



Annual Report 2002/2003

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Cool Aid has a clear and demonstrated history of success and commitment to the community, focussing on street-involved and homeless people who are most at risk in our society. The Victoria Cool Aid Society has come a long way in its 35 years of existence. The organization began in 1968 as the Cool Aid Hostel, which was established to provide short-term shelter to transient youth and adults, and has developed into a multi-faceted organization that operates a diverse range of social and health services.

From a simple hostel 35 years ago, Cool Aid has grown into a society with a budget of close to 8 million dollars, over 100 employees and programs ranging from emergency shelters, housing and health services. It is clear that citizens of the Capital Region have come to trust and rely on Cool Aid to develop and offer critical services, often where there is no other option.

During this last year, Cool Aid has undergone a period of fundamental redefinition and redesign. The organization has undergone a process of consolidation and expansion based on its reaffirmed mandate of providing shelter, housing and health for the most disadvantaged of our community. Through the provision of accessible and affordable services, Cool Aid has been able to meet individual needs and make a positive contribution toward creating a healthy and vibrant community. The Society looks forward to continuing its service to the community for many years to come.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

It is with a great deal of pleasure that we are able to present this Annual Report to the membership. This year marks the 35th anniversary of the creation of the Victoria Cool Aid Society and for all those who have been involved in the creation, service and growth of the Society since its inception this Anniversary is cause for great celebration. As an agency dedicated to providing services to those most disadvantaged in our community, we can take pride in the many successes that have been achieved over the years. As a front line provider of society's 'Social Contract' with the disadvantaged, this community has come to rely on the special skills and professionalism of our dedicated staff to fulfill this obligation. On behalf of the members and Board of the Victoria Cool Aid Society, we want to congratulate all those individuals who, over the years, through their skill and dedication have allowed us to fulfill this mandate.

This past year has been a period of transition as the Board worked diligently to implement the restructuring plan adopted by the Society last year. The Board's goal through this process has been that, with a renewed focus on the services that we provide and through a new organizational structure, we will set the foundation for the future growth and stability of the Victoria Cool Aid Society. In these times of financial restraint, the importance of these changes to the future wellbeing of the Victoria Cool Aid Society and those that we serve cannot be overstated. We hope that a review of this Annual Report will confirm that we are well on the way to achieving this goal.

Over the past months, the Board has redefined and reconfirmed the terms of governance for the affairs of the Society to ensure that the progress made to date will continue into the future. As a Board, we remain committed to enhancing the quality and breadth of services that we provide to the community.

The restructuring process has been challenging to say the least. On a final note, I wish to thank our staff, funders and partners for their patience and continued support over the past year as the Board forged this transition and redefined the policies, goals and structure of the Society. Without this trust and support the progress made this year would not have been possible.

Tom Moore
Chair
Board of Directors

June 2003

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I am pleased to provide this report on Victoria Cool Aids 35th year of operation. Last year brought about fundamental changes for Cool Aid. I thank our staff, board, funders, and donors for their support during this challenging period. Although programming changes are both difficult and exciting, both staff and board are committed to continuing to provide core services to those we are mandated to serve. Last summer, the Society reaffirmed its mandate of providing shelter, housing and community health services. As a result several programs did not fit into this definition and they were closed including the Cool Aid Daycare, Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter and others. I thank the staff who did an incredible job supporting the users of these programs as they dealt with the impacts of the impending closure of these programs.

At the same time, Cool Aid experienced funding reductions and elimination of programs from government including the Cool Aid Employment Services and the Sandy Merriman day program. However, I am pleased to confirm that after extensive consultation with government, the shelter contracts including the Sandy Merriman day program have been extended for one year.

Victoria Cool Aid has moved forward on projects that fit within the mandate. I thank the support that we have received from our funders, the Forensic Psychiatric Services Commission, the Vancouver Island Health Authority and the British Columbia Housing Management Corporation. Johnson Manor is an example of our success in providing housing as part of our continuum of service to our forensic clients. The Community Health Center supported by the health authority is a success in providing multi-disciplinary services including dental services to our at-risk population. Our housing programs in particular have received support from our funders. In collaboration with BC Housing and Vancouver Island Housing Authority, we commenced construction on the Fairway Woods project a 32 unit supportive housing in Langford and planning for the 45 unit supportive housing complex at the Aberdeen Hospital site in Victoria.

As we move forward into 2003, we remain concerned about the impact on our clients by the recent changes in government social and health programs. As a result, we participate on committees and task groups such as the Community Reconstruction Project, Downtown Service Providers group including development of the concept for a Sobering Centre, City of Victoria Committees of Housing and Social Planning Advisories, Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Housing Renewal Association Board. Through these efforts we will continue to work collaboratively to understand and support the needs of our clients.

*Carol Finnie
Chief Executive Officer
June 2003*

HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAMMING

Cool Aid Community Health Centre Another year gone by...

We have celebrated our second year as a multi-disciplinary health centre. During this time, there have been many exciting and moving stories, as our relationships with individuals and the community continues to deepen.

Our definition of health in this setting corresponds to that of the World Health Organization, i.e. that it is not merely the absence of disease, but, rather, that individuals optimize their health by increasing their own control over their physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs. We recognize that all of these areas need to be addressed in order for healing to occur, allowing individuals to improve the quality of their lives.

At a community level, several of our practitioners have participated in organized public events, such as the Victoria premiere of "Fix: the Story of an Addicted City", talk shows about various health issues, and other organized discussions related to addictions, mental health and community concerns. We strive to continue to meet the changing needs of the community that we serve, by increasing our outreach services, expanding our hours, and providing more comprehensive care.

At an individual level, stronger relationships have been established as we gain individual trust. Although there have been many disappointments, there have been many more successes, as we support individuals in their struggle to better their lives, consequently improving their health. There has been an incredible shift for many of our clients, as their personal definition of health has changed. We were used to a "crisis" attitude toward health, when we saw individuals only because there was a serious problem, which needed immediate care and treatment. Many of these same individuals recognize health issues earlier, and even take responsibility by trying to prevent future problems. It is rewarding to see the transformation in an individual who came to us in the "crisis" revolving door, and now visits regularly for monitoring, or just wants a "check up" to make sure everything is well.

Regarding specific issues, such as communicable diseases, it is regrettable that there is still an increase in new HIV and Hepatitis C cases in our community. We continue to support and educate individuals, to optimize their quality of life. We have had successes in coordinating HIV and Hepatitis C studies, enabling certain individuals to have access to treatments and monitoring that they would not have received otherwise.

The dental clinic has seen much success, as they fill a gap in services, which has existed for much too long. The clinic has expanded its hours, and at least 6 dentists have volunteered their own time to work in the clinic. It is our hope that we will continue to grow with and adapt to the clients and community that we serve.

*Irene Haigh-Gidora
Manager, Community Health Services
June 2003*

Community Support

Community Support programs are part of the Community Health Services and includes Forensic Outreach, Aspect Training Works, and the Research, Education, Evaluation & Support (REES) which includes the Community Casual Labor Pool (CCLP) and the Horticulture program. Unfortunately, Cool Aid Employment Services (CAES) lost its funding and was closed at the end of November of 2002.

REES continues to do well providing education and support services to mental health consumers by mental health consumers. Although located near the Eric Martin Pavilion, REES is part of the Victoria Cool Aid Society. In January the Community Casual Labour Pool (CCLP), formerly of CAES, was started as a pilot at REES, geared primarily to mental health clients. The pilot went very well and in April 2003 the CCLP became an ongoing component of REES' services.

Another major activity for Community Support is advocacy in the downtown community. Cool Aid is secretariat to the Downtown Service Providers Group and one of the activities was the development of the proposal for a sobering service for our clients. We are also involved in surveying downtown agencies as well as planning a presentation for the Chamber of Commerce on the needs and services in the downtown.

We participated in training for the Comprehensive Continuous Integrated System of Care (CCISC) initiative of the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) that is working toward the integration of services for clients with concurrent mental health and addictions issues. Over the next year this will assist us and other agencies to become more capable of serving clients who have mental health and addictions issues.

In January of 2003 supportive recovery services was transferred from VCAS to DARS (Drug Alcohol Recovery Services) which became a part of VIHA at March 31, 2003. As our funder said, it was "because we did such a good job" in highlighting and developing supportive recovery services that VIHA felt the services should sit within the Health Authority. As well at March 31, seniors outreach officially concluded and moved to housing services to work toward the opening of Fairway Woods this August.

From forensic services, to mental health and addictions, all agree that the homeless at-risk population is one requiring a great deal of attention. Once gain, outreach staff will continue to advocate, support and act on our clients' behalf.

*Trudy Norman
Coordinator, Community Support
June 2003*

HOUSING PROGRAM

Cool Aid's Housing Program opened in February 1991 in response to the growing numbers of homeless people in our community, and was the first program in Canada that provided a housing model with a supportive element. By focusing on building a sense of community, tenants and staff collaborate to build a supportive living situation and environment that enable tenants to experience personal growth and stability.

Swift House: opened in February 1991, Swift House continues to provide housing in a respectful and non-judgmental way for 26 adults who have been traditionally labeled as hard to house.

Pandora Project: Pandora was the second housing project opened by Cool Aid and has the same client base as Swift House. The Pandora project has turned out to be a model for responsible affordable housing for 26 tenants.

Mike Gidora: Mike Gidora apartments started as a vision of our former financial administrator Mike Gidora. Mike had a dream of possibly being able to build homes for the young working poor in the downtown area of Victoria that would be decent and affordable. We now have 45 units of purposely built, small suite design, affordable housing for low income urban singles. Tenants living in these small suites have found them to be adequate in terms of fitting in with their present lifestyle.

Johnson Manor: Johnson Manor was designed to help break the cycle of eviction for tenants who have had the most difficulty in maintaining safe, affordable housing. Some factors that have influenced the building's success include its central location away from the downtown core, 24-hour on site staffing, and strong partnerships with key stakeholders. Johnson Manor has proven to be a cost-effective model for housing 20 individuals managing co-occurring disorders such as psychiatric and substance related symptoms.

Fairway Woods: Fairway Woods is specifically designed to house 32 homeless and homeless at risk individuals who are now experiencing the added burden of dealing with all of the issues related to aging. We will be serving one meal per day (dinner) in our new dining room, facilitating community development and providing 24 hour seven day a week staffing coverage. Fairway Woods is located on Goldstream Ave. in Langford, and is adjacent to bus service, parks, walkways and easy accessibility to stores and restaurants.

Aberdeen Project: Aberdeen Project is a 45 unit supported living project for seniors built in partnership with BC Housing and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. Aberdeen will provide housing to seniors who have difficulty fitting into regular housing situations and need a higher level of care. VIHA will be providing the personal medical care and we will be providing the housing component and facilitating community development within the building. We hope to open this project in early 2005.

*John Crean
Manager, Housing Services
June 2003*

SHELTER SERVICES

This was a year of transition for shelter services within the Society. Shelter services for the first time became a focussed area of service delivery under one manager. Work has begun to create standardisation and common best practices between Sandy Merriman House and Streetlink and this will be a focus of the coming year.

A huge and ongoing challenge for both shelters is realising a sustainable and adequate level of funding. Last fall Sandy Merriman House was unsuccessful in securing ongoing funding for its day program and the shelter was forced to close during the day. As the only resource for women of its kind in the city, this was a drastic loss to the community. However, through extensive discussions and community support the Ministry of Human Resources, for the first time, included the day program as part of core shelter funding for Sandy Merriman House. Additional support for the day program was received from Vancouver Island Health Authority, United Way and Gaming. We celebrated with a very successful open house as we welcomed women back to the shelter on April 1st on a 24 hour basis. The shelter provides 15 beds and support for an average of 30 women daily through its drop-in program.

Streetlink entered its 35th year of operation. From a hostel for transient youth in 1968 in Fernwood to its present location on Store Street, the shelter has assisted countless men and women in crisis situations. Both shelters have seen a significant increase in the number of clients seeking services and the severity of the issues that they are presenting with. Last year alone the shelter provided over 20,000 bed nights and over 65,000 meals to those most in need in our community. Streetlink not only provides 55 emergency shelter beds, but daytime support including showers, laundry, counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals to those staying at the shelter as well as those who access the service on a drop-in basis. 24-hour access is crucial in both shelters to ensure we are there to meet the needs of our clients when they need us.

We will continue to advocate for our Shelter Services with our primary funder – the Ministry of Human Resources as well as our other funding partners, the Vancouver Island Health Authority and Forensics Services to ensure that this crucial service remains available in our community and is properly funded.

*Don McTavish
Coordinator of Shelters
June 2003*

TREASURER'S REPORT

From a financial perspective this has been a particularly difficult year for the Victoria Cool Aid Society. Early in the fiscal year it became clear that there were significant problems with both revenues and expenditures. In its October 2002 revised budget the Society projected a preliminary deficit of \$359,313 for the balance of the year which, together with additional costs grew to about \$500,000. In addition, Cool Aid faced significant cash flow problems which needed immediate attention. The projected shortfall was the result of a number of factors but was primarily caused by increased operating costs, projected but unrealized revenues and anticipated reductions in government funding.

In order to deal with these difficulties the board commissioned a consulting firm to prepare an organizational redesign of the Victoria Cool Aid Society. This plan, known as the Queenswood report was completed in July 2002 and formed the basis for a board review of the Society's mandate, current operations and future direction. The board review resulted in the closure of the Cool Aid Daycare and the Kiwanis Emergency Youth Shelter and led to other measures to reduce expenditures. In addition, the board successfully sought support from its funders to assist with immediate cash flow problems and to help minimize its projected deficit. The Vancouver Island Health Authority provided significant support, both in managing cash flow, in kind support and a one-time cash contribution of about \$100,000. Forensic Programs and BC Housing Management Corporation assisted with \$15,000 and \$55,000 respectively and the Ministry of Children and Family Development provided an additional one time contribution of \$4,000. Together with a one-time gain of \$142,690 from the sale of the Daycare property, these measures resulted in not only the elimination of the 2002/03 projected deficit but in a small surplus of \$78,928.

Consistent with its reaffirmed mandate the Society has invested this year in the development of supportive housing units thereby increasing its net capital assets from \$192,018 to \$320,327. Other increases in net assets resulted from a change in accounting treatment of replacement reserves and do not significantly affect the Society's financial position.

While it would not have been possible to overcome the financial problems without the support of our funders, the board is especially grateful to Cool Aid's staff, their commitment to the goals of the society, their perseverance in the face of financial difficulties and structural change and their consistently professional and high quality work.

*Thea Vakil
Treasurer, Board of Directors
June 2003*