

Our Stories



FALL NEWSLETTER
2024

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We thank Mail-O-Matic for donating resources to print this colour newsletter

Chief Executive Officer's Message

It's been an intense summer on Pandora with significant challenges and difficult events, but I'm feeling more optimistic than I have for years.

For a very long time, we have refused to accept that a tent on a sidewalk is any place to reside. It is one of the reasons why we called for action from those who have the means to provide the shelter, housing, mental health and addiction supports that folk need to successfully get off Pandora.

And they have been listening.

We have been working closely with the City of Victoria, Victoria Police, Island Health, BC Housing, Ministry of Housing and other service providers to implement long-term, sustainable solutions to street homelessness in Victoria.

The first step has been the opening of 40 new shelter beds in our existing locations to provide immediate care to those sleeping in our parks and on our sidewalks.

But make no mistake, we see this as just that, a first step.

We won't stop working and advocating until everybody has a safe place inside where they can regain their dignity, health and connection to life-transforming supports.

We envision a day when multiple avenues of support are in place: sober housing for people coming out of recovery and treatment; women's-only housing for safety and healing; pet-friendly housing; and, yes, additional emergency shelter for those who need a respite from the elements and want to start their journey to permanent housing.



Our Place's staff and volunteers have never worked harder to make the daily survival of our family members a top priority, and it's their compassion that spurs us on to fight for solutions. And I want to emphasize, we do believe there are solutions.

Before the end of the year, our hard work will pay off as we open our first, long-term Therapeutic Recovery Community for Women. The demolition stage is complete, and the building of this healing community has begun. Based on our successful men's program, New Roads, where 110 individuals received treatment in the last year alone, the women's community will be completely self-contained to best serve our residents in their journey out of addiction.

Action. Healing. Results.

None of this would be possible without your support. Thank you!

Julian Daly
Chief Executive Officer



THANK YOU!

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT 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 programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!



CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP):

HOT SUMMER: Our Place brought in the big Gorilla guns to keep people cool during the heat wave.

PRIDE: Our Place staff, volunteers and family members shared love and belonging in the 2024 Victoria Pride Parade.

HANDSOME DAY: Some of our gents received a bit of pampering thanks to The Natural Hair Salon stylists

BASEBALL: Another summer treat with four games and BBQs spread across July and August.

Summer Fun at Our Place



Our Family

Ryan's Story

“ I’ve been in treatment nine times, but nothing really worked until New Roads. ”

Even before he was old enough to understand what addiction really was, Ryan felt its effects.

“I had a fairly normal childhood,” he says. “But I have a father who’s an alcoholic. So I grew up with alcohol being a strong presence in the household.”

Growing up in East Vancouver with a big immigrant family from Scotland, Ryan’s early years hold fond memories of camping trips, but there was always a dark cloud of alcohol abuse lingering overhead.

In school, Ryan struggled.

“I had a lot of behaviour problems,” he says. “I struggled with ADD and ADHD, and ended up getting kicked out, being suspended. And the teachers, I guess they thought I was ‘troubled’ so they kinda pushed it away, put my desk in the hallway, and I lashed out.”

In high school, Ryan turned to drugs, beginning with marijuana “but it slowly progressed to acid.”

“I was skipping school a lot, and I ended up being expelled for trafficking marijuana.”

Ryan took some time off, but credits his mother for not giving up on him.

“My mother really wanted me to get an education. She has been my support

through thick and thin, and she started paying tutors to get me through distance education. She just wanted the best for me, and in the end, I graduated.”

Ryan’s relationship with his father, however, was “not so good. He was basically abusive, physically, mentally, just the way he was raised, he brought that on to us (kids).”

Ryan’s older brother also fell into addiction, but later became a role model and has been clean and sober for over 10 years now.

After graduation, Ryan was hired by a security company patrolling Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Unfortunately, the environment was high risk for someone progressing in their own drug journey.

“I was using cocaine at that point,” he says. “And down there I got introduced to heroin, crystal meth, crack cocaine.”

Despite his drug use, Ryan managed to hold onto his job for several years until a woman he had befriended “ended up being murdered.”

Because of his relationship with the victim, Ryan was investigated by the police until he proved his innocence, but to this day her murder is listed as unsolved.

“After that, I was using really heavily. I lost my job because I couldn’t hold it together.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY BUILDERS PROGRAM TODAY

Why not join the many donors who have chosen to give monthly? This eco-friendly method ensures the money saved on printing and mailing goes directly to providing food and services for people in need. Plus, you get more control over your giving because you can cancel or alter your gift at any time. And, we’ll send you one receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return. Interested? Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 to sign up.



The addiction just kept spiralling.”

Without employment, Ryan started “easing into crime just to feed the addiction. I was broke and my parents cut me off. They changed the locks and said, ‘We just can’t do this anymore.’”

Ryan continued to spiral down a dark path and “I couldn’t see a way out.”

His parents, however, picked him up and drove him to treatment in Coquitlam.

Unfortunately, short-term (30, 60 and 90-day) programs only kept Ryan sober for brief periods of time.

“After the relapse, I ended up homeless,” he says.

His mother tried again by getting him

into treatment in Nanaimo. But when he finished the 30-day program, Ryan found himself with “nothing to support myself.”

With nowhere to go, he turned back to drugs and crime until he managed to get into another short-term recovery program in Campbell River. There he met the woman who would become his wife and mother of his child.

Life started to change for the better until addiction, for both Ryan and his wife, returned. They lost their house, custody of their children, and became homeless. Ryan ended up in jail.

“I had almost a spiritual experience when I was in jail,” he says. “Do I want to continue living this life? Because it’s nothing but suffering and pain. And everybody who

loves me, they’re leaving and I’m going to be alone in the end.”

When he was released, Ryan entered New Roads, Our Place’s long-term therapeutic recovery community where he was a resident for nine months.

“It’s the best treatment centre I’ve been to,” he says. “I’ve been in treatment nine times, but nothing really worked until New Roads. They gave me the tools, education and supports to stay clean this time.”

Ryan now works at Our Place, and despite what he sees on the streets, he’s determined to make it work.

“I see a lot of pain and suffering down there (on Pandora),” he says. “I don’t see anybody happy. For me, it’s a reminder of where I don’t want to be.”



< **UNDER CONSTRUCTION** - Demolition is nearing its end at New Roads as we turn our attention to the renovation that will bring 20 long-term (9 months to 2 years) recovery beds to the Island for women. We are beyond excited to have this therapeutic recovery program on track for a 2024 opening.

**WOMEN'S
RECOVERY**
ON TRACK

Hungry Hearts

What a night!

Thanks to our incredible Hungry Hearts chefs, donors, and sponsors we have raised a record-shattering \$310,000 in support of Our Place's Women's Therapeutic Recovery Community!

Thank you for helping break the cycle of addiction for women, families, and our community. Our Place is thrilled to open the doors for women in recovery this winter.

Congratulations to the Hungry Hearts Champion: Chef Curtis Toth of Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort!



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL! We are back to recruiting NEW volunteers and looking forward to increasing our volunteer capacity in both food services and clothing distribution. Please visit our online application and orientation process for safer and easier access to the Our Place volunteer experience at: <https://www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer/>



NOEL: At 103, Noel is one of our oldest donors.

Our Donors

We recently did a survey to better understand why you choose to support us, and the responses made our hearts soar!

"I donate to Our Place Society because they are on the front lines, providing essential services to those who need it most."

"Our Place creates real change in the community. Their comprehensive approach — from meals and shelter to recovery programs — makes me confident that my donation is helping people rebuild their lives."

"The personal connections and compassion at Our Place are unmatched. I donate because they not only provide basic needs, but also create a supportive environment where people can truly feel valued."

"Every time I contribute to Our Place, I feel

like I'm part of something bigger — helping to create a lasting impact for those who need a hand up, not just a handout."

At 103, Noel is one of our oldest donors. "I started giving to Our Place because it offers so many useful services to people who need them." A former English professor, Noel suffered hearing loss while fighting in Italy in WWII.

"When someone is looking to donate to charity, I would suggest they learn about a lot of charities first. Then, choose one that is providing real help to people in need. When I chose Our Place, I tried to think about what I would need, if I were in that position. That's what Our Place offers people."

On the other end of the age spectrum, we had Lily, Patrick and Maddi work together on a very busy Lemonade Stand this summer. They raised \$105.50! "We know how lucky we are to have a home, we wanted to make sure that everyone in our community knows that we care about them"

We are grateful to everyone of our donors and all of the ways that you choose to support us. Thank you!



Monthly Donors

"It's like subscribing to a better community."

Monthly donations to Our Place are a sustainable, reliable source of income for ongoing projects that address

homelessness, addiction recovery, and community wellness in our region.



Even a small monthly gift builds over time, making this impactful form of support accessible for everyone. The more people in our community who step up in this way, the greater this solid foundation for Our Place programs becomes.

Thank you to the **Our Place Community Builders** for showing us the incredible strength of community.

Join the Community Builders program with a monthly gift today!

LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

OUR PLACE DONORS ARE COMPASSIONATE, kind, and loyal. Living these values like you do is what makes our work possible. You can extend these values beyond your life and create a Legacy of Love for the future with a gift in your will. For more information, write to Janice at legacy@ourplacesociety.com



Sponsor a meal today!

Transform simple meals to heartier, more nourishing ones

Love Our Place? Your business or community group will too! Sponsors have the option to serve their meal with friends, family, or corporate groups.

Breakfast: \$600

Lunch: \$700

Dinner: \$850

Book your sponsored meal(s) today!

E: rachelh@ourplacesociety.com P: 250-940-5060 ext. 5108

Did You Know?

Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs):

DAFs offer a flexible and easy way to support Our Place Society. By directing your DAF contributions to us, you help provide essential services for those experiencing homelessness and poverty. Your donations are managed transparently and effectively, ensuring a lasting impact on our community.

Securities:

You can also donate publicly listed securities, such as stocks, bonds, or mutual funds. This is one of the most tax-efficient ways to give. When donating securities directly to a registered charity, the Canada Revenue Agency does not tax capital gains. Plus, you'll receive a tax receipt for the full value of your donation!

Please see the Gifts of Securities Donation Form on our website at <https://www.ourplacesociety.com/how-you-can-help/> or Contact Janice Kalin at janicek@ourplacesociety.com

Creative Ways to Give

December: Dickens – Dec. 13, 2024

Tickets will be on sale in October for this festive tradition. Radio personalities from CBC Victoria and special guests present a reading of the classic Dickens tale, **A Christmas Carol**. Sing along with the Reach Choir to classic Christmas carols and help Our Place make the season special for those in need.

<https://www.ourplacesociety.com/christmascarol/>

February: Coldest Night of the Year

The popular walkathon campaign will return to downtown Victoria and the WestShore on **Feb. 22, 2025**. Our Place Society and the Pacific Centre Family Services Association host the 2 & 5km charity walks. Together, we are proud to offer everyone the opportunity to raise awareness and funds to help the homeless.

<https://www.ourplacesociety.com/events/coldest-night/>

Our Place Keeping warm

CLEANING OUT YOUR CLOSETS?

As the weather changes, we are accepting donations of warm weather clothing, such as long-sleeve shirts, pants, socks, warm shoes and boots, jackets, sleeping bags, toques and scarves.

Simply drop them off at Our Place (919 Pandora Avenue) and your donations will go right where they are needed.

250-940-5060



Hope and Belonging

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