

# Our Stories

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2026

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Victoria will walk in solidarity for those who are struggling with hurt, hunger, and homelessness in our community for the 2026 Coldest Night of the Year two-kilometre and five-kilometre walkathon on Feb. 28.



Hope and Belonging

## Message from Julian

**At this time of year, it is often inescapable to worry about the future. The days are darker, the weather is uglier, and yet there are still hundreds of people struggling just to survive another day.**

However, when I look back at the last year, I have enormous gratitude for the work our donors, government partners, staff and volunteers have accomplished in lifting people up and transforming their lives.

A huge milestone was accomplished last March when Our Place opened the Women's Program at New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community. Thanks to generous supporters, we were able to renovate one wing of our View Royal facility to create an independent, 20-room treatment community that is the first of its kind for women on Vancouver Island.

Ever since we opened the Men's Program in 2018, this has been our goal: a safe, healing place for women going through addiction. This long-term (9 months to 2 years) program is already seeing transformative results.

We have also seen changes on Pandora Avenue and at our downtown Community Centre. Sadly, we have seen a large increase in the number of people who come to us for basic needs: a meal, cup of coffee, safe place to sleep, dry clothing, a conversation.



The people who come through our doors are suffering from poverty, addiction, mental health struggles, and even loneliness.

To better serve them, we have renovated our main entrance as a way to greet people more effectively, find out what their needs are, and how we can better manage the space.

Our goal is to make the Community Centre a true sanctuary for those who are struggling. This requires not only a compassionate vision, but the continued support of our donors and volunteers.

Yes, this last year had its challenges, and those challenges will continue, but there has also been room for a miracle or two.

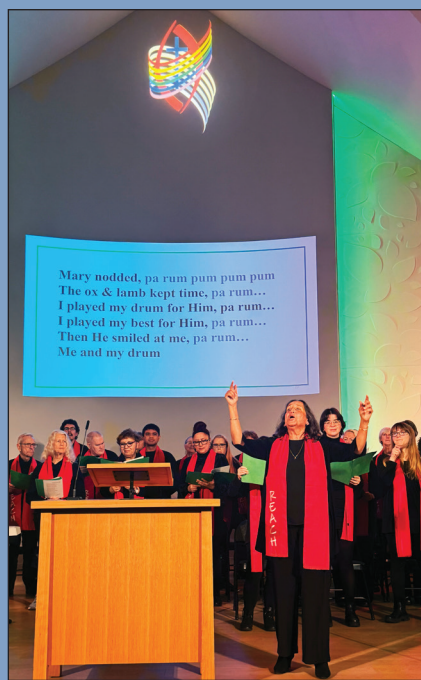
And that is a blessing.

**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



CLOCKWISE: Our Place was selected as a recipient of this year's Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Campaign.

Oak Bay United Church's Rev. Sarah Fanning donates socks and underwear to Our Place.

Angel Gifts were handed out to Family Members.

A Christmas Carol with CBC was held in a new location: Broad View United.

# Our Family

## Dan's Story

**“I thought it was impossible for me to get off opiates, stay clean, and be able to live my life.”**

From an early age, Dan had no expectation of stability. “My childhood was chaotic,” he says.

His mother struggled with addiction, and “growing up, we moved a lot. Like, I think by Grade 2, I’d already moved 16 times and been to six schools.”

This instilled in Dan a sense of restlessness that stays with him to this day. “Throughout my life, I have a hard time staying in one location . . . every six months or so, I’ll feel a need to move.”

When he was eight years old, Dan entered foster care, which he hoped would provide the stability he was missing.

Unfortunately, his foster mother’s husband was “on a downward spiral at the time and turned into a severe alcoholic.”

The foster mother — who Dan calls Grandma — had to work three jobs to support the family, which meant, “she was always at work, whether it’s in the day or night. And so it was really up to me to do what I wanted to do, because he was too drunk to pay attention.”

As the foster father’s alcoholism grew worse, he started to steal any money that Dan earned from mowing lawns to buy booze. And if Dan tried to resist, he would be beaten.

To escape, Dan began dealing drugs at the age of 13, and rented his own apartment at the age of 15.

The school system let him down, too, as he was undiagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

“My foster mother was continuously contacting the school, trying to get me tested, but they just kept saying, ‘He’s fine. He can do the work. He just doesn’t want to.’”

Frustrated with school, Dan kept getting into trouble. “Got into stealing cars, and hanging out with people I shouldn’t have been hanging out with,” he says.

Until, eventually, he was kicked out. “I was just like, okay, well, if the whole point of school is to go get a job and pay bills, I already do that. Right? I sell drugs, and I pay bills. So I didn’t go back to school until I was in prison. That’s where I got diagnosed (for ADHD).”

**“[Prison] was finally the first place that somebody paid attention to me. It was one of my teachers at the school there who noticed the pattern that I had a really hard time with reading, and retaining information.”**

## BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY BUILDERS PROGRAM TODAY

Would you consider a monthly gift to Our Place? By giving this way, you can make a big impact all year long and ensure there is help available in our community every day. And, we’ll send you just one consolidated receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return each year. 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)



With that support, Dan managed to graduate high school with his GED diploma.

At the age of 31, after completing an 11-year prison sentence, Dan's life slipped further off the tracks as a girlfriend's suicide triggered deep-seated emotions surrounding the suicide of his own father when he was nine.

There had never been any counselling for that nine-year-old child, and the unearthed trauma hit the 31-year-old man hard.

"I couldn't handle the way I felt," he says. "I immediately resorted to drinking, but that didn't do anything for me. I went to different drugs. Each one I went through didn't change the way I felt, and it wasn't until opiates I was like, okay, I don't feel all the pain. So my opiate use went through the roof."

From 2017 to 2022, Dan was in and out of jail, nonstop. "I couldn't stay out for six months. And my addiction completely took over my life. The obsession to use was so great that nothing else in my life really

mattered anymore. Even selling drugs for a living was no longer about trying to make money to buy nice things. It was just about not being sick."

When he was arrested again, Dan decided he needed to try something new, and that was when he heard of Our Place's New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community.

"[The courts said] no, initially, because of my record," says Dan, but he knew he needed a long-term program if he hoped to deal with all of his trauma. "So I kept fighting for it, and it took 11 months."

Dan has been at New Roads for 21 months and has embraced every aspect of the program.

"I'm really happy that I came because the amount of work I've done since I've been here, and the things I have going on today, I couldn't have imagined it being like this a couple years ago. Everything that I've been able to gain here, from the staff, from the program . . . It's gonna carry me through the rest of my life."

Dan is also celebrating two and a half years of sobriety, and is a leader for the peer-led programs.

**"I've had friends who were with me in the pen, were with me in crime and addiction. And they see that I'm here, and they're like, 'Okay. If Bro can do this, then we can do this.' And that's a big thing that I want my friends in jail to be able to know. We don't have to stay in that life just because we've been there our whole lives."**

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*For more information on New Roads, please visit the website at: [newroads.life](http://newroads.life)*



< **THANK YOU DONORS** - Thanks to our donors, Our Place's annual Christmas Meal was another festive hit. The kitchen served up heaping plates of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, cranberry sauce, and gravy :)

## **CHRISTMAS MEAL**

AT OUR PLACE

# New Roads

Women's Program  
is already making  
a big impact



*"New Roads Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community has changed my life for the better in ways that I could never have dreamed of! I am amazed every day by the skills, social connections and confidence that I am building. I am supported every step of the way by safe people, in a safe environment to be the best version of myself. I feel hope and joy again! I'm so thankful!"*

- Anonymous

*"New Roads Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community is helping me change my life. It isn't easy but nothing worth doing ever is. I have been to private pay treatment once before, but this is profoundly different. We have access to individual counseling, family counseling, medical staff and psychiatry. We attend DBT (Dialectical*

*Behaviour Therapy)-based programming, which helps us get to the root cause of our addiction as well as personal areas that have been holding us back in our lives. The community model is effective in developing these areas in a practical way. I love that they have a gradual, community-based approach to reintegration into society upon completion and I have hope for and confidence in my future for the first time in a long time."*

- Anonymous

*"I relapsed after 8 years of sobriety. My 'slip' lasted 20 years. I gave up all hope for happiness. New Roads Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community has saved my life. I feel like my life has purpose again!"*

- MDG

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL! With the Christmas season gone by, we are back to recruiting NEW volunteers and looking forward to increasing our volunteer capacity in both food services and clothing distribution. Please visit our online application and orientation process for safer and easier access to the Our Place volunteer experience at: [ourplacesociety.com/volunteer](https://ourplacesociety.com/volunteer)



< The Muddy Water team who helped Rev. Al with the book project.  
 v Al Tysick presents a \$10,000 cheque to Phil Calvert, Director on the board of Our Place Society.

## Our Donors

**A**l Tysick spent much of his lifetime working with the homeless in Victoria as the Executive Director of both the Open Door and Our Place, and then as founder of the Dandelion Society.

Retiring after 30 years serving the needy, he launched out on a new venture, writing a book based on his journal entries over many years.

The result was *Muddy Water: Stories from the Street*, containing 72 short chapters about life on the streets in Victoria, and well-illustrated by local artist Elfrida Schragen who has long supported Our Place.

Not an easy book to read, but heartwarming in many ways, Rev. Al tells it like it is, with all of life's blemishes and bouquets.

He completed writing the book in 2023 and brought together a team of local volunteers to help him publish and market the book, all with a view to raising awareness about homelessness and its many challenges.

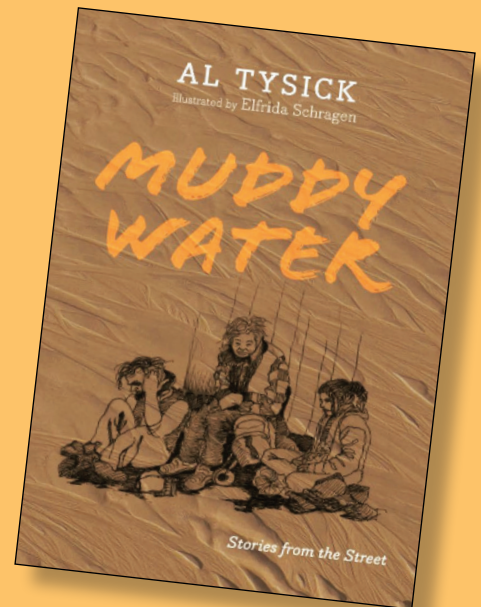
All proceeds and royalties from the book are being donated to Our Place to support the Dandelion Street Outreach Program.

The book has been available since the spring of 2024 and in the first year, a total of \$10,000 was raised for Our Place.

Al and his team of supporters gathered in July of this year to celebrate this milestone and present a cheque to Our Place. The project will continue until the spring of 2026, with the remaining funds being donated as well.

Books are still available and can be purchased from Amazon or directly from the publisher Wipf and Stock, at their website using discount code CONF40'.

Copies may also be available from Russell Books in Victoria.



## 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)

Save The Date - Feb. 28

# Warm Hearts on a Cold Night

**O**n Saturday, **February 28, 2026,** **Coldest Night of the Year** walkers will take to the streets of downtown **Victoria.**

We will walk in solidarity, raising funds and support for those who are struggling with hurt, hunger, and homelessness in our community.

Our goal for this year is \$140,000, and with your help, we will reach it!

Over the coming months, Our Place will continue to expand its shelter and recovery programs while also facing a substantial increase in food costs and a rise in demand for community meals.

Funds raised through Coldest Night of the Year Victoria Pandora will be instrumental in helping meet these growing needs and will ensure that individuals continue to receive essential supports.

**Register now at [cnoy.org/victoriapandora](http://cnoy.org/victoriapandora)**

**Walk with us and show our neighbours in need that they're not alone.**



**Sat, February 28**

**Register today: [cnoy.org/VictoriaPandora](http://cnoy.org/VictoriaPandora)**

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

**Lead Sponsor:**



**Supporting Sponsor:**



## Our Place Sponsor Meals



### HELP SERVE HOPE & BELONGING

Have a direct impact on the lives of those struggling in our community by sponsoring a meal. Your meal sponsorship helps Our Place keep up with rising costs and continue to provide nutritious and comforting meals to our neighbours experiencing homelessness and food insecurity.

And for making the meal possible, we enthusiastically encourage you to join us in serving it up. You can come by yourself, or bring friends or coworkers to volunteer your time together.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner sponsorships are available starting at \$600.

Contact Sharra at: [sharrah@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:sharrah@ourplacesociety.com) to book your meal today!

Learn more about upcoming events at [www.ourplacesociety.com/events](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/events)



**Hope and Belonging**

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