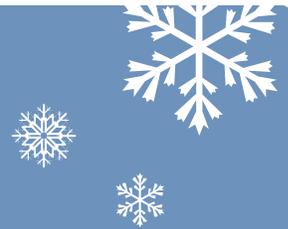


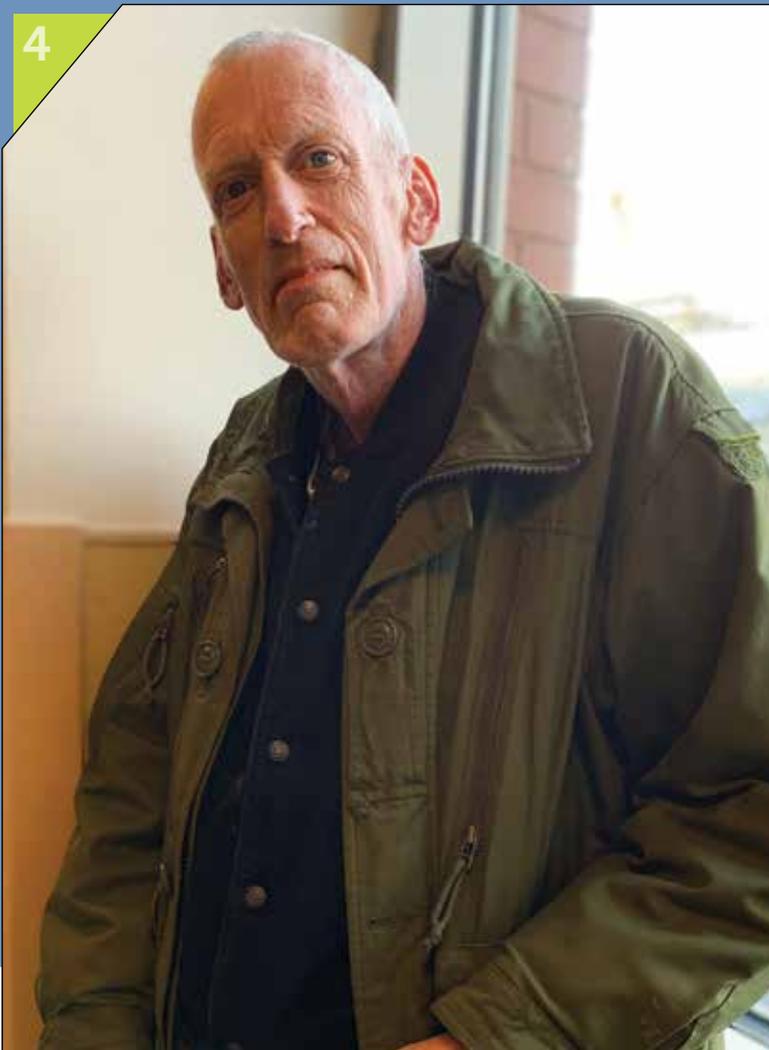
Our Stories

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2020



inside

4



3

Our Events

Angel Gifts, A Christmas Carol, The Big Latke Lunch and a delicious Christmas Meal were the festive highlights.

4

Our Family

At 63, Stingray is finally finding a measure of peace in his life. He has discovered a new purpose in giving back to those still suffering from addiction.

6

Our Programs

Art is someone who feels deeply for others, and when he heard the stories of people struggling with basic mobility, he knew he needed to do something.

7

Our Donors

More and more donors are choosing to give monthly, and when they do, they become part of the Our Place Society's Circle of Love program.



Hope and Belonging

We thank Tech Web Direct for donating resources to print this colour newsletter



Our Message

2020 promises to be an exciting year for Our Place as we switch our focus from growth to making sure that what we already do is the best it can be.

Over the last five years, Our Place has been front and centre in the plight of people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and other root causes of poverty.

We have opened additional shelter beds, operated a temporary overdose prevention site (later transforming that space into storage for the belongings of people without shelter), piloted a unique pre-employment program, extended the hours of our Drop-In floor and Hygiene into the evening, and perhaps our largest accomplishment: New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal.

All of this growth was accomplished under the guidance and passion of CEO Don Evans who tendered his resignation to recharge his batteries in December.

It has definitely been a whirlwind and, sadly, it never seems to be enough. The quest to end homelessness and suffering of those on the street is a mission into which we pour all our energy, hope, faith and optimism.

And while we have spent the last few years growing our services, it's time to turn our focus inward, to make sure those services are the absolute best they can be.



Our Place is so unique. It provides hope and belonging to everyone, and we are so proud of what, with your generous support, we have managed to accomplish. Together, we really do transform lives.

The question we always ask ourselves, however, is how can we do better, and that is our renewed focus for 2020.

New Roads is still so fresh, but we want its model of transformation to become the gold-standard therapeutic model for Canada.

With shelter, we want to make sure that we are providing more than just a place to lay one's head. We want to help people find a path to safety, stability and peace.

It sounds a little daunting, but we have the leadership, staff, volunteers, donors and supporters in place to make it a shining reality.

Sincerely,
Grant McKenzie
Director of Communications



THANK 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 and services offered over the past year would not have been possible without the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters. Thank you!



Our Recent Events

Christmas Dinner

Local politicians, police, community leaders and volunteers helped serve close to 800 Christmas meals to Victoria's most vulnerable citizens at the annual **Our Place Holiday Meal** on December 17. For many of the people who frequent Our Place, the Christmas turkey feast is the closest they come to having the kind of Christmas dinner most of us take for granted.

Angels Among Us

Our Place volunteer Penny Bond dedicates Christmas to collecting as many presents as possible – then she gives them all away to those who might otherwise go without. Penny runs **Angel Gifts**, a program that has been in existence for 17 years. Through the generosity of her fellow Our

Place volunteers, local churches, schools, community groups, businesses and government offices, Penny and Outreach Manager Jordan Cooper delivered 660 personalized presents to people living in poverty.

Big Latke Lunch

To celebrate Hanukkah – the Jewish Festival of Lights – eager and excited volunteers of the Congregation Emanu-El took over the kitchen at Our Place on Dec. 22 for **The Big Latke Lunch**. "This is a wonderful opportunity to share our festival and bring a little bit of light to the family members at Our Place," said Rabbi Harry Brechner. Congregation Emanu-El is the oldest surviving synagogue in Canada.

A Christmas Carol

The annual Our Place / CBC reading of Charles Dickens' timeless classic had a fresh look this year with a new lineup of well-known broadcasters, and music provided by members of three groups from West Coast

Reach Association, including Our Place's own outREACH choir. CBC personalities were on hand to read their interpretations of **A Christmas Carol**. Perennial favourites Gregor Craigie, Bob MacDonald and Shelagh Rogers were joined by Liz McArthur, Robyn Burns, Michael Tymchuk and Sheryl MacKay. The outREACH choir, an all-inclusive group featuring Our Place family members, people with physical and mental challenges and mentors from the wider community, performed

an array of well-known holiday songs to a crowd of more than 400 people. They were directed by choirmaster Anne-Marie Brimacombe, accompanied by Peter Brimacombe.



New Roads

Therapeutic Recovery Community

A program of
Our Place Society

ourplace

Hope and Belonging

NEW SIGN FOR NEW ROADS: The Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal has an official name and, finally, some new signage to reflect it. The name "New Roads" was picked by the first group of residents in the community after one of the residents wrote a song about his own path to recovery titled, you guessed it, New Roads.

Our Family

Stingray's Story

At 63, Stingray is finally finding a measure of peace in his life. A violent childhood led to a violent adulthood, but he has discovered a new purpose in giving back to those still suffering from addiction.

"The addicts listen to me," he says, "because I've been there. I know exactly what damage drugs can do."

Stingray lifts up his shirt to show a urostomy bag, a clear plastic collection device attached to his side where his bladder used to be.

"This is what crack cocaine does," he says matter-of-factly. "I had tumours on my bladder, lungs, kidneys . . . I show that to people in the Our Place Drop-In who are still using, and it makes them think. They'll ask 'is that going to happen to me?' I'm proof that it will."

For Stingray, making peace with his life has been a long, uphill journey as violence has always been a part of it.

"My father beat me up every day from a young age," he says. "I was stubborn and I rebelled."

That violence continued when he started school.

Born an army brat on a Canadian base in France, Stingray moved around a lot and found the changes in school difficult.

"I ended up in a special class," he says, "because I was a slow learner. If you tell me what to do, I don't learn. But if you show me

what to do, I can do it."

In Grade 4, he was integrated back into regular school. But because he learned at a slower pace, the harassment from schoolyard bullies quickly began.

Soon that harassment became more and more violent, and that's when Stingray started causing trouble of his own.

"By age nine, I was six-foot-one. The bullying quickly stopped after that."

Unfortunately, the violence and unhappiness had taken its toll. Stingray started sneaking alcohol at the age of 10, and was drinking in bars by the age of 14.

Despite this, he graduated high school and began working as a labourer in construction.

Drugs, especially cocaine, became part of his lifestyle.

"I had a bad temper," he says, looking down at his hands, which now have serious circulation problems. "I punched a lot of people."

On the mainland, he moved from construction to a job at Tim Hortons as a baker — a position he held for 31 years.

He moved to Victoria in 1987, transferring to a Tim Hortons here to continue his trade.

Despite this chance at a fresh start, his lifestyle

LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT
CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

AFTER PROVIDING FOR YOUR LOVED ONES, please consider including a gift in your will to the Our Place Foundation. If there was a way to end poverty today, or prevent addictions or forms of abuse, we would. We do try. But until miracles become more commonplace, with the help of our donors, our work continues. Your future gift of care and compassion starts here. For more information on legacy giving, please call Norma Cameron at 250-940-5066 or email normac@ourplacesociety.com



STINGRAY WITH BRE, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

of violence and drugs didn't change, and his body took the toll.

In 2012, he had to leave his job due to health issues. As if in denial, however, he continued to use drugs until a near-death experience made him stop cold turkey in 2014.

Six months later, he had his bladder removed. During the operation, the doctors found that his body was riddled with tumours.

Stingray turned away from alcohol and crack cocaine, and began volunteering his time at Our Place.

"Our Place totally made me a better person," he says. "It made me care, care for the family members, care for the staff, care for the other volunteers."

He talks about working at the Drop-In Snack Bar one morning and seeing four family members cleaning their crack pipes as they talked.

Stingray approached them and just started to chat. He shared with them some of his story, talked about how harmful crack cocaine can be, and then showed them his urostomy bag.

"Three of them broke their crack pipes in half right there and then," he says.

He wrings his hands again. "I've had 15 friends die on me, people from all walks of life, but I'm in control now, not the drugs. Now, I can help people."

As Stingray talks about his past, he wants to make one thing clear. Despite

the daily beatings, "my dad wasn't a bad person. I still loved him. I was stubborn and he taught me manners."

Despite having a Grade 7 education, Stingray's father worked as a plane mechanic for the Canadian Armed Forces for 21 years.

"I'm proud of him for that," he says.

He looks up from his hands and his eyes are earnest. "But this is my family now. I can arrive here grumpy, but as soon as I begin interacting with the family, they make me laugh, and I'm like a new person."

He continues: "I love the teamwork, love being able to help the staff, and love what they have done to help me. I love it, and I'm so proud to be here."

THERE ARE GREAT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in our administration office, kitchen, hygiene area, and much more. Become part of a dynamic team of compassionate people assisting Victoria's most vulnerable citizens. To find out when the next volunteer orientation session is being held, visit ourplacesociety.com/volunteer, call Bre, our **Coordinator of Volunteers**, at 250-388-7112 Ext. 243 or email bres@ourplacesociety.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF WHAT WE DO

Our Programs

Art's Scooters

Art is someone who feels deeply for others, and when he heard the stories of people struggling with basic mobility, he knew he needed to do something.

"I know why Our Place refers to the people it serves as 'family,'" he says. "They deserve to have dignity, and that's something I can help with."

Art and CityWide Scooters has been volunteering at Our Place for the last two years. Once a month, Art pulls into the Our Place courtyard in his mechanic shop on wheels and is immediately greeted by a lineup of people.

Some are there because their motorized scooters are in need of repair or a tune-up, but others are there to say hello, offer thanks and show off some of the customizing they've done to their mobility machines.

The personalization of the scooters shows pride of ownership. After all, for many of the family members, the scooter is their lifeline, the only thing that allows them to interact with the community at large.

"We don't leave people stranded," says Art. "One of the guys was telling me that last time his scooter broke down, the repair company

didn't offer him a loaner. This is someone who can barely walk 10 feet without assistance. That's not right. That's not dignity."

Art decided that he needed to do more than repair people's scooters when he saw what bad shape some of them were in.

Joining forces with Ron from Our Place's outreach team, the Scooter Duo began reaching out to the community for donations of scooters that were no longer needed.

And so far, seven scooters, some of them practically brand new, have found their way into the hands of grateful family members.

"The last scooter I picked up was in Oak Bay," says Ron. "And the man asked 'Do you know how long I've been trying to get rid of this?' And yet for our family members it's worth its weight in gold."

When the donated scooters arrive (either Ron or Art will pick them up), Art goes over them with a fine-toothed wrench. He replaces batteries, tires, bushings, whatever it needs before delivering it to a deserving family member.

"This is how we pay it forward," says Art. "The people who donate their scooters can't imagine what an impact they are having."

If you wish to donate a scooter or walker, call Art at 250-478-2978 or email citywidescooter@telus.ca



PROGRAMS

FOR OUR SENIORS

KARAOKE: Family members eagerly anticipate the first Monday of the month as it's **Karaoke Day!** Twelve to fifteen family members come out to sing songs ranging from classic rock, to show tunes, to hymns. Each and every performance is met with cheers from a packed crowd. Some come ready to sing and others sit back and listen. It is always a fun hour full of laughs, and everyone leaves with a smile on their face. Usually it is hard to wrap up for the day as everyone wants to keep singing all afternoon!

Our Donors

More and more donors are choosing to give monthly, and when they do, they become part of the Our Place Society's **Circle of Love** program. Benefits include being eco-friendly (no printing, mailing or postage costs), which means more of your donation goes to programs. And you'll receive one consolidated receipt per year as well as invitations to tours and customized events. Plus many monthly donors love knowing they're helping those we serve in this reliable, stable way.

Katherine B. decided to switch to monthly donations after volunteering at the Our Place nutrition bar. She believes her monthly donations "keep the cash flowing throughout the year."

Whereas Sheri E. is more practical about her choice: "We are paid monthly, so we donate monthly. It helps with our budgeting and even small amounts add up over the year."

Collectively, our monthly donors have a huge, positive impact on those we serve. As Marg Rose, Director of Philanthropy explains, "Right now, monthly gifts feed 1,100 people for 10 days of every month. And often, a meal can lead to a connection with an outreach worker and become that all-important first step toward healing."

To enjoy the benefits of membership in the **Circle of Love** program, you can go online at www.ourplacesociety.com, call Donor Services at 250-940-5060 or use the enclosed response form.

THE EMERALD CITY PROJECT: The inmates at William Head prison, in conjunction with SNAFU theater and the Prison Arts Collective, created and performed a unique play based on the Wizard of Oz called The Emerald City Project. Along with a fun and interesting evening, 10% of ticket sales went to Our Place for a total donation of \$4,520. The inmates in the minimum security facility are particularly excited about supporting Our Place's New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community.



Special Event

February is the month of love and Our Place is showing its love for monthly donors by inviting them to an exclusive presentation by award-winning author **Margo Goodhand**.

You will hear Margo share stirring stories that she and her sister Joyce gathered from pioneers in the women's shelter movement across Canada, in her book, *Runaway Wives and Rogue Feminists*. Margo is no stranger to telling stories – having served as editor-in-chief of the *Edmonton Journal* and *Winnipeg Free Press*. Margo serves on the Our Place Society Board of Directors and hosts the Victoria Giller Light Bash.

Enjoy refreshments and Margo's presentation, followed by a Q&A with the Our Place leadership team. Current Circle of Love members (or new donors who sign up for monthly donations by Feb. 1) can choose which event to attend:

Dates: **Sat. Feb. 8, 10-11:30 AM** at Victoria City Hall Council Antechambers, #1 Centennial Square (one hour free parking at Centennial Parkade) or **Tues. Feb. 25, 10-11:30 AM** at the Board room at 94 Talcott Rd

in View Royal (lots of parking close to the building).

Cost: Free for Circle of Love Monthly Donors; \$25 for guests **RSVP:** Seating

is limited. Reserve your spot by Feb. 2, by contacting Kari Frazer, Donor Relations, t: 250-940-5068 or email kariF@ourplacesociety.com



Things We Need

**UNDERWEAR
SOCKS
WARM JACKETS
BLANKETS
SLEEPING BAGS
DRY GOODS
GLOVES
TOILETRIES**

**Contact Tracy at
250-388-7112 ext. 259.**



Sponsor A Meal



SPECIAL DINNER – We are so grateful to the Realtors of Re/Max Alliance for donating and serving an exceptional meal to the Our Place family in December. The realtors and our kitchen crew served up Roast Beef & Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Yorkshire Pudding, Vegetables & Ice Cream for dessert. To find out how you can sponsor a meal for as little as \$500 visit: ourplacesociety.com/ways-give/sponsor-meal

We've made the match!

Our matching challenge of up to \$100,000 in online giving generated \$156,000 by the Dec 15 deadline from 707 donors! Donors triggered the match, and more, with a total of \$383,780 for the Christmas appeal alone. This two-month campaign ensured hundreds of people came in from the cold, could have a hot shower and hot meals; many received bus tickets and bagged lunches as they set off to work, too. **Thank You** to everyone who helped us achieve and surpass this goal, providing smiles and gifts of warmth, hope, belonging and unconditional love to those we serve.

Hungry Hearts

For the 7th year, Our Place Society proudly presents **Hungry Hearts**, an elegant soiree featuring some of Greater Victoria's most exquisite cuisine, on Saturday, March 28 at the Delta Ocean Point. Tickets for Victoria's Favourite

Culinary Fundrasier are available now at www.ourplacesociety.com/events

Inspirational Coffee Hour

You are invited to warm your heart and hear tales from the front lines with Our Place Director of Communications Grant McKenzie. Please join Grant and leadership team members for an enjoyable hour where you'll learn about Our Place past, present and future. Cookies and refreshments will be served.

Dates: Tues., Feb. 11, 10-11 AM, or Sat. April 4, 10-11 AM

Location: Board room of New Roads at 94 Talcott Road in View Royal (lots of parking close to building).

RSVP: Seating is limited. Reserve your spot by contacting Kari Frazer, Donor Relations, 250-940-5068 or email: kariF@ourplacesociety.com



Coldest Night of the Year

Whether you're looking to put together your own team, join someone else's team or just sponsor a walker, don't worry there's still plenty of time to sign up for Our Place's **Coldest Night of the Year** walkathon.

Staff, family members, friends and supporters will be gathering together Saturday, Feb. 22, 2020, for the third annual community walk to raise awareness about homelessness. Participants have a choice of walking two, five or 10 kms at one of our two locations. Last year, our community partners helped Our Place to raise over \$57,000, and this year we're aiming for \$75,000!

We are very grateful to our sponsors so far: New Balance Victoria, Aon Reed Stenhouse, Auxilium Mortgage Corp., Coca-Cola, Starbucks, CHEK News, the Times Colonist, Used Victoria and Whole Foods.

The walk also highlights the need for more shelter to keep those less fortunate out of the cold during the winter months. Form a team or come on your own to this family friendly event. Enjoy live music, chili dinner, team toque and a sense of community. Go to www.cnoy.org/register and choose Victoria and your choice of location: Pandora or the Westshore.



coldest*night
OF THE YEAR 

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250-388-7112
Donations: 250-940-5060
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