



## Nanaimo Branch of the Victoria Human Exchange Society

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### AGM Report from Nanaimo Branch Board member – Debbie Scott

Debbie began by congratulating everyone who has worked so hard to make the Society, so successful. It's four years since **Esther's House** opened in Nanaimo and 2 years for the **Mary Gordon House** - both thanks largely to the **Sisters of St Ann** and other generous donors.



Debbie brought with her the two facilitators, **Craig Shore** and **David Gillespie**, who were elected to be VHES Board members for the coming year. Craig is a great gardener who shares chives, tomatoes, peppers and strawberries which he grows in planters and pots. *See photo on left.*

Dave Gillespie was a member of Esther's House for a year but generously took over Mary Gordon House from Eli who recently set out on his own.

Dave's first job was unplugging a troublesome toilet- which he did with great success.

They have had many success stories and since random drug testing was initiated, the issue of use has subsided. Overall, Debbie believes that the Houses have had a 50% success rate. Each person seeking shelter has different needs—First they are interviewed to find what their needs are and then hooked into resources that can help them on their way. Some need literacy programs, others have brain injuries, undiagnosed learning disabilities or autism. Our caring family of friends helps them while they are in the houses and follows them afterward—whether they manage to stay sober or not—they know that someone cares. Many are on facebook; a few even call to talk about what's going on in their lives. Some who were asked to leave because of relapse have remained clean for 3 months and asked to come back. That can be counted as success.



The local service providers such as Salvation Army, probation officers, parole officers call frequently for information on how to refer men in need. The Houses have a very good name in the community and even the men who have been asked to leave speak highly of our Houses. Debbie and the other Committee members feel good to know that they make a difference



Photo to left shows **Debbie, Craig and David** at the AGM during the musical entertainment