



Nanaimo Branch of the Victoria Human Exchange Society

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Nanaimo report –success rate and worth of our VHES Houses

I've been asked to submit my findings with regard to the success rate of the men that have resided in the Nanaimo houses. I am happy to report that of the men that have passed through our houses I believe the success rate to be in the 70 - 75% range. Of those successes there are some amazing life changes, I would have to put that level of success at another 5%.

Of the 75% these men are now mostly working and supporting themselves and in some cases their families. In this percentile some of these men relapsed a time or two, moving into and out of our houses but in the end found their way and sobriety has been maintained. These men, for the most part, maintain contact with me to advise me of their accomplishments, or just to talk when they are having tough times. I have bumped into a few out in the community, they come up, give me a hug and thank us all for being there for them when they needed it most.



Since a large number of the Nanaimo residents come from Nanaimo corrections, I find these men a little more vulnerable. Most when coming out of jail find it hard to believe someone will trust and believe in them. When they realize we do, they seem to try harder. They are proud of their accomplishments and happy to have someone to share that with. On one occasion we had a resident attempt suicide, I happened to be the one that found him. It took some work to get him back on track after he left the hospital, but today he is clean and living with his girlfriend in Victoria.

There is one demographic that I am afraid would be lost without our help, they are the ones that suffer from mental health issues. They seem to do well while in our houses but once they leave they are so vulnerable they are preyed upon by others. We can't make them stay but it's sad when they do leave and they land right back where they began, victimized-- a lot of the time it's by their own family members.

The 5% are amazing what they have accomplished. One had spent over 10 years on the streets in addiction. Had very very low self esteem and all because of an undiagnosed learning disability. Once the issue was found and corrected, he gained self esteem, completed his education and now works with street people in wet housing here in Nanaimo. He is clean, sober and enjoying life like never before.

Another came straight out of Corrections, from a life of drugs and drinking. His family suffered generations in this cycle. He came to our Esther's House, learned to trust others would be there for him. He lived with us for two years, during that time he went back to school, got his grade twelve, applied to and was accepted into college with funding from his band. He left our house to move in with his girlfriend. They are now expecting their first child together, he is doing great in school and is very happy. He has reconnected with his family, his culture and himself. His mother is now sober as well. Last year his sister died of an overdose. During that time both he and his mother maintained their sobriety.

I wish there was a way these houses could be in every community. I worked 23 yrs. in the income assistance field and saw the same thing over and over. Men and women, get into trouble, drugs, alcohol, go to jail. They would decide they were going to change things. Upon release from jail they apply for assistance and with the funds they would receive could not find affordable housing so would go back to live with their friends and the cycle continues. I believe if there was affordable safe housing available so many of these people could turn their lives around so much earlier. and that's where our Human Exchange houses come in!

Every Meeting of persons can be an Exchange of Life's Gifts – a Human Exchange.

Sincere thanks

- to all the Volunteers, Debbie S; Mark and Debi A.;Bonnie; and Bonny C. as well as others who assist.
- To all donors of goods, services and funds.CRA receipts are issued as required.

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