

WISH

Drop-In Centre Society

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WISH Newsletter • Fall 2016 Issue



HOW DO WE DEFINE SUCCESS?

The Supportive Employment Program is an amalgamation of two long standing WISH programs; the Peer Volunteer Program (PVP) and the Peer Safety Patrol (PSP) with the addition of the newly developed Mainstream Employment Program. All participants must be current or former sex workers.

The women we work with identified the desire for mainstream employment but felt the barriers to be insurmountable. Some of those barriers include not having held a mainstream job in years, if ever; criminal records preventing employment opportunities; stigma; loss of confidence; near homelessness and homelessness.

In this current year alone, three women entered the mainstream employment market. We are so proud of these women, their perseverance and this latest accomplishment.

ultimately into Supportive Employment outside of WISH. In practice, women step into the program where they fit the best.

According to Eva Ureta, Coordinator of the Supportive Employment Program, "Miss D" was once a regular participant at WISH and after some time decided it was time to get serious about her life choices: where she was and who she wanted to be. She trained to become a member of the Peer

The Supportive Employment Program meets women where they are at and supports them as they develop the skills and confidence necessary to eventually enter mainstream employment. In theory, the women start in the Peer Volunteer Program, our lowest-barrier entry point, transition into Peer Safety Patrol when they are ready, and

Volunteer Program and set a long-term goal to get off social assistance. "Miss D" is now employed in a mainstream job in her community and is working on her next goal: becoming a member of Peer Safety Patrol.

Success in supportive employment is a spectrum and can look like a number of different achievements: proper (safe and clean) housing; access to mental health teams or professionals; working 1 day a week or, perhaps, 1 shift a month; or, saving one pay cheque a year to see their children or attending a family gathering.

Eva recounts the experience of another participant we'll call "M.P." She was living in a state of crisis by way of addiction and poverty. She wanted to reunite with her family which she had not seen or heard from in years. Eva recalls, "She reached out to me in a moment of clarity wanting to make a positive change in her life. I met her where she was at that point in her life and supported her in her goal of getting employment with the ultimate goal of reuniting with her mother one day. Within a relatively short period of time, "M.P." graduated from the Peer Safety Patrol training program, attended all her scheduled shifts and socked away enough money to send her mother a bus ticket. She took some time off of work to parade her mom around town, all expenses paid. I don't know who was more proud: "M.P." or her mother."

In the cases of both "M.P." and "Miss D", they certainly achieved success. As a result of their determination and perseverance they have a new sense of accomplishment; something they had not felt or known before, or in a long time. This is a feeling they can always call on when faced with any new goal or dream that the women set their sights on. In wondering, "Can I do this?" The answer can be a resounding "Yes!"

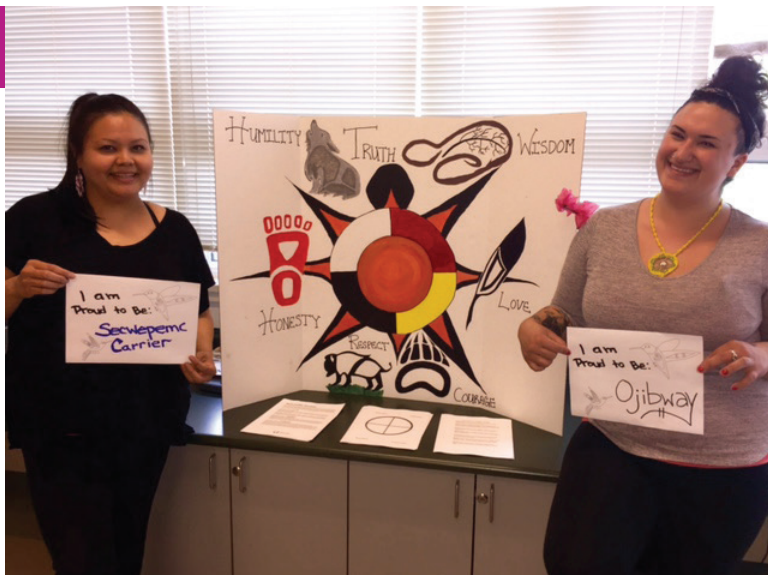
ABORIGINAL DAY AT WISH

This summer, WISH Aboriginal Health and Safety Program (AHSP) had the pleasure of working with two summer practicum students from Native Education College. Pauline and Tianna worked with WISH AHSP Coordinator and Squamish Junior Elder, Alexandria Beverly.

In addition to supporting day to day WISH Aboriginal programming, Pauline and Tianna enthusiastically lead this year's Aboriginal Day Celebrations at WISH. Their focus was on the 7 Sacred Teachings. Pauline and Tianna set up in the Learning Centre and invited women to make Medicine Bags to keep or gift.

They invited women to write each of the 7 sacred teachings: Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility and Truth on small rocks, which the women then placed in small bags. As Pauline and Tianna worked with the women, they wove information about the sacred teachings into their conversation.

The second activity set up by Pauline and Tianna was to lay out a map of Canada and ask women to identify where they are from. They talked with the women about First Nations activities specific to the culture or area they were from. One



Pauline and Tianna, Aboriginal Day display at WISH.

of the more profound creations of the day were "I am proud to be..." statements women completed. Not only are women proud of their culture and nation and sisters, they are also, indeed, proud to be.

Thank you, Pauline and Tianna for such meaningful, and well planned Aboriginal Day activities at WISH!



NEW: MUSIC THERAPY AT WISH

We are excited to announce that we will be launching a music therapy program at WISH by January 2017. WISH Participants will be encouraged and offered tools to care for their whole-person self through musical experience and psycho-education. Through the process of music therapy, participants at the WISH Drop-In Centre might (re)discover their strengths in a safe place by being invited into creative beauty.

Our music therapist, Aimee Berends MMT, MTA, MT-BC, is an accredited music therapist and highly experienced musician who brings a passion about whole-person wellness to her music therapy practice.

Aimee is new to the Vancouver area and excited about the proposed music therapy program at WISH. Her clinical focus is mental health and addictions. As a freelancer, Aimee has played with several ensembles including the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, the Elora Festival Singers, and recently held the principal oboe chair in the Guelph Symphony Orchestra. Her research interests have concentrated on the clinical use of orchestral instruments, music optimization in health care institutions, and participants' experiences of music therapy on a crisis stabilization unit. Aimee has also served as sessional instructor in Wilfrid Laurier's music therapy department.

We are proud to say that the seed funding for this program came through Music Heals Canada and from the proceeds of the inaugural concert of Allegra Chamber Orchestra in June of 2016. As one of the only all-female orchestras in the world, Allegra Chamber Orchestra's mandate is to empower women and their communities through music.

We will be sure to keep you updated on our Music Therapy Program.



To support the programs and services at WISH please contact Erin McNeill at wishfundraising@shaw.ca.

SPOTLIGHT ON:



WANDA PELLETIER
WISH Drop-In
Program Assistant

Wanda is one of 28 Program Assistants that work in the Drop-In. Program Assistants work on the front-lines of WISH's largest program, doing everything from greeting and supporting women, making the space safe and clean and welcoming, preparing meals, providing women information and referrals, and basic-needs items like clothes, toiletries, and supplies.

What brought you to WISH, Wanda?

I felt the need to be a part of WISH because of my personal connection to the community and the sex trade. I have empathy and compassion and a great understanding of the DTES. I felt I had a lot to offer. I wanted to continue to work and support women of the DTES.

What do you enjoy most about working at WISH?

I enjoy the relationships I have with some of the women. I feel that it's a blessing to be welcomed into the lives of others. I feel proud to be a part of such a powerful organization.

Tell us a little about yourself?

I am a mother of two sons and one daughter, ages 23, 21 and 16 years old. I am 44 years old and I am from the Cree First Nation. I am from Regina, Saskatchewan. I have been calling Vancouver home for 21 years. I have been working in the DTES for almost 17 years now. I love to travel and spend time with my family.



NATALIE BOLTON
Volunteer

What brought you to WISH?

It was luck that brought me to WISH - I heard about the organization through a colleague at a time when I was searching for connection. On my first visit to the Centre I knew that it would be a home for me because it's a place where women come together to use their strengths individually and collectively. I can be incredibly kind and also incredibly sarcastic. I can be easily distracted by details. Sometimes (actually lots of times), I'm too sensitive. Nonetheless I feel accepted and appreciated at WISH, because these aren't my flaws, they are my gifts, and anything I don't have I can learn or borrow from the women around me.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering at WISH?

Volunteering at the Centre can be physically demanding. You're on your feet a lot. The kitchen can get really hot. Sometimes you're moving fast and just trying to keep up. But when my shift ends I don't feel tired; I actually feel more energized than ever. Each time I'm there I learn something new or deepen a connection. The women at Wish teach me more than they could ever know about resiliency and partnership. I'm not there to be of service, I'm there to be part of a community.

Tell us a little about yourself?

I could happily eat pizza every day for the rest of my life. I love to dance but only to songs that I like, so I do most of my dancing in my living room. I play tennis and dodgeball and am working on becoming a rock climber. I grew up in Florida but only tell that to people who I trust. I miss hot and humid evenings, tropical fruit, and my family. When I'm not eating or dancing or playing, I work at the Vancouver Foundation and help coordinate the Neighbourhood Small Grants program.

Staff, donors, volunteers. We all make WISH Happen. Collecting items, hosting an event, writing a cheque, volunteering in the make-up room, chopping vegetables, sweeping floors, serving dinner, and answering the phones. However you do it ... you make WISH Happen. Join us in celebrating all the people and tasks that make WISH happen: Snap a pic! Post it on Facebook, share it on Instagram, tweet it on Twitter. **Don't forget the hashtag #ImakeWISHhappen**



@imakewishhappen



@WISHdropin



@wishwellness

BAD DATE REPORTS: WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

A big part of what WISH MAP Van, Drop-In, and office staff do is facilitating the collection and distribution of information about “bad dates” amongst sex workers who access WISH’s services (and hopefully beyond).

Vancouver’s Bad Date Sheet used to be compiled by DEYAS (the now defunct Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society) until 2005, when WISH took over compiling the reports.

We currently collect “bad date” reports from women and circulate the renamed, weekly **Red Light Alert** to over 180 sex workers, outreach and support workers, organizations and law enforcement agencies across the Lower Mainland. Sex workers can let WISH know when they have had a bad date by either ‘formally’ reporting a bad date (i.e. filling out a bad date form either with a staff member or on their own to be included in the Red Light Alert) or sometimes, folks prefer to informally share a warning with the staff to communicate amongst the women we see out working.

Letting WISH know about bad dates and predators, by any means, helps sex workers communicate potential threats to their peers and thus improving their safety while they work. Hopefully, the mechanism of reporting bad dates deters some potential attackers. It’s also an additional mechanism for law enforcement to spot trends and further investigate complaints and reports about perpetrators and predators.

When women come to WISH and tell us they have had a bad date we listen in a supportive, non-judgmental way; really exercising our sensitivity and focus as support workers.

The form is titled 'Bad Date Reporting Form'. It contains the following sections:

- Staff Name/Contact #:** _____
- Date of Incident:** _____
- Time of Incident:** _____ am _____ pm
- Location:** _____
- Picked up by:** ☐ Foot ☐ Car ☐ Truck ☐ Bicycle ☐ Other _____
- Description of vehicle:** _____
- Circle type of vehicle:** _____
- Suspect Description:** Age _____ Name _____ Gender _____ Hair colour _____
- What happened?** _____

WISH List

Without individuals like you collecting and donating these high-demand items, we simply would not be able to meet the needs of women coming to WISH. The following are items that we don’t have a budget to purchase, but that are daily necessities of the women we see.

- Women's clothing and accessories
- Feminine hygiene products
- Bras, panties, socks, tights and pantyhose
- Makeup and toiletries (new and partially used)
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste and mouthwash
- Rain Ponchos
- Umbrellas
- Coats, hats and gloves
- Walking Shoes and boots
- Bedding and towels
- Books and magazines
- First Aid supplies
- Single use compass card for participants
- Postage stamps
- Long distance cards for women to call home

WISH gratefully accepts donations at our Drop-In Centre (330 Alexander Street) seven days a week between the hours of 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. AND 3 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Please feel free to drop off donations during those hours. The entrance for drop-offs is located at the back of the building (alley entrance). Call 604-669-9474 if you have any questions, or need to make alternate arrangements outside of those hours.



NOTES FROM THE DROP-IN CENTRE

Are you feeling the pinch at the grocery store? We sure are at WISH! Our cooks currently prepare, on average, over 350 meals and snacks per day. Interestingly, this time last year we were preparing about 250 meals and snacks per day. Our meals are designed to be calorie-heavy and nutrient-rich for the women who often only eat once/day. We use whole, fresh foods to keep the nutrients high and to save money on our groceries.

We partner with a Vancouver Food Bank program called Food Runners for lots of our groceries then supplement by purchasing staples like coffee, dairy, eggs, meat and produce. Our fantastic cooks arrive at 1pm to start prepping dinner which is served at 6pm every single night of the year. Often, the cooks won’t know what they have in stock to make dinner with until the Food Bank truck arrives. They are innovative with an eye to nutritional value and the cost of a meal.

Your cash donations helps WISH purchase meal staples like coffee, dairy, eggs, meat and vegetables so that we can continue to provide the nutritious, calorie-rich meals that are so important to sustaining the health of our participants.

So much programming goes on in the Drop-In, at any given time: Everything from outreach workers, Nurse Practitioners, events, workshops, learning activities, arts-based activities, clothing and makeup donations. But without a healthy, filling meal shared with other women to start off, not much else can happen. Like with most of our homes and safe spaces, healing and community almost always starts in the kitchen. And so it goes at WISH, too.