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FALL NEWSLETTER
2020

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ourplace

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We thank Mail-O-Matic for donating resources to print this colour newsletter

Chief Executive Officer's Message

Housing is the No. 1 issue on the minds of politicians, business leaders, social agencies, and let's not forget: vulnerable people abandoned in our parks and on our streets.

At Our Place, we have a strong belief that housing is the first step to healing, which is why we have stepped up to manage several provincial acquisitions, such as the former Comfort Inn, Howard Johnson and Capital City Center hotels.

But we also have a strong belief that housing is only the first step.

Due to the COVID pandemic, the province had to move quickly to secure indoor housing that allowed people to maintain proper COVID protocols. This meant moving people directly from tents into leased or bought hotels.

If there hadn't been an emergency, we would have preferred a more stabilizing route toward a hotel room. This would include moving campers into an overnight shelter to assess their needs and provide the first steps of stabilization.

The second step would be a second-tier transitional shelter, such as we operate at My Place. This step provides much more stability with access to 24/7 supports, showers and meals. Often people in this stage are able to return to the workplace because they are no longer in pure survival

mode. This is also the stage where, for those who are ready, we would introduce the idea of detox and intake into New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community.

The third stage would be a hotel room, and in a perfect world, the fourth step would be independent living.

With this model in place, no one in our care should ever be living on the streets again. Some may have to move back a step if their lives fall apart and they become disruptive to others, but that wouldn't be the end. Once they stabilized in shelter again, they would be able to continue their journey.

We want to help people heal and find their place in this world. It can be a long journey, but it all starts with housing.

With much gratitude,

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 over 60 programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!



Finding Comfort in a New Home



NEW COMFORT: Our Place has been busy working with the province to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness. One of those facilities is the former Comfort Inn where over 65 people are now housed.

Our Family

Forest's Story

“I felt out of society, not a part of society. But they just treated me normally.”

Without a lone moment of kindness, Forest may have fallen deeper into the depths of addiction.

After moving to Vancouver from Victoria with a girlfriend at the age of 18, Forest dipped their* toe into the heroin scene as a rite of passage to becoming a writer. The authors they admired (Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, etc.) all seemed to have experimented with drugs and wrote positively about those experiences.

“I thought I would be strong enough to experience that, and come back.”

Unfortunately, heroin had other ideas.

Before Forest knew it, life became all about finding their next opioid fix, and writing was lost in the fog.

On the streets, Forest became invisible to “regular people”; dismissed as just another junkie. Their self-esteem was destroyed, and they were ashamed of the dark depths they had to go down to afford their next score.

* Forest uses the pronoun They

But one day, as people around them were dying from tainted drugs, they visited a

Supervised Injection Site.

“It was quite powerful. I was really struck by the way the staff treated me, like a person. It was very odd because I had been panhandling and involved in sex work and feeling really low about myself. I felt out of society, not a part of society. But they asked my name, smiled, and just treated me normally.

“It was such a little thing, but it was profound. From that experience, I was like ‘One day, I want to do this. One day, I want to be an outreach worker.”

Shaking off their addiction, however, was still years in the future.

Forest lived in British Columbia all of their life, spending most of their early youth in Kelowna and Fernie.

“I came from a good background,” they say. “I came from a happy, healthy home.”

They left home at 15, however, after coming out as bisexual in high school, and quickly discovering how small minded and bigoted so many of their classmates were.

Forest moved to Victoria where their sister lived, and couch surfed while finishing up the last two years of high school.

Victoria, they found, was accepting of who they were, and Forest loved those final years of schooling.



They were excited when they first went out into the world to explore Vancouver. But that’s when heroin dragged them down.

After their experience at the Supervised Injection Site, Forest returned to Victoria at the age of 20, but couldn’t quit the streets. Their addiction followed them every step of the way until, two years later, they became pregnant.

“At first, it was really easy to stop (using heroin),” they say. “Maybe it was the pregnancy hormones, but it was like I can do this s*** to myself, because at that point I didn’t care enough about

myself, but an innocent baby? I could never do that to them.”

While living at Sandy Merriman House, Forest would walk over to Our Place every day for a banana to help with morning sickness. During those visits, they connected with Benoit, an Our Place team lead. (Benoit’s story was featured in our summer newsletter available online)

Forest’s life began to settle. The father of their child decided to get clean, too, and they moved in together.

Forest then turned their eye to a career in Mental Health and Addiction that they had been inspired to pursue.

They signed up for Camosun College, and completed the course while pregnant

with their second child. Now the parent of three (ages 8, 4 and 2), Forest has been working at Our Place for three years.

“It is so impactful to work here,” Forest says. “And I love it. I was 27 with no resume, which was embarrassing for me because who was going to hire me? But I was honest about my recovery and my past, and they took a chance on me. It just gives me a sense of purpose and belonging.”

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE 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 receipts goes directly to providing food and services for people in need. Plus, you get more control over your giving because you can cancel or alter your gift at any time. And, we’ll send you one receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return. Interested? Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 to sign up.



< ART - Thanks to a federal New Horizons for Seniors grant, members of the 50+club enjoyed a visit to Point Ellice House Museum & Gardens. The staff opened up on their off day specifically for Our Place, so the club members could enjoy a physically distanced outing.

POINT ELLICE HOUSE

WITH THE 50+ CLUB!

Hungry Hearts

Goes Virtual

Our first **Virtual Hungry Hearts** was a roaring success despite the many obstacles placed in our path. Thanks to everyone who donated and tuned-in to the livestream, we raised \$150,000 for medical needs. Thank You!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS still adhering to our temporary suspension of volunteer services through this challenging time. We appreciate your support. At this time, we are not actively recruiting new volunteers, rather we will be focusing on a reintegration plan for volunteers to return safely when the time is right. For updates, visit our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer



DOREEN and HARRY JENKINS

Our Donors

Doreen's life started 'across the pond,' near the seaside in Devon, England on March 31, 1923 and ended on March 28, 2019, near a very different seaside in Victoria (they moved to Canada in 1954).

She lived three days shy of 96 years old!

"My mother's legacy is one of kindness and love. She was dedicated to her family and to her work as a volunteer for numerous charities – and her gift of warm hospitality shone brightly when hosting her many English teas and dinners," said her son, Paul Jenkins.

Her husband of 67 years, Harry, died in 2014, but they enjoyed a long and wonderful life together with their children and grandchildren.

As a long-time donor to Our Place, Doreen included a gift in her will to continue her lifelong story of care and compassion for those less fortunate in the world.

"I can't help thinking that she's sitting in her favourite armchair, cup of tea in hand and hoping we're doing okay in dealing with this horrific virus," says Paul.

"Given that she and my father survived six years in war-torn England (through the blitz and many visits to air raid shelters), I can hear her saying, 'Follow the guidance from our wonderful public health care leaders, be patient and kind to one another.'

"And, she would have a special word of support for her family members working on the front lines."

Doreen's legacy of love is a testament to a life of service to others, and a wonderful way for her story of kindness and friendship to live on through the work of Our Place Society.



Things We Need

- **MEN'S PANTS SIZES 32 TO 38**
- **MALE & FEMALE UNDERWEAR**
- **SHOES**
- **GLOVES**
- **HATS**
- **SCARVES**
- **TOQUES**
- **BLANKETS**
- **SLEEPING BAGS**
- **NAIL CLIPPERS**
- **TOILETRIES**
- **RAIN GEAR**
- **WINTER JACKETS**

LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

IF THERE WAS A WAY TO END POVERTY TODAY or prevent addictions or forms of abuse, we would. We definitely try. But until miracles become more commonplace – with the help of donors – our work continues.

For more information on establishing your legacy at Our Place, please contact Norma Cameron at 250-940- 5066 or by email: normac@ourplacesociety.com.

Creative Ways to Give

Road to recovery is a dead end without food security

Jill Van Gyn

understands that those struggling with poverty, addiction and homelessness often cannot benefit from nutritious, high protein foods. As an addict, just 10 years ago, neither did she.

Now, this dynamic CEO of **Fatso High-Performance Peanut Butter** is looking to spread her message as Chair of the **Our Place 2020 Campaign for Food Security**.

"I desperately want to have that conversation about the power of food that's available to all of us," says Jill.

"For me, it started with my own slow restoration to spiritual, physical and mental health. It helped me realize the ways I could give back as part of my journey. Looking back on my addiction, the only reason I am not dead, institutionalized or in jail is because I was born with immense privilege."

Jill believes increasing access to better food benefits everyone.

"I'm all for eating organic and local, but that excludes so many people on low incomes from the conversation."

She points out that those with



limited means are at high risk for diabetes, heart disease, tooth decay and other significant health challenges, all of which put a great strain on the health system.

Jill is asking Greater Victoria for their support with donations for high quality products from local suppliers as a focus for Our Place menus.

"It's about a healthier community, but just as importantly, it's about basic dignity."

Recovery is possible, and it often begins with a good meal.

Our Place Bonny Bonnie



ADMIRER: Our Place thanks everyone who donated to our **Admired - Portraits of Influential Women** campaign, and we are extremely grateful to artist **Elfrida Schragen** for her drive, passion and creativity.

Not only did she help raise over \$47,000, she allowed the Greater Victoria community to celebrate the good works of great people during an extremely challenging time.

Please watch for a campaign in the new year to find and celebrate young adults who are making significant contributions to our community.

Your Help is needed this Winter

Moving into fall and winter, the need to open our Drop-In floor and Nutrition Bar into the evening will add over \$200,000 to our annual budget. To make this possible, we need your help to keep vulnerable people warm, safe and fed during the cold, wet months ahead. If you can help with a financial donation, please **visit the website** or call:

250-940-5060



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Hope and Belonging

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