

ISSUE 3, DECEMBER 2022

Heart to Heart

A NEWSLETTER BY ISLAND CRISIS CARE SOCIETY

LIFESKILLS

PROJECT RISE

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

CHRISTMAS DRIVE

LOOKING AHEAD: COLDEST NIGHT



FROM THE HEART

By ELSPETH ERICKSON, Development and Communications Manager

Today I met a man who reminded me how close we all are to needing help – and needing hope. I was called by a colleague when “A” was dropped off at the bakery below my offices. He had been put in a taxi to go to an appointment, and the taxi driver, perhaps fed up with having to drive an old man around, dropped him off in the wrong place. So, there he was, no phone and no way to contact the folk in his program, or the nurse he was supposed to see, waiting for someone, anyone, to help.

So I went downstairs, bought him a cup of tea, and while I was waiting for him to drink it and then taking him to his appointment, started to hear about his life story.

He was like anyone’s grandfather – and indeed spoke with love about his own daughter and granddaughter. After a life working in the tech industry, he failed to make a couple of tax payments, had his accounts frozen, so couldn’t pay his rent and was evicted and ended up on the street. “I didn’t know what to do,” he said, a tremor in his voice. Indeed. Who would? How would any of us be equipped to know what to do in that situation?

Eventually, he went to stay with his brother in Alberta, for a time, and then made his way back to BC to be near his daughter, and finally into the Samaritan Place program. He likes his room – it is quieter than most and warm and cozy, and gives him a space to read.

And he is a great reader – Greek epics like the Iliad and the Odyssey. He has an anthology of Plato’s works that he is itching to read, and a vintage copy of the Aeneid waiting on his desk, and had planned to write his own work on Greek texts until his computers and all of his research were stolen after his eviction. Truly an exceptional man – and one that I was honoured to meet today.

And perhaps one that we wouldn’t expect to be in our programs. Yet why not? The road into need is quick and slippery, and all of our hold on the “normal” we cherish is fragile at best. It could happen to you, too. It could happen to me.

I walked him back into his program as I left, and he thanked me with his heart and with his eyes as I said goodbye. Perhaps the fact that someone had seen him outside of his program context, as a smart and funny old gentleman, well lived and well read, made a difference to his day.

I hope so.



PHOTO ON COVER: PROJECT RISE COHORT 1 GRADS



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ALL CANDIDATES MEETING

CCS partnered with the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce in October to hold an all candidates info session, bringing members of the non-profit sector together to discuss issues of urgency within the sector with potential mayoral and city council candidates.

Four speakers made presentations on priority areas of concern in key non-profit sectors, including housing and homelessness, child well-being and development, health and the arts, after which broad discussion took place, with the commitment to move forward in collaboration once a new council had been established.



ALL CANDIDATES MEETING AT THE NANAIMO BAKERY & CAFÉ

NANAIMO BUSINESS AWARDS



Thank you to the 2022 Nanaimo Business Awards for recognizing ICCS with the Inclusive Employer Award! Our amazing staff are essential to the work we do in supporting our community...this award recognizes the broad range of hard working individuals who work everyday with compassion, heart and integrity to meet the needs of our community!

BC LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



CCS was delighted to host some members of the BC Legislative Assembly at Samaritan Place and Orca Place – showing provincial investment in action. Samaritan and Orca are BC Housing funding supportive housing sites, bringing shelter and hope to people in need.

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

Christmas can be a difficult time for clients in ICCS programs. While celebrations go on around them, life can be very dismal with no family to celebrate with and little to mark the day. Thanks to the efforts of many donors and volunteers who are marking the season a bit brighter and are reminding our clients that they are special and cared for. Many, many people help to make this possible, including:

- Alliance Church
- Altrusa International of Nanaimo
- The Shoebox Project
- Everyone Deserves a Smile
- And many more

Thank you all for your care!



PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: NANAIMO ALLIANCE CHURCH, ALTRUSA MEMBERS CHERYL AND LINDA DROPPING OFF THE BAGS



LAURA KELSEY FROM THE SHOE BOX PROJECT DROPPING OFF DONATIONS FOR OUR CLIENTS

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR CLIENTS

*Share Your Joy
This Christmas Season*

by helping others
have something
to celebrate

Following a successful effort to gather Christmas presents for clients in 2021, team ICCS is again working to pull together packages so that every ICCS client has a gift this Christmas.

For many folk in ICCS programs, Christmas can be a dreary and lonely time, with family connections strained or broken and few resources with which to celebrate. Getting a gift, even a small one can make the difference between despair and hope, bringing the joy of knowing that someone cared.

This does not happen without the involvement of many partners. This year, thus far, donors have included Everyone Deserves a Smile, which brings school children together to think about issues and creating presents with hand written notes; The Nanaimo ShoeBox Project which is preparing gift filled boxes for women in ICCS programs; Oceanside Church, and many more community partners.

“It is incredible to see such generosity,” says Jayne Heys, ICCS Volunteer who is coordinating Christmas present packing, this year. Items will continue to be received until December 15th.

If you would like to support through a donation go to:
<http://weblink.donorperfect.com/ChristmasHope2022> or use the QR code below.





It is that time of year again! Coldest Night of the year 2023 has launched, and the time is now to register to create a team, walk and fundraise for this great cause!

Coldest Night of the Year happens across Canada on the same day each year - this time on February 25th, 2023. It is a community event, drawing individuals together to support the cause, but to make it happen we also need sponsorship support from organizations that care about our communities, and want to support positive change for its most vulnerable members.

ICCS coordinates 2 separate walks under its CNOY umbrella – one in Nanaimo which will start and end in Maffeo Sutton Park, and the second one in Parksville, which will start and end in Parksville Community park. In addition to the walk, participants are encouraged to reach out to friends and families to raise funding for ICCS programs that support people that have experienced precarious housing and homelessness. As a peer to peer fundraising event, CNOY builds on participant networks for success.

Even more, each participant in CNOY is encouraged to share information on the issues of homelessness in our community. The 2023 theme of CNOY is “Gather for Good”. Underlying the ICCS-CNOY23 philosophy is that community is the centre of what we do – and how we can create change. Only by working together across our community can we make a better place for all of us.



LifeSkills for Community Connection

Through years of experience, ICCS has learned that people who have experienced homelessness need more than just shelter; they need support to adapt, move forward, and find skills and confidence that can help them towards recovery, community connection, well-being and independence. The Lifeskills for Community Connection program supports this opportunity for change, creating new mechanisms for clients to access learning and lifeskills that will lead to their longer term well-being, recovery and development.

The program launched in August and has been building on great work already being done at the program level to support clients in learning and confidence. Focus is on the three ICCS supportive housing facilities - Samaritan Place and Newcastle Place in Nanaimo and Orca Place in Parksville. The intent of the program is to be flexible in approach to adapt to individual needs, supporting clients towards full development of their personal potential.

There are currently several “on-going” clients in each program who are receiving regular support from the Lifeskills Coordinator. In addition, connections have been made with external resources for longer term training, including basic and financial literacy, first aid and GED certifications. Computer literacy has been a key to this, allowing participants to move into new connections with the outside world. The program will procure several computers for on site use in the near future, and ensure training is in place through an external provider to allow effective use of these vital tools.

Some client participants need more basic care – help with room cleaning, for example. Others have a desperate need for skills in hygiene and self care, after years of self neglect living in precarious housing situations, and loss of self esteem. The program coordinator worked with one participant, showing him how to soak and soften his nails, how to clean his face and room himself, how to use soap and groom his beard. He had not cut nails for about 6 months. When the session was done he burst into tears of joy, expressing that he felt like he was human again. He almost didn't recognise the man in the mirror. These simple reminders that he had value, and could care for himself in these small ways brought him a sense of new worth.



PROJECT RISE

Project Rise is a new program of Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS) aimed to deliver pre-employment and employment skills training and work placement opportunities to people who have experienced homelessness, but are now ready to re-integrate fully into independence and community life.

Many ICCS clients face barriers to employment and re-connection to the community, based on adversity in their past, and the stigma of their present. This new program aims to fill that gap, supporting clients who have moved towards independence in housing but are unable to access the employment market take the next steps forward to regain the rhythm of community life.

Project Rise commenced officially this year, with the first home grown cycle of students who passed through 4 weeks of pre-employment training followed by 8 week work placements to gain the experience that can launch them forward into life-changing independence.

“I was ready to change and here I am. What stands out for me is the support and the smiles in the morning.” ~Denise

Cohort 2 and 3 went through a series of workshops and trainings such as essential employment skills (reading, writing, computer, numeracy, job readiness), job skills (customer service, interview skills, food/craft/gardening/carpentry skills), life skills (time management, communication, budgeting, housekeeping), personal growth (self care, hygiene, interpersonal relationships) and certification in first aid, foodsafe, and naloxone usage.

Following the workshop and trainings part of the program, participants attend a job fair where work hosts interview potential employees. Participants are placed in work opportunities following the interview process. Past and current work placements have included: Kiwanis Village, Pryde Vista Golf Course, Salvation Army, Loaves and Fishes, a variety of landscaping companies, farms and construction companies, Coop Gas Bars, U-lock storage, Nanaimo Foodshare, Curvavoom and the Nanaimo Bakery and Café.



PROJECT RISE COHORT 2 GRADUATES WITH STEPHEN COCHRANE (PROJECT RISE COORDINATOR) AND VIOLET HAYES (ICCS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)



LYNDA CHOY, COHORT 2, PREPARING FOOD FOR GRAD CELEBRATION



COHORT 3 GRADUATION

Justin's Story

By DEB CROSBY, Writing Volunteer



There is something precious about the remarkable people I get to meet at ICCS and the time I get to spend with them. Recently I met Justin, a fine young man with dark hair, bright, deep, honest eyes and a gentle smile that belies his earlier battles. Justin greeted me warmly, offering to share his story. He was candid in describing the low times and the positive changes that have propelled him to his current level of accomplishment. His story could easily have been yours or mine.

Justin had been a hard worker. "During Covid, I got let go from a job, so, I couldn't pay rent anymore. I was pretty much on the street with my uncle and others. I was staying in a tent. Outreach workers came and they helped me get into housing. I've been there for a year now... It's just right. .. At the beginning, even though I was staying at Newcastle Place, I kept drinking. I wanted to quit a long time ago, but it was really hard... I had health problems and started having seizures. I was in and out of the hospital all the time... A few friends who were younger than me passed away from alcohol seizures... I felt like I was pretty much digging my own grave. I was just so tired of it and I knew my family was tired of seeing me like that too."

When I was lying in the hospital, my mom and her husband were with me. I said, 'I'm ready to quit.'

Justin persisted and soon managed to get into the Clearview Community Medical Detox Centre... I stayed there for six days. They helped me get a treatment referral. When I got out, the detox centre said 'Keep calling the treatment center every morning because you never know.' I kept calling. Four days after I got out of the detox centre, I got accepted to go to the treatment center in Maple Ridge... I stayed there for two months."

Sandra, the Manger at Newcastle Place helped him further, signing him up for Project Rise. Justin beamed. "I'm happy that she signed me up here because it gives me something to do... something to look forward to every morning...I can't really stay in my room too long. I can't just lie there all day. I've got to get up and do something. I was happy to get into Project Rise Monday to Friday. The first week felt like I was just in school again. There were a few new faces... they are all really good guys..."

Hearing about that piece of their history together made Justin's news today seem extra joyful.

"Stephen (the Project Rise Coordinator) is a good character... he's not so uptight or anything. He jokes around with us. He doesn't take anything too seriously... I think it was one day in the first month of this program, Stephen was telling us to write down our goals. I remember putting down that I wanted to get my license and I wanted to get into the gym and start working out again and lose a few pounds. And that's exactly what I did. "Now I'm setting goals for myself and enjoying every day...I was happy to get accepted to be in this program (Project Rise) and it's really been helping me out a lot."

One of Justin's goals is to "Be a better father for my kids." He also wants to start saving up for a vehicle to go see them.

Justin is rightfully proud of the progress he's made. "I don't really hang around the crowds anymore. I'm kind of slowly making new friends ...some of my old buddies are still on the street and do the same thing every day. I still say hi to them, see how they're doing, and maybe give them five or ten bucks, or something when I can."

In my mind Justin is a "star" who is now shining brightly. When we support the work of ICCS and everyone in our community as much as we're able, we will witness more and more "star" stories like his. I'm thankful for Justin, his friends and all the past and future Project Rise graduates living in our city. It's inspiring to see them striving to be healthy, hardworking, persevering goal setters. The difference they are making in their lives enriches everyone in our community!

Justin is looking forward to graduating from Project Rise in December and working to fulfill his goals. He's realistic and knows it will take time, but with his desire to be there for his kids, Justin is focused on taking one step at a time towards achieving his dreams. Knowing how motivated he is to succeed and the support Justin has through ICCS, I expect there will be many more accomplishments to celebrate and there will be many cheering for him!