

**WISH** Drop-In  
Centre Society

WISH NEWS  
SUMMER 2020

## YOU'VE MADE A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE DURING THESE DIRE TIMES



Photo: Wendy D.

You kept the WISH Drop-In Centre open, and the MAP Van on the road as demand for our services doubled due to COVID-19

So much has happened in the world in the last four months, and we sincerely hope that you and your loved ones are staying safe during these challenging times. Everyone has felt the impacts of COVID-19, but, closer to home, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has been made even more vulnerable and its residents have been hit the hardest by this pandemic.

But thanks to your help, WISH was able to add a much-needed day shift to its MAP Van—providing outreach services to street-based sex workers every day and night.

Your generous donations also made it possible to extend our Drop-In Centre hours to 24/7 during these critical times. This is the first time in WISH's history that we have been able to keep our doors open during the day, something we hope we can continue for years to come.

At our Drop-In Centre, demand for meals, bathrooms, handwashing facilities, and showers has more than doubled. Providing these services is not just a matter of dignity; it's a matter of safety.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support and funding from the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Park Board, Luma Native Housing Society, Vancouver Foundation, Vancity, Houssian Foundation, the United Way of Lower Mainland, Vancity Community Foundation, and from individual donors like you. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.



# HERE'S HOW YOU CAN CONTINUE TO HELP

Due to the pandemic, the need for safe spaces, basic sanitation, food, essential services, and information has doubled. Currently, frontline services are stretched to breaking, and there are growing levels of fear, misinformation and anxiety in the community. In response to this urgent need, WISH launched the *Courage Campaign*.

## DEVASTATING IMPACTS OF COVID-19

- Every sex worker we support has experienced sudden, total income loss
- More women turning to street-based sex work for the first time
- Women have fewer options to stop working or refuse unsafe work
- Increased violence against sex workers
- Worsening homelessness or housing insecurity
- Heightened inability to get food and meals
- Lack of access to health and sanitary facilities
- Lack of information in the community
- Increasingly tainted drug supply and highest numbers of overdose deaths ever seen



### THE COURAGE CAMPAIGN

With your help, women in street-based sex work can continue to receive essential services from WISH. You can join the *Courage Campaign* by filling out the enclosed donation form and returning it to us with your cheque or credit card number.

Your support will help more women now when they need it most.

"Please give what you can.  
No contribution is too small as we fight this  
crisis as a community. "

Photo: Carol Minchinton



Photo: Wendy D.



Photo: Wendy D.





## MAP VAN ADDS MUCH-NEEDED DAY-TIME SHIFT



Photo: Wendy D.

Sex workers can now rely on the MAP Van while they're working, night AND day!

Sex workers who access the MAP Van tend to rely on the van for their primary support since many typically don't visit the Downtown Eastside or WISH's Drop-In Centre. Since COVID-19 began, more and more women are seeking support from the MAP Van, including many new faces.

To meet the increase in demand, the MAP Van recently began operating during the day. We can now reconnect with women we've seen at night, or with women who've been temporarily housed in hotels and shelters. Women can get meals and snacks, harm-reduction supplies and a myriad of other supports, including follow-ups to housing referrals. Although temporary, adding a day shift to the MAP Van is something we hope to continue to do for years to come.

**"When I was out on the street, working alone on a corner, the van was a ray of light for me. I enjoyed coffee, a sweet treat or two, and talking to you guys. You always had mittens and stuff for the cold and were never too busy to let me warm up a bit. Thank you from the girl on Kingsway!"**

"My favourite part about working on the MAP Van is that I get to be a 'yes' person," says MAP Van manager Dana (pictured above left). "If someone is hungry, we will give them food. If someone is cold, we'll give them warm clothes. If someone needs clean needles or condoms so they can use drugs or work in a safer way, we will give them harm reduction supplies. Without judgment. Without hesitation. People come to us needing resources or support, and we just get to say yes."

## THE WISHING WELL INITIATIVE



Photo: Emily Kydd

WISH is temporarily open 24/7 to meet dire need due to COVID-19

The closure of safe spaces and public facilities due to COVID-19 has left hundreds of people, including those community members who have been made most vulnerable, without the ability to social-distance, and without access to basic sanitation to wash their hands, use a toilet or take a shower.

To meet this grave need, we launched the *WISHing Well Initiative*, which temporarily provides women with access to basic sanitation, including showers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With critical support from the City of Vancouver, WISH's backlot now houses a 5-toilet washroom trailer and an outdoor safe respite area and employs over 35 peers who maintain the space, offer peer support, and provide overdose prevention or reversal supports every day and night. The Drop-In Centre has also expanded its hours so women can meet their basic sanitation needs.

This is the first time in WISH's history that the Drop-In Centre has been able to operate 24 hours a day—something we hope can become the new normal for WISH. Of course, all of this comes at a cost, and it's been made possible only through the generous support and funding from community of donors, foundations, funders and community partners who support WISH. Thank you!

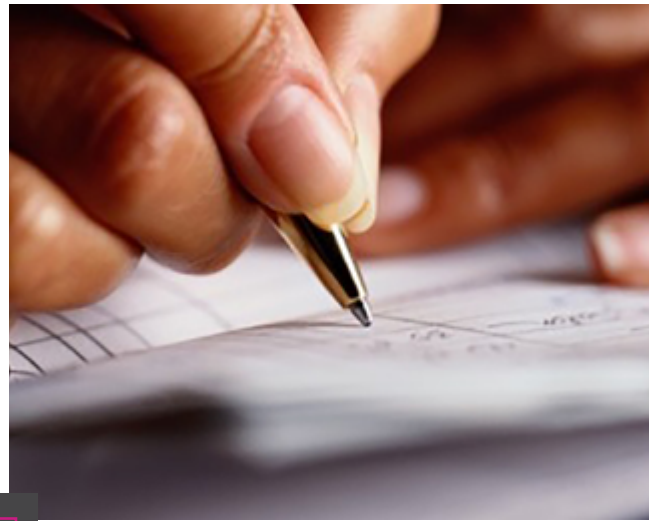
**"It's awesome you guys are open 24/7 now. I have nowhere else to use a washroom except here. It's great knowing people that care. I feel like you guys care."**

— WISH PARTICIPANT

## BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

Because of COVID-19, WISH is seeing the worst level of risk and vulnerability among women involved in street-based sex work.

WISH is working hard to support these women, but doing so is becoming more challenging than ever. Increased hours and services, increased food costs, and increased sanitation and cleaning costs are now part of our new normal. To maximize the impact of your gift, you can become a monthly donor. Your monthly donation will help build stability and provide much-needed support.



Just check the monthly box on the enclosed form and select or add your preferred monthly donation amount. This option will benefit your cash flow, you'll receive one tax receipt at the end of the year, and you'll become a WISH contributor all year round!

"WISH helped me through a very difficult time in my life... I could come have a warm meal and spend time with people who truly understood my life without being socially overwhelmed."

– WISH PARTICIPANT.



## FUNDRAISING IN CRISIS

WISH, like many other charities, relies heavily on the proceeds generated through fundraising events. Every year, we raise thousands of dollars to help support women in our society who are being made even more vulnerable and marginalized.

However, due to social distancing restrictions, many events have been cancelled – including the Scotiabank Charity Challenge. WISH has participated in this charity challenge every year for the last decade. Last year, the team was able to raise almost \$30,000 from that event alone. Our annual WISH Up-Close, which is hosted in-house, has also been cancelled due to COVID-19.

This is why your donations are more critical now than ever. The women who come to WISH are grateful for your continuous support. Whether you've made a financial donation, donated masks and hand sanitizer, clothing or food, or merchandise from your business, you've made someone's life safer. Thank you.

"People need food. People need shelter.  
And we all need dignity and autonomy."

