

# Our Stories

FALL NEWSLETTER  
2018

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



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

## Executive Director's Message

**The silver lining behind every failure is the lesson it teaches us in order to do better next time.**

And society has failed when it comes to helping people living on the streets who are struggling with severe addiction. The current therapy programs that are out there just don't work with the street-entrenched population.

And we know because we have tried. We have sent people into treatment only to watch them return to their old and destructive lifestyle within days if not hours.

That's why we need to do something different.

The idea of Our Place opening a Therapeutic Recovery Community was first discussed in 2013. Our Place leadership and Board of Directors held a visioning session where we asked ourselves where we wanted to be in the future and what impact we wanted to have in the community. A Therapeutic Recovery program was top of the list.

Since we were visioning, money was never an object and so we dreamed up the best version we could. Who was to know that with that vision in our heads, we would make it a reality in only five short years.

Maybe it was prayer, maybe it was luck, but the stars aligned when the former Youth Custody Centre became available and we were able to convince our government partners to lease it to us in order to make this ambitious dream come true.

We plan to open our doors to the first intake



of participants in October. And we anticipate the results will be life changing.

This is a program designed specifically for the people who need it most. It will be abstinence based in a closed facility for one to two years (shorter programs just don't work). It will include healing, mentorship, trauma therapy, indigenous culture, skills development, physical and mental health, and above all else compassion and encouragement.

This program will not just ease suffering for the individuals who choose to participate, it will end it.

I look forward to sharing all the future successes with you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of your support.

With warm regards,

Don Evans  
Executive Director



## 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!



# Our Events

## Pride Parade

It was another fun day of diversity at the **Pride Parade** as Victoria celebrated with a colourful parade downtown, followed by a day-long festival in James Bay. Our Place staff, volunteers, friends and supporters participated by decorating the Our Place van, plus walking in the parade to show support for the LGBTQ community.

## Aboriginal Day

We celebrated **National Aboriginal Day** with traditional First Nations food, music, dance,

games and crafts. The Esquimalt Dancers & Drummers took over our courtyard for an incredible performance. Our kitchen prepared fresh salmon (donated by **HubCity Fisheries**) for lunch. Over one quarter of our family members identify as Aboriginal and appreciated having their unique culture celebrated. Thank you to **Coast Capital Savings** for its contribution toward the event.

## Moss Street Paint-In

Our Place artists (family members and staff) participated again in this year's **TD Art Gallery Paint-In** on Moss Street. The event organizers gave us a great space on the corner of Moss Street & Fairfield Road, while the artists delivered the inspiration.



**Austin**, the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, to tour our facility and see first-hand how we help the most vulnerable citizens in the community. Austin (pictured above with Our Place Executive Director Don Evans and a Nutrition Bar volunteer) is the viceregal representative of the Canadian monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, in the province of British Columbia.

## Lieutenant Governor visits

Our Place welcomed Her Honour The Honourable **Janet**



< **HANDSOME DAY:** Although it may be difficult to tell in this Before photo (kidding guys), Our Place hosted another fun **Handsome Day** in June with donations from **Manscape Spa** and **Victory Barber & Brand**. This was a special day of pampering with haircuts, shaving kits, manicures, clothing, pizza and more.

# Our Family

## Carlos's Story

“ Everything happened because I didn't know how to live my life ”

**As a young boy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Carlos's first job was to wrap chicken eggs in newspaper for his mother.**

“I would take forever,” he admits. “Because I read all the newspapers first.” But it was in these stories that he first became fascinated with Canada.

“I read stories about Greenpeace and blue berets (peacekeeping forces), and I began to idealize Canada as a place where people really cared.”

Carlos's life got off to a rocky start when his father died just three weeks before he was born. It was a tragedy that still holds weight over him to this day.

As a teenager in 1982, his first steps into adulthood were being drafted into the Fuerzas Armadas de la República Argentina (armed forces) in time for the Falklands War against Britain. After the 10-week war ended with over 1,000 casualties, Carlos felt a need to explore beyond his home town.

“Something was telling me it was time to leave,” he says.

A cruise ship company was hiring, and Carlos soon found himself sailing around the Caribbean. When his contract ended, he was dropped off in New York and decided to visit friends in Toronto.

He ended up staying in Toronto, working for his friend's cleaning company, and even getting married. Shortly after his daughter was born, however, things began to change.

“I fell into a pit of deep emotional pain,” he says, his eyes shining with moisture. That blanket of depression covered his heart and mind, and he contemplated suicide.

This led to the breakdown of his marriage and time spent living on the streets. But then, in his darkest moment, he had a near-death experience that made him ask: “Do I really want to die?”

“I experienced this overwhelming joy,” he says of his experience in death. “And the knowledge that ‘We are Heaven.’”

When he was resuscitated, he realized that “my purpose for coming back was to heal my mind. To give up unwholesome thoughts and accept new thoughts. Everything happened because I didn't know how to live my life.”

As a way of stopping those negative

## BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE PROGRAM TODAY

JOIN THE OVER 700 MEMBERS of our Circle of Love program today! Our Place is grateful to our monthly Circle of Love donors who spread out annual donations over 12 months, which helps us plan and budget more effectively, and reduces mailing and environmental costs. Monthly donors receive a single consolidated charitable tax receipt annually. Monthly giving via credit card or direct debit from your bank account is simple to set up — please give us a call at 250-940-5080 to find out more.



thoughts, Carlos returned to school. He took a course in shiatsu massage and a degree in transpersonal psychology (a school of psychology that integrates the spiritual and transcendent aspects of the human experience.)

This led to a five-year career working in the challenging field of hospice care.

"If I could ease somebody's pain, that was it for me," he says with a smile.

During this time, he also came to realize that the childhood vision he had of Canada wasn't to be found in Toronto. "I realized the West Coast was where I really needed to be."

He moved to Sooke and began working in a healing centre. There, he met his second wife, but when her immigration visa expired, life took another tragic turn.

**"I hadn't realized the extent of her mental illness," he says. "She was picked up by the police and ordered to be deported back to Germany."**

Fearing for his wife's mental state, Carlos took her into hiding. It drained all of their savings to hide from the authorities, but once she was stabilized, she boarded a plane. Carlos was left broken-hearted, jobless, homeless and without any money.

In despair, he ended up in hospital and then in shelters until he landed one of the new transitional cots in My Place, operated by Our Place. That recently led to his own private room at Mount Edwards Court on Vancouver Street.

"Our Place saved my life," he says. "I took advantage of all the programs and services that were on offer. Being able to see a doctor was amazing. I had severe pain and digestion problems."

Carlos also found great relief from attending a sweat lodge organized by Our Place's Spiritual Care team.

He grins. "I can eat full meals again now."

Regaining his strength, Carlos volunteered at the Our Place Nutrition Bar. This led to a job offer with the Our Place custodial team, which he finds "extremely rewarding."

**"You get to see beyond the broken hearts," he says of his job. "And see the beautiful people."**



< **MIGHTY MASCOT** - Each summer, Our Place hosts a series of baseball games in Beacon Hill Park to give Victoria's most vulnerable a fun experience. This year was made extra special as the Victoria HarbourCats joined us for the first game.

## **BASEBALL AFTERNOON**

WITH THE HARBOURCATS!

# Our Volunteers

Greg Tupman

**A**t 70 years old, Greg is a golden array of sunshine every time he sits down at Our Place to begin his volunteer shift.

Compassionate, eager and always ready to roll up his sleeves or slip on a hairnet, Greg has been helping out around Our Place for the last nine years.

Volunteering is in his blood, but it took a moment of need for him to see just how valuable his contribution of time could be.

Nine years ago, Greg walked through the doors of Our Place with a heavy weight upon his shoulders.

**"I was down in the dumps and feeling suicidal," he says. "I was tired of pounding the pavement looking for work and getting rejected over and over."**

He wandered into Our Place to grab a cup of coffee, and while he was here, he decided to inquire about volunteering.

Within days, he was working his first shift in the hygiene area and cleaning showers for those even less fortunate than himself.

"That boosted me up no end," he beams.

"Just having the volunteer manager call me up and say she wanted me and when could I start."

Born with a brain injury that causes tremors in his hands, Greg has faced many obstacles in his life, but he overcomes them all — and he does it with his humour and compassion fully intact.

After graduating high school, Greg joined the Coast Guard and patrolled as far as the Arctic for nine years before government cutbacks and downsizing ended his career.

**He quickly joined Pacific Coach Lines where he was hired on to "clean the buses." Seeing his dedication to the job, the boss asked if he was interested in taking an air-brake course to become a driver.**

Greg soon passed the course and drove buses between Victoria and Vancouver for 13 years. Unfortunately, when the company was sold, he was given a severance package and found himself unemployed again.

And that's when he first found Our Place.

Throughout his life, Greg has always known the value of giving back. Last year, he received special recognition after his 2,000th blood donation. He also volunteers with Black Ball Ferry Line as a dock-hand helper.

"I like being busy," he says with his trademark chuckle.

And fortunately for Our Place, we love seeing Greg's smiling face as he slips on a hairnet, pulls on a pair of goggles, and dives into slicing and dicing a giant pile of fresh onions.



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP & CRACKLE IN OUR POP

BECOME PART OF A DYNAMIC TEAM of compassionate people assisting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. Volunteer orientation sessions happen every month and are the best way to find out more about who we are, what we do and how you can get involved! For more information, visit our website or call our Manager of Volunteers at 250-388-7112 Ext. 258.



PETE JANDO, left, attends Hungry Hearts event.

## Our Donors

**P**ete Jando gives where he lives ... and where he works.

A portfolio manager, branch manager, and Director at Odium Brown Ltd., Jando has been involved with Our Place Society since 2013.

"My first experience was serving breakfast and touring the facility with members of my team at Odium Brown. After that introduction, I worked with my firm to sponsor the first Hungry Hearts gala event ... and we've been sponsors of every gala since then."

From there, Pete began making occasional personal donations and recently arranged a monthly automatic donation, which is more convenient and easier to budget, while increasing the benefit to Our Place.

"After serving a breakfast and touring the facility, I was amazed at the breadth and

depth of services they offer. I was also surprised at the size of the need in our community — how many people rely on Our Place for basic services. I found the 919 Pandora location to be professionally managed, with caring and hardworking staff. And I recognized that, without Our Place, there would be an immense increase in the number of Victorians suffering the effects of poverty or homelessness."

While he supports Our Place personally, Pete has ensured that his firm, Odium Brown Limited, is also a major sponsor. As a BC-based investment firm for the last 95 years community involvement is part of the DNA at Odium Brown.

"When we find a great organization like Our Place, we look for opportunities to help. Every team member in our Victoria office participates in, sponsors or leads organizations that make this a vibrant place to live. We're all proud of our association with Our Place and the important work they do."

He adds: "When it comes to supporting Our Place and the less fortunate members of our community, I often think about the quote: "If not me, who? If not now, when?"



## Things We Need

- MENS CLOTHING**
- SOCKS & UNDERWEAR**
- BOOTS & SHOES**
- GLOVES & SCARVES**
- TOQUES & HATS**
- WARM JACKETS**
- BLANKETS & TENTS**
- SLEEPING BAGS**
- NAIL CLIPPERS**
- TOILETRIES**

Winter is coming! 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 always greatly appreciated.

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

**< RECYCLING FOR A CAUSE:** Thank you to Bottle Depot and our wonderful community for raising an incredible \$3,962 during the Month of June! If you still have bottles you wish to donate, you can drop them in the Our Place recycling bin on Quadra and Yates beside Foo restaurant, or you can take them to Bottle Depot and request the money be donated to Our Place.

## Creative Ways to Give



**CHRISTMAS IN JULY:** Ron Neal & The Neal Estate Team hosted an amazing summer evening in the courtyard at Our Place with a Christmas in July theme. Ron and his team sponsored and served a wonderful barbeque dinner with ice cream and chocolate sauce for dessert. There were smiles all around! But next year, we want to book a singing Elvis impersonator!

### 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 over 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 support for people accessing our services.



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

### Create A Legacy of Love

Once you have provided for loved ones in your will, perhaps you would consider including a charitable bequest to Our Place Society. Research shows that more than 1.5 million Canadians alive today have made charitable bequests and another 1 million are considering it. A gift in your will is a cost-effective way to ensure that the people and charitable causes most important to you are remembered. At Our Place, legacy gifts provide vital, stable support for our work, and will play a key role in the coming years as we continue to deepen our engagement with, and service to the community.

**For more info, contact Suzanne at [suzanned@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:suzanned@ourplacesociety.com)**

## Our Place Recent Stats

2017/2018

Meals & Snacks Served

**935,387**



Volunteer Hours

**39,007**



Showers in Hygiene

**15,292**



One-on-One Sessions

**2,470**



Crisis Interventions

**1,639**



## 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:

**250-940-5080 \***

**\* New number goes live on Sept. 24**

  
**Hope and Belonging**

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