



THE CAPITAL AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

Editor: Dave Senick > Telephone: 250-380-5333 > Email: localnews@timescolonist.com



Former street person Gordon Hawkins, 55, gives acupuncture treatments at Our Place. Patrons pay 25 cents for one-hour sessions (if a client doesn't have a quarter, Our Place provides it). He gives massages for free to patrons seated in chairs. ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Making connections with a 'healthy human touch'

ADRIAN CHAMBERLAIN
Times Colonist

Because he's lived the lonely life of a street person, Gordon Hawkins can empathize with those who yearn for the touch of another human being.

That's what he provides for clients at Our Place, the Pandora Avenue shelter. Once a week, Hawkins gives acupuncture treatments for anyone who signs up. As well, he offers chair massage sessions five days a week.

"Some people have never had healthy human touch," said the 55-year-old, who once slept in the Beacon Hill Park Bandshell. "Many people — and including myself for a chunk of time — crave that."

Between the ages of 29 and 32, Hawkins lived on the streets of Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo. To earn money, he sold paintings for \$75 a piece. But it took two weeks to complete one. After a couple of nights in a hostel, Hawkins would return to life on the street.

It wasn't always like that. Hawkins grew up in Calgary, the son of an oil-patch worker. After high school he had itinerant jobs: farm work in Israel, grape-picking in France, working on tall ships as a rigger. He fell into debt

after a business venture — manufacturing juggling sticks — failed. Aiming to pay what he owed, he moved to British Columbia to become a tree planter.

Somehow, things went awry. Although he has family on the West Coast, Hawkins found himself homeless.

The young man found some relief in living a life without rules. Hawkins wasn't a drinker or a drug-taker. It was just that the pressures of regular life had become too much to bear.

"I would just overload and crash," he said.

One day, Hawkins was discovered unconscious in a Vancouver park. He was taken to hospital, where he stayed for six weeks. At the end of that time the doctors had a diagnosis: schizophrenia.

"A lot of people are afraid of the stigma involved. But I didn't feel that at all," said Hawkins, a soft-spoken fellow with neatly trimmed blond hair and goatee. "When I got the diagnosis, it was a relief. It gave me a point of reference."

After his hospital stay, he started on the road to recovery. Hawkins did it with the help of medication, therapy and institutions such as Our Place. It took years to reach his current level of

mental stability and competence.

"For a long time, like a year or two, it was all I could do to have a bath. That was my big chore for the week, to psyche myself up to take a bath," he said.

He became interested in acupuncture while volunteering at the Sierra Club. The acupuncture college was next door. Sometimes the students gave the volunteers free sessions. The notion of the healing touch appealed to Hawkins, who said: "I was like, 'Finally, something I can understand.'"

Ten years ago, he received his certification from the Canadian Acupuncture College. Now Hawkins is learning chair massage. He hopes eventually to earn a living as freelance chair-massage practitioner.

Six months ago he took his first paid job in 20 years. He works at Our Place 12 hours a week as a custodian, cleaning up after lunches are served. Each payday he receives \$60.

He gives all the money to a longtime friend who is a panhandler. She keeps \$40. The other \$20 goes to a project she and Hawkins cooked up. On the street his friend displays a sign inviting passersby to ask questions about her life. In return, she gives her interviewer a couple of toonies.

CRD trudges back to sludge

Survey to ask farmers, foresters about possible use

BILL CLEVERLEY
Times Colonist

Capital Regional District directors are opening the door a crack to the possibility of applying treated sewage sludge to farm or forest land.

In 2011 the CRD banned use of biosolids sludge — the leftovers from the sewage treatment process — on land over concerns that farmland and the food grown on it could be polluted by pharmaceuticals and heavy metals.

This week, directors agreed to have staff develop a survey to determine how many farmers and foresters would be willing to consider applying treated sludge to their lands.

They also agreed to ask proponents to outline technologies that might address board concerns about applying sludge to land.

The moves are part of directors' search for an integrated waste-management solution for dealing with liquid and solid waste in the region.

Sludge from existing sewage treatment plants in Sooke, Salt Spring Island and the Saanich Peninsula is now dumped in Hartland landfill.

In a motion to the CRD board, Central Saanich Mayor Ryan Windsor says it costs \$500,000 a year to truck sludge from the Saanich Peninsula Treatment Plant to Hartland for disposal.

Windsor notes that new technologies may alleviate the concerns that prompted the 2011 ban.

Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps supported getting more information. "I am not one to close doors," Helps said in an interview.

"If I was asked today to vote to remove a ban on land application of biosolids, I would vote no. But I do think ... there may be some technologies out there that we haven't heard of yet."

Different levels of wastewater treatment result in different classes of biosolids. The current sewage treatment plan calls for a residual solids treatment plant at Hartland landfill to produce Class A biosolids, which contain no detectable levels of pathogens.

(Class B biosolids are known to contain bacterial and viral pathogens at varying levels.) The biosolids would be stored at Hartland pending the CRD's decision on integrated waste management.

But the CRD is facing pressure from the province, which supports land application of biosolids, to find an alternative to storage.

Environment Minister Mary Polak has told the CRD's sewage treatment project board that the region must develop a definitive plan for "the beneficial reuse of biosolids" that does not involve multi-year storage at Hartland.

Saanich Coun. Vic Derman said it should be made clear to any farmers who says they are willing to use biosolids that it would have to become public knowledge.

"I think it's very, very dangerous to create a situation where you're putting biosolids onto farms and then selling produce to the public without letting the public know," he said. bcleverley@timescolonist.com



HOW TO DONATE

Since 1956, this newspaper has collected money to benefit the less fortunate. Last year, through the Christmas Fund, we raised and distributed about \$320,000, and we hope to beat that total this year.

To donate, go online to: timescolonist.com/donate. You will be directed to a Canada Helps donation form; once you make your donation, a tax receipt will be provided immediately.

Mail a cheque, payable to the **Times Colonist Christmas Fund Society**, to the Times Colonist Christmas Fund, 2621 Douglas St., Victoria, V8T 4M2.

You can use your credit card by phoning 250-995-4438 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday through Friday. Outside those hours, messages will be accepted.

It's like begging in reverse.

"The idea," Hawkins said, "is to bring a face to panhandlers."

The patrons of Our Place pay him just 25 cents for one-hour acupuncture sessions (if a client doesn't have a quarter, the institution provides it). He gives the chair massages for free.

Some might call this "giving back." Hawkins, however, isn't crazy about the phrase.

"The biggest gift for me is to be a participant. I'm not taking or giving. I'm sharing." achamberlain@timescolonist.com

Library cardholders get pass to castle

20 passes available each day for free entry to Craigdarroch for two adults, two youths

MICHAEL D. REID
Times Colonist

Starting today, Greater Victoria Public Library cardholders can take advantage of free admission to a treasured national historic site.

"I think it's very appropriate that we're gathering here in the library," said Craigdarroch Castle Museum Society executive director John Hughes on Wednesday.

Hughes and Greater Victoria Public Library CEO Maureen Sawa convened in the castle's cosy library to launch the Craigdarroch Castle ePass.

"It's kind like checking in at the airport. Show the code and you'll be checked in," said Sawa, describing the ePass that library

users can check out like an eBook and then show at Craigdarroch.

Twenty passes providing free admission for two adults and two youths ages six to 18 (children under five are free) are available. They're valid for seven days and redeemable for a single visit.

Library users Calvin Black and his two children, Annabelle and Luke, were called upon to test the ePass on their iPad before curator Bruce Davies whisked them off to look at 1890s-era Christmas toys.

While the library offers passes granting admission to Royal B.C. Museum, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Robert Bateman Centre and Saanich Recreation centres, the castle ePass is a first for its GVPL Culture and

Recreation Pass program.

The GVPL has also put together a list of recommended books and a DVD from its collection to help visitors learn about castle history, and the lives of the Dunsmuir.

"Libraries are all about discovering and learning, but also sharing information, so we have now presented this opportunity to the community for more families to take their first look probably and hopefully come back and tell your friends it's a great place to go," Sawa said.

"The real beauty of these pass programs is that you're discovering things you may be aware of but have never really tried."

The museum society is trying to do innovative things, Hughes said. An example is its "augmented-reality" program launched in July allowing visitors to access audio, video and archival material on an iPad app.

Craigdarroch Castle is the latest of more than 120 partners GVPL has worked with to expand its offerings. Examples include a seed library, mobile outreach vehicle Olive and DigiLab at the Esquimalt branch. "We feel more and more like we're the community living room," Sawa said.

Craigdarroch Castle is also expanding, with projects including English and theatre arts programs for students in Grades 7 to 12 and potential for docent-led tours using iPads.

Hughes said it makes sense to embrace technology, especially for users who "don't want to talk to a person" and want to experience the castle at their own pace.

"The castle was technologically advanced when it was built anyway, with electricity and gas and telephone and intercom and all that kind of stuff. So to me it fits." mreid@timescolonist.com

Sawyer Sewing Centre
SINCE 1953
3400 DOUGLAS ST.
250-388-6228
1-888-229-2266
www.sawyersewing.com

JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS **OPEN SUNDAYS 11-4**

<p>JANOME G1212</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 stitches • Built-in Buttonhole • Stretch Stitches • Heavy Duty <p>SAVE \$300 \$199 MSRP \$499</p>	<p>JANOME Juno G1218</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 stitches • 4 step Buttonhole • Drop-in Bobbin • Heavy Duty <p>SAVE \$300 \$299 MSRP \$599</p>	<p>JANOME EC-30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 stitches • Fully Computerized • Heavy Duty <p>SAVE \$380 \$399 MSRP \$779</p>	<p>JANOME SKYLINE S3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 stitches • Large sewing area • 7 Buttonholes <p>SAVE \$600 \$899 MSRP \$1499</p>
--	---	---	--

Save a Minimum of 15% Off All Notions & Threads • Machines from \$199 • Sergers from \$388