



PEOPLE OF

CoolAid

Victoria Has a Safe Home ▶ and Hope

“Everything just kind of fell apart,” Victoria says, remembering the moment of deepest pain in her life.

Victoria spent much of her childhood moving from place to place with her parents. Her younger days were unsettled, and not just because of the moves. Her parents often fought, and ultimately split up. When Victoria was 15, she made her way back to the city that’s her namesake.

In spite of the turmoil of her younger years, Victoria managed to build a life for herself. She worked hard and focused on providing a good home for her own daughter.

Then, four years ago, the unthinkable happened. Her daughter tragically passed away at just 16 years of age.

“My whole world turned upside down,” Victoria whispers, “I just couldn’t do it anymore.”

Victoria was blindsided by grief, falling into a debilitating depression. She eventually turned to substance use to numb the deep pain of her daughter’s loss. Within months, she’d lost her job, her home, and her family to the horror of addiction.

She found herself on the streets, struggling to get by. She had no idea where to turn for support. But thanks to donors



like you, Cool Aid found *her*.

First, she was provided with a tent and other life-saving supplies, to survive harsh days and nights on the street.

And then, the moment that marked a turning point in Victoria’s life: she was offered a room at the new supportive housing project at the Comfort Inn across from Topaz Park.

“I couldn’t believe it. I really didn’t. It felt too good to be true.”

Thanks to this partnership between Cool Aid, Our Place, BC Housing, and other local organizations, Victoria has a safe, warm home for the first time in years.

She and over 60 other vulnerable men and women

now have the peace of mind and stability of a room of their own, as well as hot meals, medical services, and addiction counselling.

“Family couldn’t help me. I couldn’t help myself. But Cool Aid is helping me.” Victoria smiles.

She’s in a place where she can get her life back on track.

“It can feel like there’s no way out,” she says, “and then, someone comes along and gives you this and loves you. And I have people to reach out to, and everyone looks out for each other. It’s incredible.”

Thank you for everything you do to help neighbours like Victoria find home and hope again. ■

Safe, Sheltered, and Supported—Thanks to You



At this time last year, we were living in a completely different world. Who could have predicted the challenges we've faced since then?

Life was already hard enough for our neighbours experiencing poverty, homelessness, and chronic mental and physical illness.

The pandemic has made things even more of an uphill battle for many.

Between job losses, reduced social supports, and sudden isolation, COVID-19 drove many vulnerable people in our community to the edge.

Thank goodness for the compassion of supporters like you. Your generosity has kept men, women, and families safe, sheltered, and supported, month after month.

You've provided safe, affordable housing; life-saving health and social services; and nutritious food to those who need it most—especially during the dark, cold winter. You've reached out to show isolated seniors that they're not alone.

Over the holidays, you embodied the true spirit of the season, giving precious moments of joy by donating over \$52,000 for gift cards so that people living on very limited income would have a gift to open on Christmas day and something special to eat.

It's quite simple. Every day, you're changing and saving lives in so many ways.

I cannot thank you enough for caring for our neighbours in need through even the darkest times. I know that the people we serve are so grateful for your help.

Please, keep caring for them in the months to come, as we continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic. Together, we must ensure that no one in Greater Victoria is left behind.

Thank you once again for your generosity and compassion. We couldn't do it without you.

With my deepest gratitude,

Kathy Stinson
Chief Executive Officer

Your Generosity at Work ▶ Here's how you made a difference over the last year:



44,215

medical
and dental
appointments



710

people
permanently
housed



7,377

grocery gift cards
to feed hungry
neighbours



352,000

meals served

You Gave Sarah Back Her Smile

Healthy teeth are something that many of us take for granted. But for people experiencing poverty, homelessness, addiction, or chronic mental health issues, dental problems are all too common.

Missing and damaged teeth, cavities, gum disease, and other dental issues can wreak havoc on a person's health and wellbeing.

Poor nutrition, exposure to the elements, and addiction can all wear away at teeth and gums. Toothpaste and a toothbrush might be out of reach—let alone a regular place to brush teeth. Mental health issues, feelings of embarrassment and distrust can also stop people from seeking dental care. Cultural and language barriers may also play a role.

Cool Aid's Dental Clinic has been working hard to break down these barriers and deliver



the dental care that everyone deserves. The dental health team treats around 400 patients per month in the Victoria area.

Linda Ferris (left), the Clinic's Coordinator, knows first-hand how much of an impact proper dental care can make in someone's life.

"We had a patient, Sarah, who was getting back on her feet after years of struggling with addiction. Street drugs had had a huge negative impact on her health and the aesthetics of her teeth. She would cover her mouth when she spoke. She couldn't find a job, because people judged her because of the way her teeth looked."

At the Clinic, Sarah's life was changed. Her remaining teeth were repaired, and she was fitted with partial upper and lower dentures.

"To see her confidence soar, to

see her smile, hands free, for the first time was inspiring for all of us!" Linda says.

Sarah has since found a job as a house cleaner. Her future—and her smile—are so much brighter, thanks to the Clinic's team—and generous supporters like you.

Linda and her team are so thankful for your help.

"We couldn't provide the level of care that we do without you. Thanks so much for your support!"



Food is **Love**

It's often said that food is love...

This Valentine's Day, show neighbours experiencing poverty, homelessness, and hunger that they're cared for by giving the gift of nutritious food.



Donate a grocery gift card today:
coolaid.org/giftcards

For just \$25, you'll empower a hungry neighbour to buy healthy, nutritious food at a local grocery store.

"The grocery cards are so appreciated that several clients have burst into tears when they received them."

—KATIE LEAHY, RN BSCN

You Showed Isolated Seniors They're Not Alone

Friends, families, community—these connections are so crucial to seniors living alone. When COVID-19 hit, it was especially hard on the 236 seniors living in Cool Aid's seniors' housing, with many cherished activities and outings being cancelled to protect tenants' health.

But thanks to you, we were able to reach out to isolated seniors to show them they're not alone. You provided care packages with games and crafts. You helped us hold socially distanced activities like gardening and music sessions. Thanks to Peninsula Co-op's generosity, we installed screens and projectors in our seniors' buildings. And now, thanks to a generous grant from the Shaw Family Foundation, our tenants will have improved free wifi to help them stay connected with family and friends.



**Thank you for everything you've done to care for isolated seniors during the pandemic!
You've brightened so many lives!**

Sharing the Love in Greater Victoria



Follow us to see how you're changing lives in Victoria!

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