



Vancouver Second Mile Society

Assisting seniors in the Downtown Core

The Vancouver Second Mile Society • 509 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1P9 • Tel: (604) 254-2194 • Fax: (604) 254-2150

2004 Highlights



Members of the Seniors Center gathering for the monthly Birthday Parties.



3 of our seniors celebrating their 85+ years birthdays with us.

The year 2004 was challenging for us in terms of funding needs. In light of the funding cuts, we have needed to carefully review our current programs and services. We have started new initiatives in fundraising and are looking at our current programming to ensure that we are doing what our community needs.

As a result of changes in the provincial Gaming Commission procedures, we were unable to receive gaming funds during 2004. Gaming funds from 2003 had to be utilized to support our programs for 2003 and 2004. It became necessary for us to cut the operating hours of the Seniors Centre and Outreach Program, effective June 1, 2004. Despite the cutback, we strived to maintain all of our essential services and programs for the seniors.

With a United Way (Partners in Organization Development) grant, we were able to engage two Fundraising consultants. They have been helpful in the review of our fundraising efforts to broaden our funding base for 2005. During the past year, we implemented the mental health education project. This project, funded by the United Way, provided a series of mental health workshops for the staff and volunteers of our programs. We have produced a Reference Manual, to guide our Society's programs in

learning how to interact with individuals with mental health issues.

The Board of Directors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the staff and the volunteers for their understanding, co-operation and ingenuity in the difficult financial climate we find ourselves in. With a strong fundraising effort and the continued support of our present funders, we will be able to continue to provide excellent service to our seniors.



Members playing pool at the Seniors Centre.

Neighbourhood Helpers Outreach Program

Meet John, one of our clients in the Neighbourhood Helpers Program. He is a senior living in one of the estimated 6,314 Single Room Accommodation (SRA) units in the Downtown core. Our Neighbourhood helpers support seniors living in poverty to ensure that they can be connected socially with others in the community and have access to the services that they need.

John is in his 50s, suffers from a debilitating back problem, has mental health issues and is living in a SRA hotel. A typical SRA unit consists of one room about 10 feet by 10 feet, with no private bathroom and no cooking facilities; room for one bed and a sink. This is where seniors like John spend 80% of their daily lives. John described his room as "a jail cell with no bars". He pays \$325 dollars/month for this kind of room. The rent varies depending on how secure and quiet a hotel is - most of the people living in SRA hotels spend 60 % of their income in rent.

John's room is located on the second floor and is infested with cockroaches. There is no elevator and John has to drag his walker up and down the stairs every day. If you ask John what the biggest challenge that he faces every day is, he would say "it is having to share the bathroom with more than 50 people a day" (most of them much younger tenants with drug addiction issues). The second complaint is a lack of cooking facilities and having to share his food with cockroaches and mice. Safety is another concern and many of them do not go out after 5p.m.

This population is facing the loss of available housing in the downtown area due to urban redevelopment and conversion. For those still living in the downtown hotels, they are losing their sense of community as restaurants, stores and inexpensive socializing places are closing down.

Our Neighbourhood Helpers Outreach Program work with seniors and people with disabilities to help themselves by improving their quality of life and to become active participants in their community through their social support network. To achieve this goal, we do the following:-

- We facilitate coffee sessions in the hotels so seniors can have a safe space to socialize

with neighbours and have access to information on services in the community.

- Once a week staff and volunteers go to hotels to knock on doors to visit the most isolated seniors. We check on them and make sure that they get all the information and services they need.
- We organize community soups in the hotels once a week and the day before welfare day to provide food to the needy.
- We rely on our volunteers to implement our programs. Most of them are seniors and live in the hotels. They volunteer their services to help seniors help themselves.




**Helping
seniors to
help
themselves**

Christmas is coming, please help! We will be hosting our Christmas Day brunch at our seniors centre to celebrate Christmas with our lonely seniors. We do not charge for this event and we need your donation and support to help sponsor this special event. *If you can help, please call us at 604-254-2194. Happy Holidays and best wishes for the year 2005.*



A United Way
MEMBER AGENCY

Wheelchair Accessible Facilities 

Thanks to our 2004 funding partners:

City of Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, United Way of the Lower Mainland, BC Gaming Commission, Soroptimists and you, our loyal individual supporters.

