



Nanaimo Branch of the Victoria Human Exchange Society

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Issue 01

October Report from Esther's House



Illustration 1: Garden at Esther's House

October in Nanaimo has been very busy as usual. First we would like to welcome Elaine back from her 6 months on the road. She looks great, refreshed and well rested.

Esther's House has been quieter this month. One new resident for a total of 4 counting Shawn. The guys are doing well, they are all friends and get on well together. All come from the Guthrie program at Nanaimo Corrections. This seems to be a good demographic. The men all worked through the program together forming a bond that has very good results in the house. They go back and talk with their

former inmates and tell them what a great place Esther's House is, leaving them wanting to join them upon their release. Nanaimo Corrections has allowed inmates to visit the house before their release to help them decide if they too want to come. They all know we cannot hold a room but if one is available and an intake is completed before release they are in. They are all skilled in one way or another and have a plan to do some of the work that is needed at the house.

Through a lot of planning and discussion Tom was able to acquire almost all materials needed to construct the new deck/back stairs that needed to be removed to install the furnace. He managed to get about \$1,000. worth of lumber for a cost of about \$300. Tom and Jean Emslie have been great supporters of Esther's House, you just never know what they might come up with, way to go Tom. However we still needed nails, screws, concrete, etc that would cost between 3 & 4 hundred more. We asked the landlord and he sent a cheque for \$350. to help with this cost. So now the guys are started on the building with input from Ken to ensure everything is up to code. Would help if the weather would co operate a little.

Shawn has been very busy as he has now got a full time job with VIHA, way to go Shawn. But he still manages to keep things at Esthers House on an even keel.

Since I was away for 2 weeks in October on a much needed vacation, I am afraid this report will be shorter than most. But already have a fair bit for next time. That's all for now. More to come soon.

Debbie

[Every Meeting of persons can be an Exchange of Life's Gifts – a Human Exchange.](#)

Thanks from the VHES Nanaimo Branch



The Nanaimo Branch is now over 1 year old. We have learned a lot in that time and met a lot of people from all walks of life, from many communities all over the Island. We have learned there are many generous people and businesses in Nanaimo that are willing to help out when asked.

- U Lock** has been a huge asset, providing us with 2 large storage units to hold donated items until we are ready to use them and use of their moving truck for only the cost of fuel.
- Women of the Moose** for \$1000. donation.
- Marshalls** Plumbing & Heating provided and installed a new furnace for very minimal cost.
- Slegg** lumber gave some lumber for the deck at about 70% discount.
- Home Hardware** gave fire extinguishers for Esthers House.
- Liquidation World** gave a freezer for the house.
- Tom and Jean Emslie** have bought hundreds of dollars in food and household needs & also helped to seek out other donations.
- A new sump pump was donated *anonymously* and
- ER maintenance** donated the electrical to install it. This will keep the basement dry and protect the new furnace.
- Dr Grewhal** donated tooth brushes and toothpaste so each man that enters the home will be provided with one.
- The Hospice Thrift Store** allowed us to take many items we needed at no cost to help set up the kitchen.
- Thrifty Foods** and **Tim Hortons** gave donations that helped our yard sales be successful.
- The Sisters of St Ann without whom none of this would have been possible, provided our initial start up grant of \$10,000 and also donated a second grant as we made ready to get a second house in place. They also gave a huge truck-load of furniture that will go a long way toward getting the second house in place. Thank you so much Sisters, you make our work much easier. Thank you to all.**

We appreciate everything the community has done but none of this would have worked without our facilitator **Shawn Richards**. Shawn has come a long way in his life and learned so much through the school of hard knocks. He is absolutely incredible with the residents, driving them to meetings, job interviews, medical appointments; just sitting and listening to them when they need to talk and doing whatever he can to make them comfortable. Shawn truly understands what these men are going through and when they need comfort or a more direct approach.

It was through Shawn that we came to know **David Payne**. Shawn and David had an extensive history and a strong bond. **David joined the Nanaimo committee and introduced micro gardens, showing the residence how to garden in a small place. How to raise their own fresh vegetables and how to help themselves. Unfortunately we didn't have David with us long as he passed away this past summer. He made a huge impact in a very short time.**

We currently have only one empty room at Esther's House and it won't be that way long. **Esther's House** has a very good name in the community due to the cleanliness, and the comfort of the house. **We hope to get our next house open soon. Looks like it will be women's house. We have asked and received permission to name it Frieda's House, after Sister Frieda who has been a great source of strength, encouragement and resource. Thank you Sister!**

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