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# THE VICTORIA HUMAN EXCHANGE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Edition 83

Oct– Dec. 2009

**Thanks to those supporters who have responded to the appeal we sent out in our Chairperson's report in the last newsletter.**

The economic state of affairs remains bleak for non-profit organizations and for the **Victoria Human Exchange Society** individually.

We were very proud of the fact that we were able to open two more men's houses & three more women's houses in the Victoria area in the past two years. However, we unfortunately came to the decision that, in view of cut backs to our funding, we must give up 3 of our 11 houses in order to survive economically. These are the largest buildings with the highest overhead. They are the two Convents: **Esther's House** and **Mary Gordon House** and the half duplex named in honour of **Ken Barnett**, founding member. Then to our dismay, the owner of that large duplex told us we must leave his other duplex, **Lawrence Moon house** also because he wanted to take it over and ask more rent for each room. Therefore, we are left with 7 houses in all, 3 of which are in Victoria. If we can find smaller houses, less onerous economically, we will gradually reopen these Houses which are more needed than ever in these hard times. We need your help!

- If you have a house to lease and you can afford to offer lower than market rent, we can work with you and the Sisters of St Ann to set up another Esther's House (Esther being the childhood name of their foundress, Blessed Marie Anne Blondin) .
- If we can find other houses whose landlords have a social conscience and are not simply profit oriented, we will gradually open the other houses.
- If you could assist in the role of Treasurer, it would relieve our already overburdened member who is trying to accomplish this task.
- Can you assist at the houses as a volunteer - driving persons to appointments; offering support to individuals, or helping with cleaning or maintenance tasks?
- Can you supply storage for excess furniture or appliances that we receive as donations but cannot immediately use?
- Can you donate food or supplies for use in the houses. Food, toiletries, paper products, and cleaning supplies are much appreciated.
- Finally, we need financial donations in order to pay the high Utility and heating bills at all the remaining houses. Thank you for all the help and donations in the spirit of the exchange of life's gifts. We are grateful for support and advice afforded by *the Victoria Foundation; Jim Bennett of the Victoria Real Estate Board; The Coalition to End Homelessness and by all the churches and agencies that sent help.*  
Patricia Fitzgerald - grandmas@saltspring.com 250-920-5056

**CHRISTMAS Appeal:** This year we will need all the help we can get to provide gifts and festive ornaments for the houses. Not to mention trying to provide a Christmas meal for the occupants. If you can help with this important celebration, please contact us – **Linda:** 250-658-0170 or 250-857-3905 or page: 250-361-2762 **Patricia:** 250-920-5056

**Tribute to a friend and advocate who is greatly missed : Gillian Shirreff-Harker  
Departed this world: October 28, 2009**



Gillian with friends, Dr. Michele Birch-Conery & Reine de Gagne.

Gillian's life was filled with service and creativity. Her books threw light on the painful reality of living with mental illness. Her deep faith in a reality beyond the visible world sustained her through years of anguish. Gillian's Poetry has often appeared in this newsletter and her books are featured on the Publications page of the VHES web-site: [www.humanx.org](http://www.humanx.org)

**YOU ARE THE COMING KING**

You are the coming King oh Christ!  
 i want to serve with all my might.  
 you are the peace i find within,  
 you are my laughing loving heart.  
 you are the smile upon my face,  
 you are the one who wipes my tears.  
 to you i offer all my fears,  
 you are my bleeding aching heart.  
 i cry upon your bosom now.  
 my heart is healed, i don't know how.  
 i long for what i cannot see,  
 'tis faith that led me here you see.  
 you are my laughing heart oh Christ  
 i know you now, i knew you then,  
 when years ago my heart was raw,  
 you healed my wounds! oh bleeding Christ!

gs. 24/12/05

**May she rest in peace and may her beautiful spirit live on in our midst!**

**Testimonial from Gillian re the worth of the Human Exchange Society**

In the past two years, some of the resources for people with mental illnesses have closed down, but VHES remains constant. To the world's eyes I am worth nothing because I can't work, and my two books aren't selling off the shelves. But the VHES gives me assignments that make me feel worth while and I receive their email that makes my life worth living. I know of other people with mental illnesses that the VHES helps too. One man works at a service station, another teaches art and I now serve on the board of VHES.

As Macie said at May's board meeting "The mentally ill have us to turn to!" The **VHES** makes life worth living for many people!

Love,

**Gillian Shirreff**

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From Isabel of ACE:

We went to Gillian's Celebration of her life and it was everything that I am sure Gillian would have wanted it to be. I am sure that she was with us in Spirit. Her loving family did her proud and we were (Brian and I) very grateful that although we did not arrive in Victoria in time to see her alive at the end of October, we were very happy to be able to have closure with such a wonderful service. Isabel

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**For those interested in purchasing Gillian's artwork/poetry:**

Gillian's family will do an inventory of her poetry, artwork, and printed books. After that time they will tell us how these may be purchased. There is also some interest in publishing a book of her paintings.

All proceeds of sales would be committed to a set of charities in keeping with Gill's values...

More info: 250-920-5056 or [grandmas@saltspring.com](mailto:grandmas@saltspring.com)

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"Schizophrenia: the dark horse"

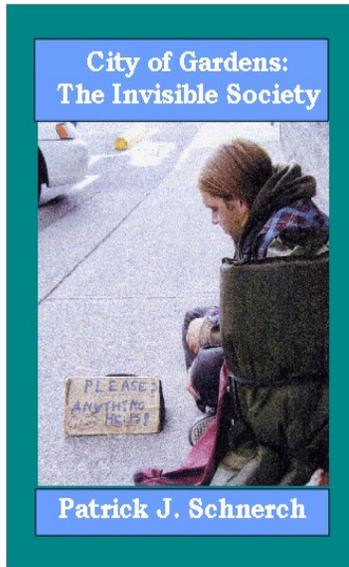
"My Life is a Garden"

"From your Mouse-in-the-Wall, Mrs Shirreff."

"When I met Jesus and the Crows"

## Second Book in the "City of Gardens Collection" of five.

By Patrick Schnerch



***City of Gardens: The Invisible Society*** is complete. It is in the hands of the editor as we speak. I would like to recognize and thank Angela Aidoo DeJorgee for her kindness and hard work making my books to have the professional edge that they need to become quality publications. She did last year's book as well and I do not see why we cannot continue our working relationship for many years to come.

I have a lot of gratitude for VHES who has stood by me through the thick and thin of this series. I am quite certain that they will enjoy this book better than last year. *There are interviews with street people, survivors, consumers, and service providers.*

I have already started the third book of the series, "*City of Gardens: Victoria's Dirty Little Secret*". There will be a lot of meat on the bones for this new publication. It will start off with the start of the Olympic Torch relay in Victoria rally which was

opposed by several groups who object to fibre of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in comparison to neglecting our mentally ill, addicted and homeless.

This new book will study and document every moment of the games and the affects it has caused the city, province and country. The "*Invisible Society*" will be released before the Games. This is a perfect opportunity to spread the message of how this event affects our most vulnerable. How many homeless people will die on Canadian streets before Team Canada scores a goal in hockey?

"*The City of Gardens Collection*" is turning out to be a bit of an item. It is a slow start, but when people realize the importance of this case study, it will certainly gain in its popularity. Literature is a hard sell in these turbulent economic times. Mainstream publishing has basically grounded to a halt in Canada. Self published books and the internet is the new age of literature around the world.

This book series entered the business at a monumental time in literary history. I am very excited about this series. As it continues, I foresee more people volunteering stories and interviews to the greater cause.

Proceeds are slow now, but the attention is growing fast. The last book has had more hits on the internet than any other of my two books and it has been less than a year from its release. The attention is there, unfortunately, the money isn't. The tough economic times has also greatly affected this market.

That will not stop me. I will continue to write and publish a new book every year regardless of our situation. When the economics turn around, so will the profits. I have to be patient and ensure that I am ready for the financial recovery. I am very confident that VHES will at least benefit marginally by this series when things start to settle down. The interest in the series is high; it is just a matter of time.

*Watch the VHES web-site for updates on the release of Patrick's second Book in the series.*

## SINCERE THANKS TO:

- **The Sisters of St Ann and the Esther's Dream Foundation** for financial support for Esther's House and for outreach to other houses. The House *will* be recreated!
- **The Victoria Foundation; the Coalition to End Homelessness; the Unitarian Church; Victoria Real Estate Foundation** and other groups who offered support for the Human Exchange as we tried to keep our houses open--
- **Jim B.** who offered to solve some of the challenges we faced in the area of volunteers; garbage collection and pest control.
- Financial support from: **Knights of Columbus** Nanaimo and Sidney Councils; **Lois M.; Sid T.; John T.; Ivor R.; Aideen L.; Annley. K.; John and Arlene E.; Maureen G.; Helene and Gene D.; Steve S.; Irene T.; Patrick and Kethy S.; Marjorie and David L.; Ian and Catherine C.; and Bertha MacB.**
- Thanks to **Linda** for all her caring and hidden hard work on behalf of others.
- **Island Blue** for offering 10% off Art supplies and a discount on our Newsletter printing.
- **Ted and Josie N.** for upright freezer in excellent condition.
- **Frank C.** for offer of an electric scooter in return for a tax receipt. Does anyone need a scooter?
- **Jenn** for Love seat; bird tables; lamps; dresser; chesterfield; corner desk and other furniture and goods.
- **Wes** for his work in the community on behalf of the VHES and for advocacy for occupants of our houses.
- **Cobbs** for promise of baked goods from their new Shelbourne Rd store (through Wes)
- **St Vincent de Paul Society** for financial support and networking in support of our houses. Thanks to Wes and Linda for attending their weekly meetings.



- **Gillian Shirreff-Harker**, of loving memory, for all her creative work. Many thanks to her family for arranging to make her books and paintings available to the public.
- And to Ted Slater for regular funds for programs to support persons with mental illness.
- **All our hard working facilitators in all the houses for making sure that the Guidelines are kept and the occupants of the houses receive all the support they need to achieve their goals. Special thanks to Dennis N. of Charlie Pyott House; Karl M. and Darren of McGivney for taking on the telephone payment. George Mcl. and Anna C. in Sidney and Kimberley and Steve on Salt Spring Island for their quiet dedication to others and generous service as volunteers.**

**DONATIONS to Victoria Human Exchange Society : Box 8534 - Victoria BC - V8W 3S1**

**Pager # GREATER VICTORIA : 361-2762 Anywhere else in North America: 1-800-691-9366**

**Cell phone to reach Patricia: 250-920-5056. Linda: 250-857-3905**

**Web-site: www.humanx.org**