

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hungry Hearts delivers message of hope to Our Place

Unique fundraiser raises \$78,000 to help Victoria's most vulnerable

VICTORIA, B.C. – The business and philanthropic community came together Thursday night for Hungry Hearts, a unique fundraiser aimed at raising both awareness and funds for the most vulnerable citizens of Greater Victoria.

In light-hearted competition, five top local chefs used their skills and imagination to see who could create the most interesting twist on one of Our Place's regular meals: soup and a sandwich.

"The food was five-star all the way," said Don Evans, executive director of Our Place, an inner-city community centre serving Greater Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. "Everyone who attended the event had huge smiles from the first bite to the last."

Guests were invited to "vote with their heart" in crowning their favourite. In a finger-licking finish, Castro Boateng of Castro Boateng Fine Catering took home the Hungry Hearts Top Chef trophy with braised duck and beet chutney on grilled cheese with parsnip & apple soup. The event, presented by PwC Canada, took place in The Atrium on Thursday, Feb. 27.

"The philanthropic and business community came together in a fun and unique way to help make our live and silent auctions a great success," said Laura Walsh, director of development. "Once people hear of all the wonderful ways Our Place helps the community, they really step up to help."

The event raised \$78,000, which is being earmarked to help Our Place extend its hours and expand its programs and services.

"Our end goal is to be open from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. when the shelters are closed so that vulnerable people always have a place to call home other than the street," said Evans. "The money raised at Hungry Hearts will go a long way to achieve our ambitious plans."

The five competing chefs were: Peter Zambri of Zambri's, Kunal Ghose of Red Fish Blue Fish, Garrett Schack of Vista 18, Castro Boateng of Castro Boateng Fine Catering, and Patrick Lynch of Foo Asian Street Food. A sixth chef, Michael Williams of the Island Chef television program, unveiled a special dessert.

Along with fabulous food, musical entertainment was provided by a wonderful jazz trio from the Victoria Conservatory of Music, plus special guest Steph Macpherson, a local singer-songwriter who is garnering attention across North America.

Renowned local philanthropist Eric Charman conducted the live auction for some amazing prize packages, which created much energy and friendly competition among bidders. Plus, the sharing of her life story by a member of the Our Place family, brought home just how important the presence of Our Place is in the community.

Our Place is an inner-city community centre serving Greater Victoria's most vulnerable: working poor, impoverished elderly, mental and physically challenged, and the homeless. Individuals and businesses provide the majority of financial support for its programs and services. Our Place provides 45 transitional housing units, over 1,200 meals per day, hot showers, free clothing, counseling and outreach services. Most importantly, it 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

Don Evans, Executive Director
Our Place Society
T: 250-388-7112 ext. 239
Cell: 778-977-4921
Email: don@ourplacesociety.com