



**WISH** Drop-In  
Centre Society

WISH NEWS  
SPRING 2021

## WHAT IF THE MAP VAN DIDN'T OPERATE DURING THE DAY?



photo: Wendy D.



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Imagine needing help but not having a phone to make a call or not having access to transportation. Imagine not being able to access the very hyper-local service bubble that is the Downtown Eastside. Thanks to the MAP Van, WISH has been able to develop unique and long-standing relationships with a diverse community of street-based sex workers across Vancouver, particularly since the addition of a day shift.

Since expanding the hours last June, the MAP Van has been able to reach a new community of street-based sex workers who face extreme barriers to accessing supports. While day shifts began as an entirely new time period for MAP Van services, within one month of operation the day shift was already seeing equal, if not greater, numbers of sex workers as the night shift.

It quickly became clear how crucial the day shift is in connecting this hard-to-reach segment of our community with necessary—and often lifesaving—services. Losing the new day shift would significantly damage participant's trust in the reliability and accessibility of our services. We owe it to them to continue to physically, and philosophically, embody the core principles of harm reduction in meeting them where they are at.

Since the MAP Van day shift began operating on June 15, 2020, the staff have:



Connected with street-based sex workers more than **7,300** times



Given out approx. **17,000** food and drink items



Given out approx. **15,000** condoms



Given out approx. **150,000** sterile needles, safer smoking kits, and other harm reduction supplies

# A YEAR IN PANDEMIC: PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN TIMES OF CHAOS

2020 proved to be a year like no other. And now, 2021 seems to be headed in the same direction. More than a year into a global pandemic, street-based sex workers continue to fall through the cracks. COVID-19, coupled with the ongoing opioid crisis, homelessness, and inequitable rates of targeted violence and discrimination against street-based sex workers means women need WISH's programs and services more than ever.

With your help, and that of government and a number of generous foundations, WISH has worked hard to ensure that the women and gender-diverse people we serve have the resources and supports needed to make free, healthy, and positive choices.

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*“It’s often the choice of taking an unsafe date or going home with no money and having to worry about all the things you can’t afford.”*

– WISH participant

## DURING THE PANDEMIC:



Our kitchen served **more than 100,000** meals



The MAP Van connected with street-based sex workers **almost 18,000** times



Our shelter has been **at capacity** since opening day



Sadly, on average, **19 women** are turned away from the shelter **every day**



The MAP Van handed out **more than 85,000** sterile needles



**Twice as many** peers are working in the Supportive Employment Program

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*“We just want to live our lives. We just want to raise our children, we just want to be happy, healthy, productive people but how do you do that?”*

– WISH participant

It’s been more than a year since we expanded the hours of the Drop-In to remain open 24/7, created an outdoor safe respite area, introduced peer witnessing to prevent accidental overdoses, installed a 5-toilet washroom trailer in our backlot, and added a crucial day shift to our MAP Van.

Regrettably, only a few months into 2021, we continue to see that work has dried up. Street-based sex workers have fewer options to refuse unsafe work, are cut off from income replacement supports, and continue to experience higher levels of gender-based and sexualized violence, as well as a worsening overdose crisis. But, with your help, women in Vancouver’s street-based sex trade can continue to receive essential services from WISH in times of chaos.

As the Downtown Eastside continues to grapple with multiple pandemics, your support is crucial in ensuring sex workers do not face a claw back in services. Please consider giving the gift of positive options and opportunities to those who don’t often have them.



# PLEASE HELP RAISE \$ 10,000 TO ENSURE STREET-BASED SEX WORKERS HAVE THE SUPPORTS THEY NEED

CLICK TO  
DONATE

# WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

By: Mikayla Cadger,  
WISH Supportive Employment Staff

When you go about your life  
Trusting only in yourself  
You realize that no one really cares,  
You learn to put up walls  
And protect your shattered heart  
Imagine finding there's an answer to your prayers.

All those lonely nights  
Standing out on the streets  
Taking your only life into your hands,  
You're living day to day  
Selling sex to stay alive  
And that was never in your childhood plans.

But what if a place existed  
Where you felt like you were home  
All the judgment and discrimination gone,  
For a woman of the night  
Your previous experience  
Has always been you're treated like a pawn.

A working girl's despair  
Is a nightmare without end  
No matter if you're Trans or you are Cis,  
Their welcoming embrace  
Is inclusive in its scope  
Lifting girls out of their abyss.

They offer without cost  
The resources women need  
To really feel safe or get ahead,  
Supportive of your choices  
No matter what they've been  
No one wants to see those girls dead.

Of all amazing things  
That you surely will find  
The greatest gift are the people  
And the staff,  
They are truly invested  
In the woman you become  
Sharing tears or just having a good laugh.

A Drop-In Centre miracle  
A place of light and love  
All those little efforts go so far,  
Changing hearts and minds  
Day by day and one by one  
This really happens,  
When you WISH upon a star.



On March 11 we held our first-ever *WISH Talks* virtual event in honour of International Women's Day. Current and former street-based sex workers shared their experiences during a panel discussion, and challenged perspectives in hopes of creating impactful and meaningful change.

The panelists challenged perspectives on violence, reconciliation, trans inclusivity, family separation and stigma. In the upcoming months and years, we hope to explore the themes and issues that affect the women WISH supports. Through the series, we strive to center the voices, experiences and realities of street-based sex workers. If you missed it, we encourage you to [visit our website](#) to watch the complete panel discussion. Please stay tuned for more *WISH Talks* later this year!

## RUN FOR WISH, BECAUSE EVERY WOMAN DESERVES ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

It's that time of the year again! You can be part of a virtual team of passionate supporters to walk or run in this year's Scotiabank Charity Challenge. WISH, like many other charities, relies heavily on proceeds from fundraising events. Last year, due to COVID-19, the Scotiabank Charity Challenge had to be cancelled. Luckily, this year, the race is taking place virtually, allowing you to stay safe while walking or running to support WISH participants.



There are several ways you can support WISH. You have the option to walk or run a 5K, 10K, or 21.1K anytime between June 2nd and July 5th. There's even a 1K Kids Race this year so the whole family can participate! Whether you're a walker or runner, you can support WISH participants by fundraising and running an individual race.

Your support is more critical than ever. Will you join Team WISH and help reach our goal? [Visit our website](#) or call the number below to learn more.

