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Regaining Hope through Healthcare
Fiona was 40 years old when she received the diagnosis that would forever change her life. Spinal arthritis, a progressive disease that can cause paralysis to one side of the body, known as Hemiplegia, meant she could no longer stand or walk without supportive devices. This permanent disability eventually put an end to her career as a teacher, and without an income, it wasn’t long before she was in danger of becoming homeless.

Growing up in a military family, Fiona attended schools all over the world, including elementary school in Singapore. In her early 20s she came to Canada, from England, where she was born, and earned a degree in Education at UBC. After graduating, she began her career as a high school teacher and within a few years, was promoted to head of the teaching department where she taught history, English, geography, civics and religion.

Being an educator was an incredibly rewarding career for Fiona. She was inspired everyday by her students’ eagerness to learn, making her years as a teacher some of the happiest of her life.

While reaching up to open a cupboard one day, Fiona lost control of her muscles and fell to the ground. She was unable to move her limbs on one side of her body, and after numerous tests and doctor appointments, it was confirmed that she had arthritis of the spine causing Hemiplegia and this condition would be permanent.

Fiona was at a loss for how to cope with such a devastating life change but was determined not to let the disability take over completely. She continued to teach, hiding the severity of her illness from her students and others. Fiona managed for a time and recalls leaning against a wall or desk while teaching so she wouldn’t fall over. But coping with the illness and trying to hide it took a toll on her mental health as well. Eventually, she had to give up the job she loved so much.

While Fiona had experienced depression in the past, her debilitating illness and the loss of her career was more than she could handle.

“I completely lost my sense of self. I was not a teacher anymore. I was not able to walk properly anymore. Who was I?”

Without an income to support herself, it didn’t take long before her savings ran out and she could no longer afford to pay rent. With nowhere else to go, she landed at Cool Aid’s Next Steps transitional shelter, and while there, the shelter staff helped her apply for disability benefits and find permanent housing. This was one of the most difficult times of Fiona’s life, but the caring staff at Cool Aid helped her get through it.

Fiona’s health condition continued to deteriorate and she had seen a number of doctors in search of someone who could treat her condition, both physically and mentally. It wasn’t until she was referred to Cool Aid’s Community Health Centre that she found Cool Aid physician, Dr. Fraser Black, who was able to treat her with the care she needed. She was also referred to the Health Centre’s resident counsellor who helped address her depression and
come to terms with losing her career. Fiona now has all her healthcare needs met through Cool Aid including group therapy, primary healthcare and dental care. She’s thankful to the staff at the Community Health Centre for putting her needs first.

“Cool Aid has been amazing. I can’t be sure that I would still be here if it wasn’t for the counselling and health care I got at the Community Health Centre.”

Now that Fiona is getting the care and support she needs, she likes to keep busy. She is a Volunteer Disability Advocate assisting people with disabilities and she also volunteers for Cat’s Cradle Animal Rescue where she fosters cats in palliative care. When she’s not busy helping others, Fiona does many crafts including needlepoint and making adorable clay animals that she gives away as gifts—mostly to the staff at the Community Health Centre!

If Fiona could have one wish? “I would love to have a job. An office job doing administration would be wonderful if it could accommodate my mobility issues.”

While Fiona is living with uncertainty about the progression of her illness, she is confident that Cool Aid will be there to help her every step of the way.

CEO’S MESSAGE

Many people already know that Cool Aid helps by housing and supporting people, but a major part of our work also includes providing an extensive array of health services.

Fiona is just one of 4,500 patients we help every year at the Community Health Centre at 713 Johnson Street. Like her, many of our patients have multiple and chronic health conditions.

Cool Aid’s community health programs include primary health care for people experiencing mental health and addiction challenges, full dental service for people who are on income assistance, plus pharmacy services that provide affordable prescription and over-the-counter medications. Our 50 medical staff include physicians, nurses, counsellors, dentists, dental hygienists and much more.

Beyond these patient services, Cool Aid physicians and nurses are world leaders in HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and palliative care research and treatments.

Your compassionate support of Cool Aid ensures that people like Fiona are getting the care they need. Thank you for supporting a healthy community.

Gratefully,

Kathy Stinson, CEO
**SUMMER WISH LIST/NEEDS**

- Hats, sunglasses, sunscreen, backpacks, lip balm
- Sports and kindergym equipment for the Downtown Community Centre
- Donations to support dental care
- More things we need: CoolAid.org/goods

**VOLUNTEER AT COOL AID**

- Help at Sandy Merriman House women’s shelter
- Volunteer at Rock Bay Landing shelter
- Coach and mentor at the Downtown Community Centre
- See all opportunities at: CoolAid.org/volunteer

**CONSIDER A GIFT IN YOUR WILL**

Many people are able to make their most impactful donation through a gift in their will. By naming Cool Aid as a beneficiary, you are leaving a legacy that will make a difference in the lives of people in need for years to come. If you’d like to learn more about leaving a gift in your will, gifts of securities or any other donation question, please contact: Lori Angelini at langelini@CoolAid.org or 250-414-4799

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**COOL AID ANNUAL HEALTH STATS**

- **681** patients helped with opioid addiction treatments
- **43,755** medical and dental visits
- **114** patients cured of hepatitis C

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**WELCOME ABOARD!**

We’d like to thank our newest corporate partners for their commitment to help end homelessness!

**Butler Concrete and Aggregates** has been serving South Vancouver Island since the early 1940s. Giving back to the local community is a big part of their corporate philosophy and many local causes benefit from the company’s generosity.

**Innov8 Digital Solutions** is BC’s largest independently owned and operated office equipment sales and service organization. The company feels strongly about supporting important causes that play a part in strengthening our communities.

**Peninsula Co-op** is a Vancouver Island based cooperative with its core business in grocery, petroleum and convenience. Last year, Peninsula Co-op donated over $500,000 to 300 local community groups and initiatives.

**Roll.Focus Productions** is proud to offer cutting-edge video production services to businesses and organizations on Vancouver Island and across Canada. They also generously support and give back to many local causes.

**Galaxy Motors** offers more than great prices on over 650 used vehicles, it’s a local dealership that cares about the community. Each year, Galaxy Motors supports numerous charity programs and fundraisers for worthy causes.

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Peninsula Co-op staff at your service.