



Meet Terry

A Crosstown resident and Community Health Centre patient shares his story of challenge and hope

At 70 years old, Terry has lived, worked, and played music all over Canada.

“I never strived to be more than a mediocre musician, but it’s my passion,” he says with a smile.

Terry’s life could be the subject of countless inspiring songs. A self-described “nomad,” he left New Brunswick in 1974 and through the years has worked in construction and with explosives and heavy equipment in mines. He acknowledges that he is an alcoholic but does his best to eat well.

The decades of hard labour caught up to Terry in 2014. “I couldn’t work anymore because of all the wear and tear on my body. That’s when I found myself low on money and eventually homeless.”

“I can’t say enough about the health care I receive at Cool Aid.”

After some time with nowhere to live, Terry landed a spot at Cool Aid’s Next Steps transitional shelter, but gave up his room when he returned to New Brunswick to help family during COVID-19. When he came back to Victoria many months later, he could not find or afford housing. He ended up sleeping in a tent in a park for nine months before securing a spot in supportive housing.

Last spring, he was among the very first residents welcomed into Cool Aid’s new Crosstown community. “I’m really grateful to have a home at Crosstown,” Terry says. “I live on my

Canadian and Old Age pensions, so this is a place I can afford.”

Terry is also thankful for the “out of this world” care he receives at Cool Aid’s Community Health Centre. And he’s looking forward to the Dr. Joe Haegert Community Health



Centre opening this fall. “I can’t say enough about the health care I receive at Cool Aid. Most days, I find it hard to believe I’m still alive. And I might not be without that health care,” he says.



Leading change and preparing for our next chapter— **THANKS TO YOU**



As we head into our busiest time of the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the past several months, and how Cool Aid's history of leading meaningful change continues to shape our work.

At our recent AGM, Carol James shared her family's long connection to Cool Aid. She spoke about a time when Cool Aid operated houses for homeless youth and promoted them with posters. It's remarkable to think about how far we've come, while recognizing that responding to urgent needs has always been who we are.

Back in July, I was reminded of our connection to the LGBTQIA2S+ community as we marched in Victoria's Pride Parade. It recalled our work supporting people living with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, when stigma was widespread and compassionate care was needed. Time and again,

Cool Aid has stepped up to meet emerging challenges, and that spirit guides us today.

Our supporters have helped write that history. Your generosity—whether you've been with us for many years or given recently for the first time—strengthens our legacy. Thank you for making it possible for us to continue responding to our community with compassion, innovation and care. Together, we're preparing for the next chapter of Cool Aid's story.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, belonging to Waheeda Esmail.

Waheeda Esmail
Interim CEO

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Being a good neighbour is important to Terry. Shortly after he moved in, he started picking up litter in the neighbourhood on a regular basis. Right now, he's dealing with a shoulder injury, but hopes to get back to volunteering soon.

Thank you for supporting people like Terry. Your generosity provides not just a place to live—but the

dignity, safety, and sense of community we all deserve.

With you by our side, at Crosstown we plan to open another pharmacy, finish equipping the new clinic, and make inclusive program space available for clients and other community members.



How you are helping to tackle food insecurity—and building community

Across our city, more people than ever are facing food insecurity.

As the cost of living soars, individuals and families are economizing where they can—and food is often the first thing they cut back.

Paul Stewart, Cool Aid's Food Services Manager, says, "Our clients are skipping meals because they can't afford groceries. So the dinner we provide may be the only time they eat that day. But you don't have to be living in supportive housing or a shelter to be struggling. Food insecurity impacts people outside of marginalized communities, too."

Paul and his team prepare and serve more than 1,000 nutritious meals every day.

He says, "As a society, we must take food insecurity more seriously. Cool Aid has the expertise to meet the growing need, but our budget is stretched thin trying to keep up. An integrated strategy that includes local producers, health care, and organizations like Cool Aid is required to provide for those in need."

Paul points out that once people's basic needs of food

and shelter are met, only then can they start to deal with homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges.

With supporters like you by our side, we built and outfitted a new kitchen in Crosstown. Thanks to a meal-service agreement with Bridge Street Pathways Shelter in Rock Bay, we had the revenue to bring on a chef and finally open the kitchen this June. "Innovative partnerships like this make great things happen in our community," Paul explains.

In addition to supporting the Pathways partnership, the Crosstown kitchen provides meals for on-site residents. "Our cook knows people's names, and brings everyone together to enjoy good food in a dignified way that makes them feel cared for," Paul says.

Every dollar received by our food program is in capable hands. Paul says, "We squeeze creative, nourishing meals out of a limited budget. We're so grateful for the community's support because every donation makes a difference in our clients' lives."

With Thanksgiving around the corner, Paul and his



team are gearing up to make extra-special holiday meals. "The people who eat in our dining rooms might have sad memories of the holidays or maybe their families didn't celebrate. So, we go out of our way to create a friendly atmosphere and help them build new memories. A delicious dinner shows folks that they matter. Food is a big part of their healing."

Thank you for your support. Your generosity is at the heart of every nutritious meal our neighbours enjoy and every compassionate connection they make. ●

30 years of dedicated service in Victoria



“Cool Aid meets people where they are—with dignity, respect, compassion, and without judgement. Those are values we share,” Maria Dominelli says.

Maria is speaking on behalf of the Victoria chapter of the Sovereign Order of St. John Jerusalem Knights Hospitaller, an international

organization steeped in an almost 1000-year-old tradition of helping those in need. Maria and her fellow volunteers raise funds from their members and the community, plus receive essential support from their major partner, the Times Colonist Christmas Fund. The partnership is at the heart of the annual appeal that runs from November 12th to the new year.

Maria says, “It’s very rewarding knowing that we help keep food programs running for some of Victoria’s most vulnerable residents. But the Sovereign Order is just one link in the chain of giving. Donors make the gifts. Community

organizations like Cool Aid turn those resources into hope and tangible outcomes for people who need them most.”

Maria is inspired by Cool Aid’s continued commitment to creating pathways out of homelessness. She says, “Recovery is not just about overcoming hardship—it’s about creating opportunities for people to build healthy, independent lives.”

Congratulations and thank you to the Sovereign Order for 30 years of dedicated service in Greater Victoria. And thank you to all of our supporters for giving from your heart!

Your **GENEROSITY** in Action ●

Take a look at the powerful impact of your support



20

new substance-free
recovery housing units
opened this year



346

volunteers provide more
than 8,000 volunteer hours
every year



30,000

healthy meals are served
each month