

Letter from the Director



Painting by member Robbie Durose. Check out the artist's Facebook group: Vancouver Island Healing Art.

Spring has arrived and, oh, how we welcome it! Warmer, brighter days and spring flowers bring hope as they remind us that better times are just around the corner. This year 'hope' is something we need more than ever — a deep desire for things to change for the better. Where we find hope, as individuals or as groups, varies from one person to the next, but it can often be found in common places:

- ◆ Reflection — looking back at the positive experiences you have had in your life
- ◆ Connection — connecting with positive people and nurturing relationships
- ◆ Gratitude — regularly practicing and working on gratitude

As I think about Connections Place and reflect on the year that has passed, I am filled with a sense of awe. Although mid-March marked the first year of the pandemic, it also marked the 2 year anniversary of our growing Clubhouse. It is amazing to think about how far we've come; everyday, I celebrate the resiliency of our clubhouse. Connecting with my community, cultivating meaningful relationships — with staff and members alike — are the experiences that I feel truly grateful for.

When we invest in the practices that generate hope, which are available to everyone, hope becomes the foundation that we build our future on. I hope to see you soon.

 Chris Forester, ED

2 Year Anniversary & Movie Night

On March 24, 2021 we hosted our 2nd year anniversary celebration in conjunction with our first ever evening hour social event — Movie Night. We hosted the event outside of our usual operational hours, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. We opened the space for twelve members to enter the Clubhouse alongside a couple of staff members to facilitate the evening. Following 'restaurant style protocols' (ie. face covering remains on unless eating or seated), we were able to offer an evening that began with a short slideshow to celebrate our 2nd year anniversary, then a movie that members had voted for. We served several snacks including some sweet treats generously donated by Paris Roka Candy.

Reflecting back on the evening, we deemed the event to be incredibly successful! The demand for this service will certainly push us to offer more evening socials and similar events as much as our current facilities will allow.





Artists' Corner

Just for Laughs

- ◇ Why couldn't the flower ride a bike? *It lost its petals.*
- ◇ Why are frogs so happy? *They eat whatever bugs them.*
- ◇ Why was the baby strawberry sad? *His mom was in a jam!*

Staff Picks & Tips

- ◇ **TV Series:** *Forever* (comedy-drama), *The Queen's Gambit* (drama) *Superstore* (sitcom)
- ◇ **Movies:** *Thunder Force* (comedy), *Palm Springs* (comedy/sci-fi)
- ◇ **TED Talks:** *This Could Be Why You're Depressed or Anxious* by Johann Hari, *Start with Why — How Great Leaders Inspire Action* by Simon Sinek
- ◇ **Books:** *Call of the Wild* by Jack London (short adventure novel), *Falling in Love with the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying* by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche & Helen Tworok (spiritual)

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The Leaves are Here

By William A. J. Bertrand

The leaves are here
 The blossoms are gone
 And the wonderful time of life is near
 The clocks have moved ahead
 The sun stays out longer
 And the love of God can be seen again
 The heart in darkness has spoken
 The body listens to his plea
 New friendship formed from winter's past
 Stroll down the garden path
 When wedded thoughts of God and man
 Bring cheer to the lonely soul
 One new friend can open the kingdom
 And the courtship of love begins
 Songs of love can be heard again
 The birds sing sweetly in the trees
 The black birds gather for their nests in pairs
 How they meet is a mystery to me
 The time to play is here
 Young and old in joyful playgrounds
 And the travelers come to town
 To share in the great celebration!

The Bus at Covid Time

Anne Harris

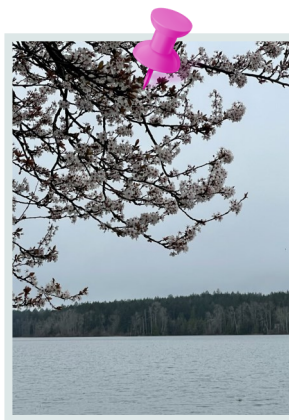
Silent faces peer over cloth
 That ears listening pull taut.
 Warm eyes, frightening eyes, cold eyes
 Eyes that speak lives alone
 I sit on a bus, not crowded, but full.
 Spare seats are scattered like polka dots.
 The odd voice on cellphone chatters
 Not a cough is heard, not winter sneeze.
 We all must be well — we are enforced to be.
 No one complains, we all are grateful.
 Grateful that we still have a bus.
 The driver is thanked continuously for
 He risks his life for his livelihood.
 So many possible cases get on,
 And he greets them all, a true front-liner,
 But there is no glory to the bus.
 No first response, a continual service.
 The daylight fades, I am almost home.
 Fresh air blows in with each exit,
 Covid is not spoken here, but understood.



Check out our private Facebook group for members:
Connections Place Private Members Group



Elk and Beaver Lakes (Christine Thate).



Spring flowers (Mike Padda).

Free Smart Phones!

Connections Place received a donation of 30 brand new smart phones (cellphones) to be distributed to our members. The phones will be distributed as part of the Bell Let's Talk campaign with the intention of helping those individuals struggling with mental health challenges to stay connected to their loved ones and care providers. We are so grateful to Bell and United Way for their generous donation!

If you are interested in securing a phone, please get in touch with us at the clubhouse.



EMDR Testimonial

By Kevin Dobbs

This will be a short/sweet to the point testimonial. The principal point being my heart is healing.

A little bit of context is necessary at this point. I had Anoxia at birth (my brain went without oxygen for too long a period of time) causing me to have a brain injury and brain damage.

Hence my heart didn't have a fighting chance when I was born. I have been sad, angry, and grief-stricken for most of my life.

As my mother said a few days ago "I have just enough knowledge to be dangerous". In my case, this statement is relevant to the EMDR therapy I am currently taking.

I credit EMDR therapy to my heart being in the process of healing. And I would go into dangerous territory if I attempted to explain EMDR therapy with the tiny, tiny bit of knowledge I have about it.

Wellness & Employment Programming

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:30pm Arts & Crafts	2:30pm TED Talk	1:30pm Cycling Group	2:30pm Music Group	2:15pm Mindful Movement
2:30pm Neighborhood Walk		2:30pm Employment Prep		2:45pm Coffee Group
		2:30pm Neighborhood Walk		



Employment Workshops

We are excited to launch our Independent Employment workshops beginning in May. These will be offered during our Employment Prep program on Wednesday afternoons from 2:30-3:15pm. Each week will focus on a different theme using worksheets and group discussion to explore a different 'step' to becoming employed.

- ◆ 1st Wednesday of the month — Workshop #1: Exploring Employment
- ◆ 2nd Wednesday of the month — Workshop #2: How to Make the Work-Ordered Day Work for You
- ◆ 3rd Wednesday of the month — Workshop #3: Writing a Resume & Cover Letter
- ◆ 4th Wednesday of the month — Workshop #4: Job Search & Interview Skills

Staff will continue to be available for one-to-one employment support upon request. Please contact us if you would like to sign up or if you have any questions regarding our Employment Program.

In the News: Blue Love Campaign



United Way Greater Victoria's Blue Love Campaign was created to support individuals in Greater Victoria struggling with mental health.

On southern Vancouver Island, COVID-19 has increased the demand for mental health services by up to 50 percent. Half of Canadians report worsening mental health due to the pandemic.

United Way Greater Victoria's goal is to raise \$1 Million by the end of December, 2021 to fund counselling, peer support, and outreach services across southern Vancouver Island, as well as to raise awareness of mental health and local services available to help.

Funds raised from the Blue Love Campaign will benefit mental health community partners such as Connections Place! We are grateful to be able to work with the United Way towards the fulfillment of this mission.



to Our Donors

THANK YOU to the following donors, partners, and funders for their incredible support and generosity!

- ◆ Sean Parke and World Financial Group
- ◆ United Way Greater Victoria
- ◆ Marian Paris of Paris Roka
- ◆ Isaiah 61 Foundation
- ◆ Victoria Chinatown Lioness Club
- ◆ The McClean Foundation
- ◆ First West Foundation
- ◆ Victoria Real Estate Board
- ◆ Boston Pizza



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Op-Ed: Patients Call for Change

By Mike Mori

I am quite appalled at what I read in this article (*'Belittled and dismissed: Former patients of Victoria Psychiatric Emergency Services call for change*, Victoria News, March 16, 2021). It is quite pathetic that patients at this Royal Jubilee Hospital in the psych ward were treated basically like garbage. These patients are lucky to have survived but have mental, physical, and emotional struggles.

Speaking as a person with a mental illness, I was hospitalized at different times in the late 80s and a good part of the 90s. I believe I was treated with a lot more respect than these aforementioned patients.

I was just 14 when I was diagnosed with what was atypical, which meant I had anything from a spectrum of schizophrenia to bipolar to depression. It can be hard to diagnose a mental illness when you are going from being a tween to a teen. There is a transition one has to make. However, there is no need to dismiss problems as teen ones.

It is time for the Royal Jubilee Hospital to take people's mental health issues more seriously. There could be tragic consequences like we have seen at other hospitals or around the Greater Victoria area. Medication keeps people stable but we need more therapy for patients and to educate people more.

Art Program with Bateman Gallery

In March, we had our first 4-week art program with the Bateman Gallery and it was a real success! We participated in many fun art projects including pastels, mandalas, and gratitude boxes. Our members showed incredible creativity! Stay tuned for future art programming with the Bateman Gallery.

