

the INDICATOR

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A joint publication of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE and the Community Council

Quality of Life CHALLENGE LEADERSHIP PARTNERS



Vibrant
COMMUNITIES



Good Things are Happening, But...

One night last November about 100 people celebrated successes of the past year. Those who came to the Quality of Life CHALLENGE Celebration and Dialogue 2005 said: "There are great things happening that I knew nothing about." "There is hope for the future."

Documented evidence shows that individuals and organizations from all sectors are making a difference. In 2005, 368 Quality of Life CHALLENGE decals were publicly presented to people who have taken action to improve quality of life in this region. Forty case studies tell how local employers are improving quality of life and reducing poverty in the workplace. Since 2003, safe, decent, affordable housing was provided for 544 households; a Regional Housing Trust Fund was established; six new bylaws were passed; and affordable housing developments were approved in the Peninsula, Westshore and Core municipalities.



Rogers' Chocolates being distributed at Celebration and Dialogue 2005.

But, at the Celebration and Dialogue, people saw that there is still much to be done. Some said they learned about, "the complexities facing the poor" and "how on the edge so many people are." Unemployment rates are at an historic low. Yet, many people with low-waged, part-time or temporary jobs do not earn enough to meet their basic needs. More employed people than ever are lining up at food banks. As of December 2005, this region has the lowest rental vacancy rate in Canada: 0.5%. With no available housing, homelessness has reached critical levels.

To date, 1,513 people have been engaged in the Quality of Life CHALLENGE: at least 198 community groups, 128 private sector, 47 public sector, and 1,140 individuals. Fifteen hundred people are less than half of one percent of the population of this region. If 1,500 people can accomplish great things, think what could be done if more took up the challenge to work together in a bold new way to find solutions to the critical issues that threaten quality of life.

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The Poverty Experience: Viewpoints of Local Employees

The following quotes are from some of the 18,000 employees in the Victoria area who live below the poverty line. In a focus group session facilitated by the Quality of Life CHALLENGE, they discussed the successes in their employment and the barriers they faced to start work, to keep work and to make ends meet. Then they made practical suggestions that would improve their situation.

*I had a job with uniforms. **Coming to work with a clean uniform was a big issue**, but I didn't have enough money for laundry. You only have one uniform, so they expect you to pay for laundry, and that can be really expensive.*

*I have an accent because English is my second language. **I had a supervisor once who pretended she never understood me** and then complained to my manager about my bad communications skills. My co-workers all understood me.*

*Once I was sick with pneumonia and had no medical coverage from work. I had to work while I was ridiculously sick, but still I missed some shifts. My rent was late. **I had no money for medical costs like prescriptions.***

*If you're only making \$1,000 a month you need help. **I used to pay 74% of my income for housing.***

*I started as an auxiliary worker 15 years ago. I am still auxiliary so **I am laid off from January to April** and have to go on and off EI. Retail work is seasonal work.*

*Some jobs only give you enough money to survive. **You can't save anything.** You don't move up, but you can't afford to quit the job and look for new work.*

*People receiving disability benefits or with multi-barriered status are able to earn a limited amount of money over benefits. Anything over that gets deducted. If you earn too much you risk losing your disability status. **You can't get a part time job that will pay enough to live on, but your body won't support working full time.***

*If I haven't been making money but now I have to take the bus, **where does the money come from to take the bus until the first paycheque?***

*I started a job after being on employment insurance, and **my cheque was held for two weeks, but I was also cut off EI.** I'm not sure how I made it through those two weeks.*

*Once you are working, your social life increases and that has a whole added expense. **Going to parties, exchanging gifts at Christmas, charity drives all cost money.***

*When you work four hours on and four hours off getting daycare is very hard. **Almost all daycare is geared toward 9 to 5 work.***

Working Toward Solutions

- The full report from the waged poor focus group can be found on www.qolchallenge.ca. It contains practical suggestions about how to address some of the above situations.
- Members of the Community Action Team will facilitate a 30 minute "poverty experience" for small groups, for example at staff meetings, board meetings, faith groups and neighbourhood gatherings. Interested? Call Andrea at 383.6166 or email her at andrea@communitycouncil.ca.
- The Employer Task Force is a group of local employers who are working to improve quality of life and reduce poverty amongst the waged poor. For information, call Ruth at 383.6166 or email her at ruthu@communitycouncil.ca.
- The Vancouver Island Social Purchasing Portal is a social enterprise that links business with community development strategies. The portal is looking for purchasers and suppliers to build social capital. Call Gail at 383.6886 or email her at sppvi@communitycouncil.ca.

volunteer profile

“Good leaders help people believe in their vision; great leaders help people believe in themselves.” That is the favourite quote of Lianne Peterson, who demonstrates her commitment to this community through great leadership, humour and enthusiasm within the Quality of Life CHALLENGE. Her skills as a communications professional were key in leveraging media and communications support for the CHALLENGE.

Until September 2005, Lianne was Director of Communications for the Vancouver Island Health Authority. Today she is the Administrative Manager of the Island Medical Program and Division of Medical Sciences coordinating human resources, finance, curriculum delivery, faculty and student support. There is no doubt she will continue to help others believe in themselves.



Kelly Gorman, depot manager, and Wayne Orlick, operations manager at the Bottle Depot

Bottle Depot Implements Benefits Plan

At the Bottle Depot, an employee who needs antibiotics to get well or a cavity filled will only have to pay 20% of their bill. The Bottle Depot pays the rest, up to a cap.

“We’re always asking employees to improve, be more efficient and provide better customer service,” Bottle Depot owner D’Arcy Hipwell says. “We wanted to give them something back and make this a more desirable work place.” Already in place for all staff is bonus program, competitive wages, 80% of MSP premiums paid, life insurance policy, and flexible schedules. In December, the Bottle Depot started paying 80% of extended health benefits for part and full-time staff.

After 11 years in business, Bottle Depot volumes are still increasing by 15 to 20 percent a year, D’Arcy says, which means staff are working harder. “The happier crew that we have, the more bottles we can push through,” D’Arcy says. “We have an incredibly good workforce.

Depot Manager Kelly Gorman agrees. “It’s hard to replace good employees, and if they stay it will benefit the business.”

Invest in Long Term Social Returns

More charitable donors in Canada are shifting focus. They are now aiming to change systems, institutions and attitudes through investments that yield returns in social values over the long term. There is evidence that the Quality of Life CHALLENGE is a lever for change.

This high quality work costs money for gathering reliable information, increasing public awareness and mobilizing all sectors to work together on deeply rooted complex social problems. The CHALLENGE has a diversified base of supporters who see the value of this long term work.

Seven Leadership Partners (page 1) and supporters (see page 8) are donating year after year. All investors receive charitable tax receipts for their investment and are recognized for their corporate social responsibility.

More committed partners are necessary to sustain the Quality of Life CHALLENGE to 2010. Today’s investment creates a vibrant community for tomorrow. Today’s children will live in a stronger, safer Capital Region. Contact christina@communitycouncil.ca for information about how you can invest in the CHALLENGE.

Recent Resources

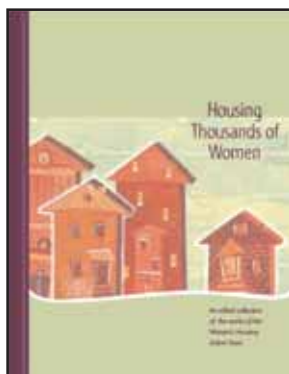
Community Council Annual Report 2005, www.communitycouncil.ca

Quality of Life CHALLENGE Annual Report 2005, www.qolchallenge.ca

People Rate Quality of Life in BC's Capital Region: Report of Regional Survey
Quality of Life CHALLENGE, September 2005, www.qolchallenge.ca

Quality of Life CHALLENGE: Fostering Engagement, Collaboration and Inclusion
The Caledon Institute, November 2005, www.caledoninst.org

Quality of Life CHALLENGE in Victoria Invites Low-income Canadians to Speak for Themselves
The Caledon Institute, Community Stories section, April 2005, www.caledoninst.org



(story on page 7)

Housing

Victoria's Regional Housing Trust Fund: So Far, So Good
The Caledon Institute, November 2005, www.caledoninst.org

WHAT: Housing Thousands of Women: An edited collection of the works of the Women's Housing Action Team December 2005, www.canadiansocialresearch.net/homeless.htm

Secondary Suites: A Guide for Local Governments
Ministry of Forests and Range, Housing Policy Branch, www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing

Local Government Guide for Improving Market Housing Affordability
Ministry of Forests and Range, Housing Policy Branch, www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing

Employment

Sustainable Incomes Activity Report, monthly reports, 2005, www.qolchallenge.ca

Links Between Employment and Quality of Life in BC's Capital Region: Report of Regional Survey, November 2005, www.qolchallenge.ca

Human Resource Options for Action, 50 Business Tips, 2005, www.qolchallenge.ca

Visionary Leadership for the Community Council Remembering Madeleine Shields (1933-2005)

For the past 70 years, people with a strong vision for a just and vibrant community have volunteered their leadership skills to the Community Council. Madeleine Shields was one of many committed people who shaped this organization. Madeleine served on the Board of the Community Council from 1980-1986, and was president in 1982-83. During the revival of the Community Council in the early 1980s, Madeleine was instrumental in repositioning the organization in the community. She helped to solidify the work by hiring Michael Clague as the Executive Director.

Madeleine passed away on November 16, 2005. Her spirit of community and social justice live on.

PLAY Makes a Difference for Children

“There is clear and compelling evidence that children’s well-being – in the areas of health, safety, family economic security... – has lasting implications for their future, not only in terms of success in school, but also in their capacity to realize their full human potential...”¹

There is a child in each and every one of us, says Michele Fryer, the leadership chair of Partnership for Learning and Advocacy for Young Children (PLAY). We were all children once.



PLAY, an early childhood development coalition, works to give all children in our region the best start in life they can possibly have. Mounting

research demonstrates why investing in kids makes sense, particularly in their early years from birth to age six. With more than 100 members, PLAY uses reliable research, data, knowledge and practice to create awareness of the links between those precious early years of our children and the communities, families, services and neighbourhoods where we all live.

PLAY has been using the outcomes from the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a questionnaire filled out by kindergarten teachers that reports on five important developmental areas for children. The EDI helps form a picture of how well the more than 2,300 children in our region have been supported in their human development before they start school. EDI outcomes for 2003 for each of the region’s 37 neighbourhoods will be found soon on the PLAY website.

Through new Government of Canada funding, for the next three years PLAY will focus on delivering a blueprint for children’s well being for British Columbia’s Capital Region. New research will be comprehensive, scientific, collaborative and community-based, covering the region’s 13 municipalities from Sooke to Sidney, the Southern Gulf Islands and the two electoral districts.



Greg Awai and Jane Worton, Community Council Researcher, with baby Finnegan James Anders Awai, born December 10, 2005.

Over the next three years, PLAY will:

- Gather a second round of Early Development Indicators in partnership with the four school districts, the Human Early Learning Project at the University of British Columbia, and the Offord Centre at McMaster University;
- Complete parent and child interviews with a statistically significant proportion of families and children in our region;
- Map relevant data and information with community partners;
- Engage the community in ongoing collaboration and outreach.

As the legal sponsor for this three year initiative, the Community Council has formed a strategic alliance with PLAY. BC’s Capital Region is one of 33 communities across Canada – 12 in BC – that are funded and supported through the Government of Canada’s Understanding the Early Years initiative (http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/hip/sd/300_UEYInfo.shtml).

For more information contact: Stephanie Gabel, Coordinator of the Early Years Project for PLAY, at stephanie@communitycouncil.ca.

¹ Richards, Jayleen and Amy Dominquez-Arms. 2002. *California Report Card: Children’s Critical Early Years*. Children Now, Oakland, Calif., 2.

Hide and go Homeless: Documentary Goes National

The Hide and go Homeless filmmakers produced a film about homelessness in Victoria. They received a 2005 Quality of Life Award because of the way they addressed the root causes of the issue.

In September of 2004, a handful of young people set out to make a documentary film about poverty and homelessness in Victoria, as part of an employment program.

None of the filmmakers had any experience with filmmaking and all of them faced particular issues in their lives that made securing employment difficult. With no filmmaking experience outside of a one-week crash course, this group created an emotionally and politically charged film that challenges the way society and government portrays and addresses the issue of homelessness and poverty.

Despite the film being created with low-end equipment, some of which was found in the bottom of an old filing cabinet, the filmmakers managed to create a professional looking film that was provocative enough to cause controversy even before it was produced.

The agency that employed this group of youth felt that the film's political content could jeopardize the agency's charitable tax status. As a result, the filmmakers were given the option to either remove any political content from the film or lose out on its production funding, a value of approximately \$1,000. Not wanting to weaken the film's underlying message, the filmmakers decided that they



Hide and go Homeless film crew receive a Quality of Life award.

could do without the production funding and reached into their own pockets to produce it.

Since the film's successful opening night in Victoria, numerous television, radio, and print media covered the film. The National Film Board of Canada was impressed with the film's content and dedicated a segment of its website to the film (see <http://citizenshift.nfb.ca>.)

Hide and go Homeless continues to be shown in various community forums to raise awareness about poverty and homelessness and to raise money for local charities.

Demonstrating Quality of Life Principles

Since September of 2005, Quality of Life CHALLENGE decals have been presented to those who enhanced the quality of life in this community:

- Brown's the Florist, for implementing profit sharing.
- Volunteer Victoria, for increasing their wage scales.
- Small Potatoes Urban Delivery, for providing their employees with a free lunch and leftover produce on Fridays.
- Values-Based Business Network, for promoting ethical businesses.
- Vectis Support Services, for paying entry-level employees a competitive wage of \$14.33 an hour.
- Pacifica Housing Advisory Association, for building 10 affordable housing units.
- Sierra Club, for lending their employees laptops and allowing them to telecommute from home.



Staff at Rogers' Chocolates receive a Quality of Life Award.

WHAT: Housing Thousands of Women

A team of women were moved by the critical housing issues facing women in the Victoria region. In 2002 they formed the Women's Housing Action Team, or WHAT. On December 1, 2005, they released *Housing Thousands of Women*, an edited collection of their works. Their efforts have been built on earlier work in Victoria, Regina and St. John's that focused on women's housing issues.

The 125-page report, *Housing Thousands of Women* contains recommendations for improving the housing conditions of single women aged 45 to 64. It documents statistics and cases of difficulties endured by nearly 6,000 low income women living in the Capital Region. The report also gives personal accounts of women who struggle daily, of women who are rarely entitled to financial aid or social housing. They share their stories next to experiences of older aboriginal, immigrant women, and women living with disabilities.

A graphic Women's Housing Wheel describes the requirements for housing according to the realities and experiences of women. The report gives hope and ideas with proposed housing models and a guide to the new residential tenancy act.

The launch at Victoria City Hall was emceed by past-mayor Gretchen Brewin. Dr. Marge Reitsma-Street, Viki Prescott and Pam Alcorn, all Women's Housing Action Team members, gave speeches. Everything was there to inspire, from chocolate cake to uplifting remembrances and legacy pieces in the form of butterfly messages.

Those in attendance were given sprouted red fife wheatgrass and wheat seeds for future planting reminding everyone that "in order to grow wings to fly, you must first grow roots in a home."

Participants were inspired to carry on the legacy of this in-depth and dedicated work of addressing the housing needs of women in BC's Capital Region, and they agreed to publicize the report to local, provincial, and federal authorities for policy action.

One significant accomplishment was strongly influenced by WHAT research. The Harrison Place project of the Victoria Women's Transition House is now ready for construction. It will provide 23 housing units.



Marlene Goley passing on the legacy of women's housing. (left)

Ambassadors for Women's Housing Action Team, former Central Saanich mayor Allison Habkirk, Fay Weller and architect Pamela Charlesworth. (right)

Projects Supported by the Regional Housing Trust Fund

The new Regional Housing Trust Fund money has leveraged \$6.4 million from various sources to put these projects on the ground. To date, three projects have been approved for Regional Housing Trust Fund support, with more in progress.

The Victoria Women's Transition House's **Harrison Place** received \$300,000. This 23 unit transitional, supportive housing project for women aged 45 to 65 is under construction at Cedar Hill and Church Streets. Information: Carolyn Fast 592-2927

A five-unit apartment building at 2821 **Irma Street** received \$75,000 to help cover renovation costs.

The **Cornerstone Building** at 1301 Fernwood Road]received \$75,000 to help with renovation costs.

Staff Members

Christine Coates, Office Manager

Stephanie Gabel, Understanding
Early Years Project Coordinator

Shana Heiser, Writer/Researcher

Christina Peacock,
Communications Manager

Mabel Jean Rawlins-Brannan,
Executive Director

Tim Richards, Researcher (temp)

Gail Scott, Social Purchasing
Portal Manager

Ruth Underhill, Employer Liaison

Coreen Weizel,
Communications Assistant

Andrea Wilmot,
Communications Coordinator

Jane Worton, Researcher
(Maternity leave)

Maria Stewart, Housing Affordability
Partnership, Executive Coordinator
(consultant)

Coming Events

January 29 to February 4
Homelessness Week
Phone Cool Aid 383-1977

February 9
Social Co-ops Forum
Phone 414-0308

February 15
Healthy Planning Seminar
Phone 592-0576

This spring:

Social Purchasing Portal Launch

Theatre about the Waged Poor

The fall:

Community Council AGM

Housing Affordability Week

Celebration and Dialogue 2006

Community Council

Vision:

a sustainable quality of life
for everyone in British Columbia's
Capital Region.

Mission:

providing leadership
to bring the community together.

Working principles:

sharing resources, power, information
and leadership builds our region's
long term capacity.

Membership:

open to all citizens, public agencies,
private businesses and community
organizations who share the
mission, vision and principles.

Annual Membership Fee

Business/organizations \$50

Individuals \$25

Low income \$3

Charitable tax receipts are issued.

Quality of Life CHALLENGE Supporters:



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William McElroy
Arlene Galloway Ford
CMSI Mentoring Solutions



Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria

Supported by members, the United Way of Greater Victoria, contracted services
and the municipalities of Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria.

1144 Fort Street, Victoria BC, V8V 3K8 • phone: (250) 383-6166 • fax: (250) 385-6712
email: info@communitycouncil.ca • www.communitycouncil.ca • www.qolchallenge.ca