

a home for every person

giving back to the community – in every community

'Giving back to the community' is an oft used phrase. When you or I give back, it's often to help someone less fortunate than we are, someone in a worse place.

What about the people living every day in that worse place?

Do *they* give back?

Many people view Vancouver's Downtown Eastside as one huge problem, an area that takes and takes, but never gives.

But in order to survive in any place, one must have a sense of purpose, a reason to get up each day, to act and feel like a human being.

Survival skills and behaviours are often viewed as negative and can easily eclipse the subtle, quieter acts of sharing or teaching that radiate out in positive waves from each instance – it's just that we rarely see that event take place.

In fact, after someone has made their place their home, has created healthy relationships with their peers, and is ready to share their experience and wisdom with a fellow tenant or someone else in

this tight knit community, both individuals benefit.

And the results can be life-altering.

Whether it's a nearby neighbour helping serve food at our shelter, a pickup game of

soccer at the park, or one of our tenants teaching another tenant how to sew, the skills and support shared in this community are ongoing.

"I try to help at least one person a day. If I've gone to bed and I haven't helped anybody,

I toss and I turn," says June, a tenant at Princess Rooms. "Even if it's just something small, I feel better when I've helped at least one person each day."

Someone who is underhoused, renting a tiny hotel room, or living on the street is just as aware of their actions (and the repercussions) as you or I, and can just as easily lose sleep over one choice, or reap the benefits of another.

As June reminds us, we can toss and turn all night, or choose to do one good thing and get a good night's sleep.

Each person living in the vibrant neighbourhood that is Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has something to give, some time to share, an experience to pass on – and it happens every day.

When everyone is seen as a three dimensional human being that has something to offer, and we recognize the give and take that transpires in all communities, everyone benefits.



“Even if it's just something small, I feel better when I've helped at least one person each day.”

- a Princess Rooms tenant

NOTE - The tenant's name was changed in order to protect her privacy.

in this issue

1 giving back to the community

2 mark's blog breaking news

3 mike's story did you know?

4 thank you's how you can help



mark's blog

by mark smith
executive director

We are living in interesting times. The downward shift of the global economy has impacted many of us in ways we previously thought impossible. Mortgages, investments, savings, all have been affected by the financial events that have taken place during the last 12 months.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that, regardless of these drastic changes to our economy, all of our programming continues to run as it always has - appropriate levels of staff, all working purposefully with our clients to identify and realize the next step in their lives. It's these kinds of sup-

ports that increase the likelihood of tenants reaching the goals that they feel are most important.

So many of the people we support have to navigate through systems and services that shut them down. Systems and services that have learned to say "No".

Our clients are often surprised when one of our staff members takes the time to listen to what they have to say, and respond by saying 'What do you want to do?' For many, this is the first step towards getting their life back, a quiet moment that is built upon until the person experiences life in a different way and doesn't need to remain in survival mode.

By getting to a place where they can make their own decisions that affect their future, people are much more invested in the outcome, whether it's making breakfast for the first time in ten years, or moving on to more independent living.

It may seem obvious, but it's important to remember that everyone is a unique individual, and began accessing our services for unique reasons. By listening, recognizing and supporting people to reach their own goals, the possibilities are endless.

breaking news



The Lux Apartments & Transitional Housing Program is now open for business! In the middle of April tenants started moving into the self-contained suites .

"It's been an incredible amount of work getting everything ready," said Danielle Nakouz, Manager of both programs, "but nothing compares to the look of amazement of the faces of tenants when they see their brand new suite for the first time."

All 92 suites at the Lux are equipped with a full kitchen and bathroom, and nine of the units are wheelchair accessible. Find more news about the Lux and other new projects at our 'What's New' page at our website, updated every week.

www.raincityhousing.org

writing, fishing, shopping for groceries - just another work week for catherine

Catherine is a RainCity Housing employee working in a new position, Community Integration Support Worker. The focus of her job is to find out what kinds of things tenants are interested in, both in the smaller community in each of our buildings and the larger community of Vancouver. Some tenants have never been to Granville Island. Others have spent almost their entire life in a three block radius.

But what's more important than going on outings is the sense of community, and the chance to strengthen a feeling of community at home.

"I feel privileged to have the opportunity to build relationships with tenants." As Catherine explains it, it's the rapport that's established between herself and the tenants, and between the tenants themselves, that makes all the difference.

"A tenant will tell me 'Now I remember what it feels like to write, to create something from nothing'. That I am lucky enough participating in some small way in these re-awakenings, is just amazing."



"I feel privileged to have the opportunity to build relationships with tenants"

Catherine Lamb, one of our Community Integration Support Workers

Fraser Street tenant writes about his refreshing environment and the benefits of giving back.

Fraser Street is an abstinent based supportive independent living environment for people recovering from addiction and mental illness and who are ready to start transitioning back into society.

My name is Mike I am a resident of this building, I have been living here for going on one year now and have found it to be a place where awesome things can happen. When I came here depression still had a firm grip on my life even though I had a lot of clean time from my addiction.

Before I moved here my depression kept causing me to relapse on certain occasions. The combination of attending groups at Concurrent Disorders, seeing their psychiatrist and living at Fraser Street helped in making the cloud of depression lift from my life.

The environment at Fraser Street is very refreshing, with the compassion and resourcefulness of the staff and the sense of community with the other clients.

It's the first time in many years that I have had a place to call my home. After spending many years living homeless on the streets, I finely felt that I was warm and safe at night.

Before living here I tried to see a psychiatrist at the West End [Mental Health] Team but was told they could not help me. It wasn't until living at Fraser Street and attending Concurrent Disorders that I was able to see a psychiatrist and be diagnosed and given the proper medication.

To have regular one-on-one's with a counsellor, plus the proper medications, I have been able to work through and get under some kind of control that dark place within me that my depression used to take me.

The combination of RainCity and Concurrent Disorder has been very instrumental in helping save my life as without them I might have fallen back into my addiction.

Together they help catch people like myself who would have otherwise fallen through the cracks in the system. The fact that in this place of healing I have finely found people who will actually listen and here what I'm saying is a godsend to me.

There are also many activities and social functions to participate in which are very therapeutic and help me to interact with people. They also help to build confidence and independence within me to be able to function on my own again.

The opportunities that I have today I never in my wildest dreams thought I could have in my life today due to my past.

Who would have dreamt that my drug addiction and mental illness were job experiences? Not me! But they are, as a Peer Support Worker, which I'm almost done training for. I will also be given support to find the right place for me to live when it's time to leave here.

I am looking forward to working as a Peer Support Worker, giving myself to others in a way that a therapist can't. I also volunteer at a homeless shelter which I find to be very fulfilling and empowering, something I've never experienced at any job I've ever had before.

There is just something about giving back and not forgetting where you came from that really is a powerful reality check.

I know that the debt I owe the people who have helped me is great and can only be repaid by me continuing to pay my life forward by sharing what was given to me with others in need. Fraser Street, like many things happening to me, seem to have a purpose that only inspires me to be all that I didn't believe I could be.

To see the growth that is taking place in me, cannot be seen through my eyes but I can see it in my fellow client's actions towards me, which is the first time in years I've felt that people could see who I was deep down, instead of the person that my exterior portrayed. In life I hid behind it to keep people from getting too close to me.

The scars inflicted on a person by the ravages of time trying to survive while living homeless on the streets in addiction and suffering with a mental illness take a lot of self healing to even start to heal. So now when I see some poor soul living homeless on the street I remind myself that but for the grace of God go I.

“There is just something about giving back and not forgetting where you came from that really is a powerful reality check.”

did you know?

A 2008 poll found that more British Columbians were concerned about social issues (housing, homelessness, welfare, and seniors) than about health, the environment, the economy, crime, education, or government. The poll, conducted by the Mustel Group, had a sample size of 500. Social issues were identified as a top concern by close to 20 per cent of respondents; a year earlier social issues were identified as a top concern by less than 10 per cent of respondents.

Lawyers really do know how to bake!



Members of Crown Counsel say 'Cheese' while dropping off their donation to Fran and Bill of RainCity Housing.

Many thanks to the Vancouver Crown Counsel's Office for donating the proceeds of "The Great Cupcake Bakeoff" to RainCity Housing!! A lot of laughs (not to mention bulging tummies) were had by all and the result was a gift of over \$500 to help our tenants and clients. Who knows, this may turn out to be an annual event!

also...

A special word of thanks to Jennifer Chow and the folks at Digital Ocean Marketing. They have very quietly been donating fresh fruit to the tenants at Princess Rooms on a weekly basis. This thoughtful and innovative gift has been truly appreciated by one and all.



a home for every person

To everyone who supported our recent Holiday Appeal Thank you!

As we all know, these are very uncertain financial times, so your donations have meant even more than ever this year. Your gifts continue to make a direct impact on many lives, be it on-going support to someone going through a life crisis, a cup of coffee or an extra meal, a warm blanket, or a ride to a doctor or dentist. Thank you for caring for those who may not be able to care for themselves.

“The act of philanthropy is a spiritual act, an expression of caring for one's fellow human beings. It is a belief in the future and that the future can be good. It is investing in that future. It is helping to make the dream come true.

- Arthur Frantzreb

please
join our
community
of support
today

Your donation will help provide safe housing, greater sense of purpose and improved quality of life for people living with mental illness, addictions and other challenges.

Donate online at www.raincityhousing.org
or contact Fran Romer 604-215-5991
fromer@raincityhousing.org

visit/donate online: www.raincityhousing.org

Yes! I support RainCity Housing and Support Society's work

Name

Address

City

Postal Code

Phone

Email

Keep in touch! Please email me updates ☐

Credit Card Information

Name of card holder

Signature

Card number

Expiry

I would like to make a one-time donation in support of RainCity Housing

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$350 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ 50 ☐ Other \$_____

I would like to pay by:

☐ Cheque (Payable to RainCity Housing) ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

I will join the Homes First Club as a monthly donor

I authorize RainCity Housing to receive the following amount from my chequing or credit card account on the 15th of each month:

Signature: _____

☐ \$50/month ☐ \$25/month ☐ \$15/month ☐ Other \$_____/month

☐ I am enclosing a cheque marked "void" to begin monthly donations

☐ I will mail or fax a cheque marked "void" (mail/fax information below)

☐ I prefer to make a monthly contribution by: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

RainCity Housing and Support Society

mail: 191 Alexander Street, Vancouver BC V6A 1B8, Canada

phone: 604.662.7023 fax: 604.254.3703 info: donations@raincityhousing.org

Your gift is tax deductible. A receipt will be issued. Registered Charity #12711 5780 RR0001