



Truth of the matter

By Julian Daly, Our Place CEO

Over the past several months, there have been differing narratives about Our Place's role in the unacceptable humanitarian crisis on Pandora. Some say we are responsible for the camping on Pandora, while others claim we are displacing people from the street. Neither of these things are true.

So, what is the truth of the matter?

All of us at Our Place are united in our goal: **to ensure no one has to live rough.**

For the past 17 years—first in Edmonton and now in Victoria—I have dedicated my career to advocating for resources to help people living rough on our streets to get shelter and housing and find a better life.

This commitment is shared by everyone at Our Place and the belief that **we need to always be a part of the solution.**

Seeing so many individuals living rough on Pandora Avenue has been deeply distressing, both personally and professionally. That's why Our Place—and I, as its CEO—have been relentlessly advocating, both publicly and behind the scenes, to ensure people receive the support they need to move off the streets and into a safer, more stable future.

That is the truth of the matter.

We could not do this alone. We have worked

relentlessly with our partners in government – most especially BC Housing, City of Victoria and Island Health – to make this so. Each partner brings its own unique resources and strengths -whether it be shelter beds, housing or mental and physical health supports - and together, we have created an effective system of care.

This initiative is beginning to bear fruit and the results are clear. The significant reduction of people living rough on Pandora Avenue is, to me, a clear sign of progress and a testament to the effectiveness of our collective efforts.

Everyone who was living on Pandora has been offered a shelter space—the first step on the pathway to housing—and many have accepted this opportunity.

And we know, from experience, that once we get someone into housing, they can find their way back to wellness, mental and physical. In fact, 85% of people coming through Our Place housing facilities have stayed housed since receiving support. And they haven't just stayed, but many have, more importantly, achieved levels of self-sufficiency, personal progress and wellness that seemed unimaginable not that long ago. Their lives are being made better.

At Our Place, our primary role is to help and inspire people to move forward to a better place in their lives. A meal is an important first step for most. By serving over 1,400 meals each day, we create

the foundation for trusting relationships that allow us to assess each individual's needs and guide them toward their next steps into wellness—whether that's a shower, housing, or extremely effective addiction treatment for men – and shortly women too – at our New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal. It is this continued support along the continuum of housing and care that is truly the strength behind Our Place's effectiveness.

The humanitarian crisis on Pandora further motivated these efforts, and it continues to fuel our commitment to making life better for those we serve. There will likely always be pathways into homelessness, and we can't predict just how those needs may change in years to come.

But, my goal remains the same; to help as many people as possible who are going through tough times along the pathways of care and housing, ensuring they are supported at every step and that they never end up on the street but end up with a better life.

Simply put, Our Place's role is to help people achieve lives that are healthy, housed, meaningful and without poverty.

Julian Daly

Our Place CEO

Photo: Adrian Lam



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TV SCREEN INSIDE

Our Place's services are part of an effective journey back to wellness for people in our city



Barb knew she needed a new community to maintain her health and sobriety. The best way she saw to get involved was to offer time. Now, not only is Barb a valued member of the Dodd's volunteer team, she is also on the board of 2 local community groups, and running her own nonprofit in honour of her uncle Doug Hudlin, a pioneering black baseball umpire in Victoria.

"It's not easy. You need to find community," says Barb of her recovery.

Finding community and connection in serving meals has been essential to Barb's own recovery. And it is these values that are at the heart of Our Place's mission. Over the years, she has come to have a special appreciation for the purpose and importance of Our Place's meal programs.

"It's not just putting food in their belly. There is way more than that. There is connection, community, finding out where they can go to find help. All of that falls into place," says Barb.

"For me, it fills my heart. They are my family"

Thank you for being a part of the Our Place family, Barb.

You can provide meals to people in our city today with a donation at www.ourplacesociety.com/donate



Our Place's services are part of an effective journey back to wellness for people in our city.

Each person's journey is unique, but along the way Our Place can provide housing and shelter, hygiene services, support for mental and physical health concerns, addiction recovery, and more.

And the first step on that journey is a meal. Every day, 1,400 of these meals are served and every meal is an opportunity to get someone on the path to a better future.

A few days a year, that number increases when special holiday meals are served. Perhaps the most well-known of these meals are the Thanksgiving and Christmas meals served by Gordy Dodd and his team. A community staple, Gordy has been serving heartwarming and nourishing meals on these holidays for over 25 years. During this time, he has built a team of cherished staff and volunteers who join him and the Our Place team to make sure everyone gets fed.

Barb Hudlin is one such volunteer.

Barb has been volunteering with Gordy for over 10 years. She found the opportunity soon after starting her own journey to sobriety.

Addiction took hold for Barb late in life. She had grown

children out of the house and was divorced from her husband. Her children helped introduce her to a man who she would go on to live happily with for 4 years before he passed away from cancer.

Grieving, and seeking support, Barb found companionship in the wrong places with a friend who introduced her to harder drugs.

"It was pretty simple," says Barb. "Somebody was caring about me."

Barb was able to conceal her addiction from her workplace. She stayed housed, but was in a living situation with other people suffering from addiction. To most people who met Barb, her challenges were invisible, and she continued to live this way for several years.

But, for her children – they were an insurmountable barrier.

It was 13 years ago when her son laid down an ultimatum. She would have to choose between continuing as she was and seeing her grandchildren.

Within 24 hours, Barb let him know she was ready to make a change. Within 3 weeks, she had moved into her own housing and began an addiction recovery program. She changed her phone number and didn't look back.



Why we give

Making a holiday donation is an act of generosity that perfectly encompasses the spirit of the season. Deciding which organization to support is a big decision. So, take it from those who know best.

We asked Our Place donors why they put their trust in the organization to provide these essential services. The overwhelming majority said a shared responsibility for our collective community encourages them to give in the first place. But, the reasons for choosing Our Place specifically provided a unique perspective into this long-time pillar of our community.

You can join this community of caring donors today and share your own reasons for giving!



Donate now at
www.ourplacesociety.com/donate

“The New Roads treatment community is a critical support that I know through my work in the justice system.”

“When I asked [someone experiencing homelessness in Victoria] which organization I should contribute to, he recommended Our Place Society.”

“Our Place is part of the solution.”

“I appreciate the ongoing commitment of this organization to provide the many individuals in our community with the assistance they need to maintain their dignity and person.”

“For all the wraparound services they provide our most vulnerable.”

“My contacts with Our Place, directly or through correspondence, have been heartfelt.”

— Our Place donors, Anonymous



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

ourplacesociety.com/sponsor-a-meal/

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