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YOUR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM RAINCITY HOUSING

30
YEARS

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keeps on giving and giving

experiences



“ACT made
me feel
human.”

raincity
HOUSING

JULY 2012

Lookin' for work – an interview with Wes

Wes is a participant with our ACT Team, part of the national At Home/Chez Soi program. When we asked him what the story should be called, he said: “I’m lookin’ for work!” So we obliged. Wes has worked hard.

Here is an account of Wes’ experiences with the ACT Team.

How did you connect with the ACT Team?

I was in St Paul’s Hospital in the psych ward and met Dr. McGarvey there. I liked [the program] right away, I got my own one bedroom apartment, a beautiful view, nice furniture, close to thrift stores and to the Recovery Club, which helps me with my addictions.

How did you pick your new apartment?

I looked at a few apartments, and picked one up here [in Mount Pleasant].

It’s away from the DTES. I can go down there when I want to and always get away from it when I don’t wanna go down there.

What do you like about the ACT Team?

I was attending a mental health team in the DTES and there was no future for me. The doctors I used to see were too busy. The ACT Team psychiatrist spent time

with me and bought me lunch the first time we got together. It made me feel human. The ACT Team has bent over backwards, to get me to appointments, helped me get bank accounts, ID, and look for work.

So are you lookin’ for work?

“I’ve already got a job at the Olla Flower Shop in Gastown, working one day a week. I’m going to fill out an application to be a cook at a restaurant [here in Mount Pleasant]. I heard Christy Clark say if you on Disability you can earn an additional \$800 and if you are on Welfare you can make \$200, so I hope that happens.”

If Premier Clark asked you why the ACT Team should continue, what would you say?

It should continue because it’s brought me out of despair. There’s hope now at the end of the tunnel, it’s not just all dark or you don’t know where to get help – this place has given me hope,

even with my addictions. I have people I can talk to about what’s happened to me in the past and this helps me deal with my addictions. It’s helped me realize through my job, that if I can work, I can clean up my addictions, too

Any last words about ACT and about life these days?

I’ve got into public speaking, told my story at conventions, which makes me feel more human than just rotting in the Eastside. I feel more hopeful, I have a lot of hope now.

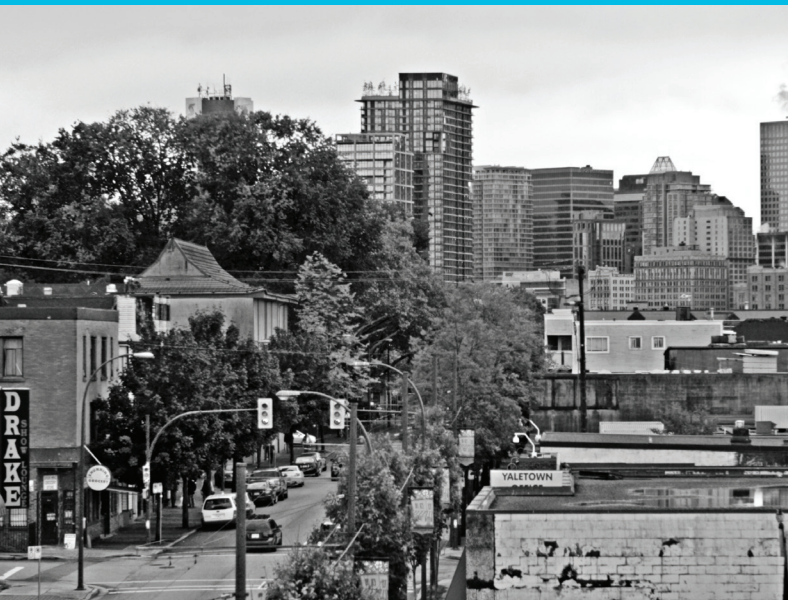
I’m just enjoying life really better these days. I’m working on family, and it’s hard to heal broken relationships but I’m in contact with them now and things are running a bit smoother.”

“I feel more
hopeful.”

remarks

a tale of two rain cities

RainCity Housing addresses homelessness in different ways and in different places. Sometimes we're the new kid on the block and sometimes our tenants are.



Tale 1: We are the new kids on the block

We were the new kid in 2007, when our program at Fraser and 41st opened. Unsure of what the future would hold, neighbours protested “Not in my backyard!” It was our job to educate the community about the possibility for positive outcomes. The hard work paid off. Less than a year after the program opened, a nearby resident called to see if one of our tenants could drop by and help her with her garden – in her own backyard!

Today, our neighbours are: preparing meals for other programs, donating canned salmon, gathering clothing donations for others – not because they're required to, but because they enthusiastically want to give back – an example to us all.

Tale 2: Making new tenants feel at home

You could say our ACT Team uses the inverse approach. Rather than provide new housing, rent supplements make it possible to use existing units anywhere in the city, so individuals are able to live in neighbourhoods that feel right for them. It also means not living in a neighbourhood where someone has either no history or one with a traumatic past. It's no surprise that people have happier and more productive lives when they live in communities they care about and that care for them.

Whether we're moving 30 people into a new neighbourhood or helping just one person move in next door, our approach is to push positivity and possibility and show that neighbours help to strengthen communities. These are two tales we're happy to tell.

a word of thanks

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 07, 2011 2:37 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: RainCity Housing/[REDACTED]

I am writing you with regard to my son “C”. C was born in December 1960 and was soon discovered to be profoundly deaf. As the years progressed, he became a very troubled young man with drug and alcohol abuse issues. We tried everything we could to no helpful end. Eventually he became homeless and was obviously mentally very ill. Still no solution, and he in his mind was not sick and our hands were tied as he was of age. Legally we could do nothing but watch in horror as he sank deeper and deeper into the mental illness. We felt helpless and hopeless. After many years we successfully had C committed under the Mental Health Act. He was admitted to Lions Gate Hospital and from there was transferred to Riverview.

This journey has been a long and difficult one indeed, but hope came alive while C was at Riverview. The Doctor at Riverview told us about a pilot program he thought C would qualify for: the RainCity Housing First ACT Team project. I now call it “Our Miracle”.

After three years or more of sleeping in a tent, C now has his own

apartment. After many years of wondering and praying if C would wake safely in the morning, I now can email him to say goodnight, lots of hugs, and *I love you*.

I am writing you to express our families gratitude for the RainCity program and all its professional and caring individuals who are helping C reshape his life and who give him hope, encouragement, counselling, and probably the most important component of the program the friendship they show him which is so important to the mentally ill – they are so lonely. Someone other than family cares.

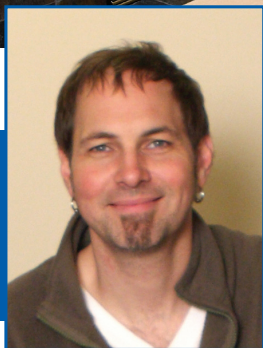
Of course now our greatest hope is that this program be allowed to continue and become an example of the wonders that can be done for the mentally ill with the support of such dedicated young people who obviously enjoy their work with the clients. Our family will advocate in any way we can, the mentally ill folks need all the support we can muster. This pilot project deserves to be highlighted as an earmark to the remarkable successes we are witnessing. Please ensure the powers that be are made fully aware of the great work being done by this dedicated group of young professionals.

Sincerely,

Anne N.

breaking news

Fraser street keeps on giving and giving (and giving...)



For almost five years our Fraser Street tenants have been giving back to the community – through local community gardens, cleaning drives, and other initiatives. The ideas are plenty and the enthusiasm is huge!

Staff and tenants gather donations and then re-distribute them where they're needed – like a shoe donation drive to give back to other RainCity Housing programs. They've also served salmon dinners at RainCity projects, and been able to give our triage shelter about 150 lbs. of salmon and trout. Plus... they've even started salmon canning! Later this year every Shaldon Hotel tenant will get a jar of fresh, wild salmon.

One tenant is donating his time and computer skills to tenants at Fraser Street and other RainCity Housing programs. Another is auctioning off one of his paintings and donating all the proceeds to RainCity Housing. How amazing is that? Check out his website and blog (which he designed!) to see his art and what inspires him.

This amazing group of generous people deserves to be recognized. Thank you, Fraser Street! You inspire all of us to do more!

programs

Our Housing First ACT Team

homewords

30 years!

In 1982, the first Triage Shelter opened in an old Bank of Montreal building on Main Street, providing shelter to 30 individuals each night. Fast forward to 2012, and RainCity Housing now provides emergency shelter, supported housing, outreach services and all sorts of support to over 2000 people a year!

This deserves a celebration!! Live music, food, hanging out with friends and the odd dignitary, and maybe even CAKE! So stay tuned, people of Vancouver, for an extra special shindig. It'll be a way to thank the amazing people that work at RainCity, those who choose to live at RainCity, give to RainCity, and all the other folks that make it possible to do what we do every day.

In September 2009, the Mental Health Commission of Canada sponsored *At Home/Chez Soi*, a study that would take place in five cities across Canada to determine what services and supports best achieve housing stability and improved health and well-being for folks who are homeless and living with a serious mental illness. In Vancouver, the focus has been on people who also have a substance addiction.

First, we help find housing.

RainCity Housing's role was to create a Housing First Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team. The team is a recovery-oriented supportive housing approach that provides homeless people living with mental illness immediate access to rent supplements so they can live in market units (typically unavailable to people living with mental illness) anywhere in the city. The rent supplements don't require participants to be in psychiatric or substance use treatment. Self-determination, choice, and harm reduction are at the core of all housing, support, and services provided by the ACT Team.

Most of the 80+ participants have spent upwards of 800 days in their new homes. It's a HUGE success, especially when you consider how many years they've spent on the streets.

Next, we help build foundations for success.

Once they're in a home, tenants can begin to look forward. Cedar Springs Foundation graciously donated \$25,000 to help ACT Participants like Wes pursue vocational opportunities and educational programs. Many ACT participants are enrolled in college programs and working part-time at sites throughout Vancouver. Thank you, Cedar Springs!

The future of ACT

There are only nine months left in the *At Home/Chez Soi* study. Which means that there's a possibility that this cutting edge approach that not only improves lives and strengthens communities, but also saves taxpayers money, could end. RainCity Housing believes it should continue. Together, we can sustain this project and continue to be a 'miracle' for many more families. Visit www.urlhereplease.com to find out how you can help.



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

191 Alexander Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1B8

If you would like more information about RainCity Housing and our programs, please contact:

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

Donate Today



spotlight

Jeremy Green

Three years ago, Jeremy Green was searching online to find an organization he felt was providing above average services to the community and one that would fit with his personal values. After looking at several non-profits in the Vancouver area he decided RainCity Housing would fit the bill. Jeremy committed to a monthly donation and made it clear he was open to becoming more involved. Little did he know what he was getting into!

Jeremy was soon recruited to the Fundraising Committee at RainCity Housing lending insight into the corporate community as well as introductions to those in his business sector. In 2011 Jeremy agreed to join the Board of Directors and has made a significant contribution to that group in a very short time.

RainCity Housing and Support Society is now very pleased to announce that Jeremy Green will become oChair of the Board of Directors in June 2012.

Jeremy is Regional Vice President of British Columbia for Optimum West Insurance Company. He holds his CIOP and CAIB insurance designations as well as a Commercial Pilot License and has over 18 years experience working with the business community in this province. During his career, Jeremy has served on a number of committees and boards at various levels including the positions of Treasurer and Chair. He was recently responsible for developing North America's first Carbon Offset program linked to a residential insurance policy and he has worked hard to improve social and environmental awareness with all companies he has worked for during his career, including Vancity and ING.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Jeremy is an ardent supporter of improving the health and well-being of those in our community who may not be able to drive change in their lives without support. He believes RainCity Housing provides an essential service to the community and his support of RainCity as Chair will allow him to assist with driving positive change in attitudes across multiple socio-economic segments of the population.