



Impact Report

Winter 2024



Your Impact

Welcome to your Impact Report, featuring stories of the critical and lasting impact made by your generous donations.

Although we made it through the incredible disruptions and dislocations of COVID-19, it was followed by a two-year period where the cost of living increased at a rate that hasn't been seen since the 1970s. Despite this, Cool Aid donors have stepped up at this challenging time to help Victoria's most vulnerable continue to access a full spectrum of supports to improve the quality of their lives.

On behalf of the people we serve, thank you for the new homes at 210 Gorge. Thank you for helping people finally access medical care through our mobile health clinics. Thank you for any one of the 7,710 dental treatments that were administered through our dental clinic last year, and thank you for the simple gifts of a well-timed \$25 grocery gift card and a fresh pair of warm, dry socks.

Thank you for taking a stand against homelessness and poverty, and for believing, as we do, that everyone deserves home, health and connection.

Everyone Deserves Dignity

Reducing stigma through client engagement

"People live outside differently," says Leslie Boucher. And he should know. Leslie has lived most of the last 15 years outside with no fixed address. He goes on to explain that people living rough have different ways of doing things, they have different possessions, and like any of us, they are unique individuals with their own set of challenges.

Leslie, for instance, struggles with what he describes as "episodes" – certain things trigger him and he often reacts in ways that do not reflect the polite, kind-hearted person he is most of the time. He says he struggles with sensory overload in busy, noisy places and prefers to spend his time on the bus or at the UVIC campus. He loves learning he says and feeling like he's making a difference.



Leslie Boucher attends regular client advisory meetings at Cool Aid's Pandora office

As one of the members of Cool Aid's client advisory group, Leslie is making a huge difference. The group of approximately 10 members meets every two weeks to discuss various topics related to client needs and how to meet those needs across Cool Aid's 20 locations. Leslie, who is not currently a Cool Aid resident, has been part of the group for close to three years, helping with client surveys, at the Downtown Community Centre, and he has even spoken about his experience at Cool Aid events.

And based on his almost-15 years of experience living outside, Leslie has noticed that people often project their own lives and expectations on to others, though they often know nothing about what it's like to experience serious mental health challenges and/or homelessness.

"There are a lot of stereotypes about people with mental health living in low barrier shelters or outside," Leslie says. "But people who are struggling need support and compassion, not judgement."

We couldn't agree more.

Cool Aid Adds Second Mobile Health Clinic in July

Donors like you are the reason we now have two mobile health clinics, bringing health care to people on the streets, in shelters and in supportive housing. The marginalized patients we see very often face barriers and stigma when trying to access traditional healthcare.

By supporting Cool Aid's mobile health clinics, you are helping provide immediate care to vulnerable people who might otherwise end up in the hospital, saving the healthcare system both time and money.





NO SMOKING

This is your community and we're all responsible for keeping it safe and clean!

Clutter on the sidewalk and Boulevard is a safety concern and brings heat down on us all.

The city will be coming by each morning at 8AM to collect any items in this area.

Please keep this area clear and don't attach anything to the trees.

FREE MEALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

ROCK BAY LANDING
Vaccine
FREE
10A

Smoking is prohibited within seven (7) metres
Clean Air Bylaw No. 29 effective April 1, 2015
CRFJ

Just needed anything new, any time.
Hep C

Donor Profile: Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller

From carloads of coats to compassionate (and considerable donations), we could not be more grateful for the continued support of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller.

This action-oriented organization is comprised entirely of volunteers who are selected because of their community involvement and philanthropic histories.

Sovereign Order has donated to our peer support program and Cool Aid food services in the past few months, as well as provided winter coats to the residents of Sandy Merriman House.



Sovereign Order members donated to Cool Aid's peer support program, food services, and even delivered a carload of coats for Sandy Merriman House residents.

So grateful for your support!

- Butler Concrete and Aggregates
- City of Victoria
- Gift Funds Canada
- Green Shield Canada
- HRJ Consulting
- JayMac II
- Kia Victoria
- Knappett Projects, Inc.
- Laucks Foundation
- Peninsula Co-op
- Pinch Family Trust Fund

- Ruby Red Fund
- Second Harvest
- Telus
- The Connor, Clark & Lunn Foundation
- TL Housing
- United Way Southern VI
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Viveka Foundation
- Waves Foundation

Cool Aid Addresses Growing Food Insecurity

Most people know Cool Aid for providing housing, shelter and healthcare, but few know how extensive our food services program is. Led by Red Seal chef, Paul Stewart, Cool Aid food services provides approximately 300,000 meals a year – a service that is increasingly important as food insecurity grows.

"Food insecurity is a growing concern for everyone," Stewart says. "If it's hitting you in the pocketbook, you can only imagine how hard it is for people living on the streets, in shelters, or on very low income."

Operating two commercial kitchens – one at Rock Bay Landing and another at Mount Edwards Court – Cool Aid serves 950 meals daily. Remarkably, 80,000 pounds of rescued food, valued at \$250,000, is also used, reflecting our commitment to sustainability and resourcefulness.

Our innovative food services approach further includes partnering with local farms and food rescue initiatives. These relationships not only improve the quality of meals served, but they also support the local economy and reduce environmental impact.

Relationship Building & Autonomy

Cool Aid's food service program is also pivotal in building trust and relationships with the people we support.

"The food we serve to our clients goes beyond mere sustenance," Stewart says. "It fosters a sense of community, belonging, and dignity."

Dignity that can also be found through an emphasis on food-related social enterprise. Future social enterprise programs will provide job skills and confidence to tenants, as well as food services training and the chance to be part of a social enterprise café.

Our Community Kitchen program at the Downtown Community Centre is another cornerstone, offering classes on food purchasing, preparation, nutrition, and storage, empowering clients with essential life skills. And community involvement is a cornerstone of it all.

"Every little bit counts. Sponsoring a meal or donating toward grocery gift cards makes a huge difference to the people we serve," Stewart says.

In 2022, Cool Aid distributed over 5,000 grocery gift cards, providing a dignified way for clients to shop for their own groceries.

The impact of Cool Aid's food services is profound. Not only does it address immediate needs like hunger, but it also provides a foundation for long-term wellness, self-esteem, and community integration.

"Food brings people together, and good nutrition changes lives. For our clients, knowing there's someone who cares is vital and makes a world of difference," Stewart says.



Cool Aid Food Services Manager, Paul Stewart (L) and Senior Cook, Jerry Kwan in the kitchen at Mount Edwards Court.

Development Update

A major highlight of the last year was the opening of our newest mixed-use development at **210 Gorge Rd.** The building has 21 units of supportive housing and 51 units of affordable housing all under one roof. The location also boasts a 2% Jazz coffee shop and community garden for residents and others in the neighbourhood.

This year also marked the beginning of construction at our **Balmoral Ave.** site. The entirely modular building, featuring a several- stories-high mural, is now complete and it is expected to welcome its first residents in the new year.

Development continues at **Crosstown**, our largest project to date. Phase One will include 100 units of affordable housing and 54 supportive units, as well as commercial space.

And lastly, we are happy to report that we have gained provisional project approval for a project on **Speed Ave.** Once complete, Speed will see 23 units.



Our new Balmoral supportive housing site features a fabulous stories-high mural by the talented FUA! Collective.

Below: Architectural rendering of Crosstown





Clockwise from top L: Belmont team serving holiday dinner; Rahim and Al from Max Furniture host Cool Aid donor mixer; Belmont holiday dinner guests; raising money for socks with Kia Victoria; Cool Aid Director of Philanthropy and Community Engagement, Mary Lee Crocker, with Dr. Joe Haegert at donor mixer; Sovereign Order donates to Cool Aid's peer support program. Center: new CEO, Elin Bjarnason with Cool Aid Board Director, Soki Kaur at donor mixer.

Thank you for your continued support!

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