
Our Place Society

Community Report

2011 – 2012



Hope and Belonging



Our Mission

Our Place offers a sense of belonging to Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. We provide a home, nourishment and hope through living, sharing, learning and worshipping together.

Our Vision

Nourishment, hope and belonging for all in Greater Victoria.

Our Values

Unconditional Love - We are an organization with Christian values and principles. We believe that everyone should experience unconditional love in a non-judgmental way.

Hope - We are founded on the belief each individual who comes through our doors will find inspiration, support and comfort. We believe in the potential of all and provide opportunities for positive change. We advocate for social justice.

Teamwork - We value the contributions of our staff and volunteers and ensure they are well trained and supported. We work together as one team committed to our mission, vision and values.

Belonging - We strive to create a nurturing atmosphere of home and family, where all are welcome and can experience a sense of hope and belonging. We are inclusive. Our doors are open to those of all cultures and beliefs.

Safety - We believe all who enter Our Place should feel secure and free from harassment or mistreatment of any kind. We endeavour to create a safe atmosphere where everyone can experience a sense of well-being.



A Message from our Executive Director and Board Chair

In the past twelve months, Our Place has undergone a significant transition. We are thankful that through it all, board and staff have focused on our mission to provide a sense of hope and belonging to Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. While working extremely hard this year, we continued to cling tightly to our vision of breaking cycles of poverty in individual lives.

We've been working hard to bring the organization to a place of comfort and stability for both family members and staff. Like other non-profits, the impact of the economic downturn can still be seen in donations received. Funding was very tight and every programming decision had an organizational implication. Despite insecure funding, we chose to carry the cost of delivery of our breakfast program with our reserve funds. While financially difficult, we know that breakfast is a vital part of our family members' day.

The year ahead brings greater opportunity to turn our focus outwards. As our focus shifts, we plan to strengthen our community relations. We will continue to work toward our goal of being open every day, fully utilizing our facility. We look forward to strengthening our partnership with you, the wider community.

We are grateful for the service of our volunteer board members, some of whom retired from long-time positions this past year. We are grateful to our dedicated staff. Every day they come alongside family members, meet them where they're at, and encourage positive change. But issues of poverty, mental health and addictions remain and are prevalent in every area of Greater Victoria. We, however, stay committed to our mission.

We look forward to the coming year. We will be busy partnering with the community in new ways, bringing a greater variety of programs to family members, and building a vision for Our Place that transcends where we are today. With your faith and support, we anticipate an exciting year ahead.



Executive Director
Don Evans



Board Chair
Shannon Renault

Outreach

At the core of our being, every single person craves acceptance and community. But when you wear visible signs of your poverty, it can be easy to go hours – if not days – without someone looking you in the eye and treating you like a real person. When you don't have a home, it's easy to feel alienated, unwelcome, and even cast off from your society. But at Our Place, grace and respect flow from the small details. Whether a friendly smile or a chat over coffee, our Outreach staff offer a sense of dignity to all our family members by simply taking the time to learn their story.



When you walk through the Drop-In doors, you'll realize that Outreach is our heartbeat of hope and belonging. Maybe you'll see Sandy handing out blankets. Maybe you'll notice Kym, stopping to chat with someone over a cup of coffee. Each of our Outreach workers help build a community where everyone can belong.

Outreach staff build relationships with our family members, greet people by name, and remind them that they're worth it. "Our Place was where people took the time to get to know me," says Jerome. "Joel and Jordan (Our Place staff) would always have helpful suggestions of where to sleep or how to access other things – but more important was that they took the time to ask me how I was. Somebody was actually willing to care."

Our Outreach staff is a team of experienced and compassionate community support workers. Every day at Our Place, Outreach workers greet people by their name, keep things safe, and provide a sense of hope and belonging. They partner with our dedicated volunteers to keep the hygiene facilities, clothing and games rooms, and snack bar running smoothly. Whether basic care such as blankets and band-aids or critical support like referrals to treatment centers, crisis intervention, or housing assistance, this team really does it all.

"I was a mess when I first came here. I remember thinking every day, "I wish that I was dead." Our Place staff were the first people who told me what was right with me, instead of pointing out what was wrong. I wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for this place. Because Our Place staff believed in me, I was able to believe in myself. I never would have thought I could be where I am today." - **Jill**, Family Member

Everybody has a story

Peter's Story

Peter hit rock bottom last September. His life-long battle with depression was at an all time high. As a result of extreme pain and depression, he had developed an addiction to alcohol. When Peter came to Our Place, he felt broken. There was no trace of his light heart, which is so obviously woven into his words today. "My life was a complete mess when I came here," he says. "Everything had taken me apart." Last fall, an Outreach Worker came alongside Peter and got him a temporary room in Our Place's transitional housing. "She saved me," he says. "If she hadn't, I'd be dead today." Peter was then connected with housing staff, a mental health worker, and a counselor. "I was only supposed to be there for 3 weeks but John, my Mental Health worker, saw something in me," Peter reflects. "He thought there was hope for me – and he didn't give up."



“

Our Place has got a heart that's bigger than its building.”

Our Place staff saw Peter through months of intensive counseling. They plugged him into the Streets to Homes program, connected him with Cool Aid medical staff, and reminded him of his human potential. "I can't say enough good things about the people here," he says. "Our Place has got a heart that's bigger than its building."

Peter has now been living at Our Place for just over 10 months. But today, Peter has an appointment with Pacifica housing. "I'm securing my new bachelor pad!" he beams. "I guess you could say I'm a good example of what this place can do for a person," he says, listing the various relationships that have impacted his recovery. "I have hope that I never knew before – and it really is all because of this place."

Programs and Services

With all of our programs and services, we strive to keep our community's sense of hope and belonging alive.



Transitional Housing



This world is sometimes cold. It can be hard to find a place that will meet you where you're at, while challenging and encouraging you to grow. Many of our family members are struggling to overcome poverty, mental health issues, trauma, and addiction. With all these barriers in place, it can be hard to find somewhere that will accept you as a tenant. That's where we come in. We provide care and residency for Greater Victoria's hardest to house citizens.

Each night at Our Place, 45 single adults rest their heads in a place that they can call home. A retreat from the buzz of our drop-in, our transitional housing units house people coming off the street, people waiting for detox or rehabilitation programs, and people committed to more stable, independent living. We know that every single resident has a unique story. That's why our residents collaborate with housing support staff and a mental health and addictions worker to create and reach healthy goals based on their own needs.

Since opening, Our Place has successfully transitioned over 70 people from our housing to more stable, independent living situations. "I feel very supported here," says one resident. "Even when I feel like I've messed up, the staff here reminds me that my journey's not done." Our housing staff meets a myriad of needs. Some days you'll find them in intensive counseling sessions. Other days they're building community with our residents and everyday, they're providing a home.

"My housing worker helps me with everything. He helped me re-start a relationship with my father. He helps me with applications, with grants. But most importantly, he's just a good person to bounce ideas off of. To talk to." - **Glen**, Our Place Resident

Volunteers



Our 320 regular volunteers are the glue that holds us together – we couldn't function without them! Whether making sandwiches, serving holiday meals, helping out in Hygiene, or serving snacks in our Nutrition Bar, our dedicated volunteers help keep the wheels of hope turning.

Volunteering with Our Place is a great way to give back to the community at large. It is a life-affirming way to spend time helping those who need it the most.

"Through volunteering with Our Place, I've really learned a huge lesson that I hope I never forget: people are people. There's no "they" or "homeless" – there's just people and lives and stories." - **Julia Kochuk**, Hygiene and Art volunteer

Maureen's Story

Maureen has been coming to Our Place since the very beginning. Thirty-five years ago, her life looked a lot different. She was a successful go-go dancer and full-time University student. At age 27, Maureen was finishing up her teaching degree. She was taking a trip up island for her Indigenous Studies course when she was in a near-fatal car accident. "An oncoming car blinded me with its lights and I drove off a cliff," she tells me. "I was in a coma for four months, during which time I had four major brain operations. I started coming to Our Place because I was unable to cook for myself." Maureen's accident took away two things: her short-term memory and her ability to walk. Unable to work, Our Place was a safe and affordable place where Maureen could find food and community. Maureen says that the meals and the depth of the relationships formed keep her coming back to Our Place each week. "This is a safe place of community for me," she says. Maureen's resilient and positive attitude far from reflect a life of pain and injustice. Not wanting to dismiss the harsh realities of physical poverty, I point out that her life sounds relationally rich. "Yes. And you know what? I treasure every day," she tells me, smiling. "If there were more people like Maureen," says an interjecting friend, "the world would be a better place."



A Year in Review

Our staff and volunteers were kept busy this year at Our Place. Thanks to their hard work and dedication, we were able to consistently meet a variety of critical needs. Here's a snapshot of some of some of our accomplishments this year:

1200 MEALS SERVED EACH DAY	25 LONG-TERM RESIDENTS SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONED THROUGH OUR HOUSING PROGRAM	1808 1-ON-1 SESSIONS WITH AN OUTREACH WORKER
659 HOUSING REFERRALS	301 EMPLOYMENT REFERRALS	127 DETOX AND TREATMENT REFERRALS
110 RENT SUPPORT WITH PARTNER AGENCIES	7748 HOT SHOWERS	170 THERAPEUTIC FOOTBATHS
8,904 VOLUNTEER SHIFTS	507 CRISIS INTERVENTIONS	

Our Vision for the Future

Every Monday to Friday, Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens have a place to go and start their day off right. But the needs of our family don't end on Fridays. That's why we are now working tirelessly to raise additional funds to increase our hours and open our doors on weekends.

Our plans include full utilization of our resources: staff, volunteers, and facility. We long to expand our programs and services, offering more opportunities for our family members. By doing this, we believe we will be able to change even more lives and further break individual cycles of poverty.

We are thrilled to announce that we have created a balanced budget for 2012/2013. By providing meals on statutory holidays and encouraging greater community partnerships, we have already taken steps towards expanding our hours. With stable leadership now in place, we are excited to begin a new year of hope and belonging at Our Place.

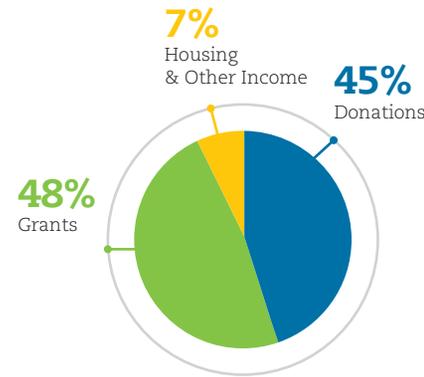
We invite you to partner with us as we dream big and plan carefully to break the cycle of poverty in Victoria, BC.

 "Our Place staff picked me up from hopelessness, from not knowing where I was going. They housed me and got me into treatment. They started the ball rolling. I was just a shell of a human and they got me back into recovery, heading in the right direction again."

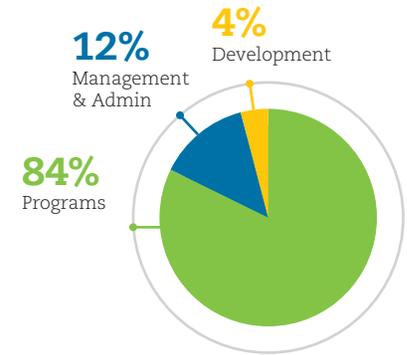
-Dominic, Family Member

Total Support

Thousands joined us in helping Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. The following chart illustrates the source of our funding support:



We have worked diligently to be efficient. The following chart illustrates how funds have been utilized:



Revenue

less amortization
 \$3,133,320

Expenses

less amortization
 \$3,387,878

Revenue & Expenses

The above financial information is based on audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2012.



ourplace

Our Place Society
919 Pandora Ave
Victoria, BC V8V 3P4
250.388.7112
ourplacesociety.com

At Our Place, we serve our family with love and respect. We work for social justice for Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens.



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