50 Years of Community Service
by Helen Edwards

Over the past 50 years, Cool Aid has grown from a shelter for travelling youth to a multi-faceted approach to ending homelessness while providing necessary supports. It was originally an organization run by young people for young people. After obtaining permission from the Cool Aid group operating in Vancouver, the Victoria organizers took the name and obtained a phone number that is still used today.

As the need for more shelter space became obvious, operations were moved to the Belfry Theatre at 1900 Fernwood Road. In 1970, the medical clinic was set up with volunteer professionals and two years later, the first dental clinic was established.

In 1976, Cool Aid was incorporated as a society. Between 1983 and 1987, the hostel clientele changed from travelling youth to Cool Aid’s Big Picture

12,000 people helped annually by one or more Cool Aid services including health care, housing, emergency shelter, and support services such as employment, healthy activities and volunteering.

457 people housed and supported in 14 apartment buildings, with another 166 apartments under development.

315 caring employees working to help people improve their lives across 17 locations in Langford, Victoria and Saanich.

50 years of building homes, lives and community in partnership with others.

continued on page 7...

50th Anniversary Homecoming Gala
by Katie Lauder

Join Cool Aid in celebrating 50 Years of Service, at our Homecoming 50th Anniversary Gala on Saturday, May 26th, 2018, from 6:30 to 10 pm at Ship Point on the Inner Harbour. In 2017, together we raised $93,000 for Support Services and new housing at the first Homecoming gala, thanks to our generous sponsors, guests and donors, including a donation match challenge of up to $25,000 from Andrew Beckerman.

continued on page 7...
Housing Development Update

by Alan Rycroft

In 2013, Cool Aid made the very ambitious decision to help end homelessness in our community by almost doubling the number of apartments we operate – 360 more by 2018! In late 2017, we have made considerable progress on our goals to house and support many more tenants who are at risk, with apartments for 261 people now opened or under development. Contributions from many generous donors combined with strong support from local, regional and provincial governments, have allowed Cool Aid to:

- Open 123 apartments for seniors who have been homeless.
- House 45 people experiencing homelessness in buildings with high levels of support. These apartments were vacated by long-term tenants whose needs are lower than in the past due to progress towards their goals.
- Move forward on developing new housing for 138 individuals who are homeless or in need of affordable housing.

At 210 Gorge Road East (Cedar Grove), Cool Aid will be adding 50 affordable housing apartments to our growing portfolio – expanding beyond our traditional focus on housing for people with the most challenges in their lives (supportive housing) into also preventing homelessness for folks who just need a break on the high rents of Victoria.

Why is Cool Aid so focussed on housing and long-term solutions to some of the most vexing challenges in our community? I’ll let Jerry, one of our tenants, answer that question for us…

Jerry was kicked out of a recovery house in 2010 – and suddenly, as many Cool Aid clients will tell you – found himself homeless. Jerry worked with Larry Stevens at REES Support Services and started off with stays at Cool Aid’s Rock Bay Landing Shelter. “It built up… I was homeless and I had to figure out how to get by. Larry would sit down and talk with me about solutions to combat my homelessness.” From Rock Bay, Jerry continued to work with Larry and a client service worker named Vytus, who helped him to move on to a transitional shelter, and then finally, into an apartment at Swift House.

Jerry was able to increase his income, work on overcoming his addictions, and has gotten his life back. “Today I am still at Swift House… Larry Stevens, Vytus and the staff of Cool Aid have been a huge part of my journey!”

CoolAid.org/housing
Founder Reflections
by Lynn Curtis

Cool Aid’s Early Days and Looking Ahead

Fifty years ago I was part of a group of young people sitting around a table discussing plans for our newest group projects. This was a weekly meeting of the Victoria Youth Council. We were an interesting assortment of students, activists, hippies, entertainers and children of the employed.

Anyone who wanted to attend could and participation changed from week to week depending on the agenda. Projects varied: who would make the signs for the peace rally next Wednesday; how could we raise the money to rent a house; who would like to work on the latest publication or prepare the next musical event.

One week the topic was the number of visiting and local youth who needed a place to stay or other help. After a lengthy discussion, consensus was reached and the idea of Cool Aid began.

Those who were most excited about finding solutions started to organize the next day. This was a longer-term project than usual, but it was approached in the usual week-by-week way.

A phone was installed in the living room of one of the member’s ($8.35 a month) and promotional stickers were pasted onto public phone booths (pre-cell phone!). Calls came in, volunteers answered, and issues were dealt with according to the caller’s needs. Things gradually grew from there.

Cool Aid is much larger now, but it has retained some of that original spirit. A diverse number of issues are dealt with and each is being worked on by people who have a particular passion to see improvement in that area. New ideas and solutions are encouraged and experiments are attempted. Sometimes they are successful and sometimes not. Learning continues.

It would be wonderful if the involvement of those who currently seek help from Cool Aid increases, so that they can gradually help themselves and each other, and also help shape the future direction of the organization. If we are really lucky Victoria might develop a stronger general sense of community over the next 50 years, so that we all become involved in caring for our fellow citizens. I certainly hope so.

The Evolution of Cool Aid Health Care
by Grey Showler

When Dr. Joe Haegert started Cool Aid’s Free Medical Clinic in 1970, I don’t think he could have imagined the impact that decision would have for thousands of people in Victoria struggling with their physical and mental health. His desire to provide health care for youth with nowhere else to turn spurred the growth of health services at Cool Aid, culminating in the opening of the Cool Aid Community Health Centre in 2001, by Irene Haigh-Gidora and Dr. Joe’s colleague, Dr. Chris Fraser. Our medical services have grown from the efforts of a single physician into a multidisciplinary team of 50 health and dental providers. The Health Centre now serves over 7,000 patients annually with primary health and dental care, all with a philosophy of ensuring client dignity and working to meet client needs - wherever they are in their lives.

Along the way, the Health Centre moved from the basement of the Belfry, to the cozy confines on Swift Street, to its

continued on page 6...
Learning From Our Clients
by Nicolas Methot

What does “client engagement” mean? It often depends whom you ask. For health care employees, it can mean increased client buy-in for their own health needs, but for housing staff it can mean increased attendance at activities, programs or classes.

In my role as Cool Aid’s Client Engagement Facilitator through REES Support Services, I’ve found that the most important aspect of engagement is in supporting clients to be heard and respected. My end goal is finding and supporting client partners that Cool Aid can rely upon to help guide our decision making.

Now, seven months into this role, funded by the Victoria Foundation, I am able to see where Cool Aid’s largest areas of improvement have been. Almost every housing and shelter site is now running regular tenant meetings where tenants are given an opportunity to voice feedback and hear answers to their questions from site staff and managers. I often find myself contending with tenants who know the meeting agenda and past meeting minutes better than I do, and who are happy to challenge me when agreed upon actions...
Towards Health & Well-Being Through Cultural Community: A Learning Journey

by Kathy Stinson

Cool Aid and the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness have embarked on a pilot project -- Towards Health & Well-Being Through Cultural Community. Alongside the men and women whose lives we are helping to improve, we are learning together as we go. The goal of the project is to ensure that 20 Indigenous people who have not been well served by community housing options can be housed and supported.

We believe this can be achieved by surrounding them in a culturally supportive environment: one that is full of traditional elements of food and music and art; that includes caring Elders as part of the support team; that includes Indigenous support staff; that includes outings to the land; that includes making connections back to families and communities of origin; that includes sharing and ceremony; that includes listening, laughter and love.

There is a deep commitment from all of us to keep these new tenants housed, to work through any challenges. Every one of us who has come in contact with this project from front line staff to our management team has been enriched. Staff have a deeper understanding of issues faced by Indigenous people. The project is inspiring more outside-the-box thinking. There is more networking and collaboration with Island Health teams and other agencies.

We have also added an Indigenous support worker as part of the team to be a bridge in helping tenants and staff relate better with each other. We have seen first-hand the value of also including Elders:

- provide grounding for the program
- keep it at a human level - remind us why we are there in a gentle, meaningful way
- in feeding the body, they also feed the soul
- they are an anchor and represent the importance of family – as mother/auntie, father/uncle figures

Thanks to our partnership with the Aboriginal Coalition, Cool Aid is learning how to deliver services differently; how to provide cultural training to our staff; and to provide housing and support for our Indigenous brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness in a culturally safe and appropriate way that truly meets their unique needs. This partnership project with the Aboriginal Coalition is incredibly important to Cool Aid’s evolution. Fran and Coreen, Aunty Glo and Fred, Bernice and Jenna, Jessica and Diana are our teachers; every member of the cohort family is also our teacher. We recognize that we can be slow learners at times and we thank our teachers for their patience.

from the last meeting are not followed through with on time. I personally welcome these challenges: as a fallible human being, I cannot claim to always know the right answer or to be able to make the right call under pressure.

My hope is that client engagement will ultimately mean an environment where both staff and clients can openly share and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses. The sharing of knowledge and information through regular tenant meetings is the first step in this relationship.

Looking forward, the next step is recognition and support of the many skills and strengths of our clients.

Cool Aid is already seeing the fruits of this approach through the enlistment of many skilled client volunteers at Rock Bay Landing’s Overdose Prevention Unit.

I am excited to see what more we will achieve in the future under the guidance of our clients!
Gentlemen Lose Gorgeous Beards

Five gentlemen offered their glorious manes for a good cause in 2015 and 2017. Last year, they made the “ultimate sacrifice” of their beards. More dollars were voted towards shaving the beards than towards saving them. In total, $6,435 was raised for REES Support Services through this unique and fun initiative.

Pets in Good Hands with SAFARS

Thanks to the good work of Margarita Dominguez and the generous supporters of SAFARS (Sooke Animal Food & Rescue Society), pets at Cool Aid’s shelters and Mount Edwards Court are well fed. Although most of our clients would sooner feed their pets than themselves, the loving kindness of SAFARS volunteers and donors ensures that everyone has enough to eat. SAFARS has been supporting Cool Aid clients’ pets since 2014. Also, a Pets In Need Endowment Fund was established in 2017, thanks to a generous bequest from Carl Young.

The Evolution of Cool Aid Health Care

current home in the Access Health heritage building at 713 Johnson Street. Unfortunately, as the Health Centre has grown, so has the need for its interdisciplinary primary health care services. The past 48 years have brought a constant set of challenges like the HIV/AIDS epidemic, hepatitis C epidemic, rising rates of mental illness and substance use, and the current overdose crisis. The Health Centre has never shied from meeting these challenges head on and now provides:

- world class care for people living with HIV
- one of the largest community-based hep C programs in Canada
- on-demand treatment for opiate use
- and, of course, at the heart of it all, Dr. Joe’s philosophy of providing primary care to those who need a little extra help

The Cool Aid Community Health Centre team has used our experience to participate in leading-edge research and are recognized internationally for our approach to integrating primary care with treatment for infectious disease, mental health and substance use challenges. Our philosophy is that our patients should be able to receive as much of their care under one roof as possible, reducing barriers.

Our work is not done yet as we look to fill critical gaps like palliative care for people who are homeless, chronic pain management, and health services for Victoria’s urban Indigenous population. All with Dr. Joe’s philosophy that every door is the right door; and everyone deserves home, health and opportunity.
Homecoming 50th Anniversary Gala  ...continued from page 1

Homecoming will be a magical night under the stars, with guests enjoying comfort food and drinks, while dancing, mingling, networking and bidding on auction items.

Enjoy delicious local food and drinks under a clear, heated tent with views of the Inner Harbour including the sunset and starry night. The tent is set up as a “house” with various rooms to explore and relax in. Bid on exciting silent and live auction items themed for your home, warm up next to the outdoor fireplace, or dance the night away to fun tunes by live bands, all while supporting a great cause. Everything is included in the $125 ticket price.

To help celebrate our landmark anniversary, Cool Aid history will be displayed throughout the tent, from photos to articles to videos, and a few other 50th Anniversary surprises.

CoolAid.org/homecoming

50 Years of Community Service  ...continued from page 1

the “hard to house” and “homeless.” In 1991, services were moved from Fernwood to a purpose-built building on Swift Street. The Streetlink building (now Swift House) provided 55 emergency shelter beds in two- and three-bedroom units. The medical facility on the main floor and large interior meant that clients did not have to line up on the street for food and beds. Twenty-six apartments were also available.

In the 1990s, Cool Aid expanded its services with Sandy Merriman House for women at risk, the Pandora Project with 32 affordable housing units, and eight short-term units for youth, the Downtown Community Centre, and Mike Gidora Place at 749 Pandora Avenue with 45 supportive housing apartments for tenants.

REES Support Services was added in 1999 to assist clients with mental health and addiction challenges on the basis that, given proper supports, these citizens could make contributions to society. The Casual Labour Pool provides workers for short-term employment with no fees charged to either the employer or the worker.

As the need for services grew, Cool Aid worked with funders and community groups to increase what they could do. In the 2000s, seniors were housed in FairWay Woods in Langford and Hillside Terrace on Hillside Avenue. With AIDS Vancouver Island, Cool Aid acquired the former Bingo Hall property at 713 Johnson Street for the Community Health Centre.

Opened in 2009, it brought all the medical and dental services under one roof with double the space of the old clinic on Swift.

When the Rock Bay Landing shelter on Ellice Street was opened in 2010, the former Streetlink site was converted to provide 49 modest apartments while the old kitchen was upgraded and became the central hub for the preparation of meals for seniors housing.

Other major housing projects included Cedar Grove, Queens Manor, Olympic Vista built with modules from athlete housing from the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, and Cottage Grove in Saanich, offering supportive housing for seniors.

The work continues today with the opening of the doors to Mt. Edwards Court for senior housing and the recent approval of an expansion. The former Tally Ho hotel on Douglas is to be converted into a 52-room supportive housing facility and Cedar Grove is ready for a major expansion of 61 more affordable and supportive apartments.

Cool Aid has come a long way in 50 years, but the need for their services has never been greater. It is only by working together that we may, indeed, put an end to homelessness.

CoolAid.org/history
Poetry in Motion - Arleen Paré

on this morning of agendas & coffee cups
I cannot guarantee that face across the table
is not the face of the Virgin Mary

oval smooth-shaved as an egg
with only shadow of shadow
along his curving jaw
calm as philosophy
glasses rimless sincere
I would let him pray for me

our shelter, s/he is saying, is barrier-free-----we turn away no one; each night when our beds are filled we call
Salvation Army or Catholic Charities
eyes closed: they come back to us & back to us, s/he says, . . .
those men

-- excerpt from Paper Trail by Arleen Paré

by Katie Lauder

Arleen Paré is the author of five books of poetry and prose, including her first book Paper Trail, which won the City of Victoria’s Butler Book Award, and Lake of Two Mountains, which won the 2014 Governor General’s Award for Poetry.

Arleen’s path to writing began in an unusual way. “I began writing directly after completing an MA at UBC,” says Arleen. “Somehow, I had enjoyed the experience of writing my MA thesis enough to want to carry on with another writing project, and decided I could start to write a novel (after all, there would be no requirement for citations) and so I began the next day, writing a few pages every day before work.”

Prior to her writing career, Arleen worked as a social worker for almost three decades, first in schools in Montréal, and then in Family Services, for the Ministry of Children and Families, and mental health housing in Vancouver. While at Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services, Arleen worked to develop and maintain quality housing for people with mental health issues.

It is here that Arleen first heard of Cool Aid, initially by reputation, as an organization that was providing housing and other services for people in Victoria, and then by meeting Cool Aid staff at provincial housing meetings.

Arleen met Board Member Drew Mildon at a writers’ party, and when he learned of her background in social work, he asked her to join the Cool Aid Board of Directors. “I thought I might have some useful background (in mental health housing) to offer to the Board,” says Arleen. Arleen has served as a Director on Cool Aid’s Board since 2012, and is currently Secretary of the Board.

But Arleen doesn’t just give her time to Cool Aid, she is also a generous monthly donor. Arleen believes, as Cool Aid does, that we must provide Housing First. “Although there are many excellent health, employment, and recreational programs at Cool Aid, keeping people safe and housed is at the heart of Cool Aid services,” says Arleen.

Why does Arleen support Cool Aid? “Helping people on our own streets is particularly important. There is such need in the world, so many competing ways we can contribute, but local is close to us all.”

CoolAid.org/govern