

OCTOBER 2021

THE BEAT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR THE
SENIORS SERVICES SOCIETY OF BC

ROSS TOWERS PILOT: INTEGRATED SUPPORTS IN NEW WESTMINSTER

Over 30 senior residents at Ross Towers signed up for our pilot support services project at an outdoor Meet 'n' Greet on Oct. 7. Sunshine, music and refreshments made a great setting for staff to share information about the services, which can include light housekeeping, meal delivery, shuttle bus, friendly support calls, Choose to Move physical activity coaching, housing navigation, and digital literacy. The project aims to facilitate connections to support services and promote aging in the right place. Program partners include United Way BC, BC Housing, City of New Westminster, and Hey Neighbour! Collective. Ross Tower residents, family, and friends enjoyed the event—and many showed interest in becoming SSS BC volunteers!



Working with communities in BC's
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central
& Northern Vancouver Island



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Registered Charity Number #80138 8547 RR0001

HOUSING OUTREACH JESSICA'S STORY

A few months ago, SSSBC received a call from a homeless shelter about Jessica. Jessica is an independent 70-year-old and uses a scooter to accomplish daily activities. She lives with multiple health conditions limiting her mobility and necessitating housing that allows full use of her scooter, elevators, and access to social programs.

In March 2021, Jessica tested positive for COVID-19 after being admitted to the hospital for flu-like symptoms. After staying in the hospital for over a month and testing negative, she was not welcome to return to her rental apartment because she had COVID-19, and other residents were paranoid. Upon her discharge from the hospital, Jessica was at risk of being homeless. Due to limited pension income, exorbitant rental prices, and the uniqueness of her housing requirements, Jessica struggled to find housing on short notice, resulting in a shelter stay.

The SSSBC Outreach Worker assessed Jessica's unique housing needs. They determined that she met SSSBC's Temporary Housing Program (THP) requirements and moved her into a unit that met her daily living needs. In a few short weeks, our Outreach Staff built a trust relationship with Jessica. They helped to apply for subsidies to secure her finances and created a budget for income and spending. They connected her to LinkAges, SSSBC's digital literacy program to increase her confidence in technology, allowing her to research local social and support programs, find housing options, and connect with friends and relatives.

Today, Jessica has been permanently housed in a community of her choosing, thanks to the THP Program. When it was time to transition from THP, the Outreach Worker arranged for movers, a damage deposit, and furniture to start her new permanent home. Jessica was incredibly grateful, and in a letter, thanked her Outreach Worker for helping her through this "horrifying" situation, stating, "There is no doubt in my mind; he saved my life."

* A fictional name has been used to protect the identity of our client.

** THP, funded by BC Housing, is a one-of-a-kind program in BC, that provides short-term emergency accommodation in a fully furnished studio and one-bedroom apartments for older adults facing an immediate housing crisis. While staying in THP, clients are connected to an outreach worker who supports them to find safe and secure permanent housing. THP units are located within four BC Housing buildings in Burnaby and New Westminster.



SENIORS HOUSING COLLABORATIVE: BUILDING TOWARDS SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Low-income seniors experience inadequate service access and community disconnection due to fragmentation in the seniors housing sector.

A new Seniors Housing Collaborative (SHC) is launching this fall to shift policy and practice so low-income seniors can age in the right place with appropriate services and strong networks. Key organizations and senior renters will work together to identify how we can build on what works in the sector—and frame actions for what needs to change.

SHC is grounded in ideas generated by the Seniors Housing Innovation Lab, where SSSBC joined more than fifty cross-sector stakeholders and senior advisors to rethink systems and services for senior renters in Metro Vancouver. With funding from Vancouver Coastal Health, SHC will take that work further, shaping policy recommendations to create communities where low-income seniors can participate, contribute, and access what they need to manage their lives.

Mariam Larson, Consulting Gerontologist, will take on the role of Collaborative Project Manager. She has extensive experience working with diverse partners to create projects that address seniors' needs. She looks forward to working with the SSSBC team to sustain and strengthen their significant community impact.

VOTED BEST COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION 2021!

In late July, SSSBC received news that we were voted "Best Community Service Organization for 2021" by the New Westminster Record Readers Choice Awards! This announcement came with many cheers from our hardworking staff who have tirelessly spent months keeping older adults off the streets and in their chosen communities, so they can thrive and age in place. We kindly thank everyone in our community for voting for us! We will continue to exceed expectations for 2022 and onwards!



NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

September was a big month. We proudly hosted a 30-day campaign entitled Challenging Ageism, that ended on National Seniors Day, October 1st!

Each week we invited our Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn followers to engage in activities, watch videos, read or learn in hopes to pursue further understanding of ageism in our communities.

In a post-campaign survey, we discovered that case studies and videos resonated most with our audience. 96% of survey respondents stated they learned something new about ageism. 35% of survey respondents knew very little about ageism when the campaign started; However, 78% of the same respondents can now define ageism. While these results are incredible, we still have work to do! For everyone who participated and was engAGEed, encourAGED, or outrAGED with our campaign posts, THANK you for your participation, comments, and feedback!

Challenging



WHAT IS AGEISM?

Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.

-World Health Organization, 2020

FAREWELL & THANK YOU

Seniors Services Society of BC would like to thank our retiring board member, Harjinder Dhanoya, for her outstanding service to our Board.

Harj has always had a soft spot for seniors and wanted to make a difference in their lives. She credits SSSBC for "doing amazing work" in "creating space and accommodation" for seniors in the community of New Westminster. Harj has served our board for 4 years.

She leaves us with the sentiment: "Every day is a chance to make a difference." We are grateful for her incredible service!



"It has been a pleasure working with the amazing individuals at the board level and contributing towards SSSBC's initiatives. I am happy the Society has an amazing team to take it to the next level! "

SPECIAL THANKS

The incredible **Royal City Rotary Club (Breakfast Club)** of **New Westminster** kindly donated proceeds from their hugely successful Heart of the Matter event to help local vulnerable older adults!

A special thank you to the **New Westminster Police** for donating housing supplies for vulnerable local older adults in need of hygiene, paper, and cleaning products!

We can't thank Ron and Mary from **Key West Ford** enough for offering their time to volunteer with us by providing valuable medical transportation to local older adults.

A huge thank you to **MP Peter Julian MLA, Anne Kangmy**, and their constituents for donating 26 fans to our older adults amid the summer heatwave.



"The members of the Royal City Rotary Club (Breakfast Club) are grateful for the work that the Senior Services Society of BC provides to the seniors in our community. We are so pleased to support them with a financial donation to continue valuable programs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic."
-Director of Ways & Means, Kathy MacKerricher (above)



OUR DONORS

We cannot do this alone! A special thank you to all our donors who support our critical work. If our stories touch you or if you want to be a part of our monthly donor community, visit www.seniorsservicessociety.ca/donate and make a generous gift today. Our seniors will thank you!

If you want to learn more about SSSBC, please visit our website or connect with us on social media!

June - September 2021

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No duty is more urgent than giving thanks.

—James Allen, 1864–1912

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