



PEOPLE OF CoolAid

FALL 2022

An author finds a home to write in – with your support!

Marsha Mildon has travelled widely, lived countless adventures, and is the author of several books inspired by her experiences. Thankfully, Marsha has found a home where she can continue writing and thriving – with your help.

By pretty much anyone's estimation, Marsha Mildon's life has been chock full of adventure. She has trekked the Andes, lived in a tent in a pony paddock, slept in church pews in Vancouver, taught scuba diving, obtained two masters degrees, helped open a women's shelter in Edmonton, and was editor of *Law Now*.

But last year, the Mount Edwards resident and author had an experience that, by her own admission, sits near the top of that list. **In 2021, Marsha was awarded one of the Grindstone International Novel Prizes for her book, "Dance Me a Revolution."** The work of (mostly) fiction is based on her time visiting and living in Peru, and it was written – for the most part – in 2017, while she was homeless and living in her car with her Golden Retriever, Branden.

"It was the worst year of my life, without a doubt."

"It was the worst year of my life, without a doubt," Marsha shares. "I went from employed and living in a home, to not employed and living in an RV in a parking lot...and then in my car."

Fortunately, she found her way to Cool Aid – first to Rock Bay Landing and then to Mount Edwards in 2018 – where she has been ever since.

Marsha, who has been to Peru eight times, calls *"Dance Me a Revolution"* the best book she has ever written, adding that it has been called "a love story to the people of Peru." It touches on the difficult



lives of the landless campesinos in the country and the universal reality that all parents want better lives for their children.

"I wanted to show how the human spirit rises, no matter the circumstances."

"Writing has always been my way of telling the stories of people who are desperate to change their lives," Marsha says. "I wanted to show how the human spirit rises to try to live its best life, no matter the circumstances." The parallels between



A community that's always there.

There's no doubt about it, we're living through some of the toughest times in recent memory. Sky-high costs of living have brought stress, uncertainty, and hardship to us all. But the past months have been especially difficult for our community's most vulnerable.

That's why I'm so incredibly grateful for you. Once again, you've proven you'll always be there for your neighbours, no matter what challenges we face.

During these uncertain times, you're giving neighbours peace of mind, knowing they can put food on their table through our grocery gift card program. And as more people than ever are turning to us, you're helping us continue to provide housing, health care, employment support, and other life-changing services.

And even in the face of rising costs and other significant challenges, you're helping make exciting new developments happen—like our affordable housing project at 210 Gorge Road and the renovations underway at the Downtown Community Centre, which will make it a bigger, brighter, better place for the people we serve.

With Thanksgiving on its way, I want you to know how grateful I am to be part of this caring community. You truly embody the spirit of neighbours helping neighbours.



And during this season of giving, I hope I can count on your support again. With more of our neighbours than ever experiencing food insecurity—many for the first time—please help ensure that every one of our neighbours can have a nourishing meal on their table this Thanksgiving by donating a grocery gift card today.

Thank you for helping neighbours in need. Wishing you and yours a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Kathy Stinson
Chief Executive Officer

...continued from page 1

the stories she writes and her own life are not lost on Marsha.

"This book is the cumulation of most of my life," Marsha reflects. "I have had an unorthodox life, for sure."

Marsha's motto – found at the bottom of every email she sends, is: "When in doubt, do something that fascinates you." And she has followed that

advice to the letter. Ever curious and seeking novelty, Marsha says she is already thinking about her next novel...about the adventures of a homeless woman detective.

Your generous support helps incredible neighbours like Marsha restore their lives in difficult times – so they can continue thriving, creating, and inspiring others. Thank you! ■

Delivering critical health care

Hepatitis C can be devastating when it goes untreated. With your support, Cool Aid is working hard to reach vulnerable neighbours with life-changing treatment.

Hepatitis C can be tragic for Victoria's most vulnerable. Many people struggling with homelessness and substance use face a much higher risk of contracting the disease. At the same time, they are often cut off from the critical health supports that could treat—and cure—the disease.

A liver condition transmitted through the blood, hepatitis C can cause jaundice, stomach pain, nausea, fever, and fatigue. When left untreated, it can have devastating impacts, leading to liver damage, cirrhosis, or even liver cancer.

That's why Cool Aid's Community Health Centre team has been working tirelessly to reach, diagnose, and treat those most at risk of hepatitis C—with your generous support.

You're helping break down barriers to treatment

Through Cool Aid's mobile health clinic, our nursing team reaches out to people where they are—in their homes, or other places they spend time. They have also started testing people in local shelters, pharmacies, and supportive housing sites.

"Testing is quick, easy, and extremely accurate," says Marion Selfridge, research

manager at the Community Health Centre. "And because one quarter of people living with the disease don't even know they have it, testing is extremely important and our best shot at eliminating it for good."

Connecting vulnerable neighbours to life-changing health care

"Through these outreach programs, we have found more than 150 people who didn't know they had hep C, or didn't know how to access treatment," Marion says.

Cool Aid nurse Tamara Barnett has seen how life-changing the work of the Community Health Centre team can be for those living with the disease.

"Hepatitis C is curable, and treatment is free," she says. "Treatment generally takes 8-12 weeks, and has no side effects for most people. It significantly improves their quality of life, and cures them of a potentially life-threatening condition."

The team is incredibly grateful for the support that the community has shown for this important work. Thank you for helping connect our most vulnerable neighbours to the health care they urgently need. ■



YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK: Here's how you helped this year:



47,346

Medical appointments



589

Permanent homes



1,250

Grocery gift cards to feed hungry neighbours



225,000

Meals served

You made the Homecoming Challenge a stunning success!

Our community has done it again, knocking this year's Homecoming Matching Challenge out of the park and raising an incredible \$204,000 for food security, employment training, and seniors' programs here at Cool Aid! **Thank you for your outstanding support!**

We want to extend a very special THANK YOU to our amazing matching partners, who were instrumental to the success of this year's Homecoming Challenge. Your generosity and community spirit are at the heart of everything we do to improve the lives of our most vulnerable neighbours here in Victoria.

Thank you to our incredible challenge partners:

- Knappet Projects Inc.
- Peninsula Co-op
- Megson Fitzpatrick Insurance Services
- TL Housing Solutions
- Butler Concrete and Aggregates
- Jim Thomson and Kathleen Brandsma
- The Stovel Family
- The Viveka Foundation

Everyone Deserves Joy— Donate a Thanksgiving Meal Today!

After another challenging year, we give thanks for the simplest gifts—like a nourishing meal shared around the table with loved ones.

But more neighbours than ever are struggling with food insecurity. This season of giving, please lend them your support.

For just \$25, you'll help vulnerable neighbours prepare and share a holiday meal of their choosing. Because everyone deserves the joy and comfort of a special meal at Thanksgiving.



coolaid.org/giftcards

Sharing the Love in Greater Victoria ▶ Follow us to see how you're changing lives in Victoria!

- /VicCoolAid
- coolaid.org/donate
- @VicCoolAid
- /VicCoolAid
- @VicCoolAid



Cool Aid Society
101-749 Pandora Avenue | Victoria, BC V8W 1N9
250-383-1977 | donate@coolaid.org
coolaid.org