

THE
PEOPLE
OF

coolaid.



SPRING 2025

“I found an unexpected life-line...”

Meet Dennis, one of the first residents to move into our new Crosstown community

“In my life I’ve had money and I’ve had nothing, but without your health, it just makes everything so much worse.”

You can hear the emotion in Dennis’s voice as he looks back on his life. At 67 years old, he’s dealt with pain and physical challenges from decades of hard work, an addiction to prescribed pain killers, and chronic health challenges.

When his doctor suggested that a warmer climate would improve his health, Dennis moved from Manitoba to Victoria. But once in his new city, he felt overwhelmed. His ID, including his Métis identification card, was not accepted at medical offices or by prospective employers.

Finally, after finding work as a janitor, Dennis fell on an icy sidewalk. That triggered severe bouts of painful arthritis and depression. With no money, he had to leave the housing he had found and live on the street—something he never thought would happen.

He says, “I reached a point where I attempted suicide using fentanyl-laced drugs.”

During that dark time, Dennis struck up a conversation with a retired nurse he met by chance. She urged him to find help at Cool Aid’s Community Health Centre.

Dennis credits meeting Cool Aid physician, Dr. Fraser Black, as the first step in a long mental and physical recovery. “That’s why I’m here today,” Dennis recalls. “It all started with restoring my health and connections to the specialized care I needed for my health.”

Dennis describes Dr. Black and other Cool Aid staff as an “unexpected life-line.” A life-line that generous people just like you make possible every day.

Dennis’s next steps were to find housing and apply for social assistance. Cool Aid helped connect Dennis to temporary housing, where he continued



to recover. Today, he is thrilled to be among the first residents to move into Crosstown, our new affordable and supportive housing community that will also house Cool Aid’s second Community Health Centre, the Dr. Joe Haegert Community Health Centre.



Renewed hope and new homes—thanks to you

Thank you for going that extra mile.

When last December's postal strike threatened our holiday fundraising efforts, caring people just like you went out of your way to donate—by giving online or even hand-delivering donations to our office. Over the winter, your generosity played a major role as we continued to offer permanent housing, health and dental care, nutritious meals, and other supports to our neighbours affected by poverty and homelessness.

Today, I'm pleased to tell you that both supportive and affordable housing residents have moved into our new Crosstown development and we continue our work—alongside donors like you—to raise the additional funding we need to complete the Dr. Joe Community Health Centre at Crosstown, as well as provide other essential supports there.

Community response to the Crosstown campaign is helping families like Sanpin and Altagracia's rebuild their lives. The couple faced overwhelming challenges when their daughter was born prematurely, weighing barely a pound. Today, the family has a two-bedroom home at Crosstown and has found hope and security, setting them on a brighter path for years to come.

And there's more good news. I'd like to thank our latest very generous \$100,000 match donors: Lorraine and Al Kemp for their recent donation to the Crosstown campaign. You will find out more about what motivated the Kemps in our donor profile on page 4.

Fundraising for Crosstown, including the new Dr. Joe Haegert Community Health Centre, will continue through the year. I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity



to have your donation matched dollar for dollar.

With so many of our neighbours struggling to get by right now, your support is critical. Thank you for standing with us.

Elin Bjarnason
Executive Director

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Dennis says, "I'll tell anyone in need to seek care through Cool Aid and the Cool Aid Community Health Centre. I try to go through my life feeling grateful and I want to pass that good energy on to someone else who's struggling."

Dennis's story is just one example of the life-changing—and life-saving—difference you make by supporting Cool Aid. We could not do this important work without you by our side. Thank you for sharing our vision of home, health, and connection. ●

The Dr. Joe Haegert Community Health Centre

Uniting housing and health care under one roof at Crosstown

Dr. Joe Haegert is the founder of Cool Aid's health care program, known for his everlasting kindness and establishing low-barrier, trauma-informed care.

"We're very proud that the new community health centre (CHC) is named in his honour and excited that it will be the medical home for so many more vulnerable people in our community."

That's Dr. Chris Fraser, Medical Director of the Cool Aid Community Health Centre, talking about the Dr. Joe Haegert CHC at Crosstown.

Crosstown offers 100 new affordable market homes and 54 new supportive homes, where residents and others in need will have access to onsite medical services including counselling and mental health supports,

treatment for infectious and chronic diseases, pathways to recovery, and a pharmacy.

Dr. Fraser says, "We're integrating housing and barrier-free health care at Crosstown. We'll be able to enroll people at the Dr. Joe CHC and provide flexible follow-up care, so they can more easily access the complex care they need."

Dr. Fraser explains that patients who are often treated by Cool Aid's mobile health clinic teams will also be welcome at the new CHC at Crosstown. He says, "Our medical staff has specialized skills and high levels of empathy. So, when we connect with these patients, we can address and improve their health challenges."

When asked about the importance of community support, Dr. Fraser says,



"Even a small gift can save a life. Cool Aid is very efficient, so a high percentage of what you give goes directly to help patients. When our supporters step up, we do great things together."

Thank you for your continued support as we unite housing and health care under one roof. You are the reason people in need, and our community as a whole, will thrive. ●

Your **GENEROSITY** in Action ●

Take a look at your powerful impact so far in 2025



84,000

NUTRITIOUS MEALS SERVED
(600 MEALS/DAY)



391

PEOPLE PROVIDED WITH
EMERGENCY SHELTER



2,000+

DENTAL TREATMENTS
GIVEN TO PATIENTS IN NEED

SUPPORTER profile.

Meet Lorraine and Al Kemp

“We’re honoured to significantly support the development of Crosstown. It’s a unique facility that’s greatly needed in our community.”

Al Kemp is talking about why he and his wife, Lorraine, are generously matching all donations up to \$100,000 to our Crosstown campaign.

Al says, “Crosstown offers social and health services in the same facility, plus clients can move from supportive housing to affordable housing, and, ultimately, to market rental

housing while continuing to access services.”

The couple shares that Cool Aid “is critically important to provide professional health and social services to those who want to improve their lives.”

Al and Lorraine began supporting Cool Aid about 10 years ago. Programs that focus on recovery continue to resonate with them.

Thank you for your outstanding generosity, Al and Lorraine! You and all



of our donors are ensuring thousands of people have access to essential medical, mental health, and recovery services—alongside stable housing and wraparound supports.

YOU inspire us.

Kinetic Construction: Building community one meal at a time

Your company can volunteer too

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, Kinetic Construction has launched a “gratitude campaign” to give back to Victoria.

Sharlot Beatty, Director of Talent and Development, says, “Kinetic is a company with heart. We prioritize doing good work in our community and team-building among our staff.”

Last winter, Kinetic donated two high-protein breakfasts—including eggs, sausages, and yogurt—that were served

by their staff at our Rock Bay Landing shelter.

Sharlot says, “The shelter guests were incredibly thankful and we were humbled by such a moving experience.”

While serving breakfast, Sharlot was surprised to see an old friend in the buffet line. She says, “We said hello and there was a lot of emotion. It was a reminder that many of us may need the incredible housing, health care, meals, and support

that Cool Aid provides.”

Sharlot encourages other companies to consider sponsoring and serving meals. She says, “Volunteering with Cool Aid gives your staff a meaningful way to give back.”

To learn more about how to participate in our “Fund a Meal for those in Need” program, please contact Steven Seltzer at sseltzer@coolaid.org or 250-882-8441.