



# PEOPLE OF CoolAid

SPRING 2022

## You connected Shelley to the care she needed to heal!

Trauma can have a deep and lasting effect on mental health—especially for those experiencing poverty and homelessness. Thankfully, your generosity is connecting people with the support they need to heal and move forward.

Shelley stands outside the handsome brick front of Mount Edwards Court, holding her dog Sassy in her arms.

Her story is one of loss, grief, trauma, and unexpected challenges. But on this day, her eyes and laughter tell another story: one of gratitude, hope and peace as she talks about the journey that led her to Cool Aid.

**“Cool Aid saved my life. I mean that from the core of my being,” she says.**

Like many people who find themselves at Cool Aid’s doors, Shelley describes a series of events that led from working and sharing a stable home with her partner of 15 years to living with Sassy in her car in Goldstream Park.

An emergency visit to Royal Jubilee Hospital led to a life-changing recommendation that she turn up at Cool Aid’s Sandy Merriman House women’s shelter before 1 p.m. with the hope of getting a bed. She arrived at 12:58 p.m.

**“From there, my life got so much better.”**

“I feel like I have been wrapped in the arms of the Cool Aid Society. Now I want to work with others like me who have hit rock bottom...to help them.”

At Sandy Merriman House, Shelley found more than the bed, clothing, physical care, and the basics that she was seeking. She also found enough stability, strength, and support to reach out for help with her mental health—something she had been avoiding for decades. She booked a standing



appointment with Sarah Jenkinson, a Registered Clinical Counsellor at Cool Aid. It was the start of a journey that would change her life forever.

**Finally healing—with your help**

Mental health challenges can feel like a life sentence for neighbours experiencing poverty and homelessness. Too often, they face significant barriers to accessing the mental health care they need to move forward.

But with your support, Cool Aid breaks down those barriers, connecting people with mental health supports they would otherwise go without.

For Shelley, counselling helped her work through the trauma of her past. “Sarah helped me build the



# Finally, spring! And with it, hope and renewal.

For a while there, it seemed like brighter days were a long way off.

Through the darkest weeks of winter, our community was shaken yet again by the pandemic. Soaring food and housing prices and a whole lot of uncertainty added to the mix.

**But through it all, you were there, helping us care for the people who were most affected by these hardships.**

With Mental Health Week this month, I especially want to acknowledge how your support allows us to be there for neighbours in crisis and connect them with the mental health care they urgently need—especially with mental health challenges soaring during the pandemic. Shelley's story is just one heartwarming example of the life-changing difference you're having in people's lives.

**And now, as the days grow brighter, there's an incredible feeling of hope and renewal in the air here at Cool Aid. Your generous support plays a big part in that!**

You're keeping fresh, nourishing food on people's tables in the face of soaring food costs. You're helping us to cautiously reopen our face-to-face programs and services, as we can safely do so.

And there have been other exciting developments in the past few months, like the ongoing progress at



210 Gorge. When work is completed later this year, we will open our doors on 30 brand new supportive housing units and 42 affordable apartments for low and middle income neighbours!

With spring here, I'm full of optimism for the months to come. I know what we can accomplish together, when we put our hearts and minds to it.

Thank you for everything you do to lift vulnerable people up in Victoria.

Kathy Stinson  
Chief Executive Officer

### *...continued from page 1*

courage to work through everything, instead of burying it," she says. **"I spent a lot of years being angry and not trusting people. But I'm learning how to trust myself and others. I'm working on self-love and self-respect."**

### **"I love my life now."**

Shelley credits Sarah and Cool Aid with helping rebuild her life. "I love my life now. If it wasn't for Sarah, I would still be suffering."

Just over a year ago, Shelley and Sassy moved

into an affordable apartment of their own at Cool Aid's Mount Edwards Court. She's built a circle of friends and is volunteering at Rock Bay Landing. She is also considering training to become a counsellor or support worker herself, so she can help others who are struggling.

"I wanted to give back to Cool Aid for being there for me," she says. "Now I want to work with others, like me, who have hit rock bottom...to help them."

**Thank you for helping Shelley get the care she needed to heal and reclaim her life! ■**

## You're helping get fresh, local food to people facing food insecurity.

Your generous support is helping to provide food security for hundreds of people every day. And not just *any* food—fresh, nutritious food straight from local farmers!

Between soaring food and housing costs and the ongoing financial impact of the pandemic, more households than ever are facing food insecurity in Victoria.

With your help, Cool Aid works tirelessly to keep nutritious food on people's tables in a number of different ways.

We serve an average of 980 meals a day—that's over 350,000 meals a year—in our emergency shelters and many of our residential buildings. Food is also available daily at the Downtown Community Centre, and our grocery gift card program gives neighbours living on a low income the freedom to purchase their own groceries and supplies. Last year alone, we distributed 4,703 grocery gift cards.

**Much of this wouldn't be possible without your generous support. And now, there's an exciting new way you're helping to put fresh, nourishing food on neighbours' tables.**

### From Farm to Tables— With Your Help

Your support, along with a generous recent grant from Second Harvest, is enabling Cool Aid



### to partner with local farmers to provide fresh, seasonal produce to neighbours facing food insecurity.

Through the South Island Farm Hub's innovative *Farmbucks* program, Cool Aid purchases fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious food from over 20 farms from all across the region.

This groundbreaking collaboration between farmers and nonprofits was originally launched during the height of the first wave of Covid-19.

**The *Farmbucks* program serves two vital purposes: feeding the growing number of people facing food insecurity in Victoria, and helping to protect local farmers' livelihoods.**

In the months to come, the program will supply all of Cool Aid's meal programs, bringing fresh, healthy produce to the kitchens and tables of our shelters and residential buildings. The grant from Second Harvest will also allow Cool Aid to source and serve more complex, locally-grown proteins, like Pacific salmon.

Thank you for helping to bring more fresh, local food to people facing food insecurity—while also supporting local farmers!! ■

## YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK: Here's how you helped this winter:



**17,686**

Medical and dental appointments



**226**

Apartments under construction



**900**

Grocery gift cards to feed hungry neighbours



**87,500**

Meals served



## Carl and Sue Stovel: A lifetime of lifting neighbours up

“It’s a terrific feeling to give back. We’ve been so fortunate, and had so many opportunities in our lives. It’s our obligation to provide opportunities for those who are in need.”

**Carl and Sue Stovel have dedicated much of their lives to supporting neighbours experiencing homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and other hardships.**

In his career as a psychiatrist, Carl supported patients with serious mental health challenges, while at the Ministry of Health, Sue worked to overcome social barriers to health—from housing insecurity to poverty.

When they retired, their dedication to supporting Victoria’s most vulnerable people did not end. In fact, their contribution to the community has only grown.

**“They are amazing individuals, and they have been incredibly supportive of Cool Aid for many, many years,” says Kathy Stinson, Cool Aid’s Chief Executive Officer.**

In addition to significant financial contributions, Carl and Sue have a combined 25 years of volunteer

service between them. They make an incredible difference every day in our community, and will continue to do so for generations to come, thanks to the family endowment fund they so generously established in partnership with the Victoria Foundation.

“It’s a terrific feeling to give back. We’ve been so fortunate, and had so many opportunities in our lives. It’s our obligation to provide opportunities for those who are in need.”

**In recognition of the Stovels’ contribution to the community, Cool Aid had the honour of nominating them for the Generosity of Spirit Award presented by National Philanthropy Day Vancouver Island. They won in October of last year! Congratulations, and our heartfelt thanks for everything you do for the people we serve.**

## Everyone Deserves Nutritious Food ▶

Food insecurity is on the rise in Victoria. Many neighbours are still struggling to recover financially from the pandemic, while the costs of food, rent, and other essentials are soaring.

This spring, please give neighbours the nutritious food and peace of mind they need.

**Donate a grocery gift card today:**  
[coolaid.org/giftcards](https://coolaid.org/giftcards)



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

—KATIE LEAHY, RN BSCN