

Annual Report

2019-2020



Connections
Place



MENTAL
ILLNESS
Wellness

Our Vision

Our community Clubhouse is a vibrant, innovative, and collaborative space dedicated to creating opportunity and purpose for those with mental health challenges. The Clubhouse is dedicated to nurturing respect, equality, and dignity for all.

Our Mission

To provide people whose lives have been disrupted by mental illness the opportunity to recover meaningful and productive lives through reintegration within the workplace and the community.



“A place for people with mental health challenges to gain confidence, respect, hope, and opportunity. We offer unique programming focused on wellness, employment, and education.”

The Clubhouse Guarantee:

- ◇ A place to come
- ◇ A right to meaningful work
- ◇ A right to meaningful relationships
- ◇ A right to a place to return



Jackie Powell
Board Chair

The fiscal year ended with COVID-19's arrival, abruptly altering the way Connections Place Clubhouse operates. In addition, our final plans were halted for our first anniversary celebration with The Honourable Judy Darcy and The Honourable Shane Simpson.

What I witnessed was Connections Place adapting at rapid speed to the changing needs in our community due to this global health pandemic. In a matter of days, our clubhouse changed and kept that vital connection with our members.

I am particularly proud of the way Connections Place has adapted and continues to adapt with our doors reopening June 8th. This report outlines the many achievements of Connections Place in our community and being part of a global mental health leader – Clubhouse International.



Chris Forester
Executive Director

Having started with Connections Place at the end of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, it's important that I begin by acknowledging and extending thanks to the society's prior leadership who collectively worked so hard to make this year the great success that it was. Thank you!

The 2019-2020 cycle marks the first full year of operations for the society. In that time, Connections Place began growing its membership base as well as its programs. It didn't take long for the word to get out that a new community service provider was delivering engaging programs in a safe and welcoming clubhouse setting. Since then, interest in our programs has soared and, along with it, our membership.

It is thanks to our partners, donors, and friends who make our mission possible. We simply would not be here without all of you. Please join me in expressing our gratitude for their vital contributions.

I am grateful to the Board of Directors who volunteer their time to oversee the administrative responsibilities of the Connections Place Society. I appreciate their enthusiasm and support throughout the year. We couldn't do it without their dedication.

Finally, thank you to our administrative team – led by Executive Director, Chris Forester – for their tireless commitment to making Connections Place succeed. During COVID-19, it was this team who saw the way forward to find new and innovative ways to ensure our members stayed connected with the clubhouse and each other. I am so impressed and grateful with this team's initiative and dedication to ensure we continued to operate in very meaningful ways without a physical space.

I want to thank Chris Forester for bringing many years of experience and knowledge to help guide us through our next phase, and for overcoming the immediate challenges of COVID-19.

In closing, I am optimistic that regardless of the challenges of COVID-19, Connections Place remains a strong community that is resilient and ready for what lies ahead.

This year has also been marked by challenges. Among them, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been the most impacting. For myself, this meant beginning my career with the society on March 5th and then having to make the decision to abruptly shut doors on March 16th to preserve the health of the clubhouse community.

Although the impact of the pandemic has been detrimental to both the clubhouse and its members, we, as a clubhouse community, have met this challenge with innovation, resiliency, and connection. Clubhouse programming was immediately adapted to an online format – referred to as the 'Virtual Clubhouse' – which offered multiple online meetings and social programs for our members to engage in on a weekly basis. We also expanded our current Outreach Program to offer one-on-one staff support as well as developing a member-supported outreach program.

Our Team

Program Staff



Katherine Howell Team Lead, Communications

I focus most of my time in the Communications Unit which entails working alongside members to publish newsletters, manage the clubhouses' social media accounts, and administrative duties. What I love most about the clubhouse is the beautiful and caring humans I get to interact with on a daily basis – whether we're cooking, planting an herb garden, knitting, or making music together.



Louise Baert Kitchen Unit

The Kitchen Unit is a busy, happy place, creating daily healthy and delicious breakfasts and lunches for our members. We rely on member participation for shopping, prep, dishes, and kitchen maintenance. Although we are having fun, we must abide by strict FoodSafe protocols. I am always amazed and humbled by the strength of our members and their gratitude for having a place to come.



Zoë Pitt Membership Unit

The Membership Unit focuses on engagement and outreach with the intention of connecting with members of the community. As this is the second clubhouse that I have worked in, I have witnessed the immense support that clubhouses provide to those with mental illness across regions of BC. I recently joined the Connections Place team and am thrilled to contribute to a service that can have such a positive impact on its members.

Members

With more than 170 members, the Connections Place Clubhouse has become the vibrant, innovative, and collaborative space that we hoped it would be. Nothing happens at the clubhouse without the input, contribution, and hard work of our members. It is the energy, spirit, and passion of our membership that give life to Connections Place and make this all possible. Thank you all!

Board of Directors

We'd like to acknowledge and thank our dedicated Board of Directors for all of their support and guidance over the last year. Their passion and commitment has helped Connections Place gain continued success.

- ◇ Jackie Powell, Chair
- ◇ Andrea Paquette, Vice Chair
- ◇ Jeany Shipley, Treasurer
- ◇ Imran Zia
- ◇ Chery Lynn Brown
- ◇ Jill Moores
- ◇ Sandy McManus
- ◇ Alex Ashby, Secretary
- ◇ Darcy Eggleston

2019-2020

By the Numbers

2,158

Member Visits

170

Members

139

Tours

1,647

Meals Served

\$346,138

Operational Costs

This year we completed our first:

- ◇ Strategic Plan
- ◇ Full Financial Audit

Our First Year

Work-Ordered Day Program

The Work-Ordered Day is the heart of all clubhouse programming. From the morning meeting, to assigning jobs on the work board, the clubhouse team works together to get the job done!

- ◇ **Kitchen Unit** – If the Work-Ordered Day is at the heart of all clubhouse programming, then it is the Kitchen Unit that is at the heart of the Work-Ordered Day. Staff and clubhouse members work side-by-side to produce healthy and delicious breakfasts and lunches. On a monthly basis we serve on average: 178 lunches and 66 breakfasts.
- ◇ **Maintenance Unit** – Everyday, members contribute their strengths and their efforts to completing the necessary jobs of keeping the clubhouse operating in a clean, safe and functional manner. Today, more than ever, the need to keep our clubhouse hygienic and virus free is very much the focus of the maintenance unit. From sanitizing high touch surfaces to watering our many plants, its all important work.
- ◇ **Membership and Communications Unit** – Recently, we made some changes to the focus of a few work units that made sense for our clubhouse. The Membership and Communications Unit work together to address the ‘front of house’ and ‘back of house’ needs of serving our intake process and membership base. Whether it’s providing tours and outreach calls, or working on our social media and our members newsletter, these two units have it covered.

Other Programs

- ◇ **Employment Program** – This year saw the creation of our first Employment Program relationship with Paris Roka Candy. Our members worked with owner and donor, Marian Paris, to package candies for local hospitality companies. This year would also see the clubhouse collaborate with WorkBC to provide our membership with employment-related support and resources.
- ◇ **Wellness Programs** – The clubhouse wellness programs took a ‘virtual’ turn halfway through the year due to COVID-19. The ‘Art Attack’ program and the member-led cycling group were great examples of innovative and engaging programs that kept our community healthy and connected while we weathered the effects of the pandemic shutdown. Today, we offer in-house programming consisting of arts and crafts, TED talks, music, and mindful movement.





Rod's Story

I think people sometimes compare stories. I do.

"Everybody recovers except me" or so I thought. For so long, I felt that something was wrong with me. I wasn't comfortable in my own skin. I felt that way for years. It's a situation people get into when they have no hope, like they have no value or self worth.

In the beginning, I was fortunate in being able to get a lot of formal education. I even took steps to get into the ordained ministry – which is what I wanted to do – but because of unresolved issues, I wasn't able to realize that dream. I was abused at the age of 17, which is something that I didn't deal with for almost 50 years and it really affected my life. I wasn't able to get into the ministry, so I moved back home to live with my mother. I was starting from scratch again and it was difficult.

Eventually, I did go back to university. I earned a diploma in healthcare and started to work in the field. But I was still unable to find real happiness or satisfaction. And by this time, I was dealing with a lot of pain, both physically and emotionally and had been for years. My relationships were going nowhere and I was experiencing lots of hopelessness.

Things got really difficult when I got in trouble with the law. I was arrested for assault, went to court, and was released on a conditional discharge and put on probation. My health care profession ended abruptly and I was forced to go into early retirement.

I felt that I sunk to the bottom, going as far as I wanted to go, not wanting to wish my experience on my worst enemy. I suffer from anxiety and depression and I became suicidal after I finished probation. I was at my lowest. I was in crisis. I ended up spending two weeks in the psyche ward.

I eventually spoke to my doctor about my abuse and so started another quest. However, all of my pain had come to the surface. I began going to hospital emergency. For several years – sometimes a few times a week – I would go to emergency, looking for refuge from my pain. Visits to the hospital for suicidal ideation were often accompanied by police and emergency staff.

During that time, I had tried to find support and I attended a few different groups and classes, but nothing really seemed to help. My cycle continued and I struggled. And then I got lucky. Two things happened. I found a support group that I liked and at the same time I found Connections Place.

When I first started at Connections Place I was calling the crisis line from the library on a regular basis. It took some time, but things slowly started to change for me. And now I'm feeling like I want to take care of myself because I am building a sense of self worth and value.

"And what mattered most was that I had somewhere to go, something to do, and people to connect with."

And what mattered most was that I had somewhere to go, something to do, and people to connect with. Hope slowly began to return. I've been a member of Connections Place for about a year now. I just realized, the other day, that I had been out of the hospital for nine months at the time, ten months now. I'm proud of that.

I put a lot of effort into my recovery and I'm starting to see that I have value as a person and it feels good. I've found relationships here, and relationships are a big part of my recovery. I learned to make friends, I learned to accept feedback and support from other people. Today, I'm looking for work. I had lost all my confidence to get a job after being unemployed for 10 years. But, I'm in the process of recovering my confidence and look forward to feeling even more confident than I've ever felt. This has slowly given me some hope, a person really can't live any quality of life without hope. Connections Place has helped with that.

Staying Connected While We're Apart

On March 16th, Connections Place made the hard decision to suspend building services, close its doors, and protect the health and safety of its staff and members as the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread around the globe.

It wasn't long after the shutdown that the Connections Place team adapted its services to meet the needs of its members impacted by the pandemic. Disrupting isolation and staying connected became the focus of the work at the clubhouse.

On March 23rd, instead of Celebrating our First Anniversary, as had been planned, the Connections Place team launched the 'Virtual Clubhouse' offering daily online Zoom meetings and social programming for members to attend safely from home.

The virtual clubhouse was shored up by a robust outreach effort provided by staff and members alike.

On June 8th, with great excitement, we reopened our doors and welcomed back our members to, once again, engage and connect at the clubhouse!

Special thanks to: The Rapid Relief Fund for granting \$37,000 to Connections Place in emergency funding.

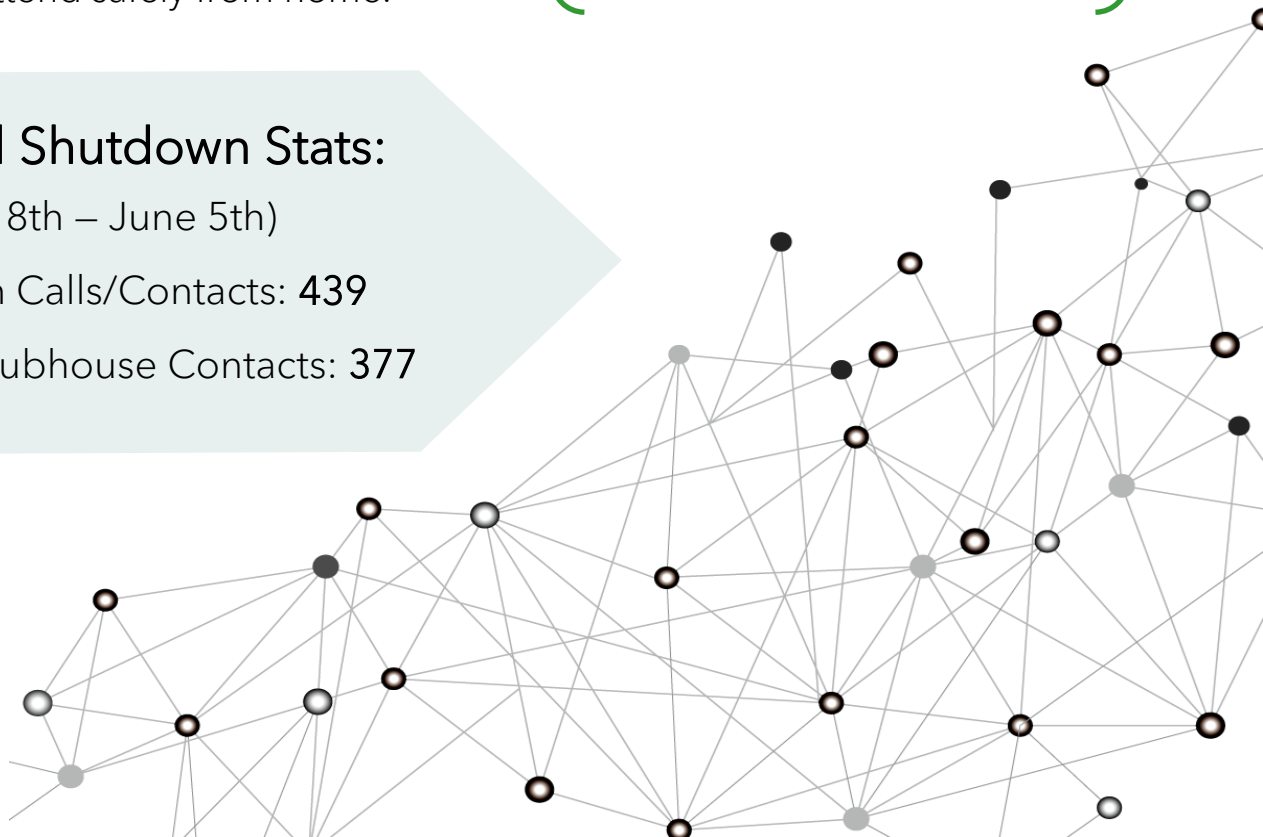
"The Members Meeting gives me a reason to get up in the morning and prepare for my day. It's been a life-line for me during COVID."

- Lisa

Operational Shutdown Stats:

(March 18th – June 5th)

- ◇ Total Outreach Calls/Contacts: **439**
- ◇ Total Virtual Clubhouse Contacts: **377**





Thank You to Our Donors!

Every donation makes a difference in building a community of recovery and wellness.

Major Funders



In-Kind Donors



With Sima & Manoj Saxena



David & Jonathan
Ventures Ltd.

Monthly & One-Time Donors


It is with the support of our 17 monthly donors and many more one-time donors that Connections Place is able to continue to provide meaningful programs and services to our community.



Let's Stay Connected

To learn more about Connections Place, we encourage you to book a Discovery Tour with us!

Contact us at (250) 483-3748 or info@connectionsplace.org

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