



PEERS Spring Newsletter

March, 2009

Issue 6

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www.peers.bc.ca

Musings from the Executive Director

Chris Leischner

These are certainly changing times. Every where we look there are people talking about the cut backs and the loss of funds. It seems to be a perpetual problem. Here at PEERS we are fortunate to have our new Elements program and although it is now 2/3rds of the original contract it is still keeping us a float. For the time being we are able to keep our programs and projects however we are going to have to be much more diligent in our search for new funds and partners.

With spring in the air we have great hopes for this next year. We are evaluating and refining our Elements curriculum, Outreach received funding from a private foundation and our projects: Collaborative Care, Access to Justice and Sex Work Integration Model are moving ahead with some incredible work in communities through out BC. For more on this work visit our website at www.peers.bc.ca.

The women here at PEERS continue to amaze me with their incredible ideas, personal healing work and caring for the others around them. If I ever have days where I feel sorry for myself, I just have to have a conversation with one of these remarkable, determined individuals to feel refreshed and renewed in my own life. They keep me honest and allow me to honour the truly unique gifts that we share with each other here at PEERS; unconditional acceptance, respect and support. And Hey.....You can't buy that!



Major Supporters

Winners

Klassy Divas Fashions

City of Esquimalt

Ministry of Social
Development and
Housing

Victoria Foundation
Law
Foundation Vancouver
Island Health
Authority

Volunteers:

Our Cooks; Betty
Rudge, Angela Gess
and Emma Girard.

Our Carpenter and
General Handiman:
Frank Rudge

Charles Lucas; the
bread guy, Cakes Etc.

Thanks from:

PEERS VICTORIA
250-388-5325
#1-744 Fairview Rd
Victoria,, B.C. V9A
5T9

The HOT PINK Event



Please come out and support PEERS fund raiser. Tickets to this adult oriented event are \$30 and \$25 for students. Doors open at 6:30. Come and join us for an evening of fun and frolic as the **Cheesecake Burlesque** and **PEERS** combine talents to give you an enjoyable evening of glamour, photos, fashions, music and treats. Fashion Show by Undercover Wear ***Planning and Décor compliments of Shin*ola Events

Anti-Olympics anyone?

Here at PEERS we are respectful of everyone's right to own their own voice and to respectfully raise that voice in opposition. Not everyone feels the same about the Olympic and we understand that but for those of you that do want to be a part of a activist event you will be interested in the following.

NETWORKS OF DISSENT: Anti-Olympics Teach-In

You probably know that the 2010 Olympics has negatively impacted the Vancouver region, but:

DID YOU KNOW....

* The Olympics has effectively "stolen" unceded Native land?

* The supposedly "greenest" Olympics to date has caused unparalleled environmental

destruction?

- * That gentrification, repression and unethical labour practices have skyrocketed?
- * That these costs are raking up an already escalating public debt?

DID YOU KNOW THAT MANY OF THESE ISSUES IMPACT VANCOUVER ISLAND?

YES! It's TRUE! The 2010 Olympic Torch Relay will begin in Victoria in October, 2009.

!! COME OUT TO A DAY OF WORKSHOPS AND DISCUSSION ON ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND ACTION!!

==MARCH 21, 2009==

11am to 5pm

755 Pandora Street,

Victoria, Coast Salish Territories

With workshops, free community lunch, art, and more!

FREE KNOWLEDGE * FREE LUNCH * FREE INSPIRATION

+++++

Featuring:

The Committee to End Homelessness

Decolonization, Land and Restitution

Harm Reduction Victoria

Hospital Employee Union members

No 2010 Victoria

Prostitutes Empowerment Education and Resource Society (PEERS)

Serena Kataoka S.O.L.I.D. (Society of Living Intravenous Drug Users)

The Temporary Autonomous Shelter Collective Zoe Blunt

+++ WE NEED YOU! +++

Volunteers and organizers are needed!

You can help us by:

- * handing out flyers and tabling before the event
- * posterizing before the event
- * doing outreach in your communities
- * cooking our community feast
- * organizing childcare during the event
- * facilitating workshops
- * videotaping or audio-recording the workshops
- * volunteering for set-up and clean-up at the event

To get involved or sign up for our listserv, contact:

no2010victoria@gmail.com – 250-472-4386

Next organizing meetings:

- March 12th, 5 pm – 7pm, Camas Books and Infoshop, 2590 Quadra (@ Kings)

- March 19th, 5 pm – 7 pm, Camas Books and Infoshop, 2590 Quadra (@ Kings)

Program and Project Updates

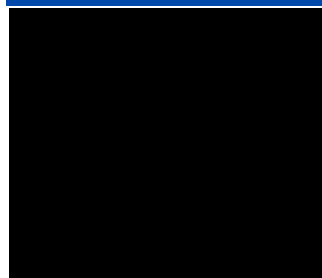
Access to Justice Program; our one year project funded by the Law Foundation had 24 referrals in the month of Jan and 34 in the month of Feb. These include helping individuals with the return of a child from the care of MCFD, mediation, court support, judicial care conferences, premediation interviews, risk assessments interviews and numerous contacts with lawyers.

Night Outreach reached an all time high for this time of the year with 545 contacts and almost 2000 harm reduction supplies distributed. Our new RV is a much more comfortable place to be obviously!

Day Outreach is also reaching new levels of contacts (both of these increases we feel are due to the current economic down turn where women are left with few resources) . Day outreach served 137 contacts in January.

Elements program has been through some formative changes since January. We negotiated a new Bridging Employment Contract with Ministry of Housing and Social Services that requires much more stringent measures for outcomes. This has put a lot of strain on reorganizing and staffing so we are all working hard to pull this new individualized programming together. As of March 1st we have 18 individuals in the Elements program, 8 of whom qualify for the Ministry's funding under the new contract.

Our **Collaborative Care homes** are soon full up and though the project has one more year of funding we are deeming it a success just by the gains it has made in helping Mom's to regain and retain their children in their lives.



Reporting on REMAX Victoria Idol

This years Idol was a resounding success. From the final contestants **Greg Baan-Meiklejohn** was chosen to carry the title of Victoria Idol for the year 2009 - 2010 PEERS would like to extend our congratulations and good luck to him and all the contestants in their future music careers. Of particular note the one to watch in the years to come is Haley Isles from Comox; this 12 year old singer was exceptional.

This fund raiser realized \$15,000.00 for the outreach program

which will help ensure that our services continue for another year.

Annual General Meeting

On May 20th, 2009, we will hold our Annual General Meeting. It has changed this year from October, our usual date, to May so that it works better with our financial year end and doesn't conflict with so many other AGM's in the fall.

Open House is at 4:30 and the meeting starts at 5:00.

Refreshments will be served and our guest speaker will be

Christine Walsh

Writer and Director of

Finding Dawn

An illustration of the “deep historical, social and economic roots that contribute to the epidemic of violence”.

A clip from this epic movie will be shown with a Question and Answer period to follow.

**PLEASE RSVP to PEERS
250-388-5325**

A Clients Story

It was not that long ago that I was just a shell of myself. Battered, beaten and lost I was fighting a decade's long heroin addiction, was physically exhausted and emotionally drained. I had no spirit.

That all changed when I let myself be cared for and supported by PEERS. Achieving the very basics most take for granted became an absolute fight for me to meet. The staff put on their gloves and came into the ring with me. From everyday necessities – food, clothing and transportation – they held my hand and supported me in reconnecting with family and positive community support securing housing.

What struck me most is that all of the staff, from the receptionist to the Executive Director, banded together to give me love and guidance. They have assured me that personal worth and success will come with time.

I am now on the road to securing employment and pursuing my dreams. Before coming to PEERS, I didn't even have a bus ticket to get on that road. Now there is nothing stopping me. It is not too much to say that PEERS saved my life.

Anonymous – Submitted by the Client Liaison Representative

New Art Work

Peer into PEERS Art Project

Art can be an important component of healing, and since many of our clients are very creative, we encourage any new ideas in that medium. Kellie Crawford, a recent graduate of the Elements Program came up with the concept of having our women open their own art show. Kellie has already produced a unique Artist Retreat along the back of her property.

Imagine jogging down the Lochside Trail, where even though you're in the city, in places it feels more like a forest. You can hear music coming from further up and as you round a bend, you can begin to notice small but interesting objects strategically placed in and around the foliage. A few more strides and you come to the clearing, which is filled with a variety of art work, from tiny pieces to painted tree stumps used as planters. There is a radio hanging in the tree, and overall there is a very peaceful feeling.

There is a little hideout complete with little bird abodes. A variety of glass art pieces are hung in the trees and placed on the ground. Look around and you'll see small objects nestled in the trees and placed on rocks. There is a painted box for donations and often she finds a few coins there, but just as often there will be a note left from an appreciative passerby.

This is the work of KC, Kellie's artistic name. She is mostly self-taught, but feels she got the gift from her mother. After graduating the program she wanted to come back and share her talent and ideas. She now runs a Thursday art group with the hope of having a showing in six months. They are currently working with glass, later they will be incorporating driftwood and shells into other works of art.

As Kellie has the ideas, space, and participants, this project is only hampered by lack of material to work with. **To help with the project we are looking for glass shards, varnish, paints and all manner of canvas and frames. Daas clay would be useful as would beads, shells and miscellaneous crafting supplies.**

Our Wish List

Day Outreach would really like donations of make-up, petite women's clothing, coats, toiletries, new socks and underwear of all sizes.

Elements is always looking for arts and crafts supplies as well as computers.

We could really use a microwave if anyone has an extra one

And food is always welcome.

Any of these can be dropped off at the office during work hours 9-4pm or by calling to make other arrangements. Thanks in advance

Dear Donors:

With this economic downturn, marginalized women will be far worse off than most. At PEERS, we want to give them a choice between economic survival on the street and economic survival that they can take. We really need your help. Many of the services we offer here at PEERS are not covered under government contracts so we rely on public donations to help us reach out to participants who don't qualify for the ministry Elements program, and to help fund our late-night outreach work on Victoria's prostitution stroll. We also rely on your donations to maintain our Spedding scholarship fund, which lets us provide past and current sex workers with small bursaries for post-secondary or other types of training. In the last year your support has helped us buy a new recreational vehicle, which has increased safety for outdoor workers and staff as well as provided them with a place to see the street nurse and have a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

The form below will help you donate to PEERS. We hope you'll consider becoming a regular donor. Your gift makes a big difference to some of our community's most marginalized citizens.

We are now able to accept credit-card donations as well through our Web site – please go to www.peers.bc.ca and click on the “Donate Now” button for that option.

I would like to donate \$_____ toward the following programs:

\$_____ Outreach/client support

\$_____ Spedding scholarship fund

\$_____ Housing support

\$_____ Food costs for daily lunches/community kitchen

\$_____ Counselling

\$_____ General operations

Total contribution: \$_____

(cheques payable to PEERS. Mail to 1-744 Fairview Rd., Victoria, B.C., V9A 5T9)



Or donate monthly to PEERS

YES, I want to donate once a month to PEERS. Please send me a void cheque from PEERS so I can take it to my bank and set up a monthly debit.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/fax/e-mail: _____

Thank you for your support!

Charitable tax receipts will be issued for donations.