



*Olympic Vista seniors housing in Saanich is one of two new housing buildings opened this year; the other is Queens Manor, an old Travellers Inn.*

## From Streets and Boats to Swift House

by Sarah Jean Bradley



One of Cool Aid's housing principles is to "hold out hope as long as possible," and Neil Longfield is one example of how important it is to apply this hope for those with mental health and addiction challenges.

*continued on page 7...*



photo: Alison Field, CitySpaces

*The reconstruction of Streetlink will add 23 more suites to Swift House.*

## My REES Experience: A Volunteer's Observations

by Daniel Wallace



A little over a year ago, I walked into Cool Aid's REES Program for the first time. My intention was to enrol in their widely-acclaimed "Every Step Counts" fitness program.

I did enrol, but was asked during the same visit to consider taking a volunteer position, working a half-day per week as a receptionist.

Although I had been unable to work for the

*continued on page 6...*



photo: Anawim House

*REES volunteer Dan Wallace*

## Did You Know?

**Over 10,000**

people were helped by Cool Aid last year.

**225,000**

nutritious meals were served by Cool Aid last year in Housing, Shelter and Health programs.

**37%**

more Cool Aid apartments were added last year to house people without homes (95 new apartments). Another 23 units are under development.

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Victoria Cool Aid Society  
102-749 Pandora Avenue  
Victoria BC, Canada, V8W 1N9  
tel: 250-383-1977 · fax: 250-383-1639  
**www.CoolAid.org** · society@CoolAid.org

## Cool Views #4

A special thanks to Cool Aid's wonderful clients and dedicated employees, volunteers and donors for sharing your stories.

### Contributors

Alan Rycroft  
Chopper  
Christine O'Brien  
Daniel Wallace  
Doug Fraser  
Gerry Williams  
Gillie Easdon  
Hannah Rabinovitch  
Martin Mack  
Sarah Jean Bradley  
Wayne Sheeran

### Photographs & Images

Alison Field (CitySpaces)  
Anawim House  
Jonathon Warren  
Martin Wright  
Michael Walsh  
Mike Lewis  
Sarah Jean Bradley  
Stephanie Hull (Centric Photography)  
Sydney Adair  
Tami Wilson

### Design & Layout

Ken Neal  
iD2 Communications

### Publisher and Editor

Alan Rycroft

### Submissions

volunteer@CoolAid.org  
250-414-4781

### Story Icons



Community Health Services



Supportive Housing



Emergency and Transitional Shelters



All Cool Aid programs

## 225,000 Nutritious Meals Served Last Year



Food is something most of us are lucky enough to take for granted, even when grocery prices go up and stretch our pocketbooks as they have in the last two years. Although food is a basic human right, many people go hungry – in Victoria.

Last year, Cool Aid provided 225,000 nutritious meals for clients at our shelters, seniors in supportive housing, and participants in some of the healthy living programs at the Downtown Community Centre.

Most Cool Aid meals are served to residents in our shelter programs – Rock Bay Landing (which replaced Streetlink), Sandy Merriman House for women, and Next Steps Transitional Shelter. Last year, over 175,000 nutritious meals were served to the shelter residents, three meals daily, and many more sandwiches and snacks were prepared for drop-ins. While meals for the residents are paid for by BC Housing, there is no funding for drop-in meals.

Sandy Merriman House provides 45 women with a healthy lunch each day through their drop-in program, where many women with nowhere to stay have come to depend on the food, showers, laundry, counselling and more. Rock Bay Landing also serves an unfunded, special Saturday

photo: Martin Wright



Mark makes meals at Rock Bay Landing.

lunch as many food services close down on weekends. The cost of these meals is \$35,000 annually.

Cool Aid's housing program now includes three buildings for seniors - in Langford (FairWay Woods), Saanich (Olympic Vista) and Victoria (Hillside Terrace). Tenants in these buildings are served one or two nutritious meals daily – about 40,000 meals per year.

Finally, runners and walkers who participate in Every Step Counts receive a healthy meal after every session, and youth cooking up a storm at the Downtown Community Centre's community kitchen workshops prepare healthy meals to eat and take home along with nutrition knowledge and recipes.

Consider a donation to Cool Aid's food security programs:

- \$75 feeds five women with a nutritious lunch for a week
- \$150 feeds ten for a week
- \$700 provides all the food for all 45 women for 7 days
- \$3,000 covers a full month's food costs at Sandy Merriman House

[www.CoolAid.org/food](http://www.CoolAid.org/food)

# Why I Love Every Step Counts

by Wayne Sheeran



Each time I come to the Every Step Counts running and walking group, I know I can leave behind my daily problems, concerns and issues. I enter into another world where it is safe. A place where I belong.

I am accepted for who I am. No judging. No criticism. It is a time when I am totally free to discover the best that is in me. It is so much fun. I can't wait to get to the group and at the end I do not want to leave.

I experience so many benefits. I have deeper and longer sleeps at night. I have more energy, stamina and endurance. People tell me how healthy I look. My anxiety is reduced. At the age of 64, I am in the best shape of my life. I have made new friends.

Everyone in the Every Step Counts group is supportive and encouraging. We care about each other. We are family. When we walk or run, we never leave anyone behind alone. We are totally inclusive and welcoming to all who come – participants and volunteers. It is a great opportunity to experience fitness, fun and fellowship all at the same time.

I have in my past experienced many failures in attempting to play a variety of team sports. I gave up and stopped trying for many years. Every Step Counts has given me the opportunity to try again, to risk again. Everyone in the group has helped me to experience success and a real sense of accomplishment.

My confidence and self-esteem have increased a lot. I look forward to experiencing

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more and greater physical challenges moving forward from 8K and 10K runs to the half marathon in the future.

I talked to some of the other Cool Aid tenants who are also participants and this is what they told me:

## Bruce

It is a lot better to run with this group than to run in isolation. I enjoy the good food that I normally could not afford.

## Bob

I enjoy the camaraderie.

## Vanessa

I enjoy being outside. I like the conversations. I have better health: my blood pressure is down and I have lost five pounds. I'm in the best shape ever.

## Tim

It is important for me to be with others, to be part of a



*Every Step Counts team starting a run together after warming up*

safe social group. The group makes me accountable to come and be part of something rather than isolating myself.

## Dennis

I enjoy the fellowship: meeting new people and making friends. It gives me encouragement. I like Gillie's smile and her home-made granola.

*Wayne Sheeran is a resident in Cool Aid's Pandora Apartments and a long-time participant with Every Step Counts.*

[www.CoolAid.org/esc](http://www.CoolAid.org/esc)

## Every Step Counts for Women

by Gillie Easdon

Deep into its third year, Every Step Counts, the positive, successful and inclusive walking and running program, is thrilled to announce a new session! Every Tuesday and Friday from 10 -11:30 am, Every Step Counts will offer a women-only run and walk out of Sandy Merriman House sponsored by Bosa Properties.

This is open to residents and non-residents alike. Every Step Counts, founded by the Victoria Foundation, is for people who self-identify with challenges like addiction, mental health, social isolation, poverty and other barriers. For more information, please contact Gillie at 250-595-8619.

THE BOSA PROPERTIES  
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[www.CoolAid.org/esc](http://www.CoolAid.org/esc)

COOLVIEWS #4

Victoria Cool Aid Society Journal

## Poetry Rocks the Landing!

by Hannah Rabinovitch

 Starting this April, Cool Aid's Rock Bay Landing shelter has hosted a weekly writing group: Poetry Rocks. Throughout the summer the group has gained momentum and popularity. Each week new faces join us upstairs, along with a core group whose writing blooms and unfurls each week. We've got a great mix of experienced poets who have been writing for years, and first-time poets who are rolling the balls of their pens for the first time ever.

This spring and summer, our

group has read at several public events. We were featured speakers at the Cool Aid AGM in September, two of our poets were invited to read before Victoria City Council on October 13, and several of our poets have attended and participated in Poetry Open Mics around town.

Poetry Rocks is pleased to announce we will be printing a book of collected poems, edited by Dvora Levin, our amazing teacher and inspiration. We have poems from 20 writers from RBL's Poetry Rocks



Artist: Mike Lewis

"The Appletree Gang" was created by Mike Lewis, a Cool Aid worker for over 30 years.

and another class that Dvora teaches at the PEERS Victoria Resource Society. The books will be out before Christmas, and will be for sale with proceeds going to support this and other arts groups at Cool Aid and PEERS. Call Hannah at 250-383-1951 for more info.

*Hanna Rabinovitch is an Emergency Support Worker with the Rock Bay Landing shelter and a member of Poetry Rocks.*

[www.CoolAid.org/shelter](http://www.CoolAid.org/shelter)

## Sam Charlie - Salt of the Earth

by Gerry Williams

 I first met Sam Charlie around 1993, when I started working at Swift House. Sam was always a trickster and often a barrel of laughs. His health was not very good though, as he suffered from diabetes and he had a poor diet.

My wife Syd and I had met many of Sam's relatives when we lived on float houses and commercial fished in the Broughton Archipelago, where many isolated Kwagewlth villages are located. Travel is by boat or floatplane only and most of the scattered residents and workers in the area know of each other. Sam came from there and has many relatives

there today.

I remember asking Sam why he did not go fishing. He said, "I'm a cement sidewalk Indian now." We started fishing together anyway at Elk, Durrance, Thetis, Langford and Colwood lakes. Sam proved to be a great trout fisherman who shared his skills with staff, fellow tenants and dozens of children and their parents at all of the fishing holes that he loved.

Sam loved living in Langford at Cool Aid's FairWay Woods seniors residence where life was stable and quality meals were available daily. He had a couple of girlfriends there. He passed away in September. Even though he had not lived among

the Kwagewlth people for many years, he was honoured by many of his friends and family at the end.

His warmth and gardening skills are dearly missed by everyone throughout the Cool Aid family.

Sam came from salt of the earth forebears and he lived life that way.

*Gerry Williams is a retired Housing Support Worker.*

[www.CoolAid.org/housing](http://www.CoolAid.org/housing)



photo: Tami Wilson

In loving memory of Sam Charlie (1949-2011)

# Rock Bay Landing

535 Ellice Street

## Poetry Rocks

### Martin Mack

by Martin Mack

I AM WHAT I AM,  
an anti-social alcoholic,  
a child of a great kung fu teacher.  
I am alone.  
I come from a small reserve called Ucluelet.  
I am not a failure.  
We are all a family from another blood line.  
I have a last name that labels who I am.  
I have a dollar in my pocket.  
I have my beliefs inked on my body.

### Meeting My Namesake

by Doug Fraser

There I was doing my thing,  
Head in the garbage can  
Grubby, dressed like a bum  
All alone in the parking lot.  
Up pulls a big shiny Mercedes.  
Out comes the rich lady.  
Fur coat and all.  
Behind her comes her dog.  
“Come along Fluffy,” says she.  
I smirk to myself.  
Out of the can I pop.  
“Hey lady, that’s my name!”

I thought she would have a stroke.  
Her eyes bulged, her jaw dropped.  
She was afraid until I laughed.  
Off she went, nose in the air.

### Let There Be An Ending

by Chopper

Let there be light. Then this morning, I’ll light a match.  
Let this morning bring something worth beginning.  
Let my beginning become never ending.  
Let your ending hold back your sorrow.  
Let the sorrow bleed out and be gone tomorrow.  
Let tomorrow be a breath of freshness.  
Let the air we breathe be clean enough not to cause more pain.  
Let our pain be written in a letter that I’ll be sending.  
Let this letter be a fresh start, without finish or ending.  
Let this ending be the end and the end.

This is the end.

## Paula Miller and the Toonie Group

by Christine O'Brien

 Volunteer extraordinaire is not enough to describe who Paula Miller is and what she has done, and continues to do, for Sandy Merriman House, Cool Aid's shelter for women who are homeless or at risk. (We offer an overnight shelter and also a daytime drop-in program for all women.)

Paula started a Christmas sock drive to make sure all shelter residents had stockings on Christmas. She also arranged for turkeys to be donated for Thanksgiving,

Christmas and Easter dinners.

We receive monthly clothing and money donations from the Toonie-A-Month club that Paula started. We use the Toonie money towards social activities for the residents that many people take for granted, like renting movies and eating popcorn. For a lot of women who have lived on the streets, watching a movie is something they have not been able to do in years. We are able to bring back some "normality" in what can often be a chaotic and unpredictable life.

photo: Stephanie Hull  
(Centric Photography)



Paula enjoys some West Coast scenery with her two children.

Most recently, Paula organized a concert with Jim Byrnes at the Lucky Bar, with proceeds going towards Sandy Merriman House and computers at the Downtown Community Centre. Paula is a wonderful, compassionate person who gives freely of her time, her energy, her humour and her heart. She has made us know that angels do exist.

*Christine O'Brien is the Sandy Merriman House Coordinator.*

[www.CoolAid.org/smh](http://www.CoolAid.org/smh)

## My REES Experience: A Volunteer's Observations continued from page 1...

preceding two years due to health issues, I decided to give it a try, and thus began a new journey for me.

With the opportunity to serve and help others, to train new volunteers, and to work with a committed staff, REES turned out to be the perfect environment for me.

Helping our clients to access the broad range of REES services has given me a real sense of purpose, a real sense of again working in the community and a new understanding of service.

I have also developed an awareness of all the little things that make us so different from each other, and all the big things that unite us as "those in need."

REES is an inspiring place to learn about service to others, to appreciate people for the qualities they have, rather than judge them for qualities they lack.

This past year I have been able to make some progress towards my goal of becoming re-employed and to move into what, for me, is a new field: working with people suffering from mental health and addiction issues, as well as those dealing with homelessness and poverty.

Only two short years ago, my nerves were shot. I could no longer hold a pen – or even focus on a computer screen. I couldn't eat and walking a block was inconceivable.

Today I have reconnected

with many of my skills, have developed a keen interest in a new field, and am actively pursuing a healthier lifestyle.

There are so many people on this journey who literally saved my life, and although I can never repay them, I can try to do the same for others. Each day at REES gives me the opportunity to do just that.

[www.CoolAid.org/rees](http://www.CoolAid.org/rees)

photo: Michael Walsh



Computer access at REES

## From Streets and Boats to Swift House continued from page 1...

Neil suffered through addiction, bodily injury, and a cycle of eviction before he found his niche at Swift House in April 2011. In the 70s, he was hit by a car at 120 kilometres an hour and spent a year in the hospital. Five years ago, he fell into the cold harbour waters, and part of his hip had to be removed and put in his ankle. One leg is now an inch and a half shorter than the other and hurts.

Drinking dulled the pain in his knees but led to a cycle of eviction. He spent three-quarters of a year homeless, pushing a cart and sleeping outside. Finally, Rick, a Downtown Assertive Community Treatment worker helped him get into Cedar Grove, a Cool Aid Housing site near the Gorge. But Cedar Grove did not prove to be the right environment for

Neil and conflicts with others led to his being asked to leave.

Neil was invited to move to Cool Aid's Swift House. He easily settled into Swift House and quickly made it his home. He has lived at Swift for six months and has abstained from drinking for almost a year. When I asked Neil if there was a pivotal moment that made him decide to stop drinking, he said it was the day he turned 60. Turning 60 made him realize he just could not continue living the way he had been.

As Neil settles into Swift House, Gerry Williams, a Senior Residential Support Worker, is moving on and into retirement after working for Cool Aid since 1993. Prior to working for Cool Aid, Gerry used to find people drinking and partying on his boat, which was docked in the

inner harbour. He built a rapport with those folks, who were some of the same people he met at Streetlink shelter, before getting his position at Swift House.

When I asked Gerry what he likes about working for Cool Aid, his immediate response was working with people. He went on to explain that just being available and doing small things over time makes a significant difference in people's lives.

[www.CoolAid.org/housing](http://www.CoolAid.org/housing)



## Leave a Legacy? I'm Not a Millionaire!



When we hear words and phrases like "legacy," "bequest"

or leaving a gift for charity in one's will, a common reaction is: "I can't do that because I'm not rich. I have to look after my children first." And so you should look after your children.

But rest assured – you can still make a meaningful difference to your community – even if you aren't one of Victoria's better known philanthropists. We can all leave a small legacy behind for the community, for the well-being of our grandchildren.

Making a gift in your will to a

charity is very easy. You can:

- choose a fixed amount – like \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$25,000
- leave a percentage of your estate – many pick 5-10%
- designate specific assets, like stocks, bonds, life insurance, or your RRIF or bank account balance
- leave a percentage of the residual of your estate, after specific gifts like your home and the family treasures have been distributed to loved ones

Some gifts can be very tax beneficial – like a gift of appreciated stocks, life insurance or designating a charity as an

RSP, RRIF, insurance or bank account beneficiary. Talk to a professional advisor to make the best decision for you and your family. Plus every gift to charity will result in a tax receipt to reduce your estate's taxes.

If you are considering leaving a gift in your will for Cool Aid, please give Alan Rycroft or Kathy Stinson a call – it helps us understand how you would like your legacy to be used and how your gift can best be honoured and celebrated – or remain anonymous (250-383-1977).

[www.CoolAid.org/bequest](http://www.CoolAid.org/bequest)



## Swiss Natural Gifts of Health



Without the support of Swiss Natural (now totalling \$65,000) there is no way that Cool Aid's over 4,000 patients would be able to access vitamins as part of their health regime – we don't have the money and neither do our patients. Thank you Swiss Natural for your gifts of health!

## Help End Homelessness!

CV4

Consider a monthly donation to the low-income Cool Aid Dental Clinic.

**YES** I would like to make a **MONTHLY** donation of:  
 \$10     \$20     \$30     \$50     other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

please debit my:     chequing     savings     credit card

Start date: \_\_\_\_\_ please include VOID cheque or card #

**YES** I would like to make a **ONE-TIME** donation of:  
 \$50     \$100     \$150     \$250     other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
amount enclosed in form of:     cheque     credit card

Credit card # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_ CSV # \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

## Frontrunners Counts



Before even the first baby step was taken, Rob Reid and his Frontrunners store were behind the Every Step Counts running and walking program, the most successful recreational program in Cool Aid's history. Thanks, Rob, and also key supporters Victoria Foundation and Jawl Foundation.

## The Magnolia Gives Comfort



Several times a year, the Magnolia Hotel and Spa calls Cool Aid with an offer of gently used linens, towels and extra hotel soaps, shampoos and other toiletries. These are passed along for free to our tenants, residents and clients. A special thanks to Magnolia and also to Harbour View, Infinity Cruise Ships, Sidney Pier Hotel, Coast Victoria Harbourside and Regent Hotel.

[www.CoolAid.org/donate](http://www.CoolAid.org/donate)

**Send to:** Victoria Cool Aid Society  
102-749 Pandora Avenue  
Victoria BC, Canada, V8W 1N9

tel: 250-414-4781  
fax: 250-383-1639

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[donate@CoolAid.org](mailto:donate@CoolAid.org)



photo: Sydney Adair

A patient receives dental care at the Cool Aid Dental Clinic.