

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Food costs jump nearly 30%, impacting local community and burdening nonprofit programs

Rising food costs strain Our Place Society, which serves 1,400+ meals daily, but community donations and shelter support offer hope through expanded services and shelter beds

We have all felt the sting of rising food costs at our local grocery and restaurants. The national average increase within the last year is over 10%.

For most of us, this is a serious stress factor that forces us to tighten our belts and choose cheaper options at the store. But, for some people in our community, there is no choice at all.

Over the summer, many community centres and kitchens that serve the most vulnerable populations in our region were forced to shut down, putting further pressure on the essential community service providers currently operating.

At the downtown community centre of a local nonprofit, Our Place Society, over 1,400 meals are being served every single day to people who cannot afford to put food on the table right now. This population ranges from people experiencing homelessness, to the elderly on a fixed income, to just people not making a wage high enough to cover their basic needs.

“With fewer places now available to receive a meal and the natural uptick in need during colder months, we anticipate a considerable surge in the number of people relying on our services,” says Janice Kalin, director of philanthropy, Our Place Society.



1,400 meals are served from the Our Place Community Centre kitchen every day. PHOTO VIA DOMINIC HALL

With a modest budget as a nonprofit community service provider, Our Place Society already has to work within the constraint of their food program being entirely donor funded. But, when the people they serve are experiencing varying degrees of malnutrition, dental issues, and other physical and mental ailments – they can’t cut corners on providing properly balanced and nourishing meals.

The results are an increase in food costs significantly above the average at 28.88%.

There is a lot happening right now in our region. It can feel quite harrowing to know

that this kind of pressure exists for our community service providers at the same time.

But, things are looking up and Our Place Society representatives are feeling optimistic about the steps being taken to support increased shelter and housing.

Increased enforcement of day camping bans complimented by supportive services from providers like Our Place means people are able to find a way off the street. The first of those supports is usually a comfortable, safe place to sit down and have a nutritious meal. Our Place’s community

centre provides that on Pandora avenue, at the heart of the city.

To further respond to street camping, 75 shelter beds are being provided by the Province, 40 of which are being operated by Our Place. All wraparound support for shelters and housing, including meals, hygiene, clothing and additional programs provided to shelter residents, are made possible by donations.

These programs are a great start but their success, and that of all programs at Our Place, ultimately relies on the strength and generosity of the community.

“We asked our donors why they give, and the most common answer by far was a feeling of shared responsibility for the health and well-being of our beautiful community. That really says a lot about this city and the compassion

of the people who live here.” says Kalin.

The Greater Victoria region is indeed a beautiful place to live, but as the donors of Our Place make clear, it is also a nurturing and strong community of people who take pride in supporting their neighbours.

Monthly donations make up a significant portion of this group and this is an easy and accessible way to contribute if you’re interested in getting involved. Even a small donation builds up over time and makes a big impact, ensuring that Our Place always has funding to rely on when people need help.

Learn more about giving to Our Place and the programs available to anyone who needs help in our region at www.ourplacesociety.com/donate.

 **ourplace**
Hope and Belonging

Our Place Society has grown from a unique inner-city community centre to eight locations serving Greater Victoria’s most vulnerable, including people struggling with homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use issues, the working poor and impoverished elderly.



Meals are made possible by donations at Our Place. PHOTO VIA DOMINIC HALL