

STREET BEAT

FALL 2013 NEWSLETTER



Bringing hope to the whole person

Food for the Season



Food: substance taken into the body to maintain life and growth (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). When I think about food, I must say that I don't think of it in terms of a dictionary meaning. Food to me is about the gathering together of friends and family, experiencing the social interaction of others. It's about life lived in the context of community – whatever that community might look like for each of us. Food is about the joy of shopping and preparing or creating something special, perhaps not every meal but on important occasions.

But to the many thousands of people who every month use the services of the Mustard Seed Food Bank, it truly is about getting something to maintain life and growth. That's a reality faced daily, a humbling, sobering reality happening in our community every day. Thank you for helping us meet that challenge.

In this edition of Street Beat you will read about a very special person who volunteers to help us help others. You'll see the progression of one family from Food Bank to Family Centre and soon to independence. These are the kinds of things that bring us great joy, to be a helper to those who desire in their heart to reach beyond their present circumstance into a new reality of success. Please pray for those people as you read about their journeys.

Now that Thanksgiving has come and gone and we've launched into our Christmas season, we once again come to appeal to your generosity to support the work of the Mustard Seed: the work of advocacy, health care, clothing the naked and feeding the hungry; the work of reaching out and bringing community to the lonely and the lost and the work of care and compassion to the addicted. Our staff and volunteers are a tireless group of people who truly have committed themselves to the service of others. We hope you can join us in this.

I read somewhere the other day that the greatest act of service is sacrifice. I understand that statement when I think of it in the context of November 11th or when I read about the history of missionaries around the world. I marvel at it when I come to embrace the meaning of a Son born at Christmas only to die for the entire human race. Let that truth be your food this coming Advent season.

Warmest blessings in Christ

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Riddell".

Rev. Chris Riddell



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Cherie Jones, volunteer of the year.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



the chance to give back and make a difference by helping others who were in need like she once was, with her time and relentless dedication. Having been on disability for many years and unable to work at a conventional job, she has been able to bring her incredible work ethic, and desire to make a difference, with her and has found her place among friends at the 'Seed' for the past five years.

Cherie takes pride in

With over 1,000 volunteer hours under her belt, Cherie Jones has by far, earned her most recent accomplishment as the Mustard Seed's 'Volunteer of the Year'. Like so many of the clients that come through the door, Cherie was a struggling single mother and sole supporter of her five year old son. She found herself leaning on the support of the Mustard Seed Food Bank throughout the years, just as a way to survive in Victoria.

When her son turned eighteen and was able to take care of himself, she jumped at

meticulously putting together the single persons food hampers each day, and feels incredibly passionate about taking her volunteer role seriously and respecting her time here. Her favorite thing about volunteering at the Mustard Seed is the relaxed atmosphere where she can put together her hampers and chat with the other volunteers. When asked what she takes from her volunteering experience, Cherie lit up with a huge smile and replied, "It gives me a place to go every day, where I have a purpose. It gives me purpose. Everyone should be somewhere, and be there on time."

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Mustard Seed serves 7,000 clients per month, which includes 1,000 families.
- Our services include a Family Centre with a life skills program.
- We're serving our community Christmas Dinner on December 1.
- More than 50 volunteers per day help The Mustard Seed. That is 111,000 volunteer hours annually accounting for 56 full-time employees.
- We give people the opportunity to serve court-mandated community services hours here to help give back.
- Our advocate meets individually with 45 men serving life-long sentences to help them reintegrate into society when they are released.
- The Mustard Seed is a street church that has been serving people living in poverty since 1975.
- 4 million pounds of food were donated to The Mustard Seed in 2012.

From Hope Farm to a Family's Fridge

Hope Farm is a 36-acre working farm nestled in the Cowichan Valley. As a ministry of the Mustard Seed it has operated for the past eight years as a place for men seeking to leave a life defined by addiction, moving toward healing and restoration. Over a six month period these men live and work, engaging their mind, body and spirit in a community that desires for men to not only become 'clean and sober' but explore the underlying reasons which created a sense that addiction was their best option in responding to them.

One of the values that Hope Farm holds up as a community is that of 'stewardship'. It is the idea that we are to take care of what we have been given. This value is encouraged and practiced in relation to our gifts, talents, experiences and relationships with ourselves, others and God. It also has meaning for how we care for our resources, finances, land and livestock. The word 'stewardship' has a root origin of 'ward of the sty', and as it happens, caring for pigs, along with laying hens, sheep, cattle, ducks and broiler chickens is part of the rhythm of daily life at Hope!

During a man's stay at Hope Farm part of the transformation we participate in is that, in caring for our land, in growing and raising good, natural food, we are reoriented to be mindful, and other-centered, taking pride and responsibility in caring for creation. Everyone participating in the Hope Farm community is directly involved in caring for our resources, cultivating the land, growing an abundance of produce and raising free-range animals in a manner that is shaped by the value of stewardship. In doing this, we participate in the extraordinary privilege of engaging the growing cycle from beginning to end, from seed to harvest, from field to plate.



In recent years, Hope Farm has begun to produce meat and vegetables for the Mustard Seed Food Bank and Our Place Society's meal program in Victoria. We have also shared in the sense of purposefulness and pride of men who needed the essential services of the Mustard Seed and Our Place, and now have the privilege and opportunity to give back to the community and thus participate in the continuum of being cared for, and caring for others.

One way in which you can support that ministry of the Mustard Seed and Hope Farm is to consider purchasing some of our seasonal offerings. Throughout the winter months roasting chicken, bacon, pork and beef are available

“ One of the values that Hope Farm holds up as a community is that of 'stewardship'.”

to purchase. In supporting the ministry in this way you are contributing to a local economy, sustainability and a community of recovery that

simultaneously benefits you. Please call us at 250-748-4479 to inquire about our program or order some of our product.

Christmas at The Mustard Seed

December is a busy time at The Mustard Seed. We offer extra services to our community throughout the month starting with a big meal for people of all ages on December 1 at the Bay St. Armoury. Our regular food hampers are distributed



throughout all months and in addition in December we also distribute 700 or more Christmas hampers for families, couples and singles. You will find Mustard Seed volunteers throughout the city participating in gift wrapping at

the Bay Centre, Hillside Centre, Tillicum Mall and Mayfair, to relieve the work of tired shoppers and to raise funds for our programs. There are also many events and food drives throughout the month including The Huron Carole on Dec. 19,

so please follow us on Facebook and look at our blog to learn more. Everyone is welcome to join us for a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7pm, 625 Queens.

Our donation hours are Monday to Friday 8-5, Saturday 8-4.

Many of you have asked how you can help, especially at this time of year. Your financial donation helps us buy exactly what we need or you are welcome to buy things on our shopping list.

Vegetables

Fresh, Seasonal
Dried peas & beans
Canned

Meats

Canned/ fresh/frozen
Canned Fish
Cans with openers (sardines)

Fruit

Fresh Seasonal
Canned
Juice

Dairy Products

Milk fresh/ powdered
Cheese
Margarine/butter

Baby Needs

Pabulum
Formula
Jars

Pastas

Macaroni (Bulk)
Rice
Spaghetti

Gifts for the Family Centre

Imax tickets, Movie tickets
Tickets to Royals hockey game or other sporting event
Gift cards of almost any kind: Walmart, Gas, Tim Horton's...
Crock pots

Clothing: New

Socks, mitts, gloves, hats
Sweatshirts, sweaters
Coats, Especially for men & women

Toys for Hampers

Passes for Rec centres
Movie Tickets
Gift Cards for Target, Walmart ..
Stocking stuffers
Small strong pocket flashlights
Sports ball caps
Adult family games

Thank you for your generosity in giving this holiday season.

**Become a
Monthly
Supporter**

It is safe, easy, and automatic!
Your monthly gift is a convenient way to support The Mustard Seed community throughout the entire year.

Visit mustardseed.ca to donate or contact Karen at donors@mustardseed.ca to request more information about our Monthly Donor Program.

Thank you for being our partner as together we come alongside our neighbours in need seven days a week.

These ladies change lives

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Emily was in a dark space two years ago. She had three children including a one year and a two year old. Her partner had been abusive and she finally had to call the police to remove him from the scene. She couldn't work with two small babies and she lost her home. If you talk to her she readily admits, "I fell as low as you can get".

She had no money and no home and her first concern was how to feed her family. She remembered a visit she had made to the Mustard Seed, when her 15 year old had been a child. She knew what she had to do: get down to the Food Bank, apply for counselling, and find some support; but depression and a sense of helplessness made it very difficult to go through the motions.

While standing in line at the Food Bank, Emily was approached by Diane (Pearson - MS Family Resource Coordinator) who asked if she knew about the Family Centre. Emily did not. "My first thought was: Wow, what a wonderful woman." Diane encouraged Emily to come upstairs to the Centre and after spending some time together decided she was a good match for the next session of family group workshops.

"When I joined the group, I was just pushing through life. I was depressed and anxious. There was nowhere else to go but up."

Emily felt inspired by what she heard in the group.

"Maureen (Workshop Facilitator) had the most wonderful stories. When she told stories of her tiny tomato plants, she had everyone in tears. Maureen and Diane are the Mustard Seed's dynamic duo."



She felt supported for the first time, "They were there to pick me up. They taught me things I had forgotten and things I didn't know".

She did the PATH program with Diane and Christine, a visual artist. As Emily talked about her aspirations, Christine recorded graphically what she heard. The result was a series of goals and an action plan.

For Emily this translated into:

- I want to become grounded and centred;
- I want to provide financial security for my family;
- I want to start my own small business, and finally;
- I want to give back to the community.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION ONLINE:



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Family article (con't)

Diane got Emily connected with Literacy Victoria for tutoring and upgrading in English. BC Small Business is helping her draft a business plan.

Emily also completed a 4-week Money Skills program presented by Burnside-Gorge at the Mustard Seed, and Diane helped her join the Family Self-Sufficiency Program which helps families improve their financial position. These programs gave Emily the tools to start a budget and the Family Self Sufficiency program matches the \$40 a month Emily is now saving and the \$5 she puts into a Tax Free Savings Account. "It's getting better every month. They really give you all the resources you could possibly need".

Emily was surprised at how quickly Diane was able to access resources for her. When she experienced depression she knew she needed counselling and applied

through another organization for help, "I am still on the waiting list for that, but Diane will see me any time. Diane is always there."

Emily was not able to finish with the first group due to other family priorities but is keen to make up the time with the next group. "I am coming back for a few classes. I need to go there. They are my filling station."

Emily is much more comfortable at the Mustard Seed now and joined other parents and children at the Family Centre Thanksgiving Dinner. "The dinner was awesome and they helped with my son. They made us feel so comfortable."

Emily's final comment was, "I am just floored that everyone doesn't know about this. These ladies change lives. They changed MY life."

SURPRISED INTO TEARS

What did more than 400 volunteers, 80 businesses, a Convoy of Awesome, and a bunch of donations create together - a massive infusion of hope and caring to make the Mustard Seed sing!

In one week Hero Work and its volunteers rebuilt our entrance hall, chapel, reception area, and intake room; they built and furnished offices; they paraded through Victoria shamelessly asking for money and help, and they stuffed the Mustard Seed truck full of food.

To top it off they threw the city's biggest block party and surprised the staff into tears with what they gave of themselves and our city's resources. They helped bring hope and dignity to those with empty bellies and little means to fill them. And they brought inspiration and encouragement to volunteers and staff who work here.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me". Mathew 25:40.

“It is not the end...”

IN THE COMMUNITY



By now, most of you know all about the Great Canadian Food Fight, in which food banks across the country competed to see which community could raise the most food in 48 hours. The response in Victoria was whole-hearted. We had a splendid kick-off at the Bay Centre. We had a family day with bouncy castles, games and firefighters. And local schools weighed in with boxes and boxes of food stuffs.

Dunsmuir Middle School (grades 7 to 9) was a champion giver this year, having started the process way back in September.

Every fall Ms. Wallace (the school principal) gets together with her Leadership Students to choose worthwhile projects for the kids to work on. This year they skyped the Mustard Seed to learn more about the Food Fight, and why it was so necessary.

The kids jumped onboard enthusiastically and started by making announcements over the PA explaining the Food Fight and why it was a good thing to do. They decorated a box for each classroom and delivered them to home rooms.

As a further incentive, they counted the items from each class and promised a class pizza to the ones with the most food.

By the end, the school had gathered more than 700 pounds of food, which three of the students transported to the Grand Launch in October.

When asked why she wanted to help Emma said, “We have so much and we wanted to get involved. We just wanted to give back.”

Jacob had been to the Mustard Seed in Cubs when he was 9 and really enjoyed unpacking and stacking tins. He called it “a very cherishable moment.”

Emma had been to the Street Café and was really impressed with the effort volunteers went to, to provide a graceful dining experience. “They don’t just provide food, they had candles with music notes wrapped around them and proper cutlery and salt and pepper shakers. Everyone was so grateful. I talked to one guy for an hour.”

Hayley showed her personal initiative by going over to her grandma’s house and helping her clean out her cupboard of all the food grandpa liked but grandma did not. “I know grandma likes to help with things like this.”

Jacob summed it up by saying, “It is not about the food; it is all about the hope you can give. You can still go on; it is not the end.”

Visit mustardseed.ca or call 250-953-1575 to find out about helping The Mustard Seed through your own event, volunteering or to get email updates on community news.



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