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THE VICTORIA HUMAN EXCHANGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October--December 2006

Edition #71

*Welcome to our world--a world of friendship
Every meeting of persons can be an exchange of life's gifts--a Human Exchange*



“ there was no room for them at the Inn.” Lk.2:7

The longer a person remains homeless, the less likely they are to have a chance for full restoration into the community.

Those who are comfortably off are encouraged to share with those who have fallen on hard times--*especially this Christmas.*

See page 3 for how you can help.

“Whenever you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me”. Matt.25:40

A person becomes homeless because of:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment or Underemployment • Inability to Pay Rent • Lack of Affordable Decent Rental Housing • Alcohol and Substance Misuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Violence • Divorce • Mental Illness / Illness/ • Accident • Lack of Family Support System |
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VHES - Providing Temporary Dignified Affordable Housing for Over 14 Years.....

Without an address and a phone number, people cannot begin to seek employment. The Society rents houses from sympathetic landlords and sub-lets to persons facing challenges of many kinds. These persons are welcomed into a family of friends who support them until they solve the challenges facing them and move on to permanent housing.

VHES is particularly concerned with persons in recovery from substance misuse (who have *at least* three months clean and sober); persons with mental illness who have medication and support; and persons seeking re-integration with estranged families.

We currently facilitate nine houses:

In Victoria: Charlie Pyott House, Esther's House, Hope House, Linda Jim House and the Fr.Michael J. McGivney House. **Sidney** Frances Thibeau House and Judy Thomas House .

Saltspring Island: Grandma's House and Bittancourt Manor

See testimonial letters from persons who use our Houses: page 2.

LETTER BOX

It is easy for those who live comfortable lives in Victoria and the Gulf Islands to forget that there are many homeless people who reside on the fringes of these prosperous communities. Indeed, a community development expert and leader once said that *the true measure of community is the extent to which it recognizes, honors, embraces, and shares the gifts offered by those less fortunate.*

I offer my un-wavering support to all the endeavors undertaken by The Victoria Human Exchange Society to carry on its work in exchanging human gifts of compassion, love and support to those in most need. In my view they represent what "community" is all about.

Sincerely,
Jim Lauder, BSW, MA, sfo

Letters from VHES Houses:

I'm moving out today. Before I leave I would like to thank you for all your help. Thank you so much.

Remember last August, when I found a job in Sidney, I almost gave it up due to no place to live. Then I saw your pager in the newspaper. I phoned you. For emergency you immediately rented this nice room. My problem solved. I'm so grateful for **Judy Thomas House's** existence. Such a nice place give people great help.

Also during my stay I saw different people come and left. When they come they had some challenges. When they left things seems all turned to the bright side. This makes people feel better. *The house helps people through their difficult time, makes them feel warm in the world. That's so great.*

I also would like to thank all the people who support the houses. I deeply appreciate all the help that VHES give people.

Sincerely, X. M

I'm writing to say thank you....thank you...thank you...Isobel, Joan, Patricia and Ken Gibson, the house owner. I've been at **Linda Jim house** 6 weeks now and am very grateful for the spirit and comforts of this home!! When I arrived from a women's shelter I had stayed at for 5 weeks, I was scared, tired and vulnerable with not many promising options. Coming to Linda Jim house was the big light I needed. Mostly, all the women have been kind and welcoming. Isobel, the house facilitator has been outstanding and strong, dedicated and supportive.

I've made some wonderful connections with the other tenants and Thanksgiving dinner here was truly a blessing for all who enjoyed and attended. There were 8 of us, 6 occupants and 2 invited guests. We had fun and are still full with the big turkey donated by Karen, facilitator from our Esther's House, along with many of the trimmings down to the yummy apple pie. We truly have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Again - thank you all at the Human Exchange!!

Blessings and Warm Wishes,

Doreen

My stay here at **Linda Jim House** has been nothing but rewarding. It feels like my own home largely thanks to our facilitator Isobel, who is very busy and takes care of the house, but also has time to listen to our problems, and give advice. We are so glad to have her here. A big thank you goes to her and also Joan the house manager who, like Isobel is so compassionate and makes sure the house runs smoothly. There are 6 women here and we work as a team. There is not enough thanks I can give to Joan, Isobel and the Human Exchange Society. I'm very grateful. My spirit is very uplifted living here.

Diane

A **NEW START** is what the Victoria Human Exchange Society has provided for me. A safe place to live and an opportunity to get some help. I see a counsellor once a week for my emotional-mental well being and addictions. I have also found a family doctor who has referred me to a couple of specialists to help me deal with my physical problems. I have found a part time job to help me feel productive. But most of all the VHES has given me the chance to be there for others who are struggling with life. It hasn't been easy, not everyone who applies to live here is sincere, but as Patricia F. has taught methey deserve a chance....I am so grateful that Patricia F. and the Victoria Human Exchange Society gave me a chance. I am a better man today because of it.

THANK YOU, Derrick N.

POEM FOR JESUS, by Gillian Shirreff

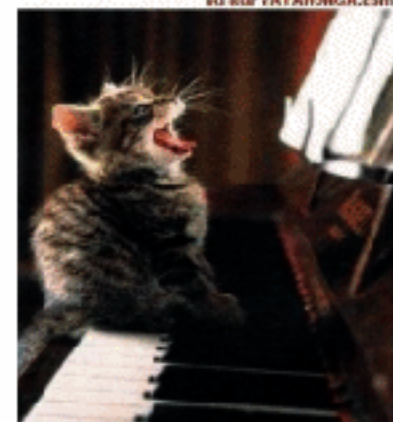
I love you for the winter glow
I love you for the lights aglow
I love you for the Christmas child,
I love you for the world gone wild

I love you for the perky tree
I love you for your gifts to me
I love you for the lavish meal
I love you for your promised deal.

I love you just because you're you
I love you for the things you do,
I love you for our crazy plans,
I love you for your nail -scarred hands.

The day you died was all but lose,
You left us with an empty cross
Our burdens lifted,
sins redeemed;
The mother laughed,
the baby beamed.

Sing
As if
no-one is



Things we would be glad to receive this Christmas (as suggested by the Occupants of our Houses): food vouchers, phone cards, stamps, gifts for children, bus passes, toiletries, soaps, lotions, slippers, books, CD's, VCR movies, T Shirts or gift certificates.

Report from Linda Jim and Esther's Houses

By Joan Vezina, Vice-Chair

It has indeed been a positive period for both **Linda Jim House**, whose Facilitator is Isobel, and **Esther's House** under the leadership of Karen.

Both houses maintain full occupancy. But our goal is not only to remain at full occupancy, but that the houses are peaceful, free of major disruptions-- the "Retreat House" atmosphere that we promote and offer to our occupants as safe havens in which to have some time away from whatever turmoil their life might contain.

This supportive atmosphere without doubt allows our occupants to focus on the solutions to the problems in their life without the clutter of worrying about keeping a safe affordable roof over their heads, usually a constant worry. We always hope that when occupants are ready to move on, they feel better equipped to manage their lives, their issues, whether that be employment, a home, family, relationships.

Thanksgiving has just come and gone and we are grateful to all those persons (especially Karen from Esther's House!) and agencies who helped our houses have a wonderful thanksgiving dinner together, with all the trimmings! All sitting together around the dinner table, as temporary families thrown together by circumstance.

We are all so aware of how much we owe the blessings of our houses to all those who support us, not only at those special times like Thanksgiving and Christmas, but throughout the year. We are already looking forward to what we can do in the houses for Christmas - a special dinner for the house, even a small gift for each person is met with much thanks and a smile.

So we labour on with our various contributions, knowing that God does supply all our needs, maybe not always in ways we expect or on our timelines, but always met. We look to the next quarter and all it may bring with great optimism, thankful hearts, and much hope that this ministry will continue to bless all our occupants, volunteers and supporters in a great way. Thanks especially to my house facilitators, Isobel and Karen. Their

efforts and patience are endless, they do provide the core stability to these houses, always with the best interests of those under their roofs as a primary concern - while managing their own lives. They are truly blessings!!

"Your Health Care Corner" by: Katherine (Kay) Buckler R.N. VHES Health & Safety Consultant

The Victoria Human Exchange Society is pleased to welcome to it's Volunteer Team, Kay Buckler R.N.. Kay is now our consultant for health and safety issues as it pertains to our houses, occupants and volunteers. Kay will be happy to entertain your particular individual situation on these matters, and she can be accessed through your House Facilitator, or by contacting Joan at (250) 382-2025, or email at jvez@shaw.ca or to Kay by email at chezkarb@shaw.ca.

This is Kay's first contribution to our Newsletter; she will be a regular contributor with her column. If you have suggestions for future columns that you feel would be of interest to all our readers, please do pass that along to us.

A Holiday Greeting to Shine Through Your Year

The celebrations of Thanksgiving and Christmas meals are not about the foods cooked, but rather the fellowship of those others we share a meal with, whether we live in a shelter or a castle, the love of others is essential for human well being.

What do we share? A turkey, potatoes, vegetables or dessert, they all have a special understanding to our celebration. Share is to make joint use of resources (such as food or money) or just to give something away. When we celebrate or in daily living, healthy eating is the practice of making choices about what and/or how we eat with the intention of improving or maintaining good health. Diets which lead to obesity, diabetes and other medical conditions are a severe drain of resources for national health care providers.

Moreover, a person's feelings or well-being, self-worth and overall happiness can be severely diminished by poor dietary habits. We ingest many negative things that upset our well-being. Junk food, inadequate or poor quality liquids, pollution, alcohol, tobacco and other smoke and stress, all affect the efficiency of our systems/body.

However, when foods are limited, it is imperative we try to make healthy, wise choices as to what we consume, and those with whom we share our meal. Enjoy what and all you are blessed to have!!

EXCHANGE OF GIFTS

Sincere Thanks To:

- **The Sisters of St. Ann** for a very generous financial gift when our funds were low and for the gifts of furniture, household goods and other equipment from Mt St Angela's through Sr. Frieda.
- **Esther's Dream Foundation**, for another mini-grant to sustain Esther's House and the Outreach from that House to others in need.
- The Gaming Commission for a **Direct Access Grant** that has enabled us to face the financial future with more confidence.
- **Francine S. and St Dunstan's Anglican Church** in Gordon Head for boxes of food at Thanksgiving.
- **Linda S.** of the PECSF for gift of two chests of drawers and for willingness to do some special fundraising on our behalf.
- **Sleep Country Canada** for the ongoing generous gift of beds to our Houses and to those who desperately need them.
- **Don W.** for all your gifts of time and energy and to your men who have done such a good job of cleaning both at their own houses and at Hope House. **Beacon Services** for excellent furniture.
- **Karen H.** for your selfless gift of turkey dinners that made thanksgiving so magic for many people.
- **Country Grocer** for Turkey and trimmings for Linda Jim House.
- **Thrifty Foods** in Sidney and on Salt Spring Island for generous gifts at Thanksgiving.
- **Kay B.** our Health Consultant and assisting with finding solutions to challenges in our houses.
- **Joan V.** for numerous letters; plans for workshops and visits to each of the Houses.
- **Don W.** for helping out in so many ways and for supporting the men at our two Victoria Houses.
- **Yvette B.** for attending meetings on homelessness and for distributing the Petition from ACE.
- Financial gifts from **Fr. Mike O'C., Doreen M, George @ Marion M, John T., Marion C, and Rex Pendril B.** Monthly \$ Donations: **Lois M.; Pat L.; Mark S.** of Pender Isl.
- **Jean S.** for maintenance on the Judy Thomas House computer. **Island.net** for reasonable service.
- **Gillian S.** for poetry for the newsletter and much support and advice for persons who come to her.
- **Reine** for generous support for others, kind actions and having such a big prayerful heart.
- **Carole P.,** VHES Secretary, for thoroughness with the Minutes and for fundraising in our behalf.
- **Louise L.** for referring **Shelley M.** to us with gifts of furniture and a freezer full of food!
- **Judy A.** for hanging in there until a new Treasurer is found and for continuing the bus program.
- **Robin** of Fran Thibeau House for caring enough to share sandwiches with hungry and homeless people in Sidney and Victoria.
- **Derrick N.** for compassionate dealings with the Occupants of Fran Thibeau House and for much garden and house work. **Anna C.** for very capably facilitating Judy Thomas House.
- **Joe R.** for letting us know about a fridge in good working order.
- **All occupants** who have taken time to write testimonial letters that help us with our fundraising.
- **Holy Trinity Church, Sidney** for making October: *Human Exchange month* and **Thea D.** for speaking on our behalf to the congregation.
- **Marj & Dave L.** for continuing to donate envelopes and for updating contact lists.
- All those present and former occupants who have taken the time to write testimonial letters.
- **Chown Place Governance** for allowing us to use the Hall for our Board Meetings and **Lois** for always being there to serve!!
- **Pacificcoast.net** and **Victoria Free Net** for generous service.
- **All those** whose names we have missed but who have shared gifts with the people in the Houses, we thank you!
- **All our Landlords** and their Maintenance persons.

DONATIONS to support the **Victoria Human Exchange Society** may be sent to

Box 8534 - Victoria BC - V8W 3S1

Pager numbers **GREATER VICTORIA**: 418-9997 or 361-2762 for Sidney and Gulf Islands

From Gulf Islands and from anywhere else in North America: 1-800-691-9366