



WISH
Drop-in Centre Society

WISH News

Spring 2007

Home Sweet Home: Our WISH come true

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ment permit process, community consultation, and design. But at last our dream, made possible by the \$1,000,000 Vancity grant and the City of Vancouver, will come true. It is now possible for WISH to increase safe space for women and increase the health, safety and well-being of women working in the sex trade.

WISH offices will remain at their present site and the Drop-In will gradually expand to its intended 24-hour operating schedule.

A Request...

Now we begin the greatest challenge of our quest. It takes more than bricks and mortar to make the WISH Wellness Centre the best it



can be. We need operating funds to support our mission of providing safe respite 24/7.

That is where you, our donors, can help.

Please introduce WISH to your friends, co-workers, classmates, club members and associates by giving them the enclosed brochures.

Ways to Donate to WISH

WISH appreciates the support of individuals and foundations who make up more than **50%** of the funding used to operate the Society. There are several ways in which donors choose to offer financial support, including:

Monthly donations:

By authorizing WISH to

process an amount on your credit card each month, you contribute to the ongoing stability of WISH. These donations are received annually.

By Mail:

You can mail a cheque or supply a credit card number for a contribution. Tax receipts are issued at the time of each donation.

Online:

Click on Canada Helps (www.canadahelps.org) and make a donation online! Canada Helps issues tax receipts directly to you and directly deposits the donation to WISH.

Securities:

By donating securities to WISH you will be receipted

for the full amount including capital gains made on your investment. Please contact us at 604-669-9474 for more information.

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Message from new Board Chair

In my three years volunteering with WISH I have been consistently surprised, delighted and inspired by the boundless energy and dedication of so many people committed to improving conditions for women working in the survival sex trade in Vancouver's Down Eastside. As incoming Board Chair I am honoured to work with such talented individuals. I have particularly benefited from the wisdom and guidance of outgoing chair Helen Van Wart and wish her and her family great happiness in the birth of their daughter Elsie.

It is hard to imagine a more dynamic and exciting time in the history of this

wonderful organization. After a long and frustrating search for a new home for WISH we are thrilled to announce that we will be moving to a new site at 334 Alexander. Our deepest thanks to the City of Vancouver, and to the members of Vancity Credit Union who (in 2003!) provided us with a donation of \$1,000,000 to assist in securing a building. This year, 2007, will be a busy year as we secure a development permit for the site and then begin the renovations necessary to accommodate the Drop-In



Centre programs and services. We will use this newsletter to keep you informed of our progress and to let you know how you can help as we move first to the new building, and then to longer hours of service and greater supports for the women. Heartfelt thanks and congratulations to all our friends, donors, volunteers and staff who have worked so long to see this project come to fruition.

Jeanne Legare

Your Dollars at work: The Drop-In Centre Staff

Dedicated staff are the most important single thing that your donations support. Their involvement with women who come to WISH is key in delivering programming that is welcoming and relevant and makes a difference in the lives of women who are isolated and marginalized in the survival sex trade. Staff members bring empathy, caring, humour and commitment to work each night, ready to face the challenges of the day.



They prepare and serve the meals, present a refreshed place of respite for women who need and are nourished not only by dinner but the environment of acceptance they find when they come to the

Drop-in Centre. Special events are highlights that offer opportunities for frivolity and fun for participants, volunteers and staff. Dressing up in costumes is all part of the fun!!



Program News: Emerging Voices

For the past year WISH has been funded by Status of Women Canada to deliver a program called Emerging Voices. In this phase of the program 12 women joined in a group to develop skills to use to become involved in the governance of WISH, initially through participation in the Fundraising/Communications Committee and the Volunteer Committee. With their increasing involvement with WISH, members devel-

oped a staff and volunteer recognition program and have honoured several staff and volunteers with a certificate and a gift of appreciation.

One of the major contributions of the Emerging Voices group was to attend volunteer orientations and talk to women about what they need and want from the Drop-In and their safe place off the street. With their own words, members of the group offered

opportunity for prospective volunteers to gain an understanding of the WISH Drop-In Centre.

In June 2007 at the Annual General Meeting, 3 participants will be nominated and elected by their peers to become members of the WISH Board of Directors and have an active role in the governance of the WISH Drop-In Centre Society.

Sex Workers Rights and the Media

WISH has been working with several organizations to create a package of information intended to keep women safe from exposure by the media during the trial in the case of the missing women.

More than 100 women, volunteers, staff and support workers met at the Drop-In Centre the week prior to the trial in order to prepare for the possible influx of media coming into the Downtown Eastside



seeking stories illuminating the circumstances under which sex workers have disappeared since the late 1990s. Women were given a list of their rights if approached by media, a list of safe places to go if pursued by media, a list of facts about sex work to give to the media, as well as an opportunity to speak anonymously on DVD about their lives, so that this information could be shared with media seeking a story. Many women are concerned about having their picture on TV or in print, as they have families

and friends who don't know the details of their lives. These images can follow a woman the rest of her life and can spring up long after she has left the sex trade. Informing women of their rights, and the actions they can take to implement these, can allow them to circumnavigate potentially harmful situations.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

We extend our gratitude to all of you who so generously donated to WISH over the Holiday Season: Capers for the Holiday dinner, everyone who donated to the Christmas Gift Bags Project, those of you who brought gifts and warm clothes and warm wishes... and so much more.

Who Donates to WISH

Donors to WISH come from many walks of life and many areas of the country. To date, England was the furthest point to which we sent a 2006 tax receipt, and the closest in virtually in our backyard.

What motivates people to donate to WISH?

- One individual told us that he was a bus driver and wanted to do something for the women he

saw on the street. He called WISH and set up a monthly payment.

- Another donor told us she sees the need to support the operations of the Society and chose to donate. This donor has established a relationship with WISH that keeps her involved in a meaningful way.
- This year a company based in

Newfoundland donated to honour an employee who had a death in the family.

- A local Synagogue donates coats and blankets to WISH as part of its annual coat drive.
- Employees gather donations of clothing, bedding, make-up and toiletries from their co-workers.

Donor Profile

Donor Profile

Jewish Women International of Canada, an organization dedicated to ending violence against women, launched its **Make-A-Bed** campaign in October: a 2-week collection drive for bed and

bath linens to help Drop-In Centres be a more comfortable place and to provide women with their own set of linens.

WISH was the chosen beneficiary of the BC campaign. "It is important that we give women a safe, clean place to rest their heads, and also make their own beds in the future," said Myra Michaelson, BC Presi

dent. "Our mission is to help end violence against women; that is why the drive is so important to us."

"As a Drop-In Centre, we see 100-150 women at WISH on a daily basis," said Kate Gibson, Executive Director of WISH. "Most women are homeless or reside in local hotels so we try to provide them with their own set of linens. The JWI-BC's Make-A-Bed

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Donor Profile *continued*

Campaign is a tremendous way to remind people of how important their help is and how each woman at our Centre deserves to be treated with dignity.”

The donations to WISH needed a moving van to collect them! Special thanks must go to Isabelle Somekh and all the women JWI-BC and other women for their generosity and dedication to making this campaign such a huge success.

Interested in Becoming a Board Member?

We are currently seeking people interested in participating with WISH through volunteering as a Board member. Areas of interest or expertise would include accounting, fundraising, business, human resources and media. If you think that WISH would be a good fit for you and are interested in becoming an active member of the Society, please contact us at 604-669-9474.



Nursing Students help to organize the Health Fair

3rd Annual Health Fair

On November 16th we had our annual Health Fair at the Drop-In Centre to provide health information and resources to women. Organized by practicum nursing students, this event not only provided information to the women, but it

also facilitated an opportunity for health care providers to get together and see what is available in our community. We had twenty-seven service providers attend this year and the event was very well attended by WISH participants. Many women

remarked how much they enjoyed being reacquainted with services and finding out about new ones. Door prizes added an element of excitement to the evening! We are grateful to the efforts of the nursing students who ensured that the event was a success!

A Farewell WISH to Mary Wreglesworth

For the past eight years Mary has taken on the role of WISH volunteer, Board member, Board Chair and Past Board President with determination and commitment. Her involvement with WISH started from simply asking directions from a woman on the street one day and subsequently finding an organization that addressed the needs of that woman and many others.

WISH became the beneficiary of Mary's dedication to women living and working in the Downtown Eastside and over the years she has worked on many initiatives. Highlights of her involvement in WISH include development of Volunteer

Orientation, collaborating in the successful application for the Vancity \$1 million Award, raising the profile of WISH through collaborating with Rethink Communications on a public ad campaign as well as developing close and lasting relationships with women who come to WISH.

Mary has recently stepped down from the Board of WISH, but she has truly put her heart into WISH and we know that it will remain there for many years to come. Please join us in thanking Mary for her many years of effort and support of the WISH Drop-In Centre Society.



Mary Wreglesworth

Join us! EMERGING VOICES ART SHOW FUNDRAISER

We will be showcasing and selling works of art by WISH participants, volunteers and friends. Proceeds will support the Emerging Voices Program.

**MARCH 9, 10 AND 11TH AT
LITTLE MOUNTAIN STUDIOS
Friday 7 pm-late, Saturday 10 am-6
pm, Sunday 12 pm-5 pm**

Located at 195 East 26th Ave. at Main
Street, Vancouver 604-629-8711



WISH Drop-in
Centre Society