

2009 Annual Report

Our Mission

Our Place Society (OPS) works in compassionate Christian love with those who are homeless and others in need to enrich and improve the lives of all. OPS, the Alliance of the Open Door City Ministry and the Upper Room Society, continues its three core activities – drop-in centre, transitional housing and meal service.

Our Board of Directors

There were three resignations from the Board during 2008 (Elmarie Roberts, Dawn Williamson and Don Fletcher) and the addition of two new members (Susan Haddon and Donald Manning). The continuing Board members are Dennis Anholt (Chair), Linda Barry (Treasurer) Ruth Elvey, Paul Jenkins (Vice Chair), Bruce Jordan (Secretary), John Ronald (Past Chair), Michael Shepherd, Gordon Sloan and Donald Storch. Board members are volunteers too. We appreciate the contributions departing and current members have and will continue to make to our success.

Overview

2008 was a year of unprecedented change and challenge for OPS. Also, it was a year of substantial accomplishment. Over the course of the year, our new building at 919 Pandora Avenue opened progressively.

Our first operations began in December 2007 and, by the time the official ribbon cutting ceremony was held on June 24th, 2008, all our programs and services were under one roof. The new facility provides over 40,000 square feet of highly functional, purpose-built space. Designed by Jensen Group Architects and constructed by Knappett Projects Inc., the building meets our needs and expectations extremely well.

The north-facing courtyard provides a welcoming entrance for over 600 Victoria citizens who visit each day we are open. This is a busy area where the family gathers on good weather days. Inside, in the bright, spacious, first floor drop-in centre, coffee and nutritious snacks are available. The centre provides a welcoming atmosphere in which to meet friends, pick up a book from the library, use a computer, and speak with one of OPS Outreach Workers.

Downstairs, one can take a shower, get a clean pair of socks or other clothing, play a game of pool or participate in one of the other recreations in the TV/Games room.

At lunch and dinner time, members of the Our Place family move to the second floor where an ever increasing number of people appreciate the nourishing meals served by the combination of OPS chefs and loyal, energetic volunteers.

On the top three floors are 45 residential rooms for men and women. These transitional housing rooms are occupied by people who, assisted by a support worker, are committed to developing a personal plan to assist them move on to more independent living.

Elsewhere throughout the building, programs, often developed by family members themselves, help improve employment and social skills. OPS is a very busy place. The staff and volunteers are constantly working to improve the lives of our family and the health and vitality of Victoria.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES

The official Opening was held on June 22nd. It was attended by Minister Coleman, Mayor Lowe many dignitaries and dozens of staff, volunteers and family members.

At the end of October, Reverend David Stewart retired after his long and valuable service to the Upper Room Society and OPS.

OPS signed operating agreements between it and both the Victoria Presbytery of the United Church of Canada and the Upper Room Society.

Usage of all our facilities, the drop-in centre, meal service and the Hygiene/Clothing section, increased significantly over the year.

OPS operates five days a week, seven and a half hours a day. There is demand from the family and civic and provincial authorities for OPS to work longer hours. Optimally, this would be 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. This is well beyond our financial resources.

The Society's financial year was changed from the calendar year to April-March in 2007. Financial statements for 2007-08 have been distributed. Copies of the 2008-09 statements will be in June 2009.

The Board has initiated a review of the OPS strategic plan. It is expected to be finalized early 2009.

OPS continues to work cooperatively with major community partners, especially the Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, in addressing the issues of poverty and homelessness in our community. OPS, jointly with the Coalition and the Downtown Victoria Business Association, sponsored a seminar and luncheon at the Harbour Towers with Mr. Steve Snyder, CEO and

President of TransAlta Corporation. Snyder was instrumental in the development of the Calgary 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Closing

As always, we are extremely grateful to our employees and volunteers who give tirelessly to assist the needy of Victoria. We especially appreciate the generosity of all our donors, private and public, without whose support we would be unable to continue our work. The enthusiasm and support of the churches and members of the Victoria Presbytery of the United Church of Canada have, once again, been an inspiration.

Sincerely,
Dennis M. Anholt, Ph.D.
Board Chair