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YOUR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM RAINCITY HOUSING

30
YEARS

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BREAKING NEWS~
OUR NEW BUILDING
GETS A NAME!

experiences



Aaron's story

I met Nathan who had been living on the streets for a number of years. We'd run into each other at a park where our puppies played together. Nathan was a smart, sensitive guy I found myself looking forward to seeing. We started going out for coffee and he would talk about life, his latest travels, and thoughts about living in Vancouver. I'd talk about what I was learning in university and eventually asked for advice on how to be a better support worker. Nathan spoke a lot about how projects don't need a lot of rules to make folks respect the space; they just need to build an environment that folks would want to respect. As I said, he was smart.

One day Nathan thanked me. He said that, for the first time since being on the street, our relationship provided opportunities for him to engage in conversations that weren't just about street life. He spoke to how meaningful this was to him, and I remember feeling pretty choked up. I told him how he changed the way I worked with people that had life experiences like his. I shared how he had taught me my work should be much more about dignifying people; that we had so much to learn from each other and most importantly, that I had learned from him that no one is just their diagnosis, addiction or income level. We all have something to contribute in order to make a healthy diverse community.

Promoting social inclusion doesn't only provide opportunities for people to have homes; it makes sure they feel at home in our communities. Community Integration staff positions focus on creating opportunities for folks to invest or reinvest in non-street involved activities that interest them, on making connections, and on providing opportunities for them to use their wisdom to help their communities.

As Nathan taught me, these connections don't just benefit the folks we serve but benefit everyone, including staff. P.S. I ran into Nathan last year and he's doing wonderfully.


raincity
HOUSING

FEBRUARY 2012

remarks

A place, a friend, and something to do

What does every person in Vancouver, whether they're living in Yaletown or under the Georgia Viaduct need in order to feel like a human being, to feel like part of Vancouver?



A place, a friend, and something to do. These are the three things we're getting right at RainCity Housing.

A 'place' was the first. A place where you weren't evicted just because you became angry. A place where, like you and me, someone could live their life inside AND address issues affecting their lives while getting healthier. We've had massive success with the housing first approach for over 10 years now and we haven't looked back.

The second thing was 'a friend'. If you really want to know how to help someone, listen. Don't come in with an agenda or think you 'know what's best'. Taking time to listen leads to building healthy relationships with people that haven't really had one for a while. Once someone knows they have a friend, someone in their corner, they begin to realize that they have control over what happens next.

Now it's the 'something to do' part. This is when someone's place truly becomes a home, when they're ready for something to do, but that something wasn't always available. Things you and I take for granted; gardening, learning how to cook, volunteering, or camping.

A place, a friend and something to do. It sounds like a no brainer, but it really works. Bring people inside. Become their friend. Provide opportunities to participate in life.



programs

Community Development Program launches!

RainCity Housing has launched the Community Development Program. The people that we work with have a wealth of experience, skills, and an integral role in the community that may be different from that of our staff, but imperative to building healthy, diverse communities. When it comes to lived experience and homelessness, we're not the experts – they are!

Aaron's story explains quite aptly why it's so important to recognise the knowledge and wisdom peers carry around with them. We decided to create a program that would maintain and build on that knowledge, and identify where that knowledge comes from.

How do we define *peers*? A peer is a person with a shared experience, has learned from that experience competencies and knowledge, and is able to

authentically teach and demonstrate this to those who haven't had opportunities to learn this yet.

The program focuses on projects that build capacity within the peer community, including ones that undermine discrimination, emphasize social inclusion, and create allies with other peer agencies. With Community Integration Support Workers at most of our sites, we're already strengthening relationships with our peers; creating employment opportunities, working towards social enterprise projects and other peer support initiatives.

One day we hope this program's philosophy will be woven into not just the fabric of RainCity Housing's approach, but all nonprofits. We become a better community when we acknowledge everyone's voice from that community.



OUR MISSION:

To advance social equity by building upon the strengths of our community and of each individual.



breaking news

Our new building gets a name

Great news for the Downtown Eastside: construction on our newest building – the Budzey Building is set to begin this year.



homewords

20 years of change

20 years is a long time. Two decades, a score, even considered a generation to some. But it's also the time I've spent working in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and I'm the better for it.

Almost every day I spend in the DTES someone shares a little part of their day with me. It might be edgy, or funny, or heartfelt, but it is always honest. The folks who live and breathe in this vibrant neighbourhood know the value of honesty, and it's a big part of earning respect. Respect leads to self-esteem, and that leads to change. It might be coming indoors for the first time in years, or it might just be speaking to someone that wants to listen.

The DTES often gets a bad rap, but things are getting better, not worse. During the last 20 years I've seen amazing changes made by people, changes to themselves and changes to the community.

How does your community change?

Lorna Budzey was a resident of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for many years. She became known to RainCity Housing at our first shelter and was one of first people to challenge our organization to be inclusive and welcoming to everyone that we work with. For someone who experienced many travesties throughout her life, Lorna was vibrant, charismatic and had an amazing sense of humour. She died in the summer of 2000.

Lorna stayed with us often because of the lack of supports and housing that recognized her unique experiences. By sharing her life with us, RainCity Housing benefited in so many ways, forcing us to take time to listen, and be constantly aware of how we interact with and support other individuals. Lorna taught us the importance of all these things. Thank you, Lorna.





a home for every person

Images of people used by RainCity Housing are either purchased stock images, staff members or people attending public events.

The decision to not use images of our clients is a conscious one - an image is a literal snapshot of someone at a particular place in their life. Once placed online or in a publication an image can be copied, manipulated, and/or saved elsewhere an endless number of times; therefore for the purposes of public photos we choose not to use images of clientele.

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RainCity Housing Tours

If you would like a tour of our facilities or more information about our programs, please contact:

Fran Romer, Donor Development Manager
fromer@raincityhousing.org, 604-215-5991

Donate Today

Every dollar makes a difference. Thank you.



events

Raise funds, awareness, and your heartrate!

Vancouver is the most beautiful city in the world. It's a city that's striving to end homelessness. What if you could contribute to ending homelessness, enjoy the beauty of Vancouver, and get healthier - all at the same time?!

Become a member of the RainCity Home Team! Team members can participate in either the Half-marathon or the 5K. Register here:
http://www.eventsonline.ca/events/crs_vanhalf/

Then, print a pledge form and start getting pledges. Once you start getting pledges contact us.

There are a few running groups to get ready with, depending on your experience. Bill Briscall can put you in touch with the group that best fits your schedule and fitness level. Call: 604.671.2169 or email: bbriscall@raincityhousing.org

Not able to participate? Pledge a Home Team member! Either search here for a team member you already know, or contact Fran and she'll connect you to a team member. Call: 604.215.5991 or email: fromer@raincityhousing.org

