

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 17, 2020



Our Place launches COVID-19 Emergency Plan

Feeding the most vulnerable is top priority

VICTORIA, B.C. – In response to the province’s emergency COVID-19 mandate, Our Place is closing its doors but not its heart in this time of health crisis.

To comply with these stricter health guidelines, Our Place is closing down access to its drop-in space, computer lab, courtyard, hygiene, and clothing area. However, it plans to continue operating its washroom facilities, transitional housing, shelter spaces, and providing three meals per day.

“It’s heartbreaking for us to limit access to so many vulnerable people, but it’s the only way we can meet the province’s new pandemic regulations,” says Grant McKenzie, communications director of Our Place. “However, even in a time of crisis, we need to make sure our family members are being looked after to the best of our ability.”

To reduce the potential spread of the Coronavirus to the most vulnerable, volunteer shifts have been cancelled and dedicated staff will step in to fill those roles.

“There is a lot of fear around what happens when this virus makes its way to the people we serve,” says McKenzie. “But our dedicated staff isn’t about to abandon this population. Our kitchen is already planning how it can continue to serve three meals per day on the street in front of 919 Pandora Avenue.”

Our Place is working to ensure that its staff and clients are properly protected, and practice social distancing to the best of their ability.

“In order to place people at the appropriate distance apart, we will need to rework our shelter space,” says McKenzie.

To that end, Our Place will be closing its seasonal shelter as of Wednesday, and limiting the number of people who can access shelter mats at First Met and My Place.

“People will be displaced,” says McKenzie. “We are talking with the province to see if it can help us with an alternate housing plan for those people who have nowhere to go, but until that happens, people will be forced to sleep in parks and doorways.”

The greatest needs during this time are financial donations, and to assist those we care about most as we adjust our shelters to comply with health regulations: single-person tents, sleeping bags and tarps. For donors not wishing to venture downtown, donations

can be dropped off at New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community, 94 Talcott Road in View Royal, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4:30pm.

“It’s all hands on deck,” adds McKenzie. “And we need the public’s support, understanding and compassion more than ever.”

For over 50 years, Our Place has been 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 much of the financial support for its programs and services. Our Place provides over 1,200 meals per day, plus 1,400 snacks, hot showers, education, job skills, health care, addiction recovery services, donated clothing, counseling and outreach services, storage facility, and more; plus 45 transitional housing units and over 150 shelter spaces. Most importantly, Our Place provides a sense of hope and belonging to our neighbours in need.

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For further information, please contact:

Grant McKenzie

Director of Communications

T: 250-388-7112 ext. 225

Cell: 250-217-2406

Email: grantm@ourplacesociety.com