

**THE
PEOPLE
OF**

coolaid.



FALL 2025

How you give home, health, and connection to seniors like Andrew

“I can look at the mountains and see bald eagles. It’s like I’ve died and gone to heaven,” says Andrew Petrie, reflecting on the view from his new Crosstown apartment.

But it’s what’s inside the building and his apartment that stands out most to him. Living with COPD and mobility challenges, Andrew is especially grateful for a home that meets his health needs—and restores his independence. He says, “This place is so big and spacious, you could square dance in the bathroom!”

Now, he can cook to his heart’s content and share his carefully prepared baking with neighbours and staff. Crosstown staff are available for any support he may need and the Cool Aid mobile health clinic makes regular visits. It’s also easy for him to get in and out of the building to run errands in the neighbourhood—something he couldn’t do often from his last apartment.



“So many seniors in Victoria are experiencing poverty, housing instability, and health issues,” says Lauren Spears, one of Cool Aid’s Housing and Shelter Managers. “It’s important to acknowledge that—because their stories are often invisible. Cool Aid currently has five housing sites exclusively for seniors.”

She adds, “Our senior residents come from different backgrounds, and most have truly amazing stories. I wish the general public could meet them. I believe it would do a lot to combat stigma and assumptions.”

All Cool Aid seniors’ housing sites have a meal plan. And,



A SPECIAL FALL MESSAGE: The healing effect of belonging and community



This fall, I've been thinking a lot about what it means to belong. For seniors like Andrew, belonging means a home where he can cook, breathe

easier, and watch eagles soar from his window. For others, it's a warm meal, a friendly conversation, or the first step toward healing. And for all of us, it starts with community.

Thanks to you, Cool Aid is doing more than responding to a crisis. You're helping create lasting change. You're showing that housing is health care. That dignity and recovery may be possible. And that no one should be left behind.

The truth is, the need is growing. The issues we face—homelessness, mental health, poverty—are complex. But together, we're building solutions that are bold, compassionate, and built to last. From Crosstown's mix of supportive and affordable

housing to mobile health care and daily meals, your support is creating new models of care that put people first.

As winter approaches, I hope you feel proud of what we're building together. This isn't just charity, it's community. And your kindness is at its heart.

Thank you for being part of this work. We truly couldn't do it without you.

Wishing you and yours a happy Thanksgiving,

Alyson Dahl

Alyson Dahl
Director of Philanthropy &
Community Engagement

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depending on the buildings they live in, senior residents may receive help with medication, hygiene, and other health challenges.

Lauren says, "We have a recreation worker at some sites. And in all of our buildings, staff engage our senior tenants with activities like walking

Andrew is deeply grateful for the improved quality of life he's found at Crosstown—and for the people who made it possible.

groups, gardening, and just having a chat."

Andrew is deeply grateful for the improved quality of life he's found at Crosstown—and for the people who made it possible. He says, "I think the world of the staff here. The

object of life is to do the best you can, and that's what I'm doing thanks to everyone here."

Thank you for giving seniors like Andrew not just a place to live—but the dignity, safety, and community we all deserve. ●

NOURISHING HOPE: **How food builds trust and supports wellness**

It starts with a meal and leads to healing

For many who turn to Cool Aid, food insecurity is a constant worry.

When someone is unhoused, a regular meal can feel out of reach. For a senior on a fixed income, just getting to a grocery store might be impossible. And for those living with chronic illness or mental health challenges, fatigue, pain, or isolation can make it hard to shop, cook, or eat well. Even those who are housed and working may still rely on food banks to make ends meet.

Across Greater Victoria, more people than ever are struggling to access the food they need. But thanks to you, Cool Aid is meeting this growing need with care, dignity, and compassion—serving more than 1,000 nutritious meals every day.

“Many of the people we serve are dealing with complex health issues like mental health challenges, chronic diseases, addiction, and weakened immune systems. On top of that, they might be facing homelessness,” says Paul Stewart.

Paul is our Food Service Manager. He supervises Cool

Aid’s four commercial kitchens, plans menus, and is always looking for new sources of local food to supplement nutritious meals at our Rock Bay Landing shelter and supportive housing buildings.

Paul is passionate about the transformative possibilities of food.

He says, “Sitting down to quality meals on a consistent basis can help someone feel cared for. As their health improves, they start trusting and feel like part of the community. That’s when our staff can connect them with the other supports they need—whether it’s health care, recovery services, or a safe place to call home.”

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, Paul and his team are preparing meals

that offer more than nourishment—they offer comfort, dignity, and a sense of connection. “A turkey dinner in our dining room might be the

highlight of someone’s month,” Paul says. “For some, it’s the only time they sit down to a hot meal surrounded by others who care.”

When someone is unhoused, a regular meal can feel out of reach.



Paul knows that systemic solutions are required to tackle food insecurity. He says, “As a society, we need to put more resources into housing and support services. Food is an important pillar of care for our clients.”

Your support means so much more than a warm meal. It’s the start of trust, healing, and connection. Together, we’re helping people take their first steps toward recovery—and building a healthier, more caring community for all. ●

SUPPORTER profile ●

ANDREW AND ELLIOT SEWELL: Volunteering runs in the family

A year ago, Andrew Sewell, a teacher at Pearson College, started supervising a group of student volunteers at our Rock Bay Landing emergency shelter.

He says, “I liked it so much that I decided to start volunteering myself.”

Soon after, his son Elliot joined him—eager to contribute and gain hands-on experience helping others. Whether working together or on separate shifts, father and son lend a hand in the kitchen, serve meals, and—most importantly—connect with guests on a human level.

Elliot says, “Volunteering with Cool Aid has been a very valuable experience for me. I’ve met some great people and have had the opportunity to learn about the struggles people experiencing homelessness and addiction can face. I would definitely recommend volunteering to others!”

Now semi-retired, Andrew is working with our volunteer coordinator to get more youth involved with Cool Aid. He says, “There are many young people who are eager to help and communities need our youth. Cool Aid is the perfect fit for both.”



Andrew encourages anyone of any age to volunteer. “I’ve always had some understanding of poverty and homelessness, but now I see the individuals dealing with these issues and how much we have in common.”

Thank you to Andrew and Elliot—and to you—for showing what community looks like. Whether you give your time, your voice, or your donations, you’re helping build a more connected and compassionate Victoria.

Your **GENEROSITY** in Action ●

Take a look at your powerful impact of your support so far in 2025.



40,000+

HEALTH ENCOUNTERS
(Community Health Centres
and outreach)



225,000

COMMUNITY MEALS



154

**NEW HOUSING UNITS AT
CROSSTOWN**

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