

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Choices transitional shelter closes on a high note

Over 100 people successfully transitioned into permanent housing

VICTORIA, B.C. – Choices, the transitional shelter operating out of the former youth custody centre in View Royal, is closing its doors this week. But it is doing so with a strong sentiment of success.

Since partnering with BC Housing in March 2016, Choices has successfully transitioned 103 of our community's most vulnerable citizens into permanent housing. The final 40 residents were all moved into brand new suites at the former Tally-Ho Hotel in Victoria this week.

"It has been an incredible journey," says Don Evans, executive director of Our Place, which operates the facility. "We couldn't have done it so successfully without the support of View Royal council and the local residents."

He adds, "To see the difference in these vulnerable people when they have a safe place to live, and three solid meals a day, is astounding. The staff truly went above and beyond to make everyone feel at home, and to work with each individual on a plan for future success."

When Choices first opened, residents elected to sleep in tents in the courtyard. But as winter approached and the interior was transformed from cells into rooms, every resident made the choice to move inside.

"Change is always difficult, and people were reluctant at first to move from tent city to Choices," says Our Place Director of Housing Debbie Berg. "But once they were here, you could visibly see health returning to them. Once they stabilized, many people were able to return to work, while others entered detox and recovery programs – some for the very first time."

Berg adds, "When it was time to close Choices, the remaining residents had a similar fear as when they first arrived, but Cool-Aid has done a fantastic job of making everyone feel welcome at their new home."

Our Place is a unique inner-city community centre serving Greater Victoria's most vulnerable: working poor, impoverished elderly, mentally and physically challenged, addicted and the homeless. Individuals and businesses provide the majority of financial support for its programs and services. Our Place provides over 1,800 meals per day, hot showers, education, job skills, free clothing, counseling and outreach services; plus 135

transitional housing units and 60 overnight shelter mats. Most importantly, it provides a sense of hope and belonging to our neighbours in need.

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