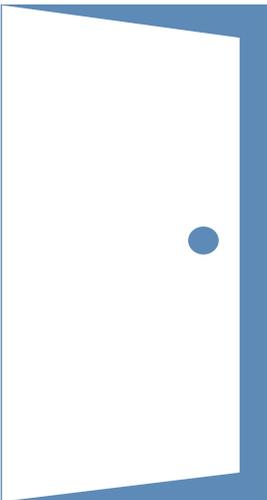


**Our Place**  
**Progress**  
**Growth**  
**Opportunity**





# Message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

When the year first began, we had a clear goal in mind: to open our doors for longer hours every day in the winter in order to bring vulnerable people inside and provide them with three hot meals a day, plus access to valuable and life-changing programs and services. What we didn't plan on, however, was a state of emergency issued on homelessness that meant we had to take action like never before.

In a few short months this past winter, Our Place went from offering 45 units of transitional housing to operating nearly 200 units of both overnight shelter and transitional housing. Working with First Metropolitan United Church, we laid 60 mats in their gymnasium for overnight shelter. We transformed the former Boys & Girls Club on Yates Street into My Place, a unique 24-7 transitional home that houses 40 people. And we transformed the former Youth Custody Centre in View Royal into an indoor/outdoor 24-7 transitional home for 50 people called Choices.

This dramatic expansion meant hiring extra staff, leaning more heavily on the experience and expertise of our existing staff, and working with BC Housing in a new co-operative partnership.

Despite the rush of opening three new facilities in a very short window of time, the results we have witnessed have been incredible.

When Shelby, one of our residents at Choices, first arrived on our doorstep, she weighed a scant 74 pounds, hadn't had a shower in over a week, and was struggling to survive. The first time she saw the bathtub at Choices, she wept. Today, she has gained a much needed 50 pounds, found joy and purpose in our arts program, and is mending fences with her estranged family. Best of all, she has her dignity back and been given a glimmer of hope for the future.

We want to thank all our donors and funders for their generosity. With your support, we can and will continue to transform lives.

With much gratitude,

**Don Evans**  
Executive Director

**Diana Butler**  
Board Chair



# Programs & Services

## DROP-IN CENTRE

**Coffee & Community, Computers, Clothing, Games, Library, Phone & Message Centre.**

Fred stands near the nutrition bar, his back against the glass doors to absorb the warmth of morning sun. In his hand is a battered paperback book. He reads everything he can find, but prefers science fiction, mystery and adventure stories. His eyes light up when a staff member approaches with a new poster announcing a special event or the menu for supper. "I like the barbeques," he says, smiling.

Our Place is Fred's Place, somewhere he not only feels welcome, but also where he feels safe to meet friends, grab a meal and read his books. "I come here so I'm not alone," he adds. "Everyone knows me here, and everyone's friendly."

*More than 400 people with no fixed address benefit from receiving mail and phone messages in the Phone & Message Centre.*

"I enjoy the library in the computer room," says Mary. "Some days I like to look through the newspaper, but my favourite day is when the library folks comes in with new books to share. I like that I'm not rushed. Nobody cares if it takes me a month to read a book."

## EDUCATION

**Art Group, Library, Choir, Computer Training, Gardening, Story Collective, Job Skills, Literacy, Knitting, Financial Planning, Math Class, Bike Maintenance.**

"I like to sing," Danny says with a mischievous smile. "I might not be any good, but the choir don't care. If anyone complains, we'll just sing louder"

"They don't treat you like a dummy," says Bunny as she finishes a class being taught in the computer lab by a professor from Camosun College. The professor volunteers his time to teach courses in Basic Math, Basic English and Basic Computer Skills. "I was real nervous at first," says Bunny, "but everyone was so kind and patient. It's been good." *Our Place partners with community groups and volunteers to provide a vast array of opportunities for family members to enrich their intellect, develop personal insight, unleash their creativity and learn practical skills.*



**Our Mission**  
We offer our most vulnerable citizens a place to call their own, where we live, share and grow together.



**Our Vision**  
**Nourishment,**  
**hope and**  
**belonging for**  
**all in Greater**  
**Victoria.**



## MEALS

**Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner, Bagged Lunches, BBQs, Birthdays, Holiday Feasts, Nutrition Bar.**

Food continues to be a mainstay for Our Place as the number of meals served continues to increase. In the last year, the Our Place kitchen served over 680,800 meals, an incredible 17.5% increase from the previous, record-breaking year.

The reason? Sadly, more vulnerable people continue to walk through our doors in need of a hot meal. Fortunately, we have been working with local businesses, farmers and grocery stores to increase the amount of donated food we receive. Protein and dairy continue to be the top two most expensive items, and the ones that use the most donor dollars to purchase and to make sure we're serving a good variety of nutritious and filling meals.

"The special breakfasts are my favourite," says Pete. "David is always busy back there flipping pancakes and frying sausages, but he still finds time to share a joke or a smile. The businesses that sponsor those meals are real angels."

## OUTREACH

**Advocacy, Emergency Food, Financial Crisis Support, Field Trips, Hope Fund, Interventions, Sports, Referrals to Employment, Housing, Government Agencies, Access Pro Bono Legal Services, Medical, Detox and Treatment Services, Aboriginal Housing Advocacy, Counselling.**

"The Outreach workers provide direction and open the doors, but we still have to do the work," says a family member. "They take the time to make sure we know what we have to do."

"I had to apologize to those guys," a family member says about the team of Outreach workers working the Drop-In floor. "I got so frustrated by the red tape the government is making me jump through that I took it out on the wrong people. It's these (Outreach workers) that helped me get the proper paperwork filled out when no one else would. Thank God for Our Place."

Outreach work is stressful and intense. To the same degree, it is also incredibly rewarding. Each Outreach worker at Our Place brings a diverse range of training and expertise to the team. Some have professional degrees, while others have walked in the same shoes as those they now help.

Family members develop trusting relationships at Our Place, inspiring them with the hope and confidence they need to succeed. Thousands of referrals are arranged by Outreach workers to ensure peoples' needs, arising from trauma, mental health, addictions, isolation and poverty, are addressed.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Bagged Lunches, Bus Tickets, Clothing, Income Tax Preparation, Job Referrals, Resume Preparation, Job Skills Training.**

After a decade living on the streets of Victoria, Al moved into one of our 45 transitional housing units. Always a hard worker, he began volunteering in the hygiene area and cleaning up the courtyard, and was soon hired for a custodial position at Our Place, where he has been working part-time for the last two years.

"It's really helped my self-esteem," says Al. "And I got my morals back on track."

His hiring turned out to be a blessing for Our Place, too, as Al showed a real aptitude for the job and quickly became a go-to member of the custodial and maintenance team when anything needed fixing, repaired, cleaned or painted.

"Bob has become a bit of a superstar at Our Place," says Our Place Communications Director Grant McKenzie. "He was hired in our kitchen as a dishwasher, but it was his secret life as an incredible artist that caught my eye." Bob was commissioned to paint a large mural in the lower floor recreation and sleeping area. "The mural was such a hit that a local printer helped us create a limited-edition print of it," says McKenzie, "which Bob is now selling to fund his passion for painting. At Our Place, we discover new surprises and hidden talents around every corner."

## HEALTH

**Acupuncture, Acupressure, Art Therapy, Bowen Method Therapy, Chiropractic, Craniosacral Therapy, Dental Hygiene, First Aid, Foot Care, Hair Cuts, Hearing Clinics, Mayfair Optometric Clinic, Doctors, Nurses, Mental Health and Addiction Counselling, Narcotics Anonymous, Reiki, Reflexology, Showers, Smart Recovery Program.**

"Our Place provides St. John's Ambulance volunteers with an opportunity to give back to the community and make a difference in people's lives," says Dave Hodgins, St. John Ambulance Victoria Board Chair.

Audiologist Donald MacAskill was introduced to Our Place through the Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre (IDHHC). "They were at an Our Place event and asked if I could do a hearing test on a client and discuss options," he says in his broad Scottish brogue. "I was shocked at the severity of his hearing loss, but it turned out he was eligible for hearing aids under a government program. We organized an appointment with a hearing aid clinic and he got his hearing aids six

weeks later. It got us thinking that there are maybe lots of people who could be helped." MacAskill now volunteers once a month at Our Place to conduct free hearing tests for the family members.



## Our Values

### Unconditional Love

We are an organization with spiritual values and principles. We believe that everyone should experience unconditional love in a non-judgmental way.

### Hope

We are founded on the belief each individual who comes through our doors will find inspiration, support and comfort. We believe in the potential of all and provide opportunities for positive change. We advocate for social justice.

### Teamwork

We value the contributions of our staff and volunteers and ensure they are well trained and supported. We work together as one team committed to our mission, vision and values.

### Belonging

We strive to create a nurturing atmosphere of home and family, where all are welcome and can experience a sense of hope and belonging. We are inclusive. Our doors are open to those of all cultures and beliefs.

### Safety

We believe all who enter Our Place should feel secure and free from harassment or mistreatment of any kind. We endeavour to create a safe atmosphere where everyone can experience a sense of well-being.

## PET CARE

### Vets for Pets, Pet Food Bank at Our Place.

Everybody is excited when Dr. Jane Vermeulen and her volunteer crew of veterinary specialists arrive for their monthly Vets For Pets program. At her regular clinic, Jane and her crew of local veterinarians and student practitioners vaccinate, treat and recommend treatment for a small, furry army of dogs, cats, ferrets and more. Pet owners can also access the Pet Food Bank at Our Place, operated weekly by a small team of fantastic volunteers.

## SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

### Grief & Loss Support, Multi-Faith Chapel, Pastoral Care, Weddings & Memorials, Bible Study, First Nations Healing Circle, Residential School Survivors Counselling, Meditation, Recovery Groups.

"It's important that we provide a sacred place for indigenous women who have suffered abuse in their lives," says Nancy McFarland, a clinical counsellor who runs a healing program at Our Place. "The residential schools program created 'spiritual homelessness' for so many people."

A lack of faith is not unusual for someone suffering from addiction and abuse. It's the strength that a person shows in wanting to reconnect with his or her creator that is truly remarkable. "I pray to God every day," says Rosie as she quietly sips on a hot cup of coffee. "I pray for forgiveness, sure, but mostly I pray for enough strength to get through the day. I also pray for my family, and friends who are on the street. I hope that God will help them find the way back into the light. We need faith. It's what gives us courage and what gives us strength."

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

### Advocacy, Counselling, Referrals to Long-term Housing, Life Skills Training, Residential Support Workers, Mental Health & Addiction Support, Landlord & Tenant Support.

Prior to 2016, Our Place operated 45 units of transitional housing, plus laid down up to 50 mats for emergency weather during the winter. That changed dramatically this past year when BC Housing asked us to house a small army of individuals who began camping on the courthouse lawn.

In response, we opened an overnight shelter in the gymnasium at First Metropolitan United Church; a 24/7 transitional home called My Place in the former Boys & Girls Club on Yates Street; and began operating Choices, a 24/7 transitional home in the former Youth Custody Centre in View Royal. In short order, we grew from 45 units of transitional housing to nearly 200 units.

"I don't like to think where I would be without Choices," says Shelby. "When I arrived here, I weighed 74 pounds, hadn't had a shower in a week, and was a total wreck." She smiles, "But look at me now!"



## A Year in Review

Through hard work and dedication, we meet a variety of critical needs. Here's a snapshot of this past year's services and supports made possible by our generous donors.

Open daily, including all holidays

680,804 meals served

\*101,802 increase from 2014/2015

37,559 volunteer hours

\*A savings of over \$1,000,000

13,323 hot showers

\*3,316 increase from 2014/2015

2,051 one-on-one sessions with outreach workers

21 long-term residents transitioned through our housing program

776 housing advocacy referrals

1,149 crisis interventions by trained staff

72 detox and treatment referrals provided

444 employment referrals

395 legal referrals

1,026 ministry advocacy

517 footbaths

632 medical services referrals

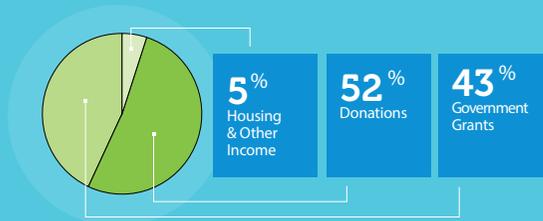
929 financial support services

626 haircuts

# Financial Supports

Thousands of caring supporters joined us in helping Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Here's the breakdown of how we carefully used donor dollars to support our mission:

**Revenue**  
**\$5,987,078**



**Expenses**  
**\$5,814,527**



Total Surplus	\$ 172,551
Allocation to Operating and Capital Reserves	\$ 169,018
Net Surplus	\$ 3,533

Our financial information is based on audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2016.

# Vision for the Future

**This next year, we will continue to expand our hours of operation and add additional life-changing programs.**

Our goal is to launch a comprehensive employment program, including pre-employment skills, training, mentoring, job placement and support for the relationship between employee and employer.

We also have ambitions to develop plans for a new therapeutic recovery community where Compassion & Empowerment will be joined by Healing & Transformation to break the cycle of homelessness between jails and the street.

**Our vision remains strong, and we invite you to partner with us.**

With your generous support, Our Place can continue to bring hope and belonging to our community's most vulnerable citizens.



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Keith Dagg

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At Our Place, we serve our family with love and respect. We work for social justice for Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens.



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Hope and Belonging

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