

Improving Lives and Building Hope

By supporting Central City Foundation (CCF) neighbours like you are making an investment in improving the lives of our neighbours in need living in the downtown eastside and other low income communities. Young moms stabilizing their lives and strengthening their parenting skills, afterschool arts programs for inner-city kids, urban farming employment and nutritious food in the inner city are just a few of the opportunities made possible thanks to Central City Foundation donors this year. CCF grants and capital investments in social purpose real estate projects build hope and transform lives and communities. Thank you to everyone who shares our vision.



Proud Mom Carrie with her son Zayn Cree Irish Johnstone in the beautiful Therapeutic Garden founded by Central City Foundation at Fir Square in BC Women's Hospital



Gale Stewart, Founder and Executive Director of Aunt Leah's, stands in front of the door that leads to the new second stage housing for homeless moms

New mothers facing homelessness who want to stabilize their lives are being helped by Central City Foundation, with the support of its donors. Thanks to CCF, a new

New Housing for Homeless Moms & Babies: Aunt Leah's Place

'second stage housing' project for young moms is now open to provide housing for homeless mothers who are at risk of losing their babies to the foster care system.

Building on CCF's support for organizations such as BC Women's Hospital, Aunt Leah's Place, YWCA Crabtree Corner and the Aboriginal Mothers Centre in the past few years, CCF purchased a two-story building in New Westminster's Uptown neighbourhood for Aunt Leah's to operate in conjunction with the Thresholds' program. Many of the Thresholds residents come directly from BC Women's Hospital, Fir Square ward – a combined care maternity unit providing inpatient prenatal and postpartum care for women and

their babies recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. Mothers and babies can live up to 18 months at Thresholds, where they receive a supportive living environment to continue their recovery and learn about being a new mom.

For women moving forward from the Thresholds program but who still need support, the new second stage housing offers longer term living. The family can stay for as long as necessary as they move toward full independent living. Similar to Thresholds, the new housing offers support and networking, enabling the women to finish school and train for employment opportunities.

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Fir Square Therapeutic Garden

Fir Square provides women with access to counselling, life skills, parenting techniques and coping mechanisms. Babies receive specialized care if they are withdrawing from prenatal substance exposure. The program, the first in Canada, helps keep mothers and babies together whenever possible and provides support when the moms and babies are ready to transition from the hospital environment into the community, to places such as Aunt Leah's.

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Fulfilling the promise of youth: Portage Keremeos at The Crossing

Ginger

There are three things you should know about Ginger. **First**, she is a graduate from Portage Keremeos at the Crossing.



Second, she just completed her first week as a student at UBC on a bursary.

And **third**, she plays a mean guitar.

Ginger says she wants to give recognition to the people and organizations who have helped her on the journey to recovery.



Completed by Central City Foundation in 2009, The Crossing is home to the Portage Keremeos program providing the only long term residential treatment for youth challenged by addiction in BC. A recent survey of graduates for the past three years shows some remarkable results: more than 85% of the young people who have completed the residential program remain abstinent and are enrolled in school!

Two years ago, Ginger never would have dreamt that life could be this good. A Canadian born to Taiwanese immigrant parents, Ginger grew up in a middle-class neighbourhood in a Vancouver suburb. While outward appearances displayed a normal family life, reality was much different. Behind the facade, witnessing the abuse of her mother was the norm for Ginger. As a child, she could come home from school on Monday where it would be normal but by Tuesday there would be broken glass, holes in the wall and blood. Uncertainty and fear left Ginger constantly on edge.

"I felt terrorized," she says. "I started drinking around ten years old, snatching beers from the fridge. Later it was marijuana, which was quickly replaced with crack and heroin. Drugs were my escape." Life became very chaotic and Ginger did not complete grade ten. She spent her days busking with her guitar on the streets and engaging in petty theft. At 16, while staying in a transition recovery house, she learned about Portage Keremeos at the Crossing. With her options running out and her future as an addict looking bleak, she applied to the program.

The Portage Keremeos program at The Crossing was nine months long. Recovery was not easy, nor was it immediate. "There were good weeks, and then there were bad," she says. "At first, I was angry and set on leaving. I didn't buy into the program and was just going through the motions of recovery." After three months, she was given a short pass home at Christmas and ended up using drugs. She contemplated leaving the program entirely but did not. Ashamed, she returned to The Crossing, but this was not the end of her escapades.

"I immediately started to plot to run away, and even had a run-away journal, with what to take, where to go," she says.

On New Year's Eve she escaped, but it was not for long. Her journey was cold, dark, exhausting and lonely and included hiding in a ditch by the side of the road. "In my mind, I really screwed up this time," she says. When she was found in a nearby town, Ginger was still resistant but agreed to return to Portage Keremeos at the Crossing. Met with open arms, love, tears and hugs from everyone, she could not believe how much people cared. Ginger was moved. "They were giving me everything that an addict is truly craving -- love, attention and understanding," she says. "It gave me faith that people do care. That night changed my life."

Now a strong advocate for Portage Keremeos, Ginger believes that the nine-month program is what she needed to get where she is to today, adding that if it was only a month long, she would have had to go nine times. She attributes her success to the unconditional love of the staff. She described the kids at The Crossing as people who have "pretty much given up on themselves and to come to a place where people have not given up on you. It just works."

Today at nearly 19, Ginger has a positive relationship with her mother and brother. Her father, who left the family some years ago, remains estranged. She returned to her original high school and completed grade 12. Now a student at UBC, on a bursary through Central City Foundation, she is realistic about the challenges ahead. She plays music and works part time to support herself. Taking recovery slowly, she is grateful for the community that supported her and continues to care: AA, social workers, case workers and her psychiatrist. She is especially grateful to The Crossing and the staff at the Portage Keremeos program. To commemorate the night that changed her life, she plans an annual trip to The Crossing on New Year's Eve.

Inner-City Youth

PROJECT LIMELIGHT SOCIETY



To participate in Project Limelight Society, children only need enthusiasm, commitment and need. "We see need in many ways, not just financial," says Maureen Webb, one of two founding members, "It encompasses social need as well as urban isolation experienced by new Canadian children."

Maureen and her sister, Donalda Weaver created Project Limelight, a non profit organization that promotes the arts, to address a lack of free and accessible performing arts programs for children in the Downtown Eastside. Three times a week, children are picked up from four local schools and shuttled to the studio for rehearsals. Initially working out of Strathcona Community Centre, Limelight now has its own dedicated space on East Georgia Street near Main. The performance studio is above the East of Main Cafe, a social enterprise that funds Project Limelight. The children always receive a hearty meal at the Cafe before rehearsals.

With the help of Central City Foundation, other donors and a team of dedicated volunteers, the children's productions are brought to life. A recent grant from CCF and its supporters enabled the sisters to purchase equipment and other needed items, such as water bottles, yoga mats and film equipment.

"Central City Foundation is an amazing organization"

MAUREEN.

Mentored by professional musicians, actors, film makers, costume designers and others, the children are encouraged to explore the arts while building confidence in a safe and welcoming environment. Recently Project Limelight was rehearsing for a ten-minute production piece that incorporates the characters from Alice in Wonderland to address the issue of social alienation as a by-product of smart-phones, computers and other technology. A typical day has the children working with a choreographer and a director, moving about the studio in small groups, practicing dance moves, song and speaking parts. The piece is part of a large-scale cabaret that will be shown later in the month at Simon Fraser University. Enthusiasm is evident, as the children preparing for their roles are clearly happy to be there.

New Opportunities

MISSION POSSIBLE

A new pottery studio at Mission Possible (MP) is opening up opportunities for residents of the Downtown Eastside. Only in operation since March 2012, the space is a well-laid-out studio in the basement of the MP building. It already welcomes over 20 potter members and offers bi-weekly training sessions that introduce

neighbours to the pride of learning a new trade and the possibility of supplementing their incomes by selling their wares.

The only cost to members is to attend an orientation and then to volunteer two hours per month at any MP site. Membership also gives the potters access to regular lunches, clothing exchanges, peer support groups, and power breakfasts.

To get the studio into full operation, two large machines were purchased thanks to the support of Central City Foundation and its donors. Participants at MP are filled with excitement about the potential.

A large china cabinet located in the studio is already full of treasures made by the potters and ready for sale.

This is not just a hobby – the new potters are learning marketable skills.

The success of the studio instills confidence and pride in the members and gives them a chance to show what they can do.



Good Food and Good Jobs for the Inner City

SOLEFOOD

Seann Dory is running a few minutes late as he approaches the busy intersection of Main and Terminal in Vancouver, but for a good reason. He has been delivering farm fresh SOLEFood produce to his ever growing client list. As a peace offering, he brings a visitor a basket of the best tasting Charlottes strawberries to sample.

Seann is meeting CCF Board Member JoAnne Chase at the fourth urban farm established by SOLEFood. It's essentially a vacant Vancouver lot with a large mound of soil in the middle that will soon be the growing medium for future produce. Seann concedes that the lot doesn't look like much at present, but it will be a huge economic driver for the farm. With up to 750 planting boxes coming to the site, there are big plans for future growth with kale, spinach, radishes, chard, arugula, eggplant, tomatoes, pepper, herbs and the now famous Charlotte strawberries. Central City Foundation's grant will be instrumental in the transformation from empty lot to robust urban farm at Main and Terminal.

Seann and co-founder Michael Ableman began the SOLEFood social enterprise through United We Can, the downtown eastside bottle depot. Along the way many organizations in the inner city have helped launch the idea into reality and grow production from 30,000 pounds of food to more than 200,000 pounds in only three short years, creating more than two dozen new jobs in the inner city.

SOLEFood's mandate is to grow great food, create a business model that is economically viable and employ people from the inner city. Currently, 84% of their



CCF Board Member JoAnne Chase and Seann Dory (holding the Charlotte Strawberries) at the Main and Terminal future site of the newest SOLEfood farm

SOLEFood's mandate is to grow great food, create a business model that is economically viable and employ people from the inner city.



employees are residents of the Downtown Eastside, many of whom face a number of challenges including addiction and mental illness. The SOLEFood farmers are trained and employed to manage small production farms with duties ranging from building the raised planter boxes to planting, harvesting, washing and delivering the goods. As well as providing employment, SOLEFood offers a positive connection to nature and to our food source.

SOLEFood produce is proudly featured on the menu at 25 local restaurants including Bishops, Wildebeest, and Pourhouse. They are now looking at creating a recognition symbol to help both the restaurants and SOLEFood promote what they are doing locally. They also sell fruits and vegetables, including French melons at up to six farmers markets per week.

Offering more than just a space to grow fruits and vegetables, urban farming can create stronger communities where neighbours meet and understand each other better through shared experiences. SOLEFood and Seann's juicy strawberries are leading to positive growth, for food, for farmers, and for neighbours.

Please renew your generous support this year so that we can continue to improve lives and build hope today!



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► Continued from COVER

The main floor of the new Aunt Leah's Place is a storefront and a distribution warehouse centre for Aunt Leah's thrift store locations and other social enterprises. It is also a training centre for the mothers to learn retail experience and houses

vocational training programs for foster children in other programs with Aunt Leah's.

Next year, Aunt Leah's is celebrating 25 years in operation. Gale Stewart, the founder and Executive Director, started Aunt Leah's after years of fostering children with her

husband Paul. She recognized the support teenagers needed after the foster care program, particularly older teens who are suddenly facing adult challenges.

From this modest beginning, Aunt Leah's has developed numerous programs throughout

the Lower Mainland to build brighter futures for foster kids. "It is wonderful that Central City Foundation and their donors are helping us support Aunt Leah's commitment to helping young mothers take positive steps towards living stable, fruitful lives with their children," says Gale.

"The Foundation's donors are really helping us make a difference."

Strengthening Families and Communities

► Continued from COVER

FIR SQUARE THERAPEUTIC GARDEN

Central City Foundation has improved the lives of moms-to-be and new moms by funding a beautiful Therapeutic Garden at Fir Square in BC Women's Hospital. The comfortable bench seating is surrounded by flowers, plants and trees, offering fresh air and sunshine for women and their newborns in this specialized unit. The moms take great ownership and pride in maintaining the welcoming space of the garden. In addition to providing a place of solace, the garden is a site for programs about gardening and growing produce.



JoAnne Chase (CCF) Jennifer Johnstone (CCF) Heather Mash, Penelope Hutchison, Fir Square Patient Crystal

SHANNON AND THRESHOLDS

When Shannon was 14 years old, she faced early peer pressure to start using marijuana, and was soon introduced to heroin by a boyfriend, and that changed everything. Life "snowballed" and went downhill fast.

"I was in and out of youth treatment centres, but didn't consider myself to have a problem, so every time I left detox, I was convinced I could use drugs again," she recounts. "My denial always brought me back to where I started."

When Shannon learned she was pregnant, her pattern had to change. She was admitted to Fir Square, a dedicated ward within BC Women's maternity program that helps pregnant women to withdraw from substances and to stabilize. Initially, Shannon's parents did not want her to keep the baby and encouraged her to give the baby up for adoption, and Shannon says she understood their position.

"If I couldn't even take care of myself, how could I take care of a new baby?" she says. But, with the support of Aunt Leah's, Shannon turned her life around for the better. She credits Aunt Leah's as the organization that really helped her through her life's toughest moments - singling out her case worker Pam as her guiding star. "Being in a supervised and supportive environment, I felt like part of a community," she says. "Staff were always there to answer any questions that cropped up. Most importantly it was a place to build relationships with other moms who were going through similar circumstances. A combination of living at Aunt Leah's and visiting her parents on weekends was an



ideal and safe way for Shannon to reconnect with her parents.

After a lot of hard work and rebuilding of trust, Shannon and her parents share a wonderful relationship today. She now lives with her new boyfriend and they have two daughters. She keeps her life on track with lots of support from her family and attending support groups. Whenever she returns to Aunt Leah's to say hello, she is welcomed with open arms, and now believes she is a good mother and is happy to be raising her family.

"I never had a baby, I didn't know what to do... if it wasn't for Aunt Leah's, I probably wouldn't have my daughter with me today."

SHANNON, a happy mother of two



A Thank You to Central City Foundation plate, sits on one of the box gardens

Housing Abbott Mansions

Brent Gibson

In April 2012, Terry Gibson wrote a simple but thoughtful letter to Jennifer Johnstone, President and CEO of Central City Foundation, thanking CCF for the housing at Abbott Mansion where his brother Brent Gibson had lived for over ten years. Brent had recently passed away and Terry felt it was significant to recognize the importance of non-profit, affordable housing and the impact it has not only on the individuals that live there but also their loved ones.



Terry recently shared Brent's story and the joy and hardship that filled his 59 years.

Brent was one of the founding members of the Vancouver Folk Festival 35 years ago. His

personality, sociability, and passion for the arts helped build the Festival from its early years. Brent worked at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre as a publicist and later Executive Director, and he also held several other positions in cultural affairs, including returning to the Folk Festival in the late 1990s as General Manager. In tributes published in local media, Brent was fondly remembered as a gregarious intellectual and rebel, who lived and breathed to build the Festival into what it is today.

"My brother was a man with an incredible social conscience who was extremely well read and a remarkable debater," says Terry. "Despite his challenges with addiction, Brent was very social and kept strong relationships with many friends. The last 15 years of his life were not easy in terms of his health and Brent was fully aware of his choices and accepted where he was at. We became close in later years

as I accepted Brent's journey and tried to support him where I could."

Terry visited Brent many times at the Abbott Mansion and communication became much more frequent thanks to Skype and their bi-weekly chats. Brent was also able to re-establish a connection with their sister in Holland.

Terry regularly volunteers and works on community issues in his Calgary neighbourhood. "I recognize that when people have the misfortune of losing their housing, they are really in trouble," he says. **"We all need anchors in our lives and a home, even a home as simple as a single-room, is important.** Safe and affordable housing like the Abbott Mansion meets some very fundamental needs in the community. Everyone should recognize how vital non-profit housing is to the health of the community -- both its mental and physical health."

Terry has high praise for the Abbott Mansion and Central City Foundation, and the safe place they offered Brent, as well as offering a great deal of comfort to his family.

GCF purchased the Abbott Mansion in 1999 and after extensive renovations, has been providing safe, clean and affordable housing to more than 100 of our neighbours in need in the inner city.

How a gift in your Will can transform lives...



A PROMISING FUTURE | leave a legacy of caring

When you include a gift in your Will to Central City Foundation you will be helping to ensure that the most vulnerable people in the inner city will receive the support they need in the future. Your legacy will not only give inner city residents the resources they need to improve the quality of their lives, it will also enable us to fund the most creative and effective organizations and programs in the inner city.

By joining A Promising Future you will help to build a legacy of caring, a community of hope, for those people who live in Vancouver's harshest streets.

A gift in your Will doesn't have to be large to make a difference. Just a small percentage of the residue of your estate will give a better life to people living in need in the inner city.

For more information on A Promising Future, please contact us at **604-683-2263** or by email at jennifer.johnstone@centralcityfoundation.ca