

a home for every person



“triage” is now raincity housing

Welcome to RainCity Housing and Support Society, RainCity Housing for short! After 25 years of being known as Triage Emergency Services & Care Society we have made the decision to change our name.

Why the change? There are a couple of reasons. The name Triage Emergency Services & Care Society no longer reflects the scope of the work we do nor the way we do it, and it misleads people about what the organization does.

When we first began to provide emergency shelter in 1982 the name was appropriate. It spoke to the work we did in the

“trenches”. The name evoked images of life and death struggles in the “war zone” of the Downtown Eastside.

That was then and this is now. Today we provide a range of supports to the people that use our services. Permanent housing, women’s housing, transitional housing, low-barrier housing, abstinence-based housing, community outreach, food services and life skills management are just some of the ways we work to support people and build community.

The way we work with and support people has changed as well. The word triage means

to sort out, or prioritize, based on need. It is an action on, or decision made FOR someone, not WITH someone. It connotes passivity on the part of the recipient of the service – the service deliverer is in charge of the decision-making process and decides who will be supported and who won’t. This is contradictory to our belief that the people we deliver our services to are the experts in their own lives. The way we work with and support our clients is collaborative, not directive.

When we tested our old name, people that did not know us thought we were an emergency department of

the hospital, or that we only provided services to people on an emergency basis. This misconception affects our ability to grow community support as a leader in providing comprehensive services and programs for people living with mental illness, addiction and other challenges.

We are thrilled with our new name – RainCity Housing and Support Society. It says exactly what we do – house and support people. We look forward to sharing our successes with you as we continue to work towards our vision of providing *a home for every person*.

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mark's blog

by mark smith,
executive director

November 4, 1991. Day One of my new job at The Triage Emergency Services & Care Society.

As I descended the back steps of the old bank building at the corner of Main and Prior, stepping over a used needle and two condoms (used as well, ugh), I wondered at what madness had convinced me to leave my comfortable job as Executive Director of The Kettle Friendship Society to join this band of recalcitrant and crazed human beings running this place called "Triage". If I knew then what I know now

about what I would see, experience and deal with between that day and this, I might have turned on my heel and left.

But I didn't leave. Instead, I walked into an organization that changed my life in many ways. An organization of which I am proud to be a part. An organization that makes a real difference every day in the lives of people living with mental illness and addiction.

Over the last sixteen years Triage – oops, I mean RainCity Housing - has worked with tens of thousands of people in tens of thousands of ways. We've come a long way from the early days of barking orders, telling people what to do and refusing them service if we thought they were stoned or drunk, to our current practice of meeting people where they're at and understanding that creating barriers to housing helps no one.

It's been one long, eventful ride and I feel fortunate to be here. RainCity Housing is an incredible organization with incredible people, far too many to mention by name. From the volunteers to the staff and on to the Board, this organization is fortunate to have committed, generous-of-spirit people working to end homelessness.



In December staff from E Care delivered carloads of blankets and warm clothing for the residents at the Vivian. Donations of blankets, towels, warm clothing and toiletries are gratefully welcome year-round. You can drop donations off at the Triage Shelter at 707 Powell Street.

“when i found out i was accepted at fraser street, i sort of got a little bit of self esteem going, like i knew that in the future there'd be a better place for me. i'm a grateful resident of fraser street, and i'm grateful for this place.”

– resident at our fraser street home

save the date!

RainCity Housing's annual Shining a Light on Homelessness luncheon will be held April 9th, noon to 1:30 at the Westin Bayshore. For more information and to purchase tickets please visit our website or call 604-215-3041.



Back by popular demand, Shelagh Rogers (centre), host of CBC's Sounds Like Canada, will be the Emcee at our 2008 Shining a Light on Homelessness luncheon.

“my daughter had 79 hospitalizations in the 10 months prior to moving into the vivian. in the 18 months she was at the vivian she had only 3. while at the vivian my relationship with her changed - i actually had a relationship with her which is something we hadn't had in a long time.”

– mother of former vivian resident

so much more than just an emergency shelter

RainCity Housing offers a broad range of services and support for people living with mental illness, addictions and other challenges. The women and men we support are matched with the RainCity Housing program that best meets their specific needs, with special care being taken to respect their individual expectations, circumstances and dignity.



Opening celebration BBQ at Killarney Gardens.

Triage Shelter

This is RainCity Housing's first line of support for homeless women and men, providing short-term emergency housing and support for people living with mental illness, addictions and other challenges.

The Vivian

The "Viv" is the first program of its kind in Vancouver, providing supported housing for at-risk, chronically homeless women living with mental illness, addictions and other challenges.

The Princess Rooms

The Princess Rooms specializes in providing safe, supported transitional housing to high-risk, high-needs women and men who have a history of chronic homelessness.

Windchimes

Since 1993 the Windchimes apartments have provided long-term housing for men and women living with mental illness and addictions.

Killarney Gardens

This is RainCity Housing's first facility located outside of the Downtown Eastside, specializing in providing housing for women and men living with mental illness.

Fraser Street

This alcohol and drug-free facility is located outside of the Downtown Eastside, specializing in providing supported housing for men and women who live with a mental illness and addiction but have chosen to live a substance-free life.

Powell Street

This housing program operates in partnership with the Neighbourhood Housing Society to provide homes to women and men who live with mental illness and addictions.

RainCity Community Outreach Team

Our Community Outreach Team works with chronically homeless people in the Downtown Eastside who are living with mental illness and addiction, helping break the cycle of homelessness, instability and poor health.

Food Services

We deliver a wide range of quality, nutritious food services to the people we serve through our various projects, as well as to the broader community.

Life Skills Support

The RainCity Team helps clients manage their money and medications, assists them with a variety of daily activities such as taking them to open a bank account or to a doctor appointment, and arranges activities which help to create a social network and sense of community.



The Triage Shelter will keep its name and its 25 year history of providing housing and services to homeless men and women in the Downtown Eastside.

dedicated volunteer making a huge difference

Walter Ricketts is a great example of how ordinary people can make a huge difference in the lives of others every day. At 81 years old, Walter Ricketts has been volunteering at the Triage Shelter for over 12 years, ever since his retirement from the oil rigs in the North West Territories.

He volunteers at the Shelter seven days a week, starting before most people are even out of bed: "Monday to Friday I show up at 6 am, do the laundry for the clients, and on Saturday and Sunday I clean the kitchen", says Walter.

Walter chats with Shelter guests over coffee and has developed a close friendship with many of the staff. Many of the people staying at the Shelter already know Walter, and are grateful he is doing their laundry instead of a stranger. When asked why he volunteers, he responds, "I like what the organization does for people. I want to help out in any way I can. I volunteer seven days a week, and I donate what I can of my own money, when I think of it."

Walter is an invaluable resource at the Shelter. Having him there not only ensures that clients at the Shelter have clean laundry and bedding, it also allows more time for staff to support, assist and advocate on the client's behalf. Sadly, Walter has almost no family left. "I have a nephew in Toronto, but we haven't spoken in years", he shares.

He does, however, feel a sense of family with the clients and staff, and always looks forward to annual events, such as the Halloween Dance and Christmas stockings.

Thank you Walter.



Stellar volunteer Walter Ricketts keeps shelter tenants' clothes and bedding squeaky clean.

from sideways, to safe and secure

By the time Chris was 16, she knew she thought differently than other kids. She had her first psychiatric episode requiring hospitalization at 19, but it took ten more years until doctors properly diagnosed that Chris had schizo-affective disorder. As one doctor described it jokingly, "some people have ups, some people have downs... you're sideways!"

Chris is familiar with the discrimination against people with mental illness. In 1991 alone, she had to move seven times, in large part due to prejudiced landlords. She

also had difficulties accessing services she had hoped would be able to help her. Narcotics Anonymous wouldn't accept her because she was on psychiatric medication, and when she worked to extract herself from an abusive relationship she was turned away from a shelter for battered women because of her mental illness.

It was around this time Chris found her way to the Triage Shelter. The Shelter welcomed Chris and provided her with safety and security at a time when she was feeling most vulnerable. When the Windchimes apartments were completed in July 1993, Chris moved in with the first generation of tenants. She continues to live safely and contentedly at Windchimes, and is one of its longest term tenants.



RainCity Housing's Windchimes provides 27 apartments for women and men living with chronic mental illness, addictions and other challenges.

Chris particularly appreciates having support available to her 24 hours a day at the Triage Shelter, which is located next door to the Windchimes apartments. Knowing this support is always available makes her

feel secure. She also appreciates the support she gets from the other tenants. In learning to help each other, the tenants of Windchimes have built a real community.



Grade 7 student Sam Klein presents a cheque to RainCity Housing with donations collected by the students and staff at McKechnie School.

did you know?

RainCity Housing provides Christmas gifts to all the residents in our housing programs. The Triage Shelter served over 200 turkey dinners to homeless people on Christmas day and provided 800 dinners to other charities in the Downtown Eastside.

plan your own fundraiser

Did you know that many of our supporters host their own fundraisers for RainCity Housing? The funds raised through "Third Party Fundraisers" are critical in allowing us to deliver our programs and services. Some of the Third Party Fundraisers that were held in 2007 to benefit RainCity Housing included:

- Michael McBride Menswear chose RainCity Housing as the beneficiary of their Michael McBride Charity Golf Tournament
- Chix with Stix coordinated a number of fundraising activities
- The students at McKechnie School sold pens and collected donations from their families and friends
- Moira Fitzpatrick and Jane Ruddick organized the annual "Friends of Triage BBQ" fundraiser

- The staff at Place Vanier Residence Life at UBC collected pledges for their "No Shave November" event
- Instead of presents for his 60th birthday, Michael Mracek asked his friends to make a gift to RainCity Housing

There are many ways you can raise money to support the people in our community who need it the most – be creative, use your imagination, and have fun with your event! To get started on your fundraiser please contact Lucy Pearson at 604-215-3048.

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 Lucy Pearson at 604-215-3048, or lpearson@raincityhousing.org.



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