



OF CoolAid

WINTER 2023

A Radical Renovation Powered by You

“Come on in and check out this amazing space,” Trevor Botkin urges.

He pushes open the newly installed double doors of the Downtown Community Centre and smiles, **“We’re super grateful to Cool Aid supporters for bringing this cool project to life.”**

Trevor is the general manager of HeroWork Victoria, a charity that transforms the buildings of other charities by coordinating “Radical Renovations.” These renovations not only create new spaces but also make it possible for more people to receive the life-saving services that Cool Aid provides.

Pre-renovation, the DCC’s layout was cramped and dated. Staff worked hard to expand on-site programming to meet the growing needs of our neighbours, but the old space made it extremely difficult.

Walk into the DCC now and you’ll see the building is set up for the community’s current and future needs.

Thick cinder block walls are gone and sunlight floods through the new windows. The re-imagined community kitchen is six times bigger, increasing efficiency and allowing even more cooking and nutrition classes. The gym is retrofitted with new walls and flooring that are much easier to clean.

New paint. New lighting. New washrooms. New computer stations. But most meaningful of all, there are already a lot of new faces. Thanks to the



Staff of Cool Aid and HeroWork at the Downtown Community Centre ribbon cutting ceremony, November 2022.

renovation, we’ll be able to welcome many more people and triple the number of programs we offer.

And, outside in the courtyard, there’s new landscaping and a timber-framed outdoor gathering spot, complete with a gas barbecue.

Trevor explains, “About half of all charities in Victoria would benefit from a renovation, so many apply for our help. We always choose to partner with organizations that are on the frontlines of mental health, addiction, and homelessness—and that have a great reputation. So, teaming up with Cool Aid was perfect.”

“Big-hearted people made this all happen,” Trevor says. “Cool Aid donors gave the seed money to make the Radical Renovation a reality. Then almost 500 volunteers—tradespeople, handy folks, and neighbours who wanted to pitch in—got down to work. It’s a true community effort. We provided safety training to everyone helping the trades. Local restaurants donated and catered lunches.”

According to Trevor, the construction sent out a “positive vibe” before the DCC even re-opened.



A **Message** from our CEO

Compassionate Choices & Welcoming Spaces— All Thanks to You

With the soaring cost of living, more people than ever are facing food insecurity in Victoria.

If you feel the pinch, imagine how much our neighbours experiencing poverty and homelessness are struggling. Even families living in affordable housing are grappling with an unthinkable choice: Do we pay the bills or buy nutritious food for our kids?

I'm so grateful that you are helping to offer a more compassionate option. Last year alone, you helped distribute \$115,000 in grocery gift cards. I've been told that several clients burst into tears when they received them.

Also, every day last year, you helped over 4,000 people access much-needed dental care through our Dental Clinic and supported 284 very low-income earners with the dental bursary.

And at the recently opened 210 Gorge Road East development, you've helped make 72 affordable and supportive apartments available during a housing affordability crisis. Soon, you'll be part of a new coffee shop there—an innovative social enterprise designed



to build community in a diverse neighbourhood.

Speaking of new spaces, your support absolutely transformed the Downtown Community Centre. Thanks to you, this renovation is going to be life-changing for so many in our community. (See our cover story.)

You are at the heart of everything our neighbours count on from recreational programs to permanent housing to dental care—including services that aren't available anywhere else in Greater Victoria.

Even with so much good news to share, the truth is too many people are still falling through the cracks. **In the coming months, please continue to offer a lifeline to people coping with spiralling costs and agonizing decisions.**

With my deepest thanks,

Kathy Stinson
Chief Executive Officer

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“When people saw the volunteers caring about their neighbourhood, they were touched. They felt empowered. It's not just about increased social services; they're excited about participating in recreation programs like floor hockey that you'd get in any other part of Victoria.”

The Cool Aid Radical Renovation is close to Trevor's heart. “I'm four years into recovery from addiction and dealing with mental health diagnoses. I relate to the Cool Aid community and want to give back,” he says.

Thank you to Trevor, to HeroWork, the Shaw Family Foundation, and to you for making a radically positive difference for our neighbours. ■

How You Give Voice and Meaning through Client Engagement

“A lot of the people I work with have had their voices taken away,” Nicole Pal says. “My job is to make sure tenants and clients are heard and get actively involved in the decision-making and programs here at Cool Aid.”

As our client engagement facilitator, Nicole is committed to listening to and empowering community members. She regularly meets with seniors in supportive housing, people in emergency shelters, and participants in recreation programs—asking for their confidential input on everything from food preferences to improving communication with staff.

“Our client advisory committee is probably the best example of how participants influence policies and the types of services we offer. We meet every two weeks, and the group is open to anyone in a Cool Aid program. Members bring their lived experience to the table, and we work on concerns they have, as well as on creating innovative programs,” she says.

Currently, the client advisory committee is planning a new peer support program. They’ve already distributed a survey to collect feedback from 75 community members. With that information, they’ll map out a training course for peer mentors and then help to deliver the program.

Nicole adds, “Recently, I was talking to a client.



She told me that being on the committee is very meaningful to her—that having a say here is a big part of her life. I know community involvement is helping many of our members heal and recover. And that has a rippling effect, giving control back to people and entire communities.”

Thank you for supporting shared decision-making throughout Cool Aid—you make this level of client engagement possible.

Your Generosity in Action

**HERE'S THE
PROFOUND
DIFFERENCE
YOU MADE
IN 2022:**



154 found paid work



4,600 grocery gift cards were given out



4,109 affordable dental appointments were provided

YOU Inspire Us

Accessible Care and a Reason to Smile—Because of You

February 1st kicks off the second annual “Everyone Deserves To Smile” campaign” for low-income adults at the Cool Aid Dental Clinic.

With up to 5,000 dental visits per year, our Clinic is the only non-profit dental care provider in the Capital region. This year, we’re aiming to raise \$50,000 for desperately needed but prohibitively expensive dental treatment, including dental emergencies.

Most of the patients we see at the Clinic are on income assistance. If they have government dental plans, and not everyone does, only 40% to 60% of



their treatment costs are covered. Other patients who are low-income earners don’t have any dental insurance at all—and even with the 20% discount our clinic offers, many still can’t afford dental care.

This is where you come in. By supporting the 2023 “Everyone Deserves to Smile” campaign, you’ll ensure more people receive urgent dental care, including patients experiencing poverty, homelessness, addiction, and chronic mental health issues.

A smile is a wonderful thing to share, and we can’t do it without you!

Revving up New Possibilities

“There’s usually tears and lots of big hugs when we give them the keys.”

That’s David King talking about the annual Car Giveaway that his dealership, King’s Auto Sales, holds in partnership with Cool Aid.

Last December 1, David and Cool Aid launched the two-week-long campaign that gave people the opportunity to nominate someone that they felt was deserving of a car. “We look for someone with a true need—someone whose financial, physical, and social needs will be met in a meaningful way with a car. Previous recipients still tell me how their vehicle makes an incredible difference to their quality of life.”

Along with the car, recipients receive three



months of insurance from Maxxam Insurance, a two-year warranty from Lubrico Warranty, and one year of maintenance from Affordable Auto Repair.

Terri was thrilled to be the winner of the 2022 Car Giveaway, “Between working two jobs and my husband’s medical condition, all while caring for our young children, it got to be too much. This car will change our lives. I can get

my husband to his medical appointments and save time travelling to work. I can’t tell you what this means to us.”

Thank you to David King and to you for your generous support. Together, we are making life’s journey a little brighter.



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