



Our Stories

SUMMER NEWSLETTER
2016

4



inside

3

Our Events

Hungry Hearts delivers hope, fun and finances to Our Place

4

Our Family

Jerry thought he had everything under control until everything fell apart

6

Our Programs

Audiologist Donald MacAskill helps our family members hear better

7

Our Donors

The first time Andrea Jakeman-Brown took a tour of Our Place, she was astonished

8

Creative Ways To Give

Second annual Sock Toss, organized by Fairfield United Church, was a roaring success



ourplace

Hope and Belonging

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Executive Director's Message

There is a crisis in Victoria that keeps me awake at night. That crisis is Tent City. And the question that keeps running through my mind is, what can Our Place do to help?

The answer isn't simple nor easy. Our first response was to work with BC Housing, an arm of the provincial government, to open not one, but three transitional housing options.

The first was designed as a winter shelter at First Metropolitan United Church that offered mats for 40 people. Winter is now fading behind us, but we continue to operate the First Met shelter as there is nowhere else for the family members living there to go.

The second is My Place. Located on Yates Street, directly across from Central Middle School, this unique facility is home to 40 vulnerable people. My Place is the first of its kind, an indoor campground with tents in the gymnasium, 24-7 support staff, home-cooked meals and programming.

The third is Choices. Located in the former Victoria Youth Custody Centre in View Royal, Choices is offering both outdoor and indoor living. With a kitchen, gymnasium, plus space for an art room and woodworking shop, Choices currently houses 50 people with the possibility for further expansion.

The opening of these facilities was only possible through funding from the provincial government. I believe it is important to mention that funding because Our Place, the heart of our organization, is still so dependant



CHOICES: Chef Jess serves delicious meals with a smile, alongside resident and kitchen volunteer Kyle, at Choices Transitional Home in View Royal.

on your donor support to feed, clothe and care (with over 60 programs focused on health care, education and employment) for our most vulnerable neighbours.

Often times, people may read the news and think Our Place is being handed large government cheques. When, in fact, every dollar earmarked for our transitional homes goes directly to operating those facilities.

And despite all of this hard work, there are still people left behind. Tent City has awoken the government to the plight of our homeless and our poor, but it, in and of itself, is not the solution.

I want to thank you for your kind words and continued generosity as we endeavour to assist in finding a long-term solution that gets everyone the help and housing they need.

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 increased programs, services and outreach offered would not have been possible without the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters. Thank you!



HUNGRY HEARTS: Unique fundraiser raises \$117,135 to help Victoria's most vulnerable.



YUMM: Volunteer Anthony Schenk, 9, serves Easter dinners.

Our Recent Events

Hungry Hearts

Our signature fundraising event, Hungry Hearts, made a delicious splash with the business and philanthropic community this year as six top local chefs used their culinary expertise and imagination in a fierce competition to see who could create the most popular savory bite.

"We are overwhelmed by the generosity of the community," said Don Evans, executive director of Our Place. "This strong support will enable us to continue with many of our life-transforming programs and services to assist people in crisis."

Guests were invited to "vote with their heart" in crowning their favourite dish. In a finger-licking finish, Chef Takashi Ito of Inn at Laurel Point took home the Hungry Hearts Top Chef trophy by creating a gourmet Aura Sushi of torched Albacore tuna, side stride shrimp, soy onion salad and togarashi mayo.

"Once people learn of all the wonderful ways Our Place helps the impoverished in our community, they really step up to help," said Lori Angelini, Senior Development Officer. "That couldn't have been made more clear when the philanthropic and business community truly came together in a fun and unique way to help make our signature fundraiser a great success."

The event, presented by PwC Canada and hosted at the Inn at Laurel Point, raised \$117,135. A portion of the proceeds will go towards establishing a brand new employment program that Our Place is planning to launch later this year.



< **PANFLORA GARDENS:** A pilot community garden project is growing on the boulevard adjacent to Our Place. The raised beds in wooden boxes have been planted with vegetable seedlings, and volunteer gardeners will include residents of Our Place. "There is a meditative and rewarding experience to gardening," says Our Place Executive Director Don Evans. "We can't wait to see what community grows from this." Photo by Bruce Stotesbury, Times Colonist

Easter Meal

Our Place hosted our annual Easter Meal with the hard-working support of our fabulous donors, volunteers, staff and local dignitaries.

Over 800 people lined up to enjoy a family feast of turkey, mashed potatoes, steamed vegetables, stuffing and gravy. For dessert, we served up slices of pumpkin pie or apple crumble for the non-marrow inclined. You can view a special video — created in-house — on our website at: ourplacesociety.com/easter-our-place



To view all the latest news, updates, videos and photos be sure to visit our website at ourplacesociety.com or follow us on Facebook at: facebook.com/ourplacesociety

Our Family

Jerry's Story



"Some dance to remember, some dance to forget."
— *Hotel California* by The Eagles

Wearing a Pink Floyd T-shirt, it's evident that music has always played an important role in Jerry's life. When asked when he got married, he easily answers, "It was the year The Eagles released 'Hell Freezes Over'." He smiles. "That's what all my friends said, Hell must have frozen over if Jerry is getting married."

Born in Victoria, Jerry's start to life was as normal as most people's. Raised in James Bay, he ran around with his older brothers, exploring the neighbourhood, and doing what young boys do.

"We used to go down to Fisherman's Wharf," he says in fond remembrance. "My brothers would hang me over the side of the pier by my ankles so I could cut away the bait worms for fishing."

As part of a large, working-class family, Jerry was one of four brothers and two sisters. Part-way through Grade 9, however, he decided school wasn't for him.

That decision was fine with his father, but with one caveat: if he wasn't going to school, he was going to work.

"Dad woke me up the very next morning and said 'you gotta work.'"

His father and uncle ran a small construction business, and Jerry soon found himself with a framing hammer in his hand.

"That first year was really tough," he says. "They didn't want to teach me anything until they were sure I was taking it seriously." Once his father saw he wasn't about to quit, his apprenticeship began.

"I framed houses for the next 30 years," he says. "I was lucky to get a trade, but I also learned how to drink."

Work hard, play harder became his motto. As it was also the lifestyle of the friends he hung with, Jerry never saw any need to be concerned.

"I had the skills and a toolbelt," he says. "That allowed me to follow the work."

After getting married in Edmonton, Jerry returned to the Island and life was looking good. He had a mortgage-free home in Esquimalt and became father to three children.

He still liked to party, but had it under control until, "I discovered crack cocaine."

When the cheap, highly-addictive drug entered his partying scene, Jerry's life tipped over the edge.

"My mantra became 'You're not a junkie if you can afford it' but crack seriously messed me up."



Provide hope and belonging for the future

Imagine knowing that it's possible for you to continue to help your neighbours in need for years to come. Naming **Our Place Society** in your will or estate plan is a fantastic way to leave a life-changing legacy that makes a compassionate difference in the lives of Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens for years to come. For more information call Lori Angelini, senior development officer, 250-413-3161 or visit our website at: www.ourplacesociety.com/ways-give/legacy-giving



Before long, the drug consumed him. Jerry lost interest in work, ran out of money and started taking equity out of the house. That downward spiral quickly saw him lose his house, his marriage — everything he had worked so hard for.

Jerry ended up on the streets, living in shelters, crashing on a friend's couch, struggling to both survive and feed his addiction.

Other agencies tried to help as he battled his addiction — staying sober for up to seven months at a time — but it didn't stick and he found himself evicted and back to living on the streets.

Last April, however, the 59-year-old secured a room at Our Place, and this time he really wanted it to work.

"My health was bad," he says. "I knew I had to get healthy first before I could deal with my addiction."

Diagnosed with Hepatitis C, Jerry entered treatment and went through the toughest six months of his life. Interferon therapy for Hep C is similar to chemotherapy for cancer patients.

"It kicked my ass," he says bluntly. "I didn't think I would make it. If it wasn't for the support of all the staff and residents at Our Place, I don't know . . ." He shakes his head and it's clear that he's survived a traumatic ordeal.

As a survivor, Jerry has teamed up with several other Our Place residents to launch a new SMART recovery program. SMART is a self-help program designed to support individuals who have chosen to abstain, or are considering abstinence from any type of addictive behaviour, by teaching how to change self-defeating thinking, emotions, and actions; and to work towards long-term satisfactions and quality of life.

Jerry still has a way to go, but he has his sights set clearly on the horizon. Two months ago, he became a grandfather for the first time.

"I just want to be there for my kids," he says. "Whatever that entails."

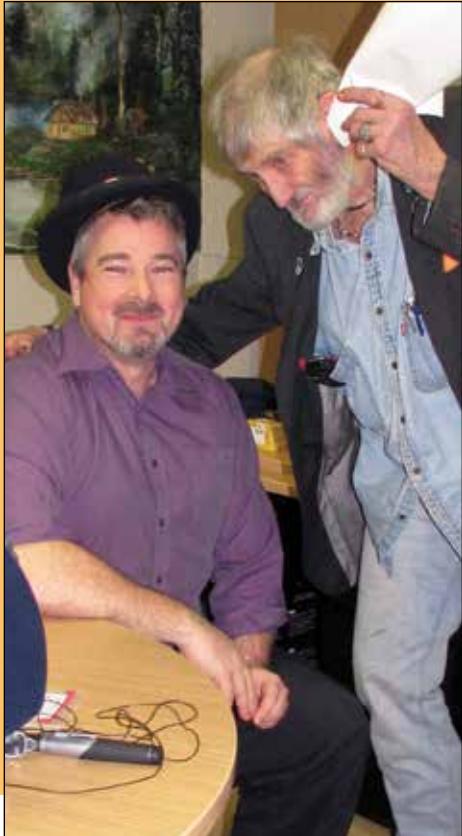
The Greater Victoria Public Library recently launched its new Outreach Library Vehicle (fondly known as OLiVE) at Our Place. Our courtyard was a perfect place to showcase the Community-Inspired Library Service as Our Place and the people we serve benefit from OLiVE's weekly visits to replenish the books in our library and sign people up with library cards.

OLIVE DELIVERS LEARNING FUN

NEW AT OUR PLACE!

Our Programs

Hearing Clinic with Audiologist Donald MacAskill



VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE
THE CAFFEINE IN OUR COFFEE



Q. What inspired you to volunteer at Our Place?

I am lucky to work with a great bunch of people at the Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre (IDHHC). They were at an Our Place open day and asked if I could do a hearing test on a client and discuss options. 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.

Q. Quinn was very excited to receive his new hearing aids. Can you share his story and how he came to hear again?

I loved working with Quinn (shown in the photos above and left with MacAskill). He was the first client in what we hope will be a bigger program at IDHHC in the near future. He had significant hearing loss and we looked at whether there were any funding streams that he could access, but we couldn't find any. Fortunately, I had a set of refurbished hearing aids and had just enough accessories to allow me to fit him with them. It was a good start and I hope we can work with many more clients in the future.

Q. What do your services provide for the family members?

I assess their hearing abilities and although we don't sell hearing aids at IDHHC, we can help direct people to other clinics and financial assistance that can help. I hope to provide them with some information of what will happen and what options are available. For example, if they cannot afford hearing aids and are looking for employment, then my colleagues, Ruth and Chandra, are experts at finding the right programs that may help them access hearing aids.

Q. What are your impressions of Our Place? Are they different than you expected?

That is a difficult question for me to answer as my previous perceptions are challenged every time I go there, and after every visit I am energized but also conflicted. I have met such amazing people and am hugely grateful that I am able to do this, but I am also very aware that my everyday life is quite privileged and I can always do more.

Q. What is your background?

I am an audiologist from the UK and moved here with my wife, Kirstine, and two children, Daniel and Jessica, 16 months ago. I have worked in this field since 1989.

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. 243.



Our Donors

"After providing for your family and friends, making a gift in your will to Our Place Society is a terrific way to ensure Our Place can continue to change lives tomorrow."

The first time Andrea Jakeman-Brown took a tour of Our Place, she was astonished.

"I went back to my office knowing the work I had witnessed being done at Our Place was some of the most important I had seen," she says. "It quite frankly was changing lives. I was embarrassed by the fact this was happening a couple streets over from where I worked yet I had no idea it existed!"

After the tour, Andrea knew she wanted to help Our Place serve the most vulnerable citizens of Greater Victoria — both today and in the future.

"I knew I had to get involved and decided that my role would include championing the programs being offered and help extinguish the myth that Our Place is just a 'soup kitchen'.

"I had no idea there were so many programs

a legacy of love

Provide hope and belonging for the future

and services, such as Reiki, music therapy, English, math and computer basics, and a partnership with Literacy Victoria."

The staff and volunteers at Our Place, she continues, "inspire me with their tireless work. Real progress is being made and this work must continue into the future."

This is one of the reasons that Andrea has included a legacy gift to Our Place in her will.

"We must never turn away from the vulnerable and marginalized because we don't understand the issues. To ensure this essential work continues in the future I hope people will consider making a legacy gift."

Andrea adds: "To know you've provided a means to help the programs and services that change lives today continue in the future because of your gift gives a true sense of accomplishment. It brings me peace, knowing it's the right thing to do."

If you would like to know more about leaving a legacy of love to Our Place Society, please contact Lori at loria@ourplacesociety.com



Things We Need

**MEN'S CLOTHING
SUN SCREEN
LIP BALM
FLIP-FLOPS
SOCKS & UNDERWEAR
FIRST-AID PACKS
TENTS & TARPS
TOILETRIES
BLANKETS
DRY GOODS
BOTTLED WATER
FRUITS & VEGETABLES**

SUMMER IS HERE! Our fellow citizens in need will feel the heat of day and chill of night on the streets of Greater Victoria. Empty your closets and garages to bring summer protection, food and blankets to Our Place. Donations can be dropped off at the front desk anytime of day or night. If you need assistance, please call 250-388-7112.



< DOCTOR BACK IN THE HOUSE: Dr. Stel returned to Our Place this January after a seven-year absence. He had long wanted to return to Our Place, but as the father of 11 children (8 adopted) he'd been a little busy. Dr. Stel works in our medical room every Wednesday where he sees family members from 9 am to noon.

Creative Ways to Give



SOCK TOSS 2016: Our second annual Sock Toss, organized by Fairfield United Church, was a roaring success with several thousand pairs of socks donated. Plus, it was a fun way to engage and inform young students about the importance of clean, dry clothing for the homeless of our community. Big Dog (aka Troy) displays some of the donated socks with students from George Jay Elementary. Other participating schools included: James Bay Community School, Margaret Jenkins Elementary, Little Hands Daycare, and South Park Elementary.

Hotels Show Support

The Hotel Association of Greater Victoria wanted to show its support of Our Place's busy lunch program with a \$7,800 donation, plus monthly service by hospitality industry members. The association represents 48

hotels in the Greater Victoria region and donates funds regularly to support local events, festivals, educational scholarships and community outreach campaigns.



Along with the donation, hospitality industry members volunteer their time to assist with serving meals. The association is also challenging other local businesses to follow its lead and donate funds to help offset the costs of meals for Our Place family members.

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 up to 400 family members. Our talented kitchen staff prepares a cooked breakfast. A small fee of \$500 covers the cost of the food, and we encourage a financial donation on top. Lunches, dinners and summer barbeques can also be sponsored.

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



Our Place In the News



STUDENTS HELPING THE HOMELESS: Students from Central Middle School made the front page of the Times Colonist when they decided to cook a special meal for the new residents at My Place, one of the new transitional homes being operated by Our Place. Our second transitional home, Choices, also made headlines that issue.

Make a Donation

The Development office has a new phone number. To speak with us regarding financial donations, address updates or tax receipt questions, please call:

250-413-3161

To donate clothing or in-kind gifts, please call our main reception number at **250-388-7112** or drop items off anytime at 919 Pandora Avenue.

