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January/February 2011

partners in touch

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Newsletter

The **Coalition Secretariat** and our **partners** have had a very busy two months. Inclement weather has brought the need for extreme weather shelter mats, and the partners have been at the ready to accommodate extra people. Eleven partners have come together to administer an emergency fund that is helping individuals and families stabilize their housing. And our two events, *Motivational Day* fundraiser and *Homelessness or Homefulness* with Michael Shapcott were well attended and very inspiring. Another service fair, **Coalition Connect for Families**, is in the planning stages and much attention has been paid in the media to harm reduction, stigma and more.

But we also paused to celebrate. Several of our members won awards in the last two months, and we are very grateful to be connected to these incredibly talented and giving people.

February is the Coalition's third anniversary. As partners across the CRD, we look forward to another year of working to end homelessness in our region.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Partners in Touch*. Please send us your updates and keep up the good work!



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Many thanks to our funders!



United Way
OF GREATER VICTORIA



Fast Fact

COALITION UPDATES

Renew Your Membership!

Still haven't renewed your **membership** for 2011? Not a member yet? Download the [membership application](#) to receive priority mailings and the ability to vote at our annual general meeting.

Fund Helps Prevent Homelessness

The Coalition's **Prevention Working Group** has worked with several of our partners to establish the **Homeless Prevention Fund** to avert the threat of homelessness. Established with an initial \$50,000 grant from a donor at the **Victoria Foundation**, it's designed to provide emergency assistance to individuals and families in Greater Victoria to help stabilize their shelter arrangements. It will be facilitated by the Coalition. See our [media release](#) for details. Since the fund was established in January 2011, we've assisted 4 families and 13 individuals.

Streets to Homes Brings Success

By the third week in February, **Streets to Homes** had helped 60 people find homes in a mix of private market, transitional, supportive and temporary housing. Read about one **successful participant** and see her [paintings](#) on our website.

Coalition Joins Canada-wide Research Group

The Coalition has participated in a joint application with **University of Victoria**, **York University**, the **Wellesley Institute**, other universities and non-profit organizations to create the **Canadian Observatory on Homelessness**. The Observatory will compile and share research, innovation and solutions on a national scale, and we will have access to research experts across Canada.

Expert Brings National Perspective to Greater Victoria

Michael Shapcott, Director of Affordable Housing and Social Innovation at Toronto's **Wellesley Institute**, spent a very busy day with the Coalition on February 16th. Following a tour of new projects and breakfast with **Mayor Dean Fortin**, Shapcott did presentations followed by Q&A with the working groups and municipal officials. That evening, he gave a public presentation at the David Lam Auditorium. Check out our website for [photos](#) of Shapcott with Coalition partner panelists. Thanks to UVic's [Office of Community Based Research](#) and Faculty of [Human & Social Development](#) for partnering on these important events. We are also grateful for all the partners and financial contributors who helped make these events so successful.

Report On Housing is Underway

Work is well underway on the **2010-11 Report on Housing and Supports** under the supervision of UVic's Bernie Pauly. Thanks to the Research, Evaluation and Data working group!

Calling All Volunteers!

Do you have a few hours to **volunteer** for the Coalition? Currently, we could use the occasional assistance of someone with graphic design skills, preferably with knowledge of Adobe Creative Suite. Please email [Maggie](#) if you can help.

Helping Low-Income Families

The Coalition, **Burnside Gorge Community Association** and **Victoria Native Friendship Centre** are teaming up to co-host a service fair for the families served by those two organizations. **Coalition Connect** will be held on April 30th at the Friendship Centre. Coalition Connect will provide services such as haircuts, ID replacement, foot care, acupuncture and more, plus a hot lunch and a gift bag full of items vital for daily needs. Please email Coalition Connect coordinator [Mary Gidney](#) for a list of items we need donated, or [Maggie Kerr-Southin](#) for information.

Reaching Out Across the CRD

Executive Director **Debbie Thompson** has made several presentations

A home is much more than having housing. A home is a space of one's own. A home is a place where one feels comfort, experiences a sense of belonging, identity and security.

The CMHC definition of acceptable/adequate housing is:

Adequate: does not require any major repairs

Suitable: has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the resident household

Affordable: costs less than 30% of before-tax household income (households are in core housing need when they have no option but to pay more than 30%).

Who Are We?

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness is a partnership of service providers, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, business and the faith community.

Our mission is to end homelessness by 2018.

across the **CRD**, including many local municipal governments. Most recently she presented to **Sooke** council, adding to the list that includes **North Saanich, Oak Bay, Langford, Esquimalt and Victoria**. If you would like a presentation to your municipality, business organization, church group or club, please [email](#) to book a date.

Theatre Created From Lived Experience

Joel Bernbaum, a theatre artist with a background in journalism and playwriting, is combining his skills for a verbatim theatre project with the **Belfry Theatre**. Verbatim is a style of theatre where the script is constructed from interviews or transcripts. The topic of this project is **homelessness in Victoria**. One of the main advantages of verbatim theatre is that it allows playwrights to go in with broad questions, as opposed to their own agenda. They want to know what people are thinking about homelessness in Victoria and what the root causes are. If you would like to contact Joel, please email joel@belfry.bc.ca, or phone 250-385-6835 x236. Interviewees can remain anonymous.

PARTNER UPDATES

Rental Assistance Program Underused

BC's Rental Assistance Program (RAP): A Policy Review for the Capital Region, prepared by the **Community Social Planning Council**, reports that at the time of writing, 636 low-income working families in the Capital Region were participating in the program out of a maximum estimated number of eligible families of 1,340.

A review of rental rates and income levels shows that families with an earned income level of up to \$20,000 who are accessing the RAP pay 50% or more of their income on rental costs if their rent is \$1,000 or more per month. As income levels decline, the number of families paying more than 50% for housing increases. Moreover, 27% of renter households (12,985 households) in the Capital Region in 2006 were in "core housing need" as defined by CMHC. [Read more.](#)

Rev. Al To Retire

A remarkable man is set to retire this summer: **Rev. Al Tysick of Our Place**. We congratulate Rev. Al for all he has accomplished at the Open Door and Our Place, leaving a huge legacy. We know he'll still be around though, as he plans to do more direct service to the city's vulnerable citizens.

Eradicating Stigma

One of the greatest harms caused by **stigma** is that it reduces people to a thing or label, concealing the fact that they occupy many roles. When we respond to people on the basis of a stigmatizing label, we lose out because we do not get to know them as real people with hopes and dreams and capabilities. Read the rest of **Bernie Pauly and Cecilia Benoit's** [guest blog post](#).

Make Every Step Count

Women are often teased about the number of shoes in their closet but it seems there are a few men around town who can't let go of their old soles. **Every Step Counts**, a running program for people experiencing barriers and challenges with housing, mental health, addiction and other related issues, gets plenty of donations of used runners and clothing for women, but scarcely anything for men. With a recent influx of male participants, **Every Step Counts** needs donations of men's running shoes and running pants. Charitable cash donations are also needed. Make them through the [Victoria Foundation](#) online donation button (choose Every Steps Counts as the "Fund/Designation" on CanadaHelps).

Celebrating 10 Years of Success

Foundation House helps men who are struggling with addiction to be successful in their recoveries, get their education or employment, and in some cases regain access to their children. Operating for 10 years, **Foundation House** operates three houses, one each for first, second and third stage recovery. Program director David Mitchell thanks everyone who has been integral in Foundation's success.

PARTNER PROFILE

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) is the only organization in Greater Victoria providing free, face-to-face legal advocacy for people with income assistance, disability benefits and tenancy issues. TAPS helps over 5,000 people in Victoria each year, from professionals who have just lost their jobs to people who have seen their health decline from years of subsistence living.

TAPS provides legal education and training through seminars and free one-on-one legal advocacy and representation. TAPS advocates help people in the Victoria area with matters that involve any of the following:

- disability benefits applications and appeals (PWD)
- income assistance (welfare)
- landlord/tenant disputes
- income tax for low-income earners

Visit the [TAPS](#) website for more information on services and contact details.

KUDOS

United Way of Greater Victoria has met its goal of \$6.2 million. Congratulations to the entire community for supporting our United Way and believing in the work being done in our region! Read [more](#).

Kudos to **Hon. Ted Hughes** and **Dr. Bernadette Pauly** for receiving **Honorary Citizen of Victoria Awards** in recognition of their outstanding community service. Ted Hughes is an original co-chair of the Coalition, and Bernie Pauly serves as co-chair of our Research, Evaluation and Data working group. We are so lucky and grateful for their dedication to eradicating poverty and homelessness. See [photos](#) of Ted, Bernie and other Coalition members at the ceremony.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe received the **Distinguished Alumni Award** on February 9th from the University of Victoria. Well deserved, Charlayne!

Congratulations to **Bernie Pauly** and **Sandra Richardson** for receiving Leadership Awards on February 16th. Bernie Pauly received the **UVic Community Leadership Award** for her service to community-based research and promotion of health equity. Sandra Richardson, CEO of **Victoria Foundation**, received the **Rotary Community Leadership Award** for her wide range of leadership activities, including serving on the Coalition's Leadership Council.

IN THE NEWS

Homelessness in Greater Victoria can be wiped out within a decade if the right strategy is in place, says **Michael Shapcott**, one of Canada's leading authorities on the problem during a visit to Victoria. Read Michael's [assessment of homelessness and poverty](#) in Victoria - and across the nation.

People with addictions experience tremendous stigma, although almost 90% of Canadians report having used alcohol or illegal drugs. But **stigma** has an impact on a number of other groups, too, writes Jody Paterson in her weekly [column](#).

Drug addiction or alcoholism should not be a barrier to social housing, according to the Coalition-commissioned **Housing and Harm Reduction** report prepared by Dr. Bernie Pauly and her colleagues at Canadian Centre for Addictions Research in BC (CARBC). Victoria city council supported the report that says providing housing is one way of reducing harm caused by addiction. [Read more.](#)

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