

5th Annual Report



Connections
Place

2023-2024



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

Executive Report



Mike Tibbles
Past Executive Director

I have been honored to work with the wonderful members, staff and Board at Connections Place for almost two years. During my time there we moved twice, achieved Clubhouse International accreditation, and added many new members and staff. The partnerships we developed with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and Island Health were central to our successes, and we can't thank them enough for their support. Our community of donors and supporters has also been instrumental to the many achievements of the Clubhouse. I've now transitioned to life back on the mainland, but dearly miss all of the wonderful people at Connections Place. I still try to keep in touch with the Clubhouse and look forward to visiting again soon for the Gala.

Connections Place has been steadily picking up momentum since opening in 2019. Having surpassed the 5th year of the Clubhouse here in Victoria, it is evident that the need for community belonging is growing - it is a fundamental, human need. Having the opportunity to live life with meaning and purpose, and show up in the whole range of expressions, from worst days to joyous moments, is a paramount value within Connections Place. This core value is known upon experiencing the Clubhouse first-hand, from a tour, joining for lunch, or a conversation with a member. Vast efforts this year have been in completing outreach visits to various community spaces, from fellow mental health centers to post secondary campuses, so that there can be understanding and mutual collaboration in making this value truly felt beyond the Clubhouse doors.

The feedback from new and existing members shapes the structure of Connections Place. Members often express appreciation for the ability to utilize Clubhouse space for independent work, such as resume writing, highlighting "a flexible, active-paced, non-pressured environment, surrounded by friends". A member recently said, "my social anxiety has significantly decreased because I know that I can talk with anyone at the Clubhouse at anytime, without being expected to." Member feedback and surveys are an ongoing way to inform the culture and values we hold.

This year, we've been supported through the Ministry for Mental Health and Addictions and Vancouver Island Health Authority to expand the staff team and bolster membership, thus creating an ever-growing net to bring those who are struggling into the fold. We said goodbye to long time Board Director Darcy Eggleston, and welcomed Claire Skillen, who brings expertise in fundraising, marketing, and business strategy. As we look to next year, the foundations and systems are set to enhance member engagement opportunities, from the kitchen renovation project, to the developing employment and education programs, and public outreach efforts.

The hope and desire from Connections Place is to maintain and increase presence in the city of Victoria, so anyone struggling with their mental health knows they do not have to face it alone. On a larger scale, the vision we have is of a region in which mental illness is destigmatized, social systems reflect the best interests of the citizens living within them, and relationships are shaped through compassion, empathy, kindness, and a good laugh. Thank you to our donors, funders, and community partners who share in this vision. We are optimistic about the next year and look forward to continuing on this path with your help and support.



Neelam Pahal
Executive Director



Jackie Powell
Board Chair

Our Team

Staff

- ◇ Neelam Pahal, Executive Director
- ◇ Paige Wallace, Program Manager
- ◇ Leah Ralph, Program Staff
- ◇ Aylin Hurtado, Program Staff
- ◇ Curtis Walz, Program Staff
- ◇ Jocelyn Plunkett, Program Staff
- ◇ Gavin Reid, Program Staff
- ◇ Rylan Wheeler, Program Staff
- ◇ Morgan Gaudet, Program Staff
- ◇ Ken Motala, Program Staff



Board of Directors

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| ◇ Jackie Powell, Chair | ◇ Cherry Lynn Brown |
| ◇ Claire Skillen, Vice Chair | ◇ Sandy McManus |
| ◇ May Han, Treasurer | ◇ Adrian MacLaren |
| ◇ Alex Ashby, Secretary | ◇ Ashley Macdonald |
| ◇ David Hansen | ◇ Michael Priest |



Members

With 138 active 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!

2023-2024

By the Numbers

7,561

Member Visits

138

Active
Members

166

Tours

5,164

Meals Served

\$17,811.65

In Donations

This year we collaborated with:

- ◇ Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
- ◇ Island Health
- ◇ Ministry for Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- ◇ LIFT Impact Partners
- ◇ Victoria Foundation

Program Development

Community Outreach

Through the support of Island Health, community outreach and public education has become an active part of the Work Ordered Day. Previously, people learned of Connections Place through "word of mouth". This year, Clubhouse members and staff formalized Connections Place marketing materials, and visited community centers in Victoria, distributed the materials, and completed presentations to increase awareness of the Clubhouse and connected with potential new members.

Further, it has been our pleasure to host guests for lunch and a tour of the Clubhouse. Notably, folks from Our Place, Cool Aid, Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Pacifica Housing, and Work BC. We are grateful to build networks in Victoria! Special thanks to Mayor Alto and MLA Grace Lore for their long-standing support and advocacy for Connections Place.



Employment Program

The very first Transitional Employment placement for Connections Place was with Vanillablossom Flavors, a local spice and vanilla manufacturing company. The placement ended in April, and became a Support Employment position for the member. This is a success for their trajectory in securing independent employment.

This year, we partnered with the Dexterra Group operating out of the Bay Centre Food Court. A member completed a T.E. placement for 8 months, before moving on in a different direction.

Independent employment supports are offered at anytime, according to individual goals. Several members gained independent employment roles, with the help of the Clubhouse, at businesses such as First Transit, an independent bookkeeping business, and a local pharmacy. Congrats to those pursuing and succeeding with their goals!

Internal systems continue to develop as we build relationships and partnerships with local employers.



Education Program

Education is valued as a life-long effort for the Clubhouse community. We invited Dr Hector Caruncho from the University of Victoria to speak about the "stress response" and subsequent coping strategies this year.

The Crisis Centre for B.C. provided training for crisis and de-escalation skills at Connections Place in the fall. What the opportunity to put the skills into practice by role-playing specific situations that may be challenging to navigate.

There are several organizations in Victoria that offer training at low/no cost, such as FoodSafe and First-Aid. We have built a database of training opportunities that help boost resumes and comfort in skill development that is available to the Clubhouse community.

Networking with local post-secondary organizations has been an excellent way to learn about continuing education and programs of interest to members.



Whether it be preparing lunch in the kitchen, cleaning a washroom, or helping with community outreach, I find meaning and structure through the established routine of the Work Ordered Day. What's more, I have been motivated to apply that same purpose and organization to my life outside of the Clubhouse. Volunteering here has helped me to be in a routine of cleaning!



Ariel

Member Testimonials

Having the Clubhouse to come to is beneficial for me. It takes a while for me to feel comfortable, but I'm starting to fit in and I really like it here. Most importantly: It's a place for us to come and be people, be ourselves. We don't have to pretend.



Gabrielle

When I'm not working and I don't really have anything going on, it's nice to come and feel like I have something to do during the day. If I were unemployed, I think I would come more often during the week because it gives me something to do, like a purpose. That's really helpful and it's made a difference for me.

Blaine



I appreciate the flexibility that members have to take time away and return to the Clubhouse on their own time: "Being able to step back and step back in and not be treated differently because of that, and even just having people check in on me from time to time, has been nice.

The Clubhouse gives me an opportunity to share my skills and knowledge in a meaningful way, to feel fulfilled, without any pressure to do more than I feel able. Most of all, the Clubhouse is like a safety net; a safe place to land when I feel like I'm falling. Connections Place changed my life. I want to see it grow, and help it change even more lives in the future.



Andrew

My social anxiety has significantly decreased because I know that I can talk with anyone at the Clubhouse at anytime, without being expected to. The Clubhouse is a flexible, active-paced, non-pressured environment, and I feel surrounded by friends.



Sage/Kit



David



Thank You to Our Donors!

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

Major Funders



Featured Donors



Monthly & One-Time Donors


It is with the support of our 20 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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