

Happy Holidays!

As our Board Chair, John McLernon, says, “While we don’t have any home runs this past year, we are hitting a lot of solid singles - providing multiple pathways out of homelessness.” Homelessness is a complex challenge that requires a multi-pronged strategy. An individual’s intentions and self-determination are at the heart of any strategy, and often, it can start with one goal, no matter how big or small, that, if addressed, can transform an individual’s life path.

In this newsletter, you will read about a new Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways (STEP) program that supports tenants in their intention to move out of supportive housing and into affordable housing and on with their lives. The support Elliot received through the STEP program has been instrumental in changing his life and building a more promising future by facilitating his move into independent housing. The supportive housing units vacated through the program subsequently welcome homeless individuals coming from shelters, freeing up additional spaces for people to come in out of the cold. Each move therefore

has the potential to improve the lives of three individuals.

You will also read about enhancements to the Vancouver Rent Bank that will ensure its existing limited resources reach increasing numbers of vulnerable individuals including children, youth, families, couples, adults and seniors. These enhancements will be shared with rent banks across the province ensuring that vulnerable people faced with a one-time extraordinary financial hardship everywhere are able to retain their housing and prevent homelessness. Homelessness prevention is a strong focus for Streetohome and our current efforts are directed at filling gaps in the homelessness service system with sustainable solutions.

The holiday season brings a moment to pause and reflect on the past year, and we would like to thank our hard-working and committed 16-member Board, comprised of public and private sector leaders, for their guidance and support in driving all of our initiatives. Kevin Bent, a founding board member, serves as co-chair of a new Streetohome Board Committee that

oversees the brokering and leveraging of innovative addiction recovery options that provide additional pathways out of homelessness. Kevin’s passion for his community, and addressing the immediate challenges we face, comes through in his responses to our recent Q&A. This is a good news story from the former President and publisher of the Vancouver Sun and Province.

As we move into 2019, we look forward to building upon our many successes. Our successes are the result of a solid collaboration with our partners – BC Housing, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health – and the amazing generosity of our donors. I hope you enjoy reading this issue. From all of us at Streetohome, we wish you and your loved ones a happy and healthy holiday season.



Rob Turnbull
President & CEO

Welcome Arielle

Join us in welcoming Arielle Berze, our new Marketing Communications Specialist. Arielle comes to Streetohome from Calgary, and we are pleased to have her as a part of our small but powerful three-person team.

Arielle will be working with the Board, Streetohome Partners, donors and vulnerable individuals to tell their stories. She will also provide support for grant writing and project management for the Smart Cities-Life Intentions initiative. You can contact Arielle at arielleb@streetohome.org or 629-2711 ext. 103.



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Moving Along One's Preferred Life Path Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways

A movie with friends, hanging out on game day – it's the simple things that most people take for granted and fail to appreciate in life. For Elliot, he knows the value in these seemingly simple activities – the value in being able to go out with friends, or even hosting friends in his own home.

"I have some friends where I would always need to go to their places to watch a movie with them, but now they can come to mine."

Diagnosed with schizophrenia, Elliot was living in a supportive housing unit, operated by Coast Mental Health Foundation, before applying for Supporting Tenants, Enabling Pathways (STEP). He lived and worked there for six years, and even when he went off his meds and became sick again, they made sure there was a place waiting for him once he was ready to move back in. He had a care team and the support services needed to help him manage his schizophrenia and recover his mental health and well-being.

"I'm doing a lot better in general, and the people at Coast could see this bit of independence growing and taking hold."

As he continued to grow more independent, the team at Coast Mental Health recommended he take part in the STEP pilot project and move on to independent living. STEP supports self-identified individuals living in supportive housing to move to independent housing that may be market, shared or subsidized, depending on their needs and preferences. The project is helping 100

"[STEP] was an opportunity to move on and live an independent life."

individuals with some of the financial burdens associated with moving. This includes covering the first and last month's rent, helping to initially furnish an apartment for those who do not already have essentials of their own, and ensuring that financial assistance is available for any unexpected challenges along the way.

"At first, I was worried about changing my care team and needing to meet a

new doctor, but I knew moving would give me more freedom. [STEP] was an opportunity to move on and live an independent life."

While Elliot has his own support system and community through family and friends he's met over the years, he feels that his new building, and STEP itself, is working to provide another local community for participants and residents.

"Everyone is so nice. The cleaning lady says 'hi' to me every morning. My new neighbours even helped me move in when they saw me in the hall! STEP, and the new rental opportunities really provide a welcoming community," he says.

"It was such an overwhelming feeling to move in and see my new home – just happiness and gratefulness. I'm glad I have this place to heal."

The independent housing is less restrictive – Elliot has his own apartment – and there's more freedom to invite his friends and family over for dinner or a movie, or even to stay for a day or two.

"My daughter came to visit from California – she's going to university



there. When she came, she was able to stay the night! She normally needs to stay with her grandmother,” his face lights up and his eyes crinkle as he smiles at the memory.

No longer needing to worry about not having somewhere to go, Elliot feels the

“It was such an overwhelming feeling to move in and see my new home – just happiness and gratefulness.”

stability has improved his mental health and allowed him to have a more positive outlook. He hopes to return to his contract work – street cleaning, as well as continuing to volunteer for a local mailroom.

“It’s good to have something to do, to get out of the house,” Elliot says. “The work means I can have more independence, and it’s nice to have the extra bit of pocket change to be able to do some of the things I want to do.”

He can play golf with friends, or buy a ticket to a sports game. He has recently become vegan, and cooks with his friends; making paneer hotdogs and other vegetable-based dishes. He has also started to reconnect with his First Nations heritage.

“I want to save, and maybe buy a vehicle so I can travel a bit. My friends travel to the First Nations community, and I’m learning the traditional songs, including the drum. I’m looking for a vegan drum with a good sound right now,” Elliot says.

Grateful for STEP, Elliot has been able to focus on the most important things in his life – enjoying the simple things and spending more time with the people closest to him.

Sharing the Wealth

A New IT System for Vancouver Rent Bank

A new IT system can mean a lot. A company can work more efficiently and help more people faster. It can mean even more when it is being shared with others and scaled to have a greater impact.

The Vancouver Rent Bank (VRB), managed by the Network of Inner City Community Services Society, is doing just that. An anonymous donor made a generous donation to the VRB, allowing them to develop a comprehensive IT system they plan on sharing with rent banks around the province.

“It was something we had been talking about for a while, and the opportunity fell into our laps,” says Caitlin Quinn, Manager of Lending Programs at the VRB.

The VRB provides interest-free loans for people in danger of eviction or essential utility cut-off, as well as providing financial workshops, resources

“While we often work as islands, there will be an increased strength, faster learning curve and greater outcomes in doing it together.”

and connections to housing support services including landlord mediation. The new IT system will allow the VRB to focus more on their advocacy initiatives, saving time currently spent manually tracking loans and transactions, and will also contribute to increasing their repayment rate by sending automated reminders and creating a constant communication stream between the VRB and the client.

“The new IT system will automate the backend banking and some of the communication, allowing for us to spend a lot more time on advocacy. We’ll be able to help people above



and beyond, and connect them with the services they need,” Caitlin says.

With the time saved, the VRB will have an increased capacity and be able to further extend their programs to help more individuals and families who run into extraordinary financial challenges.

As the largest rent bank in BC, the VRB has always had a mandate to not only help the public, but also other

rent banks – supporting them to get set up and running including sharing best practices, policies, and print/online resources. The new IT system will facilitate this process.

“They’re going to come across the same issues that we have, and we are all stronger as a collective. While we often work as islands, there will be an increased strength, faster learning curve and greater outcomes in doing it together.”

The new IT system will be up and running in January, 2019. To learn more about the Vancouver Rent Bank, visit: <http://www.niccsc.ca/VRB>

One-on-one with Kevin Bent



Kevin Bent has more than 20 years of print and online media and marketing leadership experience. He has held numerous senior sales and publishing roles throughout Canada. Currently, he's leading two new ventures in the digital media industry.

Kevin is a founding Board Member and had been actively involved in a number of Boards prior to Streethome, including BC Children's Hospital Foundation, Sunnyhill Foundation for Children, BC Achievement Foundation and Vancouver Foundation.

Why did you join the Streethome Board?

It's incumbent upon all of us to give back to our community. I've been lucky to meet many individuals either through work or friendships and these individuals have inspired me to get involved. Streethome does great work in the community and I thought the approach the group was taking was spot on – rallying the business community and community leaders to work together to tackle a significant social issue in our city – homelessness. The private sector brings together so many hardworking, dedicated, smart and caring people who know how to get things done.

Tell us about Streethome's renewed focus on homelessness prevention.

While part of our initial 10-year plan for Vancouver, the first step was to put people in a place they could call 'home', where they would be able to access the support they needed. However, the Board quickly realized that more needed to be done 'upstream' in order to have a significant impact. This meant dealing with the "root causes" and understanding why people are ending up homeless in the first place. Preventing people from cycling in and out of homelessness by helping them to achieve their personal goals, including addiction recovery, and move on with their lives, is where our focus is today.

Where do you think Addiction Recovery Pathways fit with homelessness prevention?

I co-chair a Streethome Board Committee that oversees innovative addiction recovery pathways that fill gaps in the current homelessness services system. We were delighted to recommend that the Board contribute funding to the St. Paul's HUB and Pacific Community Resources Society's two new Youth Recovery Homes – each having a significant impact. We have made major progress with where we want to go and what we want to do as a committee, but some of the "heavy lifting" is just starting. We are brokering and leveraging three promising recovery pathways with a variety of service provider partners.

How should the media address societal issues, and how can it help?

When I became the President and publisher of The Vancouver Sun and Province in 2006, I realized I was in a very unique position where I could use my good fortune to benefit the community. In my mind the media has an obligation to shine a spotlight on major societal issues and hopefully spur debate and discussion with the right stakeholders. Saying that, the media just can't highlight the issue or

issues and walk away thinking their job is done. They also need to be a part of the solution. Using their incredible power and reach to positively influence policy change is one powerful tactic that works.

What advice would you give your sons as young adults starting to make their way in the world?

This may sound like a cliché but when all is said and done, I would want them to be happy. I'd tell them to be honest and hard-working, find your passion and exploit it, treat all people with great respect, be engaged in your community and give back to the less fortunate. When they ask why someone is sleeping on the sidewalk, I explain to them that the individual is just like us but things have happened in their lives that have brought them to this point. I tell them that we are lucky to have the resources and support we have; and that some people need help in getting back into a home and on with their lives.

about us

Streethome seeks out innovative and promising practices from around the world; brokers collaboration with the provincial government's housing, health and employment programs, the City of Vancouver and non-profit service providers; and leverages private sector funding for projects that will fill gaps in the current system and demonstrate sustainable solutions to homelessness in Vancouver.

Be part of the solution.

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