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WINTER NEWSLETTER 2018

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Hope and Belonging

We thank Tech Web Direct for donating resources to print this colour newsletter

Executive Director's Message

Bill recently became one of the first residents to move into My Place, a temporary transitional shelter on Yates Street that we re-opened in December.

As Bill immediately stored his belongs under his new bunk, he had two things on his mind: laundry and a hot shower. His thankfulness and gratitude for the stabilization he has found brought many of us to tears, and we are overjoyed that we can now move him further along on his journey back to healing and wellness.

Another new My Place resident, Carlos, fell on hard times and ended up sleeping on mats at the overnight shelter we operate at First Met United Church. He told us that without access to the shelter, he didn't think he would be alive today.

"As a parent of a 13-year-old girl," he said. "My goal is to get back on my feet in order to provide for my family, and I look forward to making the most of this wonderful chance we are given."

It is stories like these that tell us our mission of raising people out of poverty is not only a necessity, but a gift.

When My Place first opened in response to Tent City, it was greeted with fear and trepidation. But thanks to the hard work of the staff, the residents, and members of the community, it ended on a high note.

Before it closed, we managed to move 70



people into permanent housing. When we discovered the building was still empty as winter returned, we approached the City about re-opening My Place. And this time, the community embraced us.

At Choices in View Royal, we faced a similar dilemma as the neighbourhood took a wary approach to our entering the community. But, as we prepare to wind down that facility in the first quarter of this year, we are thrilled to report that 100 people have now been moved into permanent housing.

Shelter may be a band-aid solution, but it is often the very first step toward healing and housing.

In gratitude,

Don Evans
Executive Director



THANK 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 increased programs and services offered over the past year would not have been possible without the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters. Thank you!



Our Recent Events

The 5,000th Foot

"Watch out for my bunions!" Raven says with a chuckle as fourth-year UVic nursing student Julia Wiewiorowski attends to his feet. Raven marks the 5,000th foot to receive care as part of the Feet First hygiene program at Our Place. Foot care is critical, particularly in winter when it's challenging to keep feet dry living on the city's streets. Each pair of feet treated leaves with a fresh pair of socks, thanks to donations.

Photo by Kristyn Anthony, Victoria News

Stories of Giving & Transformation

As part of the **Times Colonist Christmas Fund**, we were able to highlight several special stories of giving and transformation.



1 Plates filled with fragrant chick pea curry and chewy roti pass between a row of volunteers and then into the hands of hungry people. For the **Sikh Youth** who organized it, it's a way to connect people across cultures and give back to a community in need. The youth have been sponsoring a dinner at Our Place once a month since June.

2 It was tea time at Our Place on a rainy afternoon, but with a difference that prompted smiles and sweet satisfaction in equal measure. A team of staff volunteers from the **Empress Hotel** showed up to serve a spot of its legendary high tea to 300 of the capital region's most vulnerable residents .

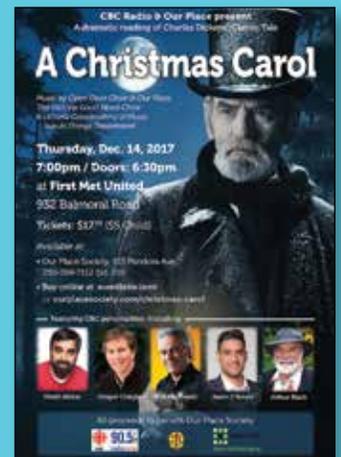
3 When you've been married for 33 years, the idea of living apart seems unfathomable. And yet that's exactly what happened to Greg and Tracy until Our Place was able to get them housed across the hall from each other at 919 Pandora Ave.

Read the full stories on Our Place's website:

ourplacesociety.com/mediapublications/news
In 2017, Our Place received \$10,000 from the Times Colonist Christmas Fund.

A Christmas Carol

A wonderful time was had by all at Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* presented by CBC and Our Place. First Met United Church was filled with song from the Open Door Choir @ Our Place as Dickens' masterpiece was read by CBC personalities Khalil Akhtar, Gregor Craigie, Bob McDonald, Jason D'Souza, and Arthur Black.



ANGEL GIFTS: Our Place volunteer Linda Ryder dedicates Christmas to collecting as many presents as possible — then she gives them all away to those who might otherwise go without. Ryder runs Angel Gifts, a program that has been in existence for 15 years. Through the generosity of her fellow Our Place volunteers, local churches, schools, community groups, businesses and government offices, Ryder and Outreach Manager Jordan Cooper delivered over 700 personalized presents to people living in poverty.

Our Family

Dan & Brandy's Story

Can love change a person? Can it make you look in the mirror and instead of seeing your own troubled past reflected back, see the person you wish to become?

Dan and Brandy like to believe so.

"My dad took me on my first B&E (break and enter) when I was 10 years old," says Dan. "And I went to jail for the first time at 15. I was sentenced to two years."

Since that first arrest, Dan reckons he's spent half of his adult life inside prison - mostly for break and enter, plus car theft.

"I couldn't stay out of prison for very long," he says. "I was using heroin and cocaine, plus drinking ... so I'd do petty crimes to support my habit. If I broke into a car and the keys were there, I'd take the car to commit more crimes."

Born in Alaska, Dan's parents split up when he was four. His mother moved him and his brother to Victoria, but Dan still flew up to Alaska to visit his father.

An alcoholic, it was Dan's dad who introduced him to the world of property crime.

"It was just something he did," says Dan. "Get some drinks inside him and go break into other people's homes."

Naturally, Dan followed in his father's footsteps and began drinking and

smoking weed at an early age.

His first prison stay, instead of dissuading him from future crimes, simply became part of life. "All I knew was how to survive until I got caught again."

Talking about his criminal past, Dan fixes a hard stare and adds, "I became addicted to crime."

"I've likely stolen over a million dollars," he says. "Crime became a job to me. It was all I knew. I didn't know how to survive without it."

Two and a half years ago, however, Dan met Brandy. She was living in transitional housing at Our Place, and he was living at Salvation Army.

Before moving into Our Place, Brandy had been living on the streets of Victoria. Her adoptive parents split up when she was five, and she ran away from home in Salmon Arm at 16.

On the streets, she quickly discovered alcohol, crack cocaine and crystal meth.

Their whirlwind romance blossomed and the couple soon realized that if they wanted to have a future, they had to rewrite their life story and get into

LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT
CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

JOIN THE OVER 200 SUPPORTERS of Our Place who have become part of our Legacy of Love program and confirmed or are in the process of including Our Place in their estate planning. Leaving a gift in your will for Our Place will ensure that those experiencing poverty will always have a welcoming and supportive environment with vital services and programs at our downtown location. You are truly helping to transform lives. If you are interested in learning more about leaving a Legacy of Love with Our Place, please call Lori at 250-413-3161 or email legacy@ourplacesociety.com



treatment. Finding a recovery program that took couples proved to be a challenge, and when they finally got in, the programs were too short.

"I could never get more than 69 days back to back," says Dan, frustration evident in his voice.

After leaving recovery, Dan proposed. He even picked up a marriage license.

Unfortunately, a relapse involving a VicPD Bait Car, sent Dan back to jail and the marriage license expired before the couple could say, "I do."

When Dan got out of prison, he bought another license, and this time the couple got married the very next day. In hindsight, maybe Brandy knew she had to hurry because it wasn't long before Dan was arrested once again.

Inside prison, Dan grew angry at himself, and something finally clicked. Every bad choice he had ever made was done when he was high or drunk. He vowed to make a change.

Outside, Brandy was coming to a similar decision. She had moved into Choices — the transitional housing facility operated by Our Place in the former youth custody centre — and secured Dan a spot there for when he got out.

"Choices wasn't the ideal environment for someone trying to stay sober," says Dan. "But I white-knuckled it and took in all the good points. If it wasn't for Choices, I wouldn't be sober today."

While at Choices, both Brandy and Dan got sober (they are both celebrating over one year of sobriety) and started

helping out around the facility. Dan worked in the kitchen, and Brandy helped with the gardens.

Their sobriety and work ethic didn't go unnoticed, and both were offered jobs with Our Place. This turnaround has also enabled them to move out of Choices and into their own apartment.

As for the future, both have signed up for Our Place's new employment program, and Dan is interested in going back to school to become an Outreach Worker.

"I don't want to be that guy who slips back," he says with a steely determination. "I know I could easily lose it all by going back into addiction."

THERE ARE GREAT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in our administration office, kitchen, hygiene area, and much more. Become part of a dynamic team of compassionate people assisting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. To find out when the next volunteer orientation session is being held, call **Mark**, our **Manager of Volunteers**, at 250-388-7112 Ext. 258 or email volunteer@ourplacesociety.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF WHAT WE DO

Our Programs

Head & Neck Clinic



When Dr. Matthew Kittleson came into Our Place looking for a way to help, it turned out his specialty was a perfect fit for us.

Many of our family suffer from head and neck injuries, due to trauma inflicted by addiction, mental illness and violence. And Dr. Kittleson's clinic, UC Life Chiropractic Centre, located in downtown Victoria, specializes in correcting misalignments in the upper spine.

The Head and Neck Clinic program is unusual in that it doesn't take place in our building, like the vast majority of our programs. Instead an outreach worker brings family members to the UC Life Chiropractic Centre.

There, patients are X-rayed, their spinal misalignments measured, and then and only then, they are adjusted by Dr. Kittleson. If it is necessary, a second set of X-Rays are taken to ensure the adjustment worked.

Dr. Kittleson also provides follow-up service for months after the original adjustments.

Dr. Kittleson was educated at UBC and then went to school in San Francisco to train as a chiropractor. While in chiropractic school he organized and ran: "Mission Trip America," where he and his fellow students ran a free weekly clinic for San Francisco's poor Latino community.



"I always found it strange how medical professionals will spend thousands to go and do mission work outside their country, when it is so clear to me that it is needed right here in our own communities."

He is aware that chiropractic services are usually only available to those people with money and/or benefits. It's one of the reasons why he wants to help our family members.

He also finds working with our family fulfilling. "I find them very polite and cautious of offending. They are quiet and reserved until they trust you. I enjoy our interactions and being able to connect. There is a joy in that."

PROGRAMS

COMPUTER BASICS

COMPUTER BASICS: Camosun College continues its very popular Computer Basics class at Our Place this year. Computer skills are introduced at the fundamental level to help students gain the knowledge and confidence to perform basic computer operations and essential computer literacy skills such as basic keyboarding, introduction to word processing and electronic communication. The friendly and supportive instructors accommodate all levels of student experience.



with the homeless community they've come to support.

"We've made participation really simple," says Lori Angelini, director of development at Our Place. "People gather a team of friends together, register online, and join us on Feb. 24 for either a 2, 5 or 10 kilometer walk."

The website to register is: <https://cnoy.org/location/victoria2>

"Despite the cold, it's going to be a fun evening for a stroll," adds Angelini. "We will have toques available, plus hot chocolate, and a warm meal after the walk."

For more information on how to participate contact Joel at 250-413-3161 or email coldestnight@ourplacesociety.com.

Next Steps to Employment

Thank you to the generous donors at the **Victoria Foundation**, who came together to give a total of \$40,000 towards the **Next Steps to Employment Program**, one of the newest projects at Our Place. This funding will help us to offer training, work experience and job matching for vulnerable people looking to get back into work, and move towards independence and self-sufficiency. Seven donors came together to respond to this request, and their generosity will help us transform many more lives.

Our Donors

Coldest Night of the Year

For the first time, Our Place is participating in Canada's National Walk for Homelessness by inviting the public to gather family and friends for the **Coldest Night of the Year** on Saturday, Feb. 24, 2018.

"On the coldest nights, we try to get as many people indoors as possible," says Don Evans, executive director of Our Place. "But, unfortunately, there are still people left outside. This walk allows the community to come together and show how much they care about the most vulnerable members of society."

While the family-friendly walk will raise much-needed funds for Our Place, it also offers people an opportunity to meet and connect

SUNDEEP'S SUNDAES: Sundeep's family wanted to honour her memory by giving back to the community, so on her birthday, they celebrated by sponsoring and serving 'Build Your Own Ice Cream Sundae' at Our Place. Sundeep loved sweets and so does the Our Place family as the line-up was strong for over an hour and a half.



Things We Need

- UNDERWEAR**
- SOCKS**
- WARM JACKETS**
- BLANKETS**
- SLEEPING BAGS**
- DRY GOODS**
- GLOVES**
- TOILETRIES**

WINTER IS HERE! Our fellow citizens in need will feel the cold and damp on the streets of Greater Victoria. Empty your closets and bring your warm coats and jackets, blankets and sleeping bags to Our Place. Donations of new underwear and socks are also greatly appreciated.

Contact Tracy at 250-388-7112 ext. 259.

Creative Ways to Give



WHAT FANTASTIC TIMING! Two wonderful supporters, Jules and Sharon, dropped off 70 brand new Winter Coats for the family, plus quilted work shirts, rain gear, 47 pairs of jeans, 65 T-shirts, 29 sweaters, hoodies, plus 14 special packages consisting of pants, shirt, t-shirt, underwear, socks, toothbrush and more. We couldn't be more thrilled, and the family members were overjoyed as the cold weather is definitely upon us.

Sponsor-a-Breakfast

This popular morale-boosting and team-building opportunity invites your group to sponsor and serve a warm, nutritious morning meal to kick-start the day for 300 family members. Our talented kitchen staff prepares a nutritious, cooked breakfast. A \$500 fee covers the cost of the food, and we encourage an extra donation to help fund operations.



For more information, visit our website or contact Tracy at 250-388-7112 ext. 259

Giving Tuesday

While Black Friday has become the epitome of shopping madness, Giving Tuesday is a relatively new concept that is inspiring others to give back to those who are less fortunate.

"Our regular supporters understand what important work we do," says Don Evans, executive director of Our Place. "Giving Tuesday allowed others in the community to get involved."

This year, local philanthropists joined forces to provide matching funds for every donation made on Giving Tuesday.

The online campaign ended up raising over \$200,000.



Bear Mountain Holiday Home Tour

Six beautifully decorated homes on Bear Mountain opened their doors to raise funds for the most vulnerable people in our community. Organized by Cindy Scott, owner of KC Custom Designs, the third annual Holiday Home Tour at Bear Mountain Resort raised a record breaking \$30,000.

"The support from local businesses and the community has been phenomenal," said Cindy.

Guests arriving at the Westin Bear Mountain Resort were treated to hot chocolate and Christmas treats before boarding tour buses, which shuttled visitors from home to home.

"It was wonderful to see so many come together in support of people in need," said Lori Angelini, director of development at Our Place Society. "We are so grateful to Cindy, Bear Mountain, and the many sponsors and volunteers who made this event a success."

Your Help is Needed this Winter

This has been a challenging year for all the vulnerable and marginalized people seeking solace, food and shelter at Our Place. With winter's cold chill, we have opened our Drop-in for longer hours into the evening, and we desperately need your help to keep people warm, safe and fed during the cold, wet months ahead. If you can help with a donation, please call Lori, Aly or Dawn at:

250-413-3161

 **ourplace**
Hope and Belonging

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