetings. Several times, she has attended memorials for friends who have passed that would otherwise not have had a service.

"Without OPS and my friends here, I wouldn't be as far as I am today," she says.

And what's next on the pathway for Lorelai? She hopes to go back to school and attend classes at Camosun to pursue a career working with children of a similar age as her own grandkids.

But, first—she'll be getting into her kitchen at Albina St. so she can make sure they all have their own pies, baked with love, from their grandma, for the holidays.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!** We currently have a few select daytime and evening volunteer shifts available. 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](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer) to get started.

# Our Community

## Our Place's 55+ Club



**WE LOVE YOU VERY VERY MUCH TOO!**

For seniors in our community who are experiencing poverty, daily life can be isolating and painful. Whether they're living on a fixed income, or otherwise experiencing crises of poverty, mental health challenges or physical health challenges—it's hard enough to meet their basic needs, let alone find connection with others.

Our 55+ program at the Our Place Community Centre is designed to create moments of connection, community, and joy for seniors without support. And our most recent gathering was a beautiful reminder of why this matters.

While most members come in to eat every day due to food insecurity, our 55+ Family Members also attend a special lunch every Monday and Wednesday where they eat together as a group.

"It's so much better than eating alone. My hands are sore and I can't do much cooking and the food is really, really good," says one participant.

After lunch, they stay for group activities like Mah Jong, journaling, crafts, and educational workshops like presentations on avoiding common elder fraud scams. Other times, the Our Place van takes them on small trips to local parks, museums, and other community activities.

This month, participants came together for a music therapy session led by a trained facilitator. After lunch was cleaned up, the room quickly filled with the sound of gentle guitar strums and the familiar words of tunes from the 50's and 60's. At first, some shy smiles appeared, followed by some toe-tapping. Within a few minutes, the whole room was singing along to "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis Presley in a beautiful moment of calm and connection.

For those who wanted to explore more hands-on, an assortment of instruments like tambourines, shakers, and drums were set out.

### MUSIC CONNECTS AND HEALS





"This brought back a memory from when I was a child. We used to have sing-a-longs at school and just have fun together. This was kind of like that. I haven't thought about that in years," said one participant.

Music therapy is more than a fun activity—it's a proven way to boost mood, reduce stress, and even improve memory and focus. In this welcoming environment, seniors connect with one another through music, sharing memories sparked by the familiar tunes, and feel safe to simply enjoy the moment.

Programs like these are vital for seniors experiencing poverty and isolation, who don't have the resources or support system to access other activities. Your support makes it possible for them to come together, try something new, and leave with lighter hearts and full bellies.

Thank you for helping seniors in our community rediscover joy, connection, and the dignity they deserve in their golden years.



## 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](mailto:janicek@ourplacesociety.com)



## Our Donors

### COLLEEN MCLEOD

Colleen McLeod was a familiar face on Pandora Avenue. Not only was she a donor and avid supporter of Our Place Society, she built sincere relationships with the people we serve—her neighbours.

Having lived in Victoria for most of her life, Colleen was a wonderful example of the friendly kindness our city is known for. She understood the value of a welcoming and heartfelt connection.

She would often visit Pandora Avenue and strike up conversations, sharing chocolate bars and meals from the local McDonald's with those she met.

Colleen's generosity has made a lasting impact at Our Place, and we are deeply honoured that she chose to leave a portion of her estate to support our work. Her legacy of kindness will continue to live on in the meals served, the connections made, the lives transformed, and the hope inspired in our community.

# Join us for three meaningful evenings supporting community, transformation, and recovery.

This year, to gain deeper connection with our mission, the 11th annual Hungry Hearts Gala has been transformed into a series of intimate gatherings celebrating care and community.

**We hope to see you this fall at a Hungry Hearts VIP event!**

## Sunday, October 26, 2025 An Evening at the Heart

Join fellow members of our community whose generosity makes our work possible. Share great food, great company, and inspiring stories about the impact we're making together.

You'll hear firsthand how something as simple as a warm meal or timely on-site paramedic care can restore health, dignity, and hope for the people we serve every day. Seats are limited.

*Time:* 5:30pm

*Location:* Pacific Suite, Delta Hotels Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort

*Tickets:* \$200 (includes dinner and donation to Our Place)

## Tuesday, October 7, 2025 Garden Dinner

SOLD OUT

Thank you to everyone who attended this year.



## Saturday, November 8, 2025 Inside Our Place

Join us for an evening at our community centre—a behind-the-scenes experience rarely open to the public.

You'll be guided through the spaces where lives are transformed every day and hear powerful firsthand stories from our team about how Our Place supports recovery, dignity, and hope in our community.

*Time:* 5:30pm

*Location:* Our Place Community Centre, 919 Pandora Ave

*Tickets:* \$120 (includes dinner and donation to Our Place)

Visit [www.ourplacesociety.com/events](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/events) to buy tickets

For any questions, email [sharrah@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:sharrah@ourplacesociety.com)  
or call 250 940 5060 Ext 5108

**Thank you to our Hungry Hearts VIP Community Advocate Sponsors**



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Peter Jando, CFA  
Vice President, Portfolio Manager



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