...And Get A Real Job!
by Christopher Geater

If you’ve ever been tempted to tell a homeless person to “get a job,” you might be surprised to find out how many already have one. In Cool Aid’s shelters 25% of residents have some form of employment.

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Coming Down the Pipeline
by Norman Gidney

They’re calling it a housing pipeline and it’s got three Cool Aid projects in it. The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, which is co-ordinating the region’s efforts to eliminate homelessness by 2018, says the pipeline projects are, “the most viable and valuable to the community.”

In varying degrees, the projects will make use of funding from donors, three levels of government and their sponsor organizations.

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Did You Know?

$18,000 is saved every year by providing just one person who is homeless with an apartment.

360 more Cool Aid apartments are needed to help end homelessness. (In 2012, the Society operated 374 supportive housing apartments.)

$10 million is needed from individuals, companies and foundations to help build 719 modest apartments to end homelessness in the CRD by 2018.

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Meals on Wheels for Seniors

Delicious meals for seniors now are coming out of a refurbished Cool Aid kitchen at Swift House downtown.

It once prepared food for people at the Streetlink emergency shelter, but was surplus space when Rock Bay Landing shelter opened. Now after extensive renovations, chefs are cooking there again.

It’s just about a brand-new kitchen, as some well-used equipment had to be replaced, including the walk-in freezer and refrigerator, dishwasher and plumbing grease trap.

The kitchen will be cooking for the senior residents at three Cool Aid-managed buildings at least one hot meal daily. Hillside Terrace in Victoria has been the first (they get lunch and dinner), with Olympic Vista in Saanich and FairWay Woods in Langford to follow in 2013.

“We’re rolling out the program gradually,” says Cool Aid housing manager John Crean.

Meals had been coming from an outside contractor, and now Cool Aid’s own kitchen is taking over food service, led by Red Seal chef Ron Curran.

Food is cooked in quantity at the new kitchen, then delivered hot in containers to a prep kitchen at each location and served to seniors. “It’s more like a restaurant,” says Crean.

Compliments about the quality of the food have gone up, and Curran and crew get the credit for sourcing good ingredients -- even steak sometimes -- and shopping around for best prices. The money saved by centralizing food preparation is expected to pay for the new equipment within two years.

www.CoolAid.org/food
Art and A Sense of Home
by Johanna Westerneng

At Sandy Merriman House, we are trying to make a difference through our actions, and I feel that art can be such an important part of this positive change. We can provide a safe place where people can express themselves through painting and crafts.

I believe that art can be an integral part of the healing journey. While it can assist with building a positive attitude and self-esteem, or act as physical, emotional and mental therapy, it also helps create a non-confrontational atmosphere.

Then, of course, it can be just a beautiful way to indulge in artistic pleasure. Art has the ability to remind us of the power to innovate; it is an external validation of raw human emotion. It is sharing our own truths.

To be able to find a sense of place, a sense of being through artistic expression, is a gift that is right at the tip of one’s fingers.

Maybe through pencil scratches on paper, splattered paint on canvas, roadside treasures or a ball of wool -- whatever it may be to one person or the other allows for an individual experience that manages to bring people together in warmth, especially through the rainy days of winter.

Together through innovation, together to appreciate moments spent in consideration, and perhaps most importantly, together to enhance and create a sense of place.

I challenge you to look at art through a new lens, look at the value beyond aesthetics, at the sense of community and warm social response that it can create.

Using an artistic medium, one has the ability to think in a different way, a gentle memory and a sweet embrace. A glance at the world through another’s perception, the world is our canvas. All we need are the tools.

Johanna Westerneng is a shelter support worker at Sandy Merriman House.

www.CoolAid.org/shelter
www.CoolAid.org/arts
250.383.1951

Giving A Way of Life for Bloomfield Family
by Christopher Geater

You may already know Michael and Christine Bloomfield for their socks. Since 2007, the Bloomfields have organized donations from McGregor Socks to homeless Victoria residents, which this year will reach a grand total of 58,000 pairs! What you may not know is how a beautiful relationship began and how it is just one of the ways the Bloomfields help Cool Aid.

“We were impressed with what Cool Aid does, but more so when we saw Cool Aid’s generosity about sharing the socks with other agencies,” says Michael Bloomfield. The Bloomfields support a number of community groups in Victoria through donations and time, including Avodah social

continued on page 6...
Varied Voices Get A Say
by Norman Gidney

In a big organization like Cool Aid -- with 14 buildings, 225,000 meals served in a year, 1,552 shelter residents -- sometimes it’s a challenge for the board of directors to stay in touch with the people Cool Aid serves. And since Cool Aid is definitely not a “top down” kind of organization, the board has grappled with the question: how do we involve the people Cool Aid serves in governing the organization? The result is something called Client Voice.

Some of the volunteers who sit on Cool Aid’s board, together with housing tenants, clinic visitors and shelter users, gather for lunch and conversation. For directors, the focus is on listening to the Cool Aid community. There have been three get-togethers, open to anyone, one each for housing tenants, shelter residents and Health Centre patients.

“The whole idea was born out of the board’s desire to create a way to connect with and get advice, a point of view from the clients,” says Brad Clark, who chairs Cool Aid’s board. It’s hoped Client Voice will answer the two big questions: how do you see yourself participating in Cool Aid and what services should Cool Aid provide.

At the meetings, there are a few gripes voiced, says Clark, but, “you don’t get too many people who complain.” Cool Aid clients may have issues, but are generous with praise for the organization and front-line staff. “It’s been pretty affirming,” he says.

Kathy Stinson, executive director of Cool Aid, who’s been a regular at the meetings, sums up: “The board has a better sense of who our clients are and have built a bridge to them.”

For 2013, Client Voice will carry on with three meetings involving the different Cool Aid client groups, talking with members of the board and senior staff.

Photos on this page were taken by Shirley Coon, who was born in Kingcome Village and now lives in Victoria in Cool Aid housing. She is a regular participant in many community agencies and programs, including Cool Aid’s Downtown Community Centre.

Shirley carries her digital camera around with her everywhere. She got interested in photography and shared this outdoor activity with her mentor, Melanie Siebert, whom she met through Cool Aid’s Mentoring Project. It has blossomed into a full-time passion.

Shirley is excited to share her photos through all-occasion greeting cards and calendars. Contact the artist at coon.13@hotmail.com.

“I am living in an environment where I feel I have a voice that is valued.”

– Larry Reed
Pandora tenant
and Client Voice
Participant

www.CoolAid.org/govern
Jerry McBride has seen the downside of homelessness. In the summer of 2010, he resided at the Foundation House where residents get help with addiction-related issues.

Jerry wasn’t managing well in dealing with people and soon found himself on the streets. “The street is not a safe place. I was highly vulnerable. I was more scared than I’ve ever been,” recalls Jerry of his experience. “So I reached out for Cool Aid’s Resources, Education, Employment and Support Program (REES) and met Larry Stevens, and was finally able to get into the Rock Bay Landing (RBL) shelter by November 2010.”

While at RBL, Jerry worked with Client Service Worker Vytas. Using a goal-oriented approach towards independent living, Jerry managed to get into the transitional program at the shelter where he had his own suite and resided for 14 months.

During this time Jerry tapped into the Men’s Trauma Centre at Our Place where he became involved with Narcotics Anonymous.

Today Jerry has his own place at Swift House, the Cool Aid apartments in downtown Victoria with a “housing first” philosophy that grew out of the frustration with seeing the same people repeatedly return to the emergency shelter program.

Swift House provides supportive housing and tenants receive help with issues relating to addictions and mental health or even things like time management.

“I also take part in programs like fishing or cooking at Cool Aid’s Downtown Community Centre, where I’ve been involved ever since my days at Rock Bay Landing.”

When asked about his disability Jerry says: “it resides inward, creates hurdles in building social relations, and as a result I was isolated.”

Jerry is grateful to Larry Stevens and Vytas, who along with the Cool Aid Health Centre on Johnson Street, “worked with me to get organized for the Persons With Disability application, which I eventually managed to obtain.”
Cool Views #5
Victoria Cool Aid Society Journal

Giving A Way of Life for Bloomfield Family continued from page 3...

action group at Congregation Emanu-El.

When asked about his motivation, Michael answers: “It comes from our Jewish tradition of philanthropy and healing the world!”

“Those of us who live lives of good fortune know how good it feels to be part of the community, showing gratitude for our blessings by sharing with those less fortunate. Life is made more meaningful because of that.”

On a modest household income, the Bloomfields take a proactive approach budgeting how they contribute to their community. “Make it a priority,” advises Michael, “and plan ahead, don’t wait to see what’s left over. And get involved with charities you support. Get to know the organization and people. Volunteer your time. Show your kids how important it is to live in a kind, caring community and develop compassion in them too.”

“We find the staff at Cool Aid committed and dedicated to what they do, and that’s why we’ve become regular supporters,” says Michael. “When we wrote our new will, we also designated Cool Aid as a beneficiary.”

Cool Aid is grateful for their generous support but the Bloomfields consider it a worthwhile investment: “A healthy, prosperous community is the best place to live in, so we’re investing in that for ourselves and the future.”

www.CoolAid.org/bequest
250.414.4781

Coming Down the Pipeline continued from page 1...

Cool Aid’s proposals are:

Cottage Grove Manor, 43 units of supportive housing for seniors in a new Saanich building on Quadra Street, similar to Olympic Vista apartments.

Cedar Grove, the redevelopment of 21 units in a former Gorge Road motel into 60 suites of supportive housing.

Central Gardens, 140 apartments for low-income singles and some supportive housing. To be developed from the 147-room Central Care seniors nursing home at 844 Johnson Street currently operated by the Baptist Housing Society.

Top of the pipeline list is Hope Centre on West Coast Road in Sooke, sponsored by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and M’akola Housing Society. It has 25 affordable rental apartments, offices, a thrift store and an alternate school.

Rosalie’s Village is number three on the pipeline list. It’s a project of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and will build 41 new housing units with a daycare centre. Target groups for Rosalie’s are homeless young single mothers and children, and older single women facing homelessness due to domestic abuse.

A Cool Aid “End Homelessness” capital campaign will be launched to generate the $10 million needed for the 360 new Cool Aid apartments to be built by 2018.

www.CoolAid.org/housing
While it’s true that many experiencing homelessness have mental or physical health issues that preclude a full-time job, they are also keen to do what they can to earn a living. Wendy Stone at Cool Aid’s Community Casual Labour Pool is essential in helping connect these people with employers who can use some extra help.

“The labour pool is a real credit to the organization. I am very happy with the workers. They will be successful wherever they work,” says Kevin Jones of Guard Roofing.

The labour pool assesses the suitability of both clients and employers to ensure a good match. “We provide the most suitable worker for each job and get the job done well,” says Wendy. Most jobs start with “casual” work and the relationships and experience these jobs bring are often instrumental in finding more secure employment.

Part of the REES Program (standing for Resources, Education, Employment and Support), the labour pool is always looking for more employers willing to help someone in need get back into the work force.

To refer an employer or worker to the Community Casual Labour Pool, contact:

Wendy Stone, 250.388.9296
www.CoolAid.org/labour
www.CoolAid.org/rees

Cool Aid’s New Homes

Two new Cool Aid housing developments have opened in Victoria – buildings that come with a history.

Swift House

Behind the doors of Swift House, 49 people now live in supportive apartments after a $2.9 million renovation, most of it funded by the province of BC. It started life as a Swift’s meatpacking plant at the edge of Victoria’s Chinatown some time before the 1940s, when streetcars used to rumble by.

Three more storeys were added over the years. The first and second floors were the busy, crowded Streetlink shelter for two decades and have been “completely gutted,” says Cool Aid housing manager John Crean.

At first, it looked like 15 apartments could be laid out. Creative planning, including a second-floor light well, allowed us to configure 23 studio and one-bedroom apartments, averaging 410 square feet. “It had a lot of challenges,” admits Darrel Jensen, the architect.

Outside, except for the new entrance on the corner, Swift House hasn’t changed much. Indoors is a brand-new building with no two apartments the same, and a few with harbour views.

Queens Manor

It opened two years ago as short-term supportive housing, and after a $1.6 million renovation, Queens Manor now has 36 apartments for longer-term residents.

The building at 710 Queens Street was a three-storey Travellers Inn motel before the city of Victoria purchased the building in July 2010 for $1.9 million. Over six months in 2012, the building was renovated one floor at a time to minimize disruption for Cool Aid tenants.

At the official opening, resident Wade Churcott told guests: “I got the word that I had a place to stay, and I cried.” Ottawa picked up $1.5 million of the $5.5-million cost while BC’s share was $2.9 million (including property costs of $1.9 million repaid to the City). BC Housing will also provide a $548,000 annual operating subsidy. The City of Victoria, CRD and United Way covered the remaining costs.

www.CoolAid.org/housing
250.383.1977
End Homelessness Campaign

Consider a monthly donation to end homelessness in the Capital Region by building more homes.

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Thanks to everyone who hosted events like these:

- Wolf/Sheep Arthouse have raised $2,200 through an art exhibit and sale the last two years for the Every Step Counts running and program.
- Students from UVic’s Gustavson School of Business raised over $5,000 through their Chillin’ for Charity events last year to pay for equipment at the Dental Clinic and Community Centre.
- The Lighted Ship Parade put on each December by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority raises money and warm clothing for Cool Aid’s shelter program.
- Lucky Bar and the bands Run Chico Run and Bloody Wilma raised $1,300 for Sandy Merriman House before we even knew the night club event had happened!

www.CoolAid.org/donate
250.414.4799

Very Cool Events

Two tenants at Swift House.

photo: Sarah Jean Bradley

Wixxen.jpg

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