

THE VICTORIA HUMAN EXCHANGE SOCIETY

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In today's fragile economy it doesn't take much to put you over the edge. Any one of us could become unemployed and possibly homeless overnight.

Those who, through one or other of life's misfortunes, already lack many of the basic necessities of life need our friendship and support, and they have many gifts to share with us. Our proposal is that people who live comfortably befriend homeless people. We could think of it as an exchange of gifts or a Human Exchange and it would break down a lot of barriers, misconceptions, and prejudices that exist in the community regarding homeless people.

GUIDELINES

All people involved in this exchange of gifts enjoy:

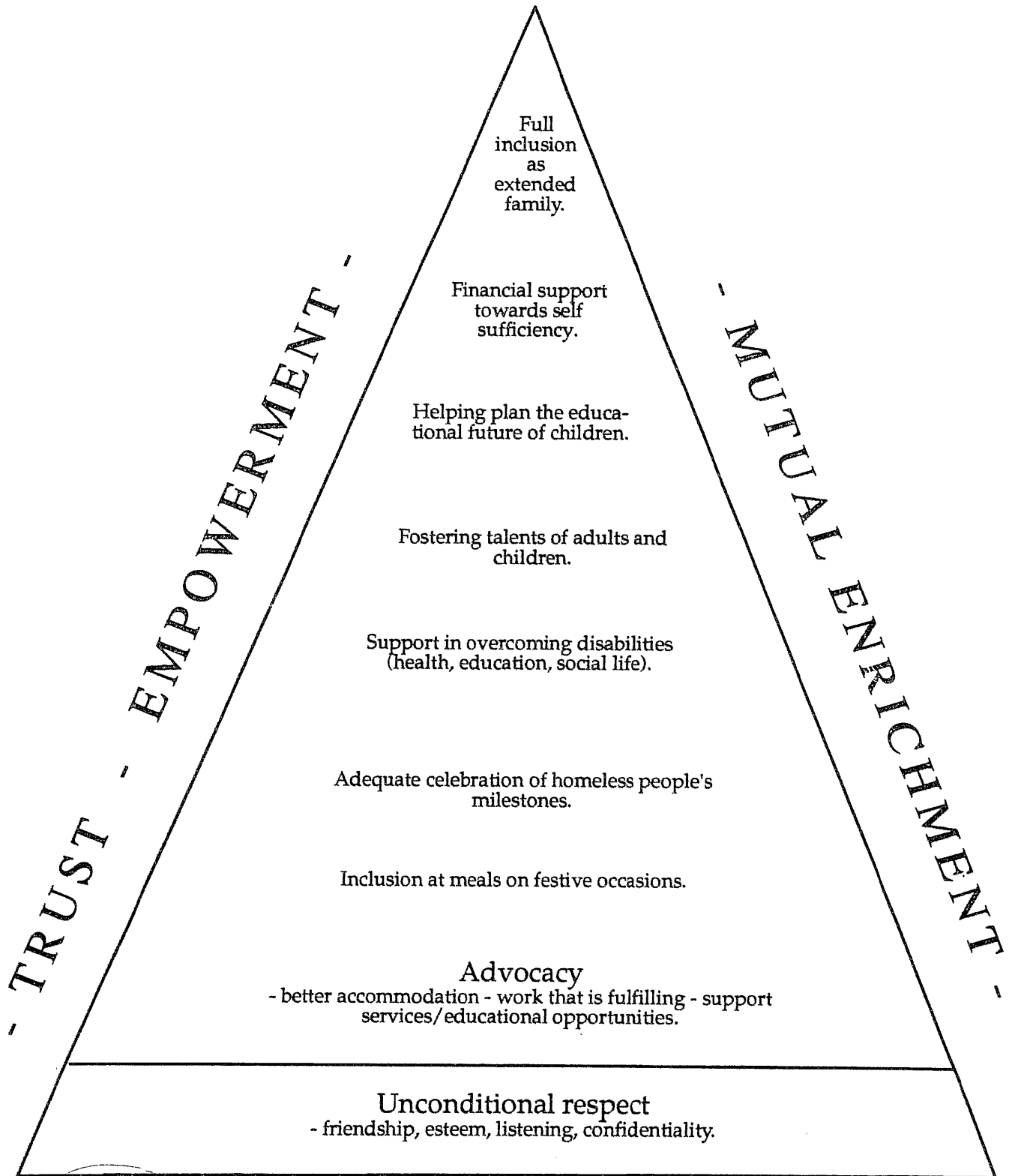
- the right to privacy and confidentiality,
- the right to respect for themselves and for their property or belongings,
- the right to have their beliefs and choices respected.

The emphasis is on **supportive relationships and empowerment** rather than control.

Either family in the exchange may choose to terminate the arrangement for sufficient reason, and be perfectly free to do so, without loss of respect or regard.

THE HUMAN EXCHANGE

Levels of Participation



- If some people can give only the first level of involvement, it will be well worthwhile. -

Every meeting of persons can be an exchange of gifts.

GIFTS EXCHANGED

Gifts that homeless people can bring to others.

1. Witness to the truly important basics of life - survival strategies; living one day at a time.
2. Example of fortitude in suffering.
3. Wisdom learned in the "school of hard knocks".
4. Help to get seemingly big problems into perspective.
5. Talents and skills to share.
6. The sharing of poignant life histories.
7. Help to slow down - get out of the 'rat race' for a while.
8. Native families and those of other cultures have traditional wisdom and teachings to share with people they trust.
9. Opportunity to become more human in the exchange - to enrich their lives.
10. Opportunity to build a more caring involved community.

Gifts can be brought to homeless people.

1. Unconditional respect.
2. Nourishment of self-esteem and sense of worth.
3. Bringing hope into seemingly hopeless situations.
4. Advocacy in all areas required.
5. Enabling homeless friends to celebrate the milestones of their lives adequately.
6. Inclusion of the homeless friends in family's recreation and festive activities.
7. Improved living conditions and social life.
8. Assistance with educational and health needs.
9. Fostering of talents, skills, and dreams.
10. Liberation from cycle of poverty.

BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY AT LARGE

1. As people stand together there will be more energy behind projects already in existence to:
 - obtain affordable housing,
 - set up day care centres,
 - advance school lunch programs,
 - find mentors and tutors for children with special needs,
 - obtain university scholarships and funding,
 - provide recreational programs to get children off the street,
 - support single parent families,
 - prevent school drop out, substance abuse, delinquency and crime,
 - set up 12 step programs, etc.
2. As people help people, there will be less need for food banks and transition houses.
3. Children will be liberated from the poverty cycle if they have the support they need growing up to become self-supporting.
4. Many bridges will be built between people, services and ministries.
5. Prejudices and misconceptions about homelessness will decrease.
6. The idea could be extended to include lonely elderly people in long term care facilities who are truly homeless having gradually lost independence and control in their lives.