

WINTER 2025

# Heart to Heart

A NEWSLETTER BY ISLAND CRISIS CARE SOCIETY

FROM THE HEART

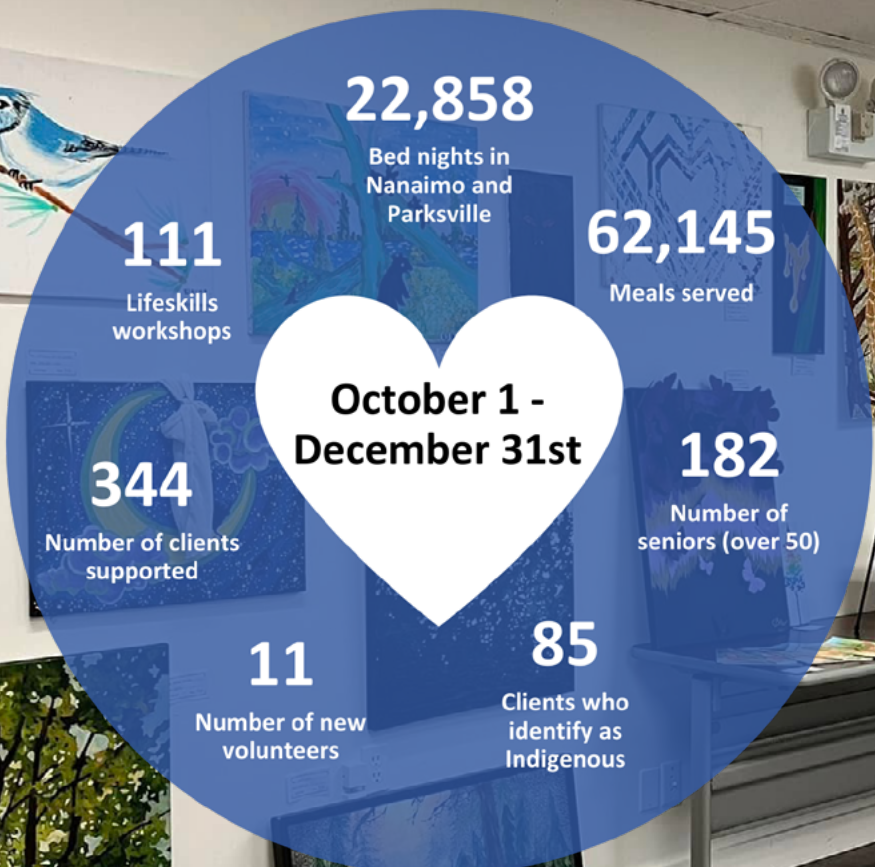
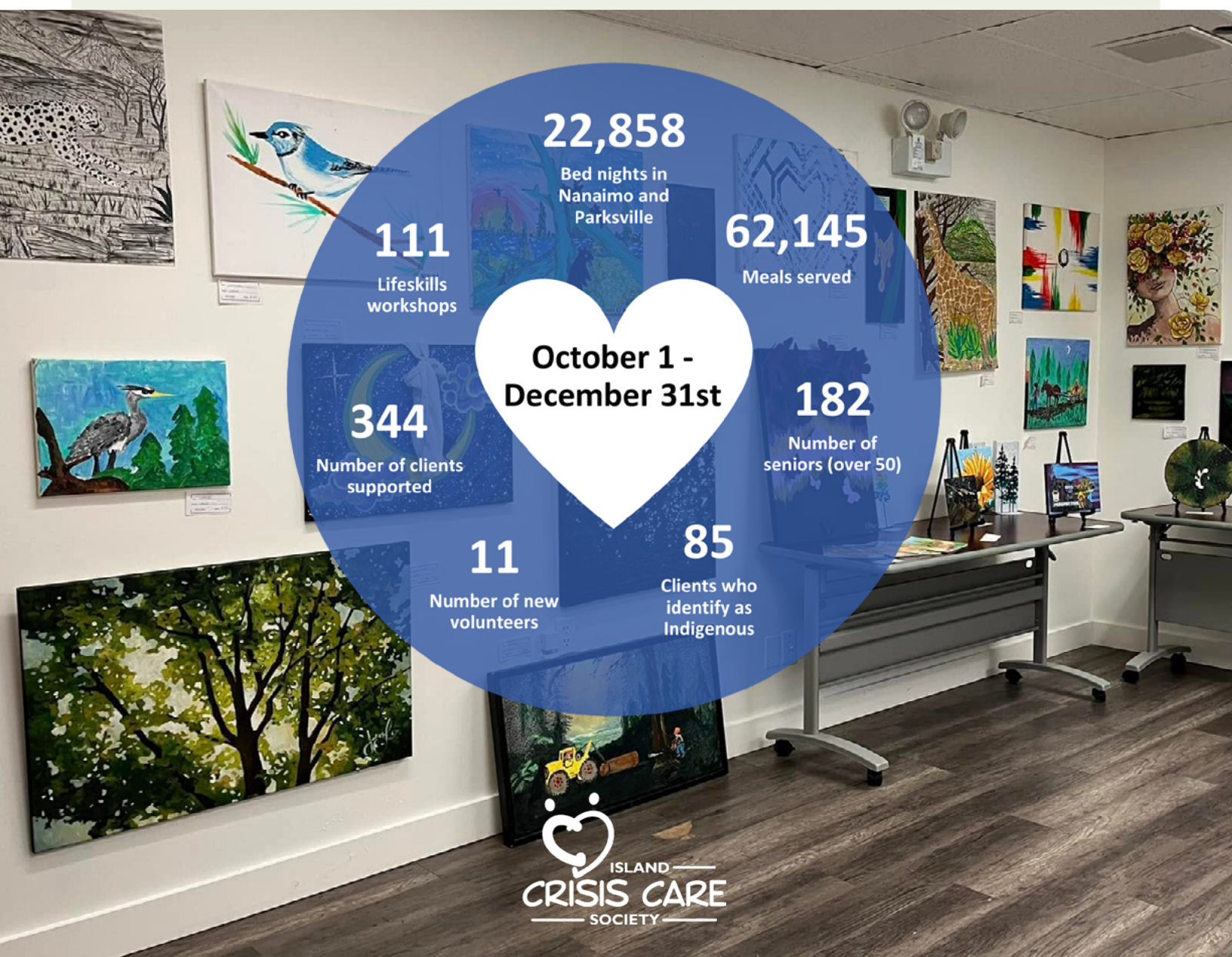
ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHTS

THE ORCA PLACE PUZZLE PROJECT

PROJECT RISE/LIFESKILLS

THANKS TO OUR DONORS

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR



# FROM THE HEART

As we step into the season of renewal and growth, we're reminded of the resilience and strength of those we serve at Island Crisis Care Society. Just as spring brings the promise of new beginnings, we see this same spirit reflected in the lives of our clients every day.

Whether it's someone moving into stable housing after years of uncertainty, a resident gaining confidence through employment programs like Project Rise, or a community member finding connection and warmth at one of our outreach programs, your support makes these stories possible.

This past winter, we witnessed the incredible generosity of our community through initiatives like the holiday gift program and helping get the Drop-In Centre up and running.

These acts of kindness remind us that hope is not just something we offer—it's something we build together.

As we look ahead to the warmer months, we are excited to expand opportunities, grow our programs, and continue creating spaces where individuals can find stability, belonging, and the support they need to thrive. Together, we are planting seeds of change that will bloom into brighter futures.

ON COVER: ART WALK, WALLACE STREET OFFICE

## ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHTS

### COMMUNITY KITCHEN

We're thrilled to announce that the Rising Hope Community Kitchen is officially open and ready to serve Nanaimo! This versatile space is available for small businesses, community groups, and individuals to rent for food-based activities such as workshops, food preservation, meal prep, or even launching a small food business.



A community kitchen like Rising Hope offers numerous benefits for Nanaimo. It provides access to professional-grade equipment at an affordable rate and helps local entrepreneurs grow their food-based businesses. It also fosters

collaboration and connection by creating a shared space for workshops, cultural food traditions, and community events. Most importantly, it promotes food security by supporting individuals and organizations in building self-sufficiency through cooking, food preservation, and skill development.

Interested in renting the kitchen? Contact Gillian at [bowenkitchen@iccare.ca](mailto:bowenkitchen@iccare.ca) to learn more. Let's work together to make Rising Hope a hub for creativity, collaboration, and food resiliency in our community!

DO YOU HAVE A DELICIOUS PRODUCT BUT NOWHERE TO MAKE IT?

**COMMUNITY KITCHEN** OPEN NOW

CHEF	CATERER	RESTAURATEUR	VEGAN
BAKER	FARMER	FOOD TRUCK	BEVERAGE

**NANAIMO** AFFORDABLE MONTHLY AND HOURLY RATES

Scan Code for more info or [communitykitchen@iccare.ca](mailto:communitykitchen@iccare.ca)



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## NEWCASTLE CONNECTION

During the Christmas season, Chaplain Melanie made several visits to HEARTH Newcastle Place, offering a warm and caring presence during what can be a challenging time for many of our clients.

For residents who may feel disconnected or lonely during the holidays, Chaplain Melanie's visits provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with someone who genuinely listens. Her compassionate approach allowed many individuals to share their personal struggles, offering comfort and a sense of hope during a season that can often feel isolating.

Her visits were a gentle reminder that even in difficult times, we are not alone. Thank you to Chaplain Melanie for her unwavering support and for helping to make the holidays a little brighter for those who needed it most.

## ICCS JOINS THE ANNUAL NANAIMO ARTWALK

In November, ICCS proudly participated in the Annual Nanaimo Artwalk, giving clients and staff the chance to display and sell their artwork. Our temporary office was transformed into a vibrant gallery, showcasing a wide variety of incredible pieces created by our talented community.

We were thrilled to highlight the creativity and artistic skills of our clients and staff while sharing their work with the broader community. Events like these not only celebrate art but also build connections and provide meaningful opportunities for self-expression. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to support and celebrate local talent!



## SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER: CLIENT CHRISTMAS GIFTS

This holiday season, thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, we were able to provide meaningful Christmas gifts to each of our 276 clients. These gifts hold a profound impact on the mental and emotional well-being of our clients, many of whom are not connected to family during the holidays.



For those we serve, receiving a thoughtful gift is more than just a gesture—it's a reminder that the community cares about them and that they are valued and not forgotten.

We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of support that made this possible. Together, we've brought joy and hope to so many this holiday season. Thank you for helping us make a difference!



PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: OVER 100 BOXES WITH CARE PRODUCTS DONATED BY THE SHOEBOX PROJECT, VOLUNTEERS HELPING PUT TOGETHER BAGS WITH GLOVES, SOCKS, CARE PRODUCTS, NOTEBOOKS AND MORE

## COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS LEAD TO HOUSING SUCCESS

Through dedicated advocacy, our Oceanside Outreach Worker recently helped secure housing at Orca Place for a client who had been street-entrenched for over 10 years. This incredible achievement was made possible through collaboration with **Island Health, Hospital Staff**, and the **HOST working group**.

The client continues to access community services and support, building on the trust and rapport established with our outreach worker. This success story underscores the power of interorganizational connections and how, together, we can help individuals transition into stable housing and brighter futures.

## MARY'S PLACE SUCCESS STORY

We are thrilled to share a success story from Mary's Place! After completing the Project Rise Employment Program, one of our residents secured a job in the kitchen at Nanaimo Foodshare.

This opportunity has been life-changing for her, providing not only employment but also a renewed sense of confidence and purpose. With her new job, she is now actively searching for independent housing—a huge step toward self-sufficiency and stability.

Stories like this remind us of the incredible impact that supportive programs and community partnerships can have on someone's life. Thank you to everyone who helps make these moments possible!

## SMALL STEPS TOWARD CONNECTION

At ICCS, even the smallest moments can carry the greatest significance. Recently, a client at Samaritan Place, who had been isolating surprised both staff and residents by joining the group for dinner in the lounge for the very first time during their stay.

They didn't say much, quietly eating as others chatted around them. But before heading back to their room, they offered a simple, heartfelt "thank you."

In a place where loneliness and survival mode often take center stage, this moment felt like a breakthrough—a quiet reminder that small steps toward connection matter deeply. These moments of courage, however subtle, show the profound impact of creating spaces where individuals feel safe, welcome, and supported.

Thank you for helping us foster connection and hope in the lives of those we serve. Together, we're making a difference—one step at a time.

## CHALLENGING STIGMA THROUGH ART: THE ORCA PLACE PUZZLE PROJECT

At Orca Place, residents often face the challenge of stigma and negative stereotypes associated with supportive housing.

However, two residents, Kasey and Tyra, are working to change the narrative. They had the idea of taking art tiles, created by Orca staff and clients during a theme month around connection, and making them into a puzzle. Their idea emerged during one of our Art Heals workshops. It allows clients to express themselves creatively in ways they may not be able to through words alone



and to challenge misconceptions.

Tyra, who has experienced firsthand the prejudice that often accompanies living in supportive housing says, "I want to show

that we're creative, productive members of society. People need to understand that supportive housing is a safe place to heal. It could happen to anyone." She and Kasey are determined to shift the focus to the positive aspects of life at Orca Place.



For Tyra, moving into Orca Place after over two years on the streets was a turning point. "It was a big step for me. I could finally take a break from the stress and start to rediscover who I am," she shares.

The puzzle, which reflects the theme "putting the pieces back together," symbolizes the journey many residents experience at Orca Place—healing, rebuilding, and moving forward. The puzzle is now available for purchase, with proceeds supporting programs that impact over 300 people daily.

By purchasing the puzzle, you help raise awareness and combat stigma. Visit [www.islandcrisiscareociety.ca/shop](http://www.islandcrisiscareociety.ca/shop) to support this initiative and see the amazing work being done at Orca Place.

# LIFESKILLS

ICCS has learned - over 30 years of providing support and care - 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, wellbeing and independence.

This program enables participants to rebuild their knowledge and awareness around basic skills. By offering chances to develop social, communication, and creative skills, the focus is on essential components for successful life skills competency development. The hope is that by creating new mechanisms for clients to access learning and life skills, it will lead to their longer-term well-being, recovery and development and ultimately community reintegration.

Foot & Nail care clinic at Samaritan. Having on-site health care helps clients address minor issues before they become unmanageable and need hospital assistance.

**“I never saw my feet this clean, nor knew how easy it is to actually care for my feet each day”.**

~Lifeskills participant



**“The art programs have allowed me to go deeper into my emotional blocks and develop ways to manage them. I’m feeling more heard and not shutting my feelings down as much.”**

~Lifeskills participant



PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ALEXIS (LIFESKILLS COORDINATOR) AND AIMEE FACILITATING AN ART WORKSHOP, VOLUNTEERS HELPING WITH HARVEST TEA, SHARON (COMMUNITY PROGRAMS MANAGER) WITH STACY, ONE OF OUR CLIENTS



# PROJECT RISE

Project Rise is a 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 reintegrate more fully into independence and community life.



Many ICCS clients face barriers to employment and reconnection to the community, based on adversity in their past, and the stigma of their present. This 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.

While our residential programs strive to support clients where they are, the leap from homelessness to supported housing to independent community life is great. Unless we equip clients with real skills they can use to find a way back to community, to navigate through the job market and to fill gaps in knowledge and experience from how to balance a cheque book to how to communicate effectively with others, the leap is often too great. With these essential skills, however, possibility is born. This is



**“What I like about the program are the people, the structure.**

**The courses and certifications are great.”**

ANDREW, PROJECT RISE PARTICIPANT

**“I’m going to a staff meeting tonight.... Isn’t that so cool? I get to go to a staff meeting!”**

~ Project Rise participant

**“I am so grateful for this program. It has completely changed my life.”**

~ Project Rise participant

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## OPERATION FREEDOM PAWS BRINGS JOY TO ORCA PLACE

Twice a month, Operation Freedom Paws volunteers visit Orca Place, bringing therapy dogs to connect with our clients. These visits have had a profoundly meaningful impact, offering comfort and joy to those in our care.



KIM AND HER DOG CEDAR

and their ability to bring healing and hope to those transitioning into stable housing. Thank you to the volunteers who make these visits possible!

Recently, a client in just their second day of housing participated in a dog therapy visit. He shared how he had recently spoken with his family about how beneficial therapy dogs could be in supportive housing, and the timing of this connection couldn't have been more perfect.

This heartfelt moment highlights the incredible value of programs like Operation Freedom Paws

### Operation Freedom Paws Mission & Values

Operation Freedom Paws Canada empowers veterans and individuals with disabilities to restore their freedom to live life by teaching them to train their own dogs and certifying them as service dog teams.

Through a special therapeutic canine-human relationship, all veterans and individuals with disabilities live an enriched life and engage with their communities.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our annual client Christmas gifts this year.



ZONTA DROPPING OFF DONATIONS

The Shoebox Project, Everyone Deserves a Smile – Hammond Bay School, Oceanside Community Church in Parksville, Brechin United Church, Zonta Club of Nanaimo, Hope Lutheran Church, Hammond Bay Baptist Church, Margaret Litch, New Horizons Church, Pinky & Friends, Island Health IMIT Department Christmas Elf Raffle, Generations Church, and United Way BC, BC Hydro

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are looking to fill the following volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in making an impact and being a part of a clients success story, we would love to hear from you!

## DROP IN HUB

**Volunteer Host:** We're seeking friendly and compassionate volunteers to help create a welcoming and engaging atmosphere at our drop-in center. This role is perfect for individuals who enjoy socializing, playing games, and connecting with others in a meaningful way. Your presence will help foster a sense of community and provide a positive, supportive environment for those we serve.

**Kitchen Support:** Join our team as a Kitchen Support to help prepare delicious sandwiches and hopefully progress to muffins, and loaves for our drop-in center visitors. Your contribution will ensure that those we serve have access to nourishing food in a welcoming environment. Whether you're a seasoned cook or new to the kitchen, your time and effort will make a big difference!

## DAVID'S PLACE

**Kitchen Baker:** We're looking for passionate and creative bakers to join our volunteer team! As a Kitchen Baker, you'll prepare a variety of baked goods such as muffins, cookies, loaves, and other treats to share with residents of David's Place. Your skills and love for baking will help us provide comforting, delicious snacks that bring joy to those we serve.

Are you an existing volunteer? Email Sara at [volunteercoordinator@iccare.ca](mailto:volunteercoordinator@iccare.ca)

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer?



[www.islandcrisiscareociety.ca/join-us/volunteer-with-us](http://www.islandcrisiscareociety.ca/join-us/volunteer-with-us)

# COMING UP COLDEST NIGHT 2025

## Coldest Night of the Year is Coming – Join Us!

Mark your calendars for February 22nd as we come together for the Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY)! This family-friendly walk raises vital funds for ICCS programs, including Project Rise, Life Skills for Community Connection, and Oceanside Outreach, supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community.

This year, our goal is to raise \$125,000 in Nanaimo and \$100,000 in Oceanside, and we need your help to make it happen!

### How You Can Help:

**Register as a Walker:** Sign up and join an ICCS team or create your own with friends, family, or coworkers.

**Donate:** Support a walker or team, and help us reach our fundraising goal. Every donation makes a difference!

**Spread the Word:** Share the event on your social media and let others know how they can get involved.

Did you know that all the money raised stays right here in our community to support those in need? Together, we can make a real impact on the lives of our neighbors.

**Ready to get started? Register or donate today at [www.cnoy.org/nanaimo](http://www.cnoy.org/nanaimo) or [www.cnoy.org/oceanside](http://www.cnoy.org/oceanside).**



Let's walk together to brighten the coldest nights for those who need it most!

## Help us reach our goals!



[cnoy.org/oceanside](http://cnoy.org/oceanside)



[cnoy.org/nanaimo](http://cnoy.org/nanaimo)



CNOY NANAIMO 2024



CNOY OCEANSIDE 2024

*"When I joined the Board 3 years ago, I had no idea of the joy I would experience in being part of ICCS. The Coldest Night of the Year in support of ICCS has become a real beacon of light in my life. I do enjoy being outside and walking - what a way for me to combine them and make a difference in people's lives."*

~ ICCS board member