



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE: May 26, 2007

TIME: 1:00 pm

PLACE: "Sunset Room"

1810 B Store Street, Victoria, BC

Mark your calendars now!

DIRECTIONS: Going north on Store St., turn left onto Herald, where there is lots of parking. Walk toward the water, where you'll go through a black wrought-iron gate on the right, at the back of the Value Village building. Follow the pathway to the double rust-colored doors off the patio.

TENTH VHES HOUSE NOW A "DISTANT GOAL"...

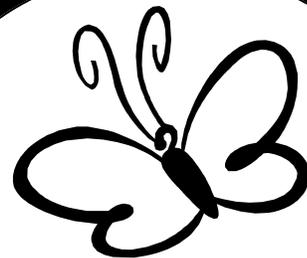
Several months ago, some of us got quite excited about the possibility of opening a new house for women in the Victoria area. A fund-raising campaign was launched through a website called 'GiveMeaning.com' and we all tried to get the word out to anyone we thought would support it.

Although some money WAS raised, it was decided at the last board meeting to put the project on hold for the foreseeable future. Between changes to the Board of Directors and other ongoing fundraising efforts, it was felt that the timing just wasn't quite right to pursue this ideal at the moment.

For those of you who supported the beginning efforts toward a new house (either financially or in spirit!), thanks so much for your efforts, and we'll keep you posted if the project goes forward at a later date!



To "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.
To "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.
To "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging the outcomes but to allow others to affect their own destinies.
To "let go" is not to be protective, it's to permit another to face reality.
To "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.





"You do not live on the street....you die a little every day."

A person on welfare gets \$510 a month....if they pay a damage deposit, \$20 dollars a month is deducted from that to reimburse welfare. I logged on to a website called craigslist.org and clicked on the rooms and shared accommodation page. I took the latest 45 listings, added them all up, and divided that amount by 45 and the average cost of a room in the Victoria area is \$480 a month, which welfare will not cover. Most of the rooms that are listed below \$450 will only accept students or people who work full time. So again this drastically decreases their options.

If a person is declared disabled then chances are they are DISABLED. They have gone through a strict process set up by Human Resources that is not only very overwhelming at times but humiliating as well. They have been seen by several doctors as well as a social worker and a counsellor or community worker. Human Resources then, as policy, automatically rejects the majority of first time applicants and insists that the person go through the process again. Each doctor's visit costs the government more than a person gets a month for food.

Drugs that are covered by Pharmacare are usually of the generic type. A lot of times a doctor will prescribe a specific drug for a specific problem and when processed by a pharmacy, they are told the drug is not covered and they have to go BACK TO THE DOCTOR AGAIN and get a substitute prescribed. Then, in some cases such as severe infections (which are very common among people that are homeless) the substitute is not sufficient enough to deal with the problem and then another doctor's visit and trip to the pharmacy is in order and so on.

There is a lot of discrimination in the system towards people that are homeless or on welfare. 'THEY DONE THIS TO THEMSELVES' or WHY DON'T THEY JUST GET A JOB. Most people who are homeless or on welfare have been severely traumatized, most likely when they were children. In a lot of cases they were RAPED at a young age by people who were put in a position of trust over them. Or they were misdiagnosed and treated with experimental drugs that we find out later were hurting, not helping. Others fell victim to alcohol and or drugs at a very early age. Whatever the reason, no one I have met that is on welfare is doing it by choice, they usually feel that there is no other choice. At some point in their life, something died inside of them. Something that also took away their drive, self determination, ability to make healthy decisions and in a lot of cases, their willingness to live.

For a person seeking help with addictions, things get even more frustrating. There is usually a 2 to 4 week waiting list for a bed in detox, if your community even has a detox. There is a shortage of credible treatment centres. A lot of treatment centres are now set up as "For Profit" facilities.

People on income assistance cannot afford them. Others are very ill-equipped to deal with the severity of the problems that drugs like heroin, crack cocaine and crystal meth cause. Those that are making an effort to deal with these problems are overwhelmed and have long waiting lists. If one is lucky enough to make it into and through a treatment centre, he/she has to wait up to six months to receive counselling as after and follow up care.

The list of obstacles can go on and on. " WHY DON'T THEY JUST GET A JOB"would you hire someone while they were still living on the street ???.....would you give someone with serious emotional, mental, physical and social baggage the opportunity to represent your company ???....

Each year the governments of British Columbia and Canada give "BILLIONS OF DOLLARS" to companies like Air Canada, Bombardier, the oil companies and so on in tax breaks and subsidies. Yet you concern yourself with people who are forced to live with about \$5000 a year. That is over six thousand dollars below the poverty level.

The people who reside at VHES houses are very blessed. They pay \$325 a month which is the maximum allowed by welfare to pay for rent. The sacrifices made by landlords (who could get double what they are getting now for their houses), the community as a whole for donating so much, the numerous volunteers, the board of directors and people like Patricia who give up so much in order to help others, provide the people who live in the Temporary Housing of the Victoria Human Exchange Society a step up and they take away some of the barriers that prevent those less fortunate from moving along in society. ❖

Derrick Nash, a proud and grateful resident of the VHES
carvingnash@yahoo.ca

Letter to Board Members

I would like to sincerely thank Patricia and all of you to have let me stay at your house on Salt Spring at Bittancourt.

I stayed with you from March 31st to June 30th 2006.

Attached is a cheque for \$1000 donated from a friend of mine who is willing to pay off my debt.

Once again I thank you for giving me shelter when I so desperately needed it.

*Shenaz Jaffer
Victoria BC*



JUDY THOMAS HOUSE REPORT

The Judy Thomas House continues to operate at full capacity and all occupants are working hard to go forward in their lives. Linda is hoping to become more involved in VHES, already lending much help in cleaning up Esther's House in Victoria. Erin is busy with personal improvements and our third resident is involved with educational goals.

Since January of last year (2006) 17 women have been given shelter at JTH and another 15 inquiries regarding accommodation have come in.

Recently the town of Sidney once again generously granted VHES \$1000 in support of the two local houses. Many other forms of support which are greatly appreciated — such as food, clothing and furniture — arrive regularly.

As Spring approaches, we count our many blessings!

Submitted by Anah

I finally have a place I can call home! I've never stopped trying and I've never given up hope and because of that, I've come a very long way to improving my life.

Many people have extended me their assistance, and numerous resources have been made available to help me along the way.

However, the support and kindness that Joan from TheVictoria Human Exchange Society (VHES) has given me is unmatched. While staying at Sandi Merriman Women's Shelter, I was referred to the Victoria Human Exchange. Within a few days of meeting with Joan, I was settled into Linda Jim House as a temporary home, which is part of VHES.

Joan's support doesn't stop there. Shortly after, permanent subsidized housing became available to me and Joan provided me with all my furnishings and other necessities including groceries. My apartment would have otherwise been empty and unfurnished had it not been for the tremendous effort and support of VHES.

I would like to take this opportunity to express great gratitude to Joan and Kay and the Victoria Human Exchange Society for looking after me.

Barb

Just a quick introduction to me, your new 'Editor' — Patricia will hopefully have ONE less thing on her plate now! I'm Marilyn, I've got a 20+ year background in media and in human services, and I'm delighted to be able to produce this newsletter for VHES. If you have story ideas, please don't hesitate to give me a call at 388-6466 or email to: editor@coveservices.net .

NEXT DEADLINE: MAY 28th for JUNE 15th publication. Thanks!

GILLIAN'S STORY

Wouldn't It be Nice?

Wouldn't it be nice if all adults loved reading, had sailed through school, and could achieve hard things without a gut-wrenching struggle? I did none of these things. Here is my story.

I was born of an educated family, but somehow slipped through the cracks, and didn't learn to read or write. I collected books to look at, wrote millions of letters, but couldn't learn things like other kids did.

I dreamed I could read in my wake and my sleep. I longed to read but found I would skip paragraphs, words, and often read backwards. I drifted from grade to grade and from school to school until I graduated. Somehow I received the certificate, but still could not read.

I collected books, read the first few pages, and laid them aside. This pattern continued until I was fifty. After my husband of six years died, I joined Project Literacy, in hopes of becoming a reader. The problem continued until I was ready. Then a book club, who knew my heart, sent me orders I hadn't made and well into my sixties, I became an avid reader of love stories. They filled my dream.

Some people don't learn in school. For those who sail through it, there is a gap between them and those who find school a traumatic experience like I did.

Many relatives and friends concerned themselves about me, hoping for a break, but they didn't get one. Project Literacy Victoria taught me the computer, and I found people who loved me through the internet. Project Literacy also tried to teach me some on line courses, but failed.

However with continued free internet access, I was able to research many subjects, and keep a network of friends. Nine to five jobs had been a bad experience for me, so I avoided them.

Adult Literacy Programs were paramount in keeping me off the street and free from harm. The teachers did not give up, and I finally succeeded. That is why I say keep Adult Literacy Programs at all costs. They give people like me hope for the future, job access, and a network of friends.

Yes, the world would be lovely if we all learned at the same speed and with the same enthusiasm. But this is not always the case. To educate one person is to educate many, and eventually the world.

I don't know who this plea is going to but I want the powers that be to keep adult Literacy Programs, to keep lonely people on track. ❖

I was born of an educated family, but somehow slipped through the cracks, and didn't learn to read or write.

Editor's note: What do YOU think? Should Adult Literacy programs be a prominent part of any homelessness initiatives? Write to me at <editor@coveservices.net' and I may publish your letter in a future edition....

The Seven Wonders Of The World

A group of students were asked to list what they thought were the present "Seven Wonders of the World." Though there were some disagreements, the following received the most votes: 1. Egypt's Great Pyramids 2. Taj Mahal 3. Grand Canyon 4. Panama Canal 5. Empire State Building 6. St. Peter's Basilica 7. China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one student had not finished her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the 'Seven Wonders of the World' are: 1. To See 2. To Hear 3. To Touch 4. To Taste 5. To Feel 6. To Laugh 7. And to Love."

The room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. The things we overlook as simple and ordinary and that we take for granted are truly wondrous! A gentle reminder -- that the most precious things in life cannot be built by hand or bought by man. ❖

BOOK SALES TO HELP VHES

I am an author and advocate for the mentally ill and for those recovering from addiction. I do this through my writing. I've written two books and am an editor for the Tranquility Newsletter. I try to promote awareness of these conditions, thus reducing discrimination and stigmatism.

I admire what VHES does for the community. I think it is great that this organization takes these situations very seriously. Mental illness and addiction is a largely overlooked topic in today's society. My book, "The Peaceful Warrior: Memoirs of a Damaged Mind and Soul" is my personal journey under these conditions. This is not a medical journal or text book, it is my experience only. There are similarities in the symptoms that millions of others experience, and perhaps my story will pave the way for others to speak out. We have been hiding in the closet for decades out of sight from the public; therefore, it seems that the situation does not exist.

My story is real. Mental illness and addiction is real. Only the people affected directly or indirectly understand that it really exists and affects whole communities in various ways such as homelessness, poverty and hunger.

I have recently promised 30% of the profit from the sales of my two books. This still holds true. I have over seven hundred books for sale in my garage. Your share is as follows: The Peaceful Warrior - \$3.00 each / retail \$20.00. Adrian - Soft cover - \$4.20 each / retail \$28.00. Adrian - Hardcover - \$5.70 each / retail \$38.00.

Mental illness and or addiction do affect many of our homeless and destitute. They can't work for a living within society because of these conditions. Many are incarcerated for petty crimes such as possession of drugs. These are illness related problems. Many are ill, but not yet diagnosed because their addiction masks the symptoms of a mental disorder.

The book may not be a suitable publication for Victoria Human Exchange Society, because some of the content may be offensive to some. Most of the book was written while being severely ill. The publication is to be read between the lines. My idea was to write down the exact thoughts and emotions at the time they were conceived, demonstrating the affects of several conditions. This was a ground-breaking project that examined the inner workings of a man tortured by mental illness and alcoholism. As difficult as it may have been for me to write this book, I believe that my honesty on the subject was necessary. I believe in what I am doing.

My book and your organization share a lot of common factors. We both care about people in need, especially those who are discriminated against by society.

We both want to raise awareness to the public that these problems exist and that it affects everyone, not just the individual in need. Our goals are very similar. Unfortunately, I have had a difficult time reaching the public. For most of those who have read my book, they really liked it. I had comments that it is very insightful for others are unaware of what it is like to be ill, addicted, hungry or homeless. It opened their eyes. That was my goal accomplished, so the book seems to be worthy to continue to promote and distribute on a larger scale. I request that you review the book and see if you would be interested in helping me spread my message.

I want to thank-you for your time and kind consideration into this matter.

Sincerely,
Patrick Schnerch

EDITOR'S NOTE: Check out Patrick's web site at: <http://www.westcoastliteraryproductions.com>. You will find interesting information, links and back issues. If someone would consider writing a review of Patrick's book so that we can encourage supporters to buy it, I'd appreciate it! Call Marilyn at 388-6466.

The Cool Aid Society (REES Network) and the Umbrella Society for Mental Health and Addictions has developed a Mentorship Program — targeted to aid people recovering from mental illness and/or addiction problems — that will train individuals to become mentors for others.

Many folks in recovery find themselves isolated from the mainstream. A mentor will visit this individual once a week for two hours and help them re-enter society. From experience, I know that during my recovery, I had to learn new skills such as self-care, nutrition, goal setting, grocery shopping, cooking, budget planning and social skills. This can be very overwhelming to a person in recovery.

A mentor is matched to serve the needs of the individual. This can be as simple as going out for a coffee and talking, building a trusting long-term relationship. This will help in creating self-confidence and pride which may have been low in the past. The individual will learn new skills to live independently and economically. The mentor will be compassionate, non-judgmental and honest. They will provide support such as accompanying people to their appointments or support groups.

The program will start training volunteer mentors this spring and commence shortly after. If you would like to become a mentor or if you would like more information about the program, contact: **Sally Ross, Mentorship Program Coordinator, at 595-8619, email sross@coolaid.org or visit the REES Network office.**

Submitted by Patrick Schnerch

THANK-YOU!

- **KAIROS** for funds to support homeless persons who find shelter in our Houses.
- **The Town of Sidney** for supporting Judy Thomas and Frances Thibeau Houses.
- **The Victoria Foundation** for considering our request for funds to buy commercial strength laundry machines. Board member Carole P. for writing the letter of interest.
- **The United Way** for being willing to talk to us about funds, and for the much valued regular cheques received from the **Provincial Employees Community Services Fund**.
- **The Zonta Club** for willingness to consider sending funds to VHES.
- **The Knights of Columbus Charity Foundation** for ongoing funds for the Father Michael J. McGivney House.
- **Paul R. and the Knights of Columbus, St Patrick's Parish**, for hamper for the men at *McGivney House* at Christmas time.
- **The Sisters of St. Ann** for ongoing funds for Esther's House; and for furniture.
- Financial Gifts from **Jean C; Mona M and the VOTF members; Aideen L. and Ivor R.; Linda M; Leon and Margaret M.; Jenny S.; Shirley B.; Paul R.; John T.; Catherine C.; Sid T.. Akber K. of Mayfair Properties, Vancouver.**
- **The Sacred Heart Catholic Women's League** for remembering us regularly.
- **Patrick L. and Lois M.** for monthly post dated cheques that help with rents/expenses.
- **Sleep Country Canada** for keeping us on their long list of donees.
- **Doug and Merville H.** for 4 lamps, furniture, linen, kitchen items (including kettle and toaster oven) from the estate of Doug's departed mother. **Nanette J.** 20 inch colour television with remote.
- Clothing and household supplies from **Mona; Daphne** and the **VOTF members.**
- **Jim S.** who picked up a donated bed from Judy Tomas House for a handicapped gentleman whose bed was in bad shape; Jim is now willing to pick up and drop off donated furniture for us. Welcome, Jim!
- **Cobs Bread** for excellent bread and baked goods donated by their Oak Bay store on fridays for 2 months.
- **Don W. and other willing volunteers** for pick up and drop off of bread and baked goods .
- **Thea D.** for stereo and for networking to disperse donated bread to hungry families.
- **Derrick** and the men at Frances Thibeau House and the women of Judy Thomas for working together and volunteering outside the house—Thanks Derrick and Linda for clean up of stored goods at Esther's House plus indoor cleaning.
- **Marilyn G.,** for volunteering her expertise and experience in the area of addictions; media; and publishing.
- **Beacon Community Services** for a monthly food box (fruits and veggies) and assortment of useful items: small round table; 2 phones; 2 waste baskets etc.
- **The Community Council of Victoria** for it's great work in the Community promoting the interests of marginalized persons. See the **Indicator** for details.
- **Alice G.** for an electric bed that was gratefully received by Ken and Louise B. who donated a desk and other items to us in their gratitude--*See the exchange of gifts at work!!*
- **Bernice P.** clothing, kitchenware and miscellaneous items. **Ken G. and Ann** for furniture.
- **Els W.** baked 2 Christmas cakes also beautifully wrapped; **Florence M and Nonie L.** gave clothes and dishes; and **VOTF** is collecting funds to present at the end of 2007.
- **Bruce and Bill F.** for furniture delivered to Judy Thomas House. **Beacon Community Services** supply monthly boxes of fruit and veggies.
- **Glenna E.** of Sidney for a sofa; computer desk; leather chair and ottoman.

If you've donated something since our last newsletter and we've forgotten you on this list, please forgive us, and THANK YOU!

TO CONTACT OR SEND DONATIONS TO SUPPORT THE VICTORIA HUMAN EXCHANGE SOCIETY
Box 8534, Victoria BC V8W 3S1

Pager numbers:

GREATER VICTORIA : 418-9997

SIDNEY and the GULF ISLANDS: 361-2762

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

FIND US ONLINE www.humanx.org