



Annual Report 2000/2001

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The Victoria Cool Aid Society has come a long way in its 33-year existence. The organization began in 1968 as the Cool Aid Hostel, which was established to provide short-term shelter to transient youth and adults. It was, in effect, very similar to the other youth hostels of the day. Today, however, the Society bears little resemblance to its original incarnation. What began as a modest undertaking designed to serve a tiny demographic in Greater Victoria has grown into a multi-faceted organization that operates a diverse range of social services directed at those in the community who are most vulnerable.

Cool Aid is best known for its work in addressing housing issues, such as accessibility, affordability, alternative housing programs and homelessness. In addition to long-term housing and emergency shelter, the Society offers programs in child care, recreation, medical services and employment training. Through the provision of these accessible and affordable services Cool Aid is able to meet individual needs and make a positive contribution toward creating a healthy and vibrant community.

Apart from being an administrator of specific programs, Cool Aid is an active participant in a variety of regional, provincial and national networks and organizations that work together to improve services, maximize effectiveness and influence social service policy. The Society has a staff of more than 240 dedicated employees, an annual operating budget of over \$5 Million, and is governed by an elected, community-based board of directors. Cool Aid has established itself as a bottom-line resource in the social safety net within the Capital Regional District (CRD).

Two years ago the Society introduced an ambitious three-year Strategic Plan with the theme, "Compassionate Action." The Plan builds on the society's earlier traditions and at the same time reflects their commitment to the future by positioning the Society for success in what is likely to be an uncertain business environment.

Whether Cool Aid is sheltering the homeless, offering employment counselling or running a daycare, the Society is guided by the following trilogy:

Vision ~ In partnership with our community, we will seek out needs and provide opportunities to help create a just and healthy quality of life for all.

Guiding Principles

- We demonstrate reliability, good faith and integrity in all our relationships.
- We make and keep our commitments.
- We are accountable for our actions and measure and share our contribution to the community.
- We support and value participation, build partnerships, and encourage shared leadership in our community.
- We treat all people with respect, dignity and fairness.
- We look at the environment through the eyes of our clients.
- We are innovative, learn from our experiences and the input of others, and make effective change.
- We are action-oriented and advocate for those we serve.

Mission ~ The Victoria Cool Aid Society responds with care to the life needs of children, youth, men and women in adverse situations. By creating and supporting a range of effective immediate to long-term services, we build hope, lives and community.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This report is written with pride. I am proud to be a member of an organization that is helping "create a just and healthy quality of life for all." There is no higher objective or more worthy pursuit. The Victoria Cool Aid Society's employees and volunteers share their commitment to achieving this vision. All of us at Cool Aid, in our various roles, are working to create a better community. It is helpful to pause periodically and look up from the immediate challenges of our roles and re-read the society's vision statement. It is inspiring and uplifting to remember our shared purpose.

I am proud to be a member of an organization that is pursuing its ethically defensible, caring, humane vision using tools borrowed from the business community. Cool Aid's strategic plan, carefully articulated strategic objectives, annual operating plans, financial forecasts, business plans, and quarterly reporting systems are exemplary. We know where we are going and we are measuring our progress toward our targets.

I am proud of Cool Aid's accomplishments. We can all celebrate these highlights from the past year:

- Mike Gidora Place opened and now provides safe, healthy, affordable housing for 45 tenants.
- The Swift Street Clinic has expanded its staff, services, and hours of operation and changed its name to the Cool Aid Community Health Centre.
- Construction is underway at Johnson Manor. Before long, 20 residents will be receiving support and building a community in attractive new apartments.
- BC Housing has approved the Fairway Woods project for seniors. Construction is expected to begin as soon as rezoning of the site is approved.
- Cool Aid Employment Services has begun its pilot of the innovative Street Enterprise Project, working with unlicensed street vendors to help them enhance their success as self-employed entrepreneurs.
- Health Canada has approved CHIPP funding for a proposal submitted by the Capital Health Region and Cool Aid. It will support the development of software for use by Mental Health service providers.

I am proud of Cool Aid's management group. Through their efforts the strategic plan was developed and put into practice. They have accepted the challenges, stresses, and time demands associated with the strategic planning process. The planning documents and quarterly reports generated by the management group are outstanding and they are invaluable to the Board.

I am proud to know and work with Cool Aid's employees and volunteers. Cool Aid people are doing valuable work in an efficient, business-like way, and Victoria is an increasingly better place because of Cool Aid.

*Vicki Mulligan
Chair
Board of Directors*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In March 2000, the Board of the Cool Aid Society approved our second Annual Operating Plan (AOP) based on our three-year Strategic Plan, "Compassionate Action". The AOP outlined our objectives, how we were going to achieve those objectives, the expected business environment and how the management team would report back on the achievements.

Through quarterly reports to the Board, all components of our organisation from the board through to actions of our staff in the programs have remained accountable to the plan. The plan has brought change to how we work as an organisation and the change management process has been critical to achieving our performance targets. Although Cool Aid has a number of separate programs we now define our services and programs into three general categories or foci, which have given our programs a new way of working together.

Shelter and Community Support System	Housing Continuum	Employment, Training, Skill Development, Activity & Lifestyle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetlink Emergency Shelter • Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter • Sandy Merriman House • Outreach Services – Alcohol and Drug, mental health/ forensic support, Housing outreach and Seniors housing outreach. • Cool Aid Community Health Centre (formerly the Swift Street Medical Clinic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Program (Swift House, Pandora Project) • Garden Gate Residence and transition/satellite housing. • Mike Gidora Place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool Aid Employment Services • Downtown Community Activity Centre • Cool Aid Daycare • Sandy Merriman Drop-in

We expected our business environment to provide some major challenges this year.

At the federal level there was an election and with the return of the Liberal government we were pleased to see the continuation of initiatives started prior to the election. For example we received confirmation from Health Canada that our partnership submission with the CHR for a mental health information system was accepted. We continued to work with federal and national groups to ensure that the provision of affordable housing and addressing homelessness are priorities.

The provincial government, both in its policy and funding, is always a key factor in our business environment and this year was no exception. The knowledge of an election looming throughout this past year did affect our programs and services. It was very much a hold steady year which put a strain on our existing resources. We received some extra funds to avert a shelter crisis this winter and there were some small initiatives that received extra Provincial support. We were pleased to see another housing allocation for a further 1200 units for 2001. We continued to look at how we could develop some youth housing in the Western communities. This will be an ongoing focus as well as our interest in assisting our community meet the needs of supportive and assisted living for seniors as part of the continuing care renewal plan. We will continue to respond to homelessness through developing housing opportunities to ensure the shelters don't become the only housing option for the homeless.

The City of Victoria continued their direct partnership with Cool Aid through support of Johnson Manor and the Downtown Community Activity Centre. We are also working closely with them in the development of the community plan to address homelessness, the Sexually Exploited Youth Project, the Downtown Street Enterprise Project and in general through the Downtown Working Group and Social Planning and Housing Advisory.

The Capital Health Region continued to support a number of our programs that provide services to the downtown population. We were pleased to tour the new CEO, Rick Rogers last fall and are excited to see the region work towards a more integrated community based health system. The support from the CHR for the change of the medical clinic to a community health centre speaks to the region's desire to respond to changing and community needs. We have also been actively involved in mental health planning and developed a range of partnerships with the CHR. Partnerships were developed with the Downtown Community Activity Centre, Cool Aid Employment Services, consumer integration and pre-employment initiatives. The CHR was also involved with the housing program in developing supports to existing housing and new housing, and with Outreach for dual diagnosis, housing outreach for forensic as well as seniors division. The CHR supported the shelter system through Streetlink and Sandy Merriman. We will participate in the mental health renewal initiative by working with the CHR to respond to the 87 recommendations to improve the mental health system.

The United Way had a successful campaign this year, which directly reflects on the agencies it funds. Through the United Way allocation we were able to address the community priorities of poverty, violence in society, substance abuse through our shelter and community support and employment programs, family stress and breakdown through KEYS and daycare, and isolation and loneliness through our housing, residential and downtown activity centre programs. We hope that the United Way will assist Cool Aid in a greater way in the future to respond innovatively and expediently to these critical issues.

There were other non-government funding agencies that played a key role in supporting community initiatives. The Vancouver Foundation, Victoria Foundation, the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., VanCity Community Foundation and Pacific Coast Savings Credit Union all played a role in capital for housing or funding for client services. Their approach has been innovative and critical for Cool Aid and its community partners to develop new initiatives.

Our daycare has continued to adjust to the harsh reality of unaffordable and inaccessible daycare. A flexible operating budget and staffing model have accommodated the flux in enrolment and kept the daycare operating. Participation in problem-solving meetings has assisted parents to access subsidy. We continue to speak up at the federal and provincial level to ensure young children and their struggling parents' needs are met.

The key results of last year's Long-Term business and program priorities represent year 2 of the society's Strategic Plan and can be summarised under three key headings.

How Cool Aid is improving its services to clients:

The three shelters, in order to improve our services for the benefit of clients, hired consultant, Joan Cotie to assist them in a number of tactics. As a result of 8 months of work the shelters developed a set of shelter standards to be implemented in year three of the strategic plan. They reviewed their policies against those standards, completed client satisfaction surveys and developed client info cards and brochures. They conducted a program review of the shelters and developed a shelter enhancement action plan that included improved storage, safety, recreation, and community liaison and improved access for youth. They developed a list of links for the website, a core training program and installed a database program, which is being used for registration, tracking, reports and outcomes measurement. The results of the data collection will manifest in year three.

In addition to the three shelters, Outreach Alcohol and Drug completed their program review. We have achieved about 35% of our three-year target to review all Cool Aid's lines of business. The rest of the programs will be undertaking their reviews in year three. All programs completed their client satisfaction surveys this year as a baseline using an approved format. There will now be the opportunity to repeat the surveys in year three to see if there will be a 5% increase in client satisfaction.

Cool Aid recognizes that an effective way to improve the health and welfare of people is to break their cycle of dependency on social services. To that end the three-year plan identified two action plans aimed at breaking the cycle. Sandy Merriman, through the funding assistance of Community Solutions designed a service to involve women in first aid and foodsafe training and other lifeskills opportunities. Forty women will have accessed this service during the year and there will be a comprehensive report on the effectiveness. The second initiative, Homeless to Work, received federal funds in the late spring and will be part of next year's report.

Another performance target was to increase the number of housing units from 66 to 161 by 2002. Mike Gidora Place opened in September 2000 which added another 45 units. Another 52 units will be built in year three.

In advance of the two housing projects being built we received funding to provide support to the future tenants of these projects. Through HOP and Seniors Outreach we are providing tenant support and rent supplement to 45 people. This housing outreach service has been highly successful and is an example of collaboration between Housing and Outreach.

The programs have reported further on their activities and outcomes in the pages ahead. All programs continue to look at opportunities to improve their services to clients. For some like the daycare it means a daily struggle, for others it was a schedule change. Cool Aid continues to put the clients first.

How Cool Aid is strengthening and developing the resources required to meet our clients' life needs:

The performance target of increasing non-government funding by 4% to be used by Cool Aid was not met through alternative revenue generation this year. However, Mike Gidora Place has been a huge success in overcoming many obstacles and has developed an alternative to government financing in developing affordable housing.

The Cool Aid Foundation was formed this year. It held its first AGM, has obtained charitable status, and developed some solid policies and a work plan for next year. The Cool Aid Society is very thankful to our donors for supporting our services and we look forward to increasing public awareness of Cool Aid in the coming year.

Through the CHR database collaborative we have set down a strong building block for future revenue generation. We have also dedicated a position for next year to focus on this performance target.

There have been two committees focusing on technology and data collecting as two resource areas that have become fundamental in today's social service environment. This was the first year of having a capital plan for technology and we have strengthened the information technology support. We are implementing data collection capacity in our programs, which includes installation, training, troubleshooting and creation of reports. This work will be completed in year three.

Administration had a successful move to Mike Gidora Place in August. It was successful because we had key people who were exemplary in organizational skills and meeting timelines. We hired a new Human Resources Manager in September and the latter part of this year has been a successful building time for HR as well as rebuilding other parts of administration.

We successfully completed union negotiations last May for Sandy Merriman and Garden Gate. It has been a long process with CSSEA to follow through with the costing and Ministry distribution mechanisms. The government also awarded increased compensation to the non-union programs. We also greatly improved the employee RRSP plan.

How Cool Aid has demonstrated leadership in effective and innovative models of service delivery and influenced decisions that affect our services and clients:

We had some key successes in the objective to demonstrate service delivery models that go beyond the traditional single-agency, single program delivery structure. One of the performance targets was to identify collaborative initiatives with other service providers.

The Housing Outreach Program (HOP) was developed as collaboration between Cool Aid, Forensics, Mental Health, John Howard Society, Cedar Lodge Society and others.

The three shelters worked collaboratively on addressing the shelter tactics. This has set the groundwork for more collaboration between the shelters. We have also been very involved with Shelter Net BC, the provincial body looking at shelters. It had its inaugural AGM last November and we are represented on the Board. Through Shelter Net BC we are influencing MSDES on practices that work in Victoria.

We have been successful in accessing federal homeless funds for urgent need (Shared Community Partnership Initiatives - SCPI) and are involved in the community plan to address homelessness in the next two years.

There have been numerous ways locally and provincially that we have been involved. Cool Aid managers are involved in advisories, task forces, and consultations and Cool Aid is sought out as a key stakeholder.

I believe we are meeting our performance targets to address social issues and we will be increasing our campaign to increase public awareness next year through some dedicated resources to communication.

Our vision is to create a just and healthy quality of life for all – we are on our way with a ways to go.

The success of the Strategic Plan's implementation is the result of having dedicated a skilled co-ordinator who can balance the many processes and tasks required to ensure the plan moves forward. Nina Cox stepped up to the challenge and has provided the requisite dedication and continuity. The managers have all contributed throughout the year, each having a lead role in some tactics and a supporting role in others. The managers developed, implemented and reported on the Annual Operating Plan for 2000/2001, while the Board, through the Planning Committee, held us accountable. I am pleased to present a very strong report card.

The Managers have all taken on many challenges this year and continue to provide strong leadership to the organisation through the management team. Ron McNaughton was hired as the new manager of Streetlink last July. Melanie Clarke joined the organisation as our new Human Resources Manager and Fred Trimmer took over the role of Manager of Finance in March when Joan Patrick was assigned to alternative revenue and foundation fundraising.

It was a challenging year for administration. The move to Mike Gidora Place, changes in personnel and continued development of the organisation put heavy demands on all the staff. Once again we saw administration dig deep to find the extra time and energy to try and meet the needs of the organisation. We have another challenging year ahead of us but our goal is always to provide cost-efficient, effective and appropriate support services to the programs and the Board of Directors who work tirelessly to govern the society.

*Jane Dewing
Executive Director
Victoria Cool Aid Society*

SHELTER AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SYSTEM

STREETLINK EMERGENCY SHELTER

Since it opened in 1968, the Streetlink Emergency Shelter has gradually expanded and diversified its services in order to meet its clients' constantly changing needs. In addition to offering overnight accommodation and meals, Streetlink provides referrals, hygiene and mental health services, housing advocacy, community liaison, and crisis and life skills counselling.

Streetlink is the oldest Cool Aid program, and it continues to be one of the busiest. During the past year the 55-bed facility had an average monthly occupancy rate of 82 per cent, with a male/female ratio of close to nine to one. There were many nights of each month when the 45 male beds were completely full.

This year the shelter re-established a variety of forums for clients. Two street nurses provided information and discussed 'harm reduction'. A constable from the Victoria Police Dept. held an open forum to talk about any questions or issues people wished to discuss regarding policing. A First Nations elder presided over a healing circle. The attendance and feedback for all were very positive. The shelter also added a small library based on the "leave one, take one" concept and established a clothing distribution program with the help of a volunteer church group. And one afternoon each week a street nurse and community mental health worker are available to assist drop-in clients.

Two training sessions for staff were held during the fall. One session offered some insights and skills on how to work more effectively with individuals having dual diagnoses. The second one concerned harm reduction; a concept that is very important at Streetlink. We also defined what 'core competencies' the staff at Streetlink must have to do their work. This means that there will be an ongoing basic standard of knowledge and skills that all staff will have to help them perform effectively in the provision of service.

Renovations to the reception area were done and some walls were altered or removed. The purpose was to enhance the supervision of the client lounge area, and make better use of the space available for the staff to work behind the reception desk. Most of the main floor of Streetlink was painted giving it a brighter cleaner look.

We averted a possible partial closure that would have had a significant impact on shelter service. The potential closure was due to several years of underfunding to the shelter. Fortunately, there were positive outcomes to this difficult situation. After our administration's successful negotiations the CHR and MSDES did provide most of the monies needed to support the shelter and closures were averted.

For some Streetlink clients, the shelter experience is much more than a hot meal and a warm bed. D arrived in Victoria recently with an alcohol problem and not much else. He didn't have a job or a place to live and had been kicked off welfare. During a two-month stay at Streetlink, however, he started to turn his life around. He developed a good relationship with two staff members, who subsequently referred him to counselling for his alcohol abuse. It worked. D got back on welfare, then found part-time work and eventually landed a permanent, full-time maintenance job. He continues to do well and occasionally drops in to Streetlink to say hello.

Another recent client praised Streetlink staff for helping him get off the street and into an apartment. "I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for Streetlink," he said. "Thanks so much for all your help."

KIWANIS EMERGENCY YOUTH SHELTER

Since 1987, young people in Victoria who are unable to stay in the family home have had a safe, secure alternative to the uncertainty of the street: the Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter (KEYS), a 10-bed, short-term shelter for youth aged 13 to 18. To assist teenagers at risk, KEYS also provides crisis counselling, family sessions and consultation with parents and professionals.

During the past year the shelter provided service to over 420 youth and families in crisis. It is interesting to note that the gender split saw 57% females and 43% males. This is the highest differential in the history of the shelter and can be attributed to increased awareness by helping professionals of the risk factors for female youth particularly in the area of sexual exploitation. The shelter generally saw younger females and older males this year, which is seen as a result of providing under aged income assistance to more adolescent males. 72% of youth were *not* in the care of the Ministry, which represents a 5% increase from last year and a 10% increase in the last two years. This is consistent with the current philosophy to provide different services to youth without taking them into Ministry care. Staff provided 38 family sessions up from 22 the previous year; a 42% increase. Sessions utilised a brief solution focussed counselling approach.

KEYS continues to be an effective regional resource and provides support to youth and families in crisis from all over the region. 40% of youth served were from Victoria/Saanich, 25% from the Western Communities/Esquimalt/Sooke areas, 20% from Downtown and 15% fell into the 'other' including elsewhere on the island.

Recently KEYS staff determined the issues that dominate the scene for youth and service providers are housing, sexual exploitation and residential detox services. As a result, KEYS has developed an increased awareness and subsequent strategies for dealing with youth during, their substance misuse and their vulnerabilities as they find themselves quickly immersed in the sex trade, all the while struggling with the need for safe long term housing.

Another new KEYS initiative was Project Graduation; a housing project and support model designed to help selected youth complete their last years of high school. The program will target young people aged 16 to 19 whose life circumstances have caused them to consider dropping out. KEYS staff believe that with supportive, stable housing, these people will graduate. Project Graduation affords that opportunity. A committee of KEYS staff, other youth service providers and community partners met regularly to develop the concept. Presentations were made to the Sooke School Board and Colwood Rotary, both of which provided their support.

Integrated case management is a concept currently being embraced in this region and provincially driven. KEYS is pleased to participate in this effort that supports accountable seamless service delivery to youth and their families. They are less likely to fall through the cracks and have increased opportunity to be heard.

Often when youths benefit from their time at KEYS, so do their families. That was evident earlier this year when the parents of a shelter client sent a donation and letter of gratitude to KEYS. "Our son recently used your shelter at a time when he was struggling with living at home," they wrote. "At a time when his life was in chaos, you helped immeasurably by providing a safe and understanding place for him to stay."

SANDY MERRIMAN HOUSE

Sandy Merriman House (SMH) was established in 1995. SMH a fifteen-bed shelter and drop in for women only, came as a result of an initiative called the Downtown Women's Project. The Project emerged in early 1994 as a community development initiative and involved low income and homeless women in addressing the emergency shelter needs for homeless women in Victoria. Many women had reported feeling uncomfortable and sometimes unsafe at existing shelters as they are dominated by male clients. In 1998 Cool Aid added SMH to its group of programs.

Through its shelter and drop-in, SMH provides meals, hygiene products, shower and laundry facilities and other services such as crisis intervention, one-to-one support, discussion groups and workshops on lifeskill development and one afternoon each week the street nurse visits and assists women with their health concerns. Many of the women that access SMH have drug and alcohol related issues and some are dealing with serious and persistent mental illness, SMH staff work closely with them and make referrals to housing, mental health and drug and alcohol agencies. This year 481 women spent an average of nine days each at the shelter, and the average monthly occupancy rate was 77 per cent.

With the collaboration of clients, staff, shelter managers and consultant Joan Cotie, the SMH completed its program review. The review was comprised of the development of shelter standards, and completion of the SMH policy and procedure manual. A client satisfaction survey defined two enhancement goals for 2001; improving activities and safety at SMH. A committee consisting of shelter staff, managers, ED, Joan Cotie and two representatives from community agencies (VYES and CRD) participated in a series of discussions relating to program enhancements. The feedback will assist SMH staff and clients with their enhancement goals. Core competency training for shelter staff was defined and client information cards and a new pamphlet were designed and printed.

Cool Aid recognizes that an effective way to improve the health and welfare of people is to break their cycle of dependency on social services. To that end, SMH applied for and received funding from the Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers, to assist with the development of a Community Kitchen and the implementation of food-safe and first aid certification for SMH participants. This year we have had 17 community kitchens, averaging 5 women per kitchen. Twenty-eight women were certified with first aid and 26 women with food safe. With this funding we also provided additional life skills & related nutritional workshops. Other activities at SMH this past year have included healing circles, community dinners, a garden project, and computer and pottery workshops.

SMH has helped many women turn their lives around over the years. One recent success is J, who was struggling with substance abuse and in a bad relationship before coming to SMH. She wrote about what the shelter meant to her: "Right away I noticed a big positive change in the way things are at SMH. The staff members are so gentle and calming ... It's so hard to define in a few words the absolutely awesome treatment I've received since arriving here." Months later, after finding a place to live and being clean and sober for a year, J added, "I'll always remember that SMH helped me to find a new way."

OUTREACH SERVICES

Outreach Services was created in 1986 to help people on the street access the social agencies that are available to them. The program provides assessment, counselling and referrals for homeless and other at-risk people in downtown Victoria.

The steady increase in homelessness since the 1980s has resulted in the expansion of Outreach Services. What began, as a one-person operation serving 150 homeless people has become a five-person team offering support to a population that now exceeds 1000.

Recent additions to the list of Outreach programs include: Alcohol and Drug services, which provides individual support, assessment, counselling, and referral services; Forensic Outreach, which assists people with psychiatric illness and criminal records; Supportive Recovery, which helps clients overcome their addictions by placing them in private homes; Housing Outreach, (the program will transition to Housing when Johnson Manor opens) which supports 25 people in the community; and Seniors' Outreach, which offers support services to those aged 55 and up.

Seniors' Outreach was established as an interim service while the Fairway Woods housing project in Langford is being built, but Outreach staff consider the program important enough to continue even after the housing is completed. Through the Seniors Outreach case manager and a weekend support worker we were able to serve at least 16 clients aged 55 and up in the downtown area who were falling through the cracks.

The total number of counselling sessions in this year will top 1200. The client group is predominantly male and between the ages of 25 and 54. A file review indicated that over 90% of the clients sent to Supportive Recovery or treatment programs completed the program. Also, 90% of clients self reported a significant positive change in their lives. Outreach ADS is able to see clients within 24 to 48 hours from the time an appointment is requested. ADS began the first program review in Outreach this year and looks forward to defining and implementing program enhancements in 2001/2002.

A comprehensive questionnaire on Supportive Recovery services in the Capital Region was sent out and the results were the impetus for our current Supportive Recovery action plan. The plan will span at least the last year of this strategic plan and perhaps the first year or two of the next one.

The HOP program has five full time staff spanning all seven days a week. The program supports 23 clients in the community with homes, rent subsidies, and daily contacts where necessary. The staff are dedicated to providing the best possible services to the clients.

Not only did Trudy Norman, Manager of Outreach, see a number of people on the Forensic Outreach program, she saw and continues to see several clients who are unable to access other Mental Health services. For two of those people, she was the only person who could come to their home and see them. Both people have a lot of difficulty being outside the house and having someone visit them was their only option for service. Outreach in its purest form! The existing caseload is 8 – 10 clients, a number of which are dual diagnosis.

Trudy also chaired the Gateway Task Force at the request of the community. The Gateway Task Force was charged with preparing a plan for the community around the closure of the Gateway shelter. The plan was prepared and accepted by the community at the end of January.

With the announcement of funding for the Community Health Centre based in the Swift Street Clinic excited planning began for integration of some client services between the Clinic, Streetlink and Outreach.

Like other Cool Aid programs, Outreach has helped many clients realize success stories. One such client is a persistently mentally ill woman who was barely able to leave her home for nine years. She is now on medication and has graduated from short, bi-weekly visits with an Outreach worker to long outings. She recently declared she now can do most things by herself and no longer requires assistance.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

The Cool Aid Community Health Centre is another Society facility that bears little resemblance to its original incarnation. Established in 1970 as a small clinic providing free medical care to people who did not have coverage, the facility gradually grew as demand increased and the patients' illnesses became more serious.

In 1991 the clinic moved from Fernwood to the new Cool Aid building on Swift Street in downtown Victoria. Since then, with changes in the economy, greater awareness of mental illness and the rise of drug and alcohol dependence, the clinic has provided a link for its patients toward better physical and mental health as well as a connection to social stability.

In March, in response to community needs the medical clinic further evolved and expanded to become the Cool Aid Community Health Centre, with an inter-discipline team that includes four physicians, four sessional specialists (MDs such as GI, psychiatry etc.), three nurse practitioners, one nutritionist, one drug and alcohol counsellor, support staff, one pharmacist and an acupuncturist. The centre serves 50 - 75 clients per day and is open six days a week with some evening coverage.

With its expanded staff, the health centre can now take a multi-disciplinary approach to health care as it addresses problems such as: a growing number of homeless or marginally housed people; an increased number of injection drug users; more cases of tuberculosis; the second-highest rate of HIV infection in Canada; and a high percentage of patients with dual diagnosis. Staff anticipate this multi-disciplinary approach will lead to, among other things, less emergency room use, reduced frequency and duration of hospital visits, and better coordination of prevention services.

The Community Health Centre will be an integral part of the collaborative community response to the downtown's health and social problems.

HOUSING CONTINUUM

HOUSING PROGRAM

The Cool Aid Housing Program is now 10 years old. It all began in 1991 with the opening of the 26-unit Swift House, the first project of its kind in Canada. The idea was to provide housing for people who historically have had difficulty in finding and keeping affordable housing for a variety of reasons. Also our housing model was designed with a resident support element in place. Swift House experienced growing pains during its early years, but because of the efforts that the tenants and staff put into community development we were able to succeed in being able to provide a healthy stable living environment.

The community-based, tenant-driven model that emerged at Swift House has now been replicated many times in other Canadian cities. Meanwhile, the demand for additional low-cost housing persisted. Cool Aid responded by opening the Pandora Project in 1997. The Pandora Project includes 32 adult apartments, eight transitional units of youth housing and an activity centre.

This past year has been a period of further growth for Cool Aid Housing. We have seen the completion of Mike Gidora Place and the successful application of a management model based on the principles used in our supported housing and adapted for use in a market-housing situation. Additionally, we entered into two new housing initiatives (Johnson Manor & Fairway Woods) that are being designed from the ground up to support two groups of people that have traditionally been on the fringe of available services. As part of the overall support plan, the initial staffing component was hired and services begun to the target populations.

Our staff availed themselves of many educational and training opportunities over the past year. This year we were able to bring all of our core staff to the BC Non-Profit Housing Association conference, which proved to be an incredibly rich experience as well as an opportunity to forge many new alliances with societies and programs across BC. Core staff have also been engaged in undertaking and presenting material in various areas such as Justice Institute courses, A Hop/Access training series and a program of interdisciplinary workshops organized by Capital Health Region, among others.

A priority of the housing program is to increase the participation of tenants in conceiving, planning and facilitating activities. A case in point is Jill and her French lessons. A former journalist and a resident of the Pandora Apartments since 1998, Jill asked staff about the possibility of her offering free French lessons to her fellow tenants. A poster went up on the notice board and now every Sunday Jill teaches her mother language to a small group of her neighbours.

From weekly hot dog nights for tenants and guests to regular tenant meetings, outings and camping trips, most residents of the housing program now feel a sense of belonging, security and community that evaded them for much of their lives.

GARDEN GATE RESIDENCE

Garden Gate Residence began as the Cool Aid group home in 1981. In 1995 the six-bed facility relocated to Garden Street. In 1993 the program shifted from a medical model to a psychosocial model. In a medical model the emphasis is on custodial care, while in a psychosocial model the aim is to teach people how to live with their illness in the community and be more independent.

This is the basis of Garden Gate's Two to Twenty-four Months program, in which participants are encouraged to recognize their strengths and build upon their skills. The focus is on mental wellness rather than mental illness. Residents are coming for shorter stays. We had approximately 6 residents leave during the year. Stays ranged from 5 to 10 months with 2 very short-term residents.

In addition to the group home, Garden Gate manages a Satellite Program and a Transition Apartment Program. The Satellite Program was developed for individuals with chronic mental illness who do not require 24-hour supervision but who also are not candidates for fully independent living. Although the three Satellite participants live in an apartment down the street from Garden Gate, they are still considered part of the Two to Twenty-four Months program and each is supported by staff for five hours per week. The three men in the Satellite Program have been living semi-independently for more than two years.

The purpose of the Transition Apartment (located in the same building as the Satellite apartment) is to help residents move from group-home life to greater independence. Like the Satellite Program, the Transition Apartment is part of the Two to Twenty-four Months program. The difference is that Transition residents are given the opportunity to eventually graduate to independent living.

Garden Gate has its share of success stories. For example three residences that lived at Garden Gate for close to 10 years celebrated their second year of independence in their three-bedroom apartment while they continue to get support from Garden Gate. Manager, Ruth McHale believes that every resident, no matter what past experiences have been, deserves the opportunity to move forward in life, to achieve a greater degree of independence and to be well supported in this quest.

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, SKILL DEVELOPMENT, ACTIVITY & LIFESTYLE

COOL AID EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The past year was a challenging one for Cool Aid Employment Services (CAES). Established in 1993, CAES is a training and referral program that helps unemployed people find casual and permanent employment. The heart of CAES is the Skills to Work program and the Casual Labour Pool. Skills to Work helps people make the necessary adjustments to succeed in the job market, and the Casual Labour Pool provides them with practical work experience.

But the provincial government cut funding for the two programs, and the very survival of CAES was threatened. Fortunately for hundreds of unemployed Victoria residents, CAES working with the community secured continued funding to keep the programs running. Along with several member agencies in the community CAES collectively fought back and have kept their funding which is hopefully secured until at least the fall of 2001. The Ministry has also shifted the nature of its client referrals to its contracted employment assistance programs. They are diverting job ready participants to direct job placement programs (JPP) and all multi-barriered clients to the assisted job search programs like CAES. This has meant a demographic shift and we now are seeing more chronic clients with more problems. We are adjusting our programming to meet the challenges.

Other CAES initiatives include: Training Works, a training subsidy program helping Income Assistant clients find and maintain full-time jobs; Job Start, a wage subsidy program for youth, the Retail Industry Training Program, a partnership with Cadillac Fairview, Camosun College and Business Works; the Street Enterprise pilot project; and the Homeless to Work (Peer to Peer) program.

In order to secure alternative funding we have developed different programming, trying joint ventures with other Cool Aid programs and are developing a strategy to promote core-funded programs.

With an average of 74 clients per month and hundreds of jobs filled annually, CAES is full of success stories. A good example is TP, who came to CAES after seven years on income assistance and a string of personal crises. When TP enrolled in Skills to Work, he lacked direction, his self-esteem was low and he had little hope for a positive outcome. Upon completion of the program, however, TP began to see opportunities for himself. He became an enthusiastic participant in the Casual Labour Pool and demonstrated a positive outlook and strong work ethic. Feedback from employers was always positive and TP eventually received two full-time job offers.

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTRE

In the fall of 1997 The Downtown Community Activity Centre (DCAC) was established as a unique community resource for those living, working and involved in Victoria's Downtown – with a special emphasis on those who do not traditionally access recreational or social facilities. This was a result of a community scan that indicated that many sectors of the Downtown community felt that the Centre would fulfil an important role in our community. However, these responses were also indicative of a major challenge – responding to a multiplicity of needs and desires. The DCAC's rapid growth, particularly during the past year has exceeded expectations. Open seven days a week, the DCAC has developed into a bustling place that is utilized by close to 3,000 user per month.

The DCAC believes that everyone has the right to affordable and accessible healthy living. Healthy living is facilitated through community involvement and activity. The DCAC supports community initiatives that contribute to healthy living allowing us to offer such diverse programming as dance, drop-in sports, kindergym, Kids birthday parties, computer and internet access, voicemail, Active Living Promotes Healthy Attitudes (ALPHA), horticultural, music lessons & jam sessions, drop-in socialization, free coffee and phone use, Pandora Patio Café, theatre groups, Spanish classes, Artistic Tuesdays, host of fringe festival site, and much more. What makes the DCAC unique is that we respond to the social and recreational needs of the downtown community. In other words, we work with our community to develop, provide and support the programs the community wants, not what we think they want.

We strive to ensure an environment that is caring and respectful of diversity, and approach all community members with acceptance, respect and awareness. Since its inception, the DCAC has grown from a Centre of one staff, two programs and a handful of users, to a Centre that has three full time staff, a University co-op student and countless community volunteers. The centre is now open seven days a week and offers over 40 different programs. We believe that everyone has a right to a fit and healthy lifestyle!

Specific initiatives in the past year have included establishing a partnership with UVIC and Mental Health, which resulted in a part-time fitness coordinator from the Recreation co-op program. The coordinator has been integral in developing a fitness program for people who normally do not access recreation programs as well as for the downtown working population. Artistic & Tapestry Tuesdays is now delivered through the Centre. Both programs were developed through the City of Victoria's Community Development Division. The centre established job skill development opportunities for consumers of Mental Health to assist in integration back into the community. We developed a consumer driven initiative that provides affordable access to a personalized voicemail. Users have reported that this has assisted them in keeping in touch with family members, assisted in finding jobs, and has had a positive impact on their lives.

Part of the Centre's great success is due to the partnerships it has established over the years. The Victoria Cool Aid Society is proud to work in a community partnership model, with the City of Victoria and the Capital Health Region, in the delivery of services to the downtown community. In the year to come the centre will go through a formal program review led by the DCAC Steering Committee. The business plan for reaching self-sustainability will be assessed and a new three-year business plan will be developed.

COOL AID DAYCARE

The Cool Aid Daycare is one of the Society's longest-running programs. Established in 1973 when Victoria had only a dozen other daycares, the Cool Aid Daycare has provided quality care for young children for almost three decades. Daycare families come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. During the past year about 55 per cent of the children were from single parent families and 71 per cent of the parents were employed.

Despite the daycare's longevity, it has not always had a smooth ride. Two years ago reduced numbers of parents who could afford licensed daycare forced Cool Aid to reduce the number of daycare spaces from 25 to 16 and this past year the daycare faced the challenge of further declining enrolment. The low enrolment resulted from such factors as the cost of daycare, a lower birth rate, and too many daycares in the area. It was not only a problem felt by our centre; low enrolment is an issue faced by many daycares in Victoria. Despite the lower numbers Cool Aid Daycare continues to provide high quality child development that is the foundation for a healthy education and skill base for the rest of their lives.

The financial challenges facing the daycare have made the role of advocacy increasingly important. After years of advocacy and letter writing campaigns we were very pleased this spring with the passage of the Child Care BC Act, which put into legislation a program of publicly, funded child care for all children and families. The first step, operational funding for out of school care, was implemented in January 2001. Funding for group care for 3 to 5 year olds is slated for the 2003/2004 fiscal year. We anticipate being involved in further advocacy to ensure that the new provincial government remains committed to the full implementation of the Child Care BC Act.

We were also successful this year in lobbying around the issues of dual ministry funding and accessing subsidy. We had several meetings with ministry staff on both a provincial and regional basis. Victoria now has a daycare office which has staff dedicated solely to doing daycare subsidies. We are hopeful this will help resolve some of the issues both parents and caregivers have experienced in the past.

Because it has been around so long, Cool Aid Daycare is now seeing its second generation of children. Some of the first children to go through the program occasionally contact daycare staff and share the positive impact Cool Aid had on their lives.

While daycare manager Diane Carruthers is discouraged by the facility's uncertain future, she is committed to the daycare concept and determined not to give up. "Cool Aid Daycare provides positive developmental opportunities for children," she says. "We are also able to act as a vehicle for delivering other services such as child protection, family supports and detection of developmental delays or other health problems. We provide an opportunity for parents of all income levels to participate in employment, job training and education by providing care for their children while they are engaged in these activities ... Children, parents and society all benefit from quality daycare."

As the Victoria Cool Aid Society enters its 34th year of existence, more change is undoubtedly on the way. With the social, political and business environments constantly evolving, the Cool Aid of tomorrow will differ from the Cool Aid of yesterday and today as it strives to offer innovative and effective programs to its diverse group of clients. The Society, it appears, will never be short of challenges, but as it has demonstrated over and over in the past, Cool Aid will find a way to meet them.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Overall the Victoria Cool Aid Society remains in good financial condition. While the last few years have been a period of rapid growth in both assets and liabilities, the Society remains financially stable.

At the program level there was a small deficit of \$17,946 in 2000/2001. The Society's assets increased by \$1.2 million as a result of the completion of Mike Gidora Place, and liabilities increased by a slightly higher amount. As a result, the Society's net assets (assets minus liabilities) declined by \$24,365.

Most of the Society's programs either reported a surplus or a small deficit. However, there were two exceptions to this, the Streetlink Shelter and the Mike Gidora Place Housing project. As I mentioned last year, the reason why the Shelter has a deficit is because the Society does not receive enough money to fully fund this program and this continues to be a concern to myself and the other members of the board. In addition, while Mike Gidora Place appears to have a large surplus, in fact a portion of the expenses relating to repayment of loan principal are not included as an operating expense for the program but rather, are included as a capital expenditure elsewhere in the financial statements. This does understate the true cost of the program to Cool Aid, particularly since this is a "stand-alone" program that does not rely on government funding.

The Society now has assets of \$13.2 million, an increase of \$1.2 million. This is entirely due to the completion of Mike Gidora Place and the inclusion of the full value of the completed project in the financial statements. At the same time, the Society's liabilities also increased to reflect the full cost of Mike Gidora Place. Liabilities have now reached \$12.5 million, an increase of slightly more than \$1.2 million.

The net assets indicate how much of the assets on our financial statements the Society actually owns outright. The net assets are now at \$775,805 which is a small decrease of \$24,365 from last year. This reflects the operating deficit of \$17,946 and all the capital transactions that took place during the year, which were also in a small deficit of \$6,419.

As mentioned in the previous annual report, the last few years have been a period of rapid expansion in Cool Aid's assets and liabilities. As a result, next year should be a period of financial consolidation as we digest these latest projects by paying down debt. But, I have no doubt that there are many plans ahead for new projects that make being a member of Cool Aid such an exciting undertaking

Let me finish by thanking the Administration staff for all their hard work this year. I would also like to thank Bev Zitman who will be leaving Cool Aid for new challenges and welcome Fred Trimmer as the Manager of Finance and Administration. We are going to miss Bev, but I am excited about working with Fred and know we are going to have a great year together.

*Bryan Thomson
Treasurer
Board of Directors*