



PEOPLE OF

CoolAid

John's Rebuilding His Life ▶ Thanks to You

John's been through a lot of ups and downs, but the one constant in his life is his love of building things. A journeyman carpenter, he's been creating everything from docks, to decks, to houses for over 40 years.

Years ago, he moved away from his home in Ontario in search of opportunities in the boomtown of Fort McMurray.

"Fort Mac was a roller coaster," he says. "It was going well. Then, it crashed and burned." **John literally saw his livelihood go up in flames during the devastating Fort McMurray fire of 2016. He's been working to get back on his feet ever since.**

He got flown out to Victoria for an interview with a recruiter. But unlike Fort McMurray, they didn't have housing for him. And the pay was much lower than he'd been led to believe. He found a place to stay for a week using what little savings he had, but then he found himself homeless for the first time in his life.

To make matters worse, he was forced to leave the job when the contractor refused to pay him what they'd promised. In the blink of an eye, he was in an unfamiliar city, homeless and jobless.

"It was scary. I was on the streets with all of my



possessions, my tools."

Thankfully, John found safe shelter and the support he needed at Cool Aid. He started at the Rock Bay Landing Shelter, where he got hot meals, a roof over his head, and help from a caring, supportive team.

"They look after you very well and make you feel welcome," he says.

From the get-go, John was determined to get back on his feet. A few months ago, he moved to a room at our Next Steps Transitional Shelter, where he's getting the support he needs to move forward.

"I want to be independent," he says. At Next Steps, clients like John get help finding jobs and homes, learn financial and life skills, and access physical and mental health care.

"I'm going to make my room vacant for someone else who needs it soon," he says with a smile. "I'm going to get out of the city. Find work. I'm going somewhere."

Your support helped get John off the streets so he can focus on rebuilding his life. Thank you so much for helping turn lives around every day. ■



You've Given Health, Healing, and Hope

We've finally emerged from the long winter of the pandemic. It's so good to feel the warmth of the sun on our faces again. And to finally feel hope for the coming months.

Through it all, you have very much been a source of that hope.

Your unwavering support has kept our most vulnerable neighbours nourished, safe, and supported all through the dark days of COVID-19.

I'm especially grateful that you've helped protect our clients' health and wellbeing during such a difficult and dangerous time.

Thanks to you, we were able to

provide enough masks, sanitizer and PPE to ensure that clients and staff were kept safe.

Last year, the Cool Aid Health Outreach team launched into action, providing health care to people housed in emergency shelters and encampments during the pandemic. The health outreach team saw 414 clients over 9,823 visits in the first five months of service.

Thanks to you, neighbours who have struggled deeply with mental health and addictions have gotten the support they need throughout the pandemic. And as you'll read inside, people suffering from life-limiting

illnesses are getting the care and support they need to navigate the end of their lives with dignity.

And even more good news: our residents are starting to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations!

Thank you so much for giving health, healing, and hope during the pandemic.

Our clients are so grateful for our generous, caring community.

Wishing you a beautiful spring,

Kathy Stinson
Chief Executive Officer

Art and Healing at Cool Aid

Finding a creative outlet can be a life-changer for isolated seniors and people experiencing poverty, mental health issues, or addictions.

With your support, our Downtown Community Centre and Client Engagement program provide art supplies and creative workshops for residents to express themselves. They have created so many beautiful works of art over the years—often while processing deep trauma and emotional pain.

And now, we're proud to share some of their artwork with you!

If you're looking to refresh your decor this spring, consider purchasing a one-of-a-kind work of art created by one of Cool Aid's clients. All proceeds will go directly to the artist.



View pieces for sale at www.coolaid.org/art-for-sale, and learn more about some of the talented artists at www.coolaid.org/artists-of-the-cool-aid-art-collective.

Facing the End of Life With Dignity

Imagine suffering from pain in your lungs that's getting more and more unbearable each day. After a lifetime of bad experiences with hospitals, you've tried your best to ignore it, until one day you wake up struggling to breathe. You're taken to an emergency room, where you're told you have months left to live. Now imagine you don't have a house or a family to go home to.

Sadly, this type of situation is all too common for people experiencing poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and addiction. At much greater risk of life-limiting illnesses, they are also far less likely to have the resources and supports they need during such a difficult time.

It's for that reason that PORT—The Palliative Outreach Resource Team—was created. A partnership between Cool Aid, the University of Victoria, and other community partners, PORT's team is committed to helping anyone

navigate the dying process with dignity, regardless of circumstances.

“Every dying person, no matter their social circumstances, deserves to die with dignity and without pain,” says Dr. Kelli Stajduhar, lead investigator for PORT for the University of Victoria. “That is our intention with PORT.”

Since its creation in 2019, the team has supported over 90 vulnerable people with life-limiting illnesses in Victoria. Led by Dr. Fraser Black and palliative care nurse Katie Leahy, PORT goes wherever patients need them—whether that's in a tent, on the streets, or at one of Greater Victoria's shelters.

They provide direct medical care—checking in on their

patients' health, helping to manage pain, and delivering medications. They also connect their clients to medical, mental health, and other supports that they might otherwise go without.

Sometimes, that means going with a patient to appointments and being their advocate when their family can't or won't. Sometimes, it means finding a room in a facility that has around-the-clock care. Sometimes, it means making plans to ensure a patient is as comfortable as possible when they're dying. And sometimes, it means helping family, friends, and caregivers grieve.

With your help, we serve vulnerable neighbours at every stage of their life's journey. Thanks to the PORT team's vital work, someone who might otherwise face the end of their life alone and in pain will get the caring, compassion, comfort, and dignity they so deeply deserve.

Your Generosity at Work ▶

Here's how you helped make a difference over the last year:



37,500

medical and dental appointments



650

people permanently housed



2,250

grocery gift cards to feed hungry neighbours



384

individuals found paid work

Helping Women Heal at Sandy Merriman House



Dianne has volunteered at Sandy Merriman House for many years. She teaches writing and literacy skills, as well as arts and crafts. She's always struck by the beauty that the women at the House create, often while recovering from tremendous pain and trauma.

Dianne will always remember the giving spirit of the women she's met there. Women who've had so much taken away from them, but who give back so

freely—whether it's a cake baked in the shelter's kitchen, or a shoulder to cry on for a fellow resident.

As a monthly donor, Dianne highlights how important donors' support is to keep residents safe, sheltered, and nourished. "For me, it's the easiest way to donate. But the main reason I donate monthly is because I see the need all year round. This way, the women can always count on my support."

Cool Aid is so grateful for Dianne's amazing work and generosity, and for the support of our whole caring team of donors and volunteers. We couldn't do it without you!

SHARING THE LOVE IN GREATER VICTORIA

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