



Covenant
House
VANCOUVER



2020 IMPACT REPORT



Immediacy · Sanctuary · Value Communication · Structure · Choice



93

93 youth found and maintained employment

20

An average of 20 youth per week attended an art therapy open studio to access mental health support

219

219 youth secured stable housing

104

Every day, an average of 104 youth found love and support at Covenant House Vancouver

1,750

Kitchen staff lovingly prepared and served more than 1,750 meals every week

94%

94% of youth told us that Covenant House Vancouver has helped them

83%

83% of youth said they feel more confident about their future

YOUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE



When young people arrive at Covenant House, they are greeted without judgment — with unconditional love and absolute respect — often for the first time in their lives. With the knowledge that they are part of a community of people who care about them, youth can build healthy relationships, develop important life skills, and improve their mental health.

The youth who turn to Covenant House Vancouver for help are extremely vulnerable. This year, keeping them safe and healthy has taken on a new level of urgency.

Behind these numbers are stories of individual youth who have worked hard to overcome incredible obstacles and setbacks in their lives. In the coming pages, you can read more about some of the young people's individual journeys.

Because of you, these young people can receive the care and guidance they need to transform their lives and become healthy, independent adults. Your support provides the stable foundation youth need to surmount challenging circumstances and build healthier, brighter futures.



Dear CHV Family,

What a year it has been for all of us at Covenant House and around the world. An unprecedented global pandemic, the likes of which have not been seen in our generation, has challenged and united us in ways we could not have possibly imagined.

As always, the youth, volunteers and staff at Covenant House Vancouver met these challenges with determination and resilience; strengthened by our donor community whose support has been unwavering.

We are incredibly grateful for your continued commitment to young people as the world faces this global pandemic and as many of you face your own personal and business struggles. Thank you for keeping the youth who come to CHV in your hearts and minds.

Our frontline staff have shown strength and courage while supporting young people not only through COVID-19, but through the Opioid Crisis as well. So many deaths from opioid overdoses have taken an emotional toll both on youth and staff. While our

frontline team is hard at work responding to these issues at the ground level, the Senior Management Team and I are working to ensure we are advocating for young people at the municipal and provincial levels.

Despite these challenges, there are many positive outcomes I am proud to share with you in the report that follows. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and some COVID-19 funding, we are in good financial shape and have not needed to consider reducing any of our youth support services. This, along with exceptional stewardship of resources, has allowed us to achieve our Board of Directors' mandate of having a "rainy day fund" that holds at least three months of operating revenue should an external financial or environmental emergency occur.

This past summer marked the one-year anniversary of our new building at 1302 Seymour Street, and construction is already underway across the street where we are building our new 10-storey facility. This second purposely-designed building will provide a safe and welcoming place for our housing and support services. The new building will house more beds for our youth, as well as new fitness and wellness facilities, art and music therapy rooms, and classrooms.

The Senior Management Team and our Board of Directors worked together to develop a new Strategic Plan which will guide us over the next five years. The Strategic Plan is framed around four key capability areas that will ensure Covenant House continues our tradition of providing innovative and all-encompassing services to youth by further developing: operational excellence, diversity and inclusion, partnering for impact, and employer branding. As we navigate the

increasingly complex social services system, these new and/or enhanced capabilities will be essential to the fulfillment of Covenant House Vancouver's core purpose and vision. You can learn more about our five-year plan on page six.

The year ahead will bring new challenges and opportunities for all of us. Your commitment to Covenant House Vancouver fills us with pride and provides encouragement to our young people, staff, volunteers and Board of Directors.

On their behalf, I thank you for your confidence in us and your ongoing support.

Wishing health and safety to you and your loved ones,



Krista Thompson
CEO, Covenant House Vancouver

HIGHLIGHTS



↑ Our incredible volunteers donated almost 6,000 hours of service.



↑ After 13 years of service, we gave a heartfelt "thank you" to our now retired Board Chair, Sean Muggah (on the right) and welcomed our new Board Chair Allan Seckel (on the left).

2020–2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



The new Strategic Plan for Covenant House Vancouver (CHV) has been developed at a time of great momentum. The Strategic Plan presents a series of key priorities and activities to be undertaken by CHV in the next five years.

Through this new Strategic Plan, we will reiterate and reinforce our long-standing commitment to focus first and foremost on service and support for youth. We'll continue to protect our strong independence of funding and decision-making. And we'll continue to uphold safety in all that we do. Upon this foundation, we'll build new capabilities that will enhance our services and our reach in years to come.

Strategic Priorities

Over the coming five years, our strategy will be focused on the following priorities:

1. Continuing to create conditions for the best possible youth outcomes. Youth are at the centre of everything we do. We will continue to provide high quality, leading-edge services and tools that support youth in creating a better future for themselves through a “one size fits one” approach. This includes growing our capacity to provide more services for youth in response to their needs, as well as growing our influence on the systems that contribute to youth homelessness or hamper youth's ability to be successful. In addition to our role as a service provider,

we will develop our influence and capacity for advocacy in BC, helping to shape policy and expectations about how youth services can be enhanced to deliver the best possible outcomes.

2. Enhancing and accelerating CHV's impact in the communities we serve. We know that in order to reach more homeless youth we will need to partner with others who have aligned goals. We will seek ways to extend our reach and expand our ability to support more youth, particularly through development of strategic partnerships with those who can help us increase our programs' capacity and reach, provide services, or fund our work.

Key Capability Areas:

To achieve our bold vision of developing tools, nurturing strategic partnerships, and strengthening our stance as youth advocates to bring about systemic change, Covenant House must develop and renew some key capabilities. This five-year plan is therefore framed around the following key capability areas:

- Operational Excellence
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
- Partnering for Impact
- Employer Branding

HIGHLIGHTS



↑ We broke ground on our second purposely-designed building at the intersection of Drake and Seymour Streets. This second new building will be another safe and welcoming place for youth.



↑ We hosted a roundtable on homelessness and housing initiatives with Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Adam Vaughan and Member of Parliament Hedy Fry.

HIGHLIGHTS



↑ Together with Canuck Place, we nominated Nicola Wealth for an Association of Fundraising Giving Hearts Award in recognition of their outstanding contributions to our community. Thank you, Nicola Wealth!



↑ We held our first virtual Sleep Out: Home Edition to raise critical funds and awareness for homeless youth while still practicing safe physical distancing.



↑ Andrew Teel, who created the fundraiser “Twoonies for Teens” in support of youth who are experiencing homelessness, was a Courage to Come Back Award recipient in the Youth Category. Congratulations Andrew!

HIGHLIGHTS



↑ We participated in the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and led a talk on Gender Specific Programming: Lessons Learned Pictured above: young man practicing self-care in our Crisis Program.



↑ We were honoured to be chosen as the recipient of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC 50/50 Program. Pictured here is winner Jayme M, one of our 50/50 winners!



↑ We were honoured to win a 2020 Canadian Green Building Award in the category of “Institutional (Small)” for our 1302 Seymour Street building.



CONTINUUM OF CARE

Covenant House Vancouver opened in 1997 in response to an overwhelming need for housing and support services for homeless and at-risk youth. We are primarily privately funded (95%) and supported by 180 employees, 140 volunteers and 50,000 donors. We offer a full range of services through a carefully designed continuum of care or “one-stop shop” for youth in crisis. This includes ongoing support from our Integrated Case Management team who are all certificated Social Workers.

Community Support Services

The Outreach Team seeks out young people living on the streets, in Single Room Occupancies (SROs), or those at-risk of becoming homeless. The Outreach Team is the “face” of Covenant House Vancouver, building trust with the youth, and encouraging them to access our programs where they can get something to eat, clothing, a friendly conversation, or an outside referral. Housing workers and Registered Clinical Counsellors are also available.

551

Our Street Outreach team connected with 551 individual youth

Crisis Program

Our 63-bed Crisis Program offers safe housing, food, clothing and counselling to young people aged 16 – 24. We take care of their immediate needs first, which are usually medical attention, food and rest. We encourage youth to create their own plan for independence and we support them every step of the way.

367

367 individual youth found safety and stability during their time living in our Crisis Program



Rights of Passage (ROP)

Rights of Passage (ROP) is a transitional living program for young people who need housing, structure and support as they strive toward independence. Basic life skills most of us take for granted: budgeting, cooking, cleaning and goal-setting are taught. We also provide emotional support and counselling. We are proud to report that 100% of youth in ROP transition off the street.

34

34 youth lived in Rights of Passage, and 100% of youth who left the program moved to stable housing that met their specific needs

All our services are offered with genuine compassion and acceptance, with the knowledge that trust is the foundation for a successful way forward and away from the trauma of the streets.

THE IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMS

Jenny's Story

shared by Krista, *Outreach Worker
at Community Support Services*



It all started when I received a call from Jenny's mother, who was very concerned that her daughter had come to BC with an abusive man. She didn't know how to help her daughter from so far away, so I briefly explained the different programs Covenant House offers and asked her to let Jenny know we could help her any time.

Shortly after that conversation, Jenny called in tears. We arranged a time to meet at Covenant House and I reassured Jenny that we could help her. She arrived and was very quiet and visibly anxious. She needed help obtaining ID as hers had been stolen by her boyfriend. As I showed her around the Drop-In Centre and then the Crisis Program, Jenny opened up about fearing her boyfriend and how controlling he was. I let her know that

CHV is open 24/7 and that she could call or show up any time she was ready to leave him.

One of my colleagues in the Outreach Program, Adelyn, connected with Jenny the next day to help her fill out a birth certificate form. Jenny told Adelyn that her boyfriend had stolen her wallet and takes any money she earns. From the stories that Jenny shared, we had a strong suspicion that she was being trafficked (forced to exchange sex for money

by her “boyfriend”). Jenny had very specific times that she could meet with staff, as it had to be while her boyfriend was at work.

Unfortunately, after that meeting, Jenny did not return to our Drop-In Centre or respond to any texts we sent. But she continued to text every month reiterating how much she wanted to leave her boyfriend, often not responding back to us when we replied. It was hard not to worry about her. Someone had donated a knitted bunny to us, so Adelyn and I put it aside and told each other that it was for Jenny when she was finally ready to leave.

Fast forward 3 months, and Adelyn got word that Jenny’s mother had called and asked to speak to her. Jenny’s mother and Adelyn connected on speakerphone while Jenny was calling from Facebook. Jenny said that she had locked herself in the bathroom and feared for her life. She was afraid her boyfriend would take her phone and she would no longer be able to contact anyone for support. Both Jenny and her mom were crying on the phone – it was obvious how scared they both were.

Adelyn and another Outreach Worker, Nicola, said that the police needed to be involved and that they would contact them on Jenny’s behalf. They called the police – apparently the boyfriend was already known to them. They sent a police escort to the house and said that CHV staff could meet them to take Jenny to Covenant House’s Crisis Program.

When Adelyn and Nicola arrived, the police officers were already inside helping Jenny out and gathering her belongings. Jenny was very grateful to the officers and said thank you to them endlessly. Jenny then ran over to the

Covenant House van and left with Nicola and Adelyn to return to our Crisis Program.

A few hours later, I went to check on her. Jenny told me about her future and the goals she had. She was close to both her parents and missed her friends at home. She was so excited that would be able to see her sister walk down the aisle as she was getting married soon. Jenny was so proud of herself for getting away from her bad relationship. I then gave her the bunny we had saved and I told Jenny, “we knew we would see you again, so we saved this bunny for you since the day we first met”. Jenny cried when she saw the bunny and said she couldn’t express how grateful she was for everything.

“ *we knew we would see you again, so we saved this bunny for you since the day we first met.* ”

Shortly after her first day staying with us, the police escorted Jenny to retrieve her cat from her old place. Jenny was very attached to her pet and couldn’t imagine returning home without him. I contacted the BC SPCA and was able to arrange a respite stay for the cat until Jenny’s flight home. The BC SPCA kindly waived all the fees for Jenny. As time progressed, her mother mailed over a piece of photo ID which would allow Jenny to fly within Canada. Our team worked with Jenny’s family to get her safely back to her home province.

When Jenny arrived home, her mother sent photos of the reunion to us and expressed gratitude that “her baby was home”.



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Michelle's Story

shared by Amber, *Team Leader*
at our *Crisis Program*

Covenant House works with young people aged 16-24. So, when a young person gets close to the age of 25, we want to ensure that they have all the skills they need to be successful as they move towards independence. We also connect them with adult services in the community, so they know where to go if they need support.

As someone that has worked with many of these youth for years, I often wonder when it comes time for them to move on, “Did they get the most they could out of our programming? Will they remember to use their skills? Will they remember to save their money and budget well? Will they know what to do when they get triggered to use drugs or alcohol?” etc.

Once a youth leaves Covenant House, we do not know if we will see them again or get updates on their progress. We can only encourage them to check in and hope that they will stop by to say, “hello”. One such young person was Michelle, who accessed our services from the ages of 20 to 25.

Michelle came from a family with serious addiction issues and she was severely neglected as a child. She left home at a young

age and then found herself pregnant at 17. Michelle also faced her own mental health and addiction issues. Sadly, due to being homeless and having no family support, she lost custody of her child. Over the next few years, her addiction got worse as she wandered from one unsafe living situation to another. She was often taken advantage of by those she thought she could trust, and her self-esteem only sunk lower due to being physically and mentally abused.

When Michelle came to Covenant House, she had just turned 20. She was tired of the way she was living and wanted desperately to get her child back. She did not know what to do and felt her life was out of control. Michelle’s pain and disappointment in herself for the poor choices she had made was compounded by her having had her child taken away.

She once told me that she would never amount to anything because she was a failure at life. It was evident that Michelle's life experiences had broken her down and left her feeling worthless.

I responded by telling her that she was not worthless or a bad mother. The fact that she had come to Covenant House proved that she wanted to make real changes in her life.

This first conversation we had together began a five-year journey with Michelle, as she began rebuilding her life. Of course, the road was not always easy. She struggled with depression, and when she would get really low, she would go back to alcohol which had been her coping mechanism for many years. Sometimes she would leave and we would not hear from her for months. She often missed important appointments, even those related to finding housing, securing financial support, or getting her child back. Often when she returned to the Crisis Program, we would have to start from square one.

At Covenant House, we understand the cycle of addiction. And in Michelle's case, her addiction was the result of years of abuse and neglect that resulted in low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The only way she knew how to cope with these emotions was to use alcohol to numb her pain. I always reminded her that we were happy when she came back and welcomed her with open arms.

In her last year with us, Michelle made some great accomplishments. I saw a huge improvement in her self-esteem. She realized that she deserved better than to be with people that

abused her. She also joined parenting classes to help her gain the skills needed to look after her child. She started slow, with supervised visits with her child. Eventually, she worked with a Social Worker to take the steps needed to get full custody.

Finally, the day came when Michelle was turning 25 and moving on from our services. Michelle told us how thankful she was that we always believed in her—especially when she didn't even believe in herself. She was also thankful that we never judged her and always welcomed her back.

“ *She was also thankful that we never judged her and always welcomed her back.* ”

About a year later, I received a phone call and immediately recognized the voice on the other end. It was Michelle calling to say how well she was doing. She said she had been sober for 9 months, and had left Vancouver with her child to start over and leave behind her old life. She had her own housing and was still practicing her budgeting skills. Michelle then said that being at Covenant House Vancouver was like having the family she never had.

To this day, Michelle calls and checks in with us — she continues to do amazingly well. Even though we cannot help but worry about the youth when they leave us, this is an example of the valuable skills young people can learn through the Covenant House Crisis Program.



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Cody's Story

shared by Jerry, *Youth Worker*
at our *Rights of Passage Program*

Cody joined us in the Rights of Passage Program (ROP) a little over a year ago. He is a very quiet young man who likes to keep a low profile. Cody's parents broke up when he was very young, and his mother raised him and his other sibling alone. In his late teens, he had to fend for himself until a stranger gave him some money and directions to Covenant House Vancouver. That's how Cody's journey started with us, first in our Crisis Program, and now at ROP.

Cody's reclusive personality was a challenge when it came to community participation, which is an important part of ROP. At our weekly check-ins, he could barely hold a five-minute conversation. And his one-line responses often made our meetings brief and superficial.

Cody's progress in meeting the expectations of the program were excruciatingly slow. He wasn't passing the weekly room checks (to ensure cleanliness etc.) and was not completing his chores. His Social Worker and I worked

to develop a strategy to support him and help him succeed.

One day, I invited him to help me cook frittata for brunch so he could work on his life skill goal for the week. I had already finished slicing most of the veggies when he finally showed up to the kitchen. He quietly stood on the opposite side of the stove and observed me as I chopped up the last piece of carrot.

In an attempt to ignite his interest, I dished out information about frittatas. He remained

expressionless and continued to watch what I was doing in silence. Eventually, I asked if he would whisk the eggs. He said nothing but took the bowl and whisk and got to work. His hand was heavy and the silence was now punctuated by an occasional loud clanking of the metal bowl.

Half-way through his chore, Cody asked how I learned about this recipe. I told him that when I was little, my mother used to cook scrambled eggs with carrots and peas to entice me to eat veggies and I thought that it would be great to put a little twist on that original idea.

Out of the blue, he muttered under his breath that he couldn't remember the last time he cooked a meal and usually ate canned food or fast food. "Finally!", I thought to myself, "Cody is giving me a peek into his life". I remembered that not every child enjoys home-cooked meals, and everyone has a different family experience.

I tried to keep the conversation going. I'm not sure what I said that finally got Cody to open up more to me, but eventually the floodgates opened. Cody shared with me memories of his dysfunctional upbringing. Scattered and sometimes incoherent and incomprehensible, those bits and pieces of his life events provided an opportunity for me to understand him on a new level.

He slowly poured the beaten eggs over the half-cooked veggies in the pan as our conversation drifted to his high school years. He murmured that he did not have close friends in school except for his two buddies that he is still in contact with. Listening to him, one

would think that he had a "normal" high school experience, but there was this unmistakable sadness in his voice.

Our frittata was slowly taking shape and Cody transferred the pan into the oven. Suddenly, silence once again—only broken by the sharp beep from the oven that signaled the end of the cooking time. I took the pan out and there emerged our beautiful golden-brown frittata. His eyes glowed in excitement and a bright smile flashed across his face. It was a priceless moment!

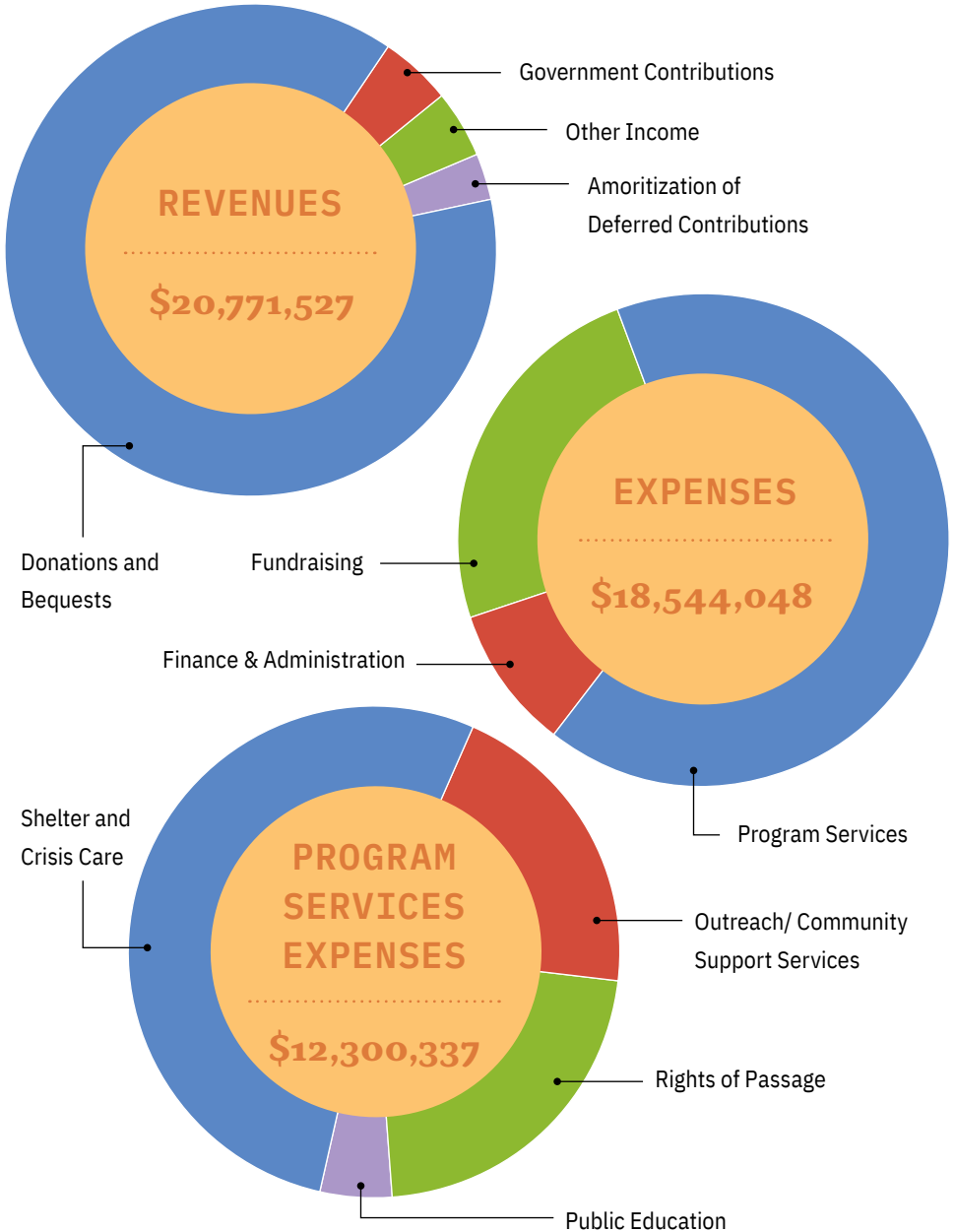
After that day, I saw a gradual improvement in Cody's behavior. He became less nervous during our conversations, asking questions and elaborating on his own answers, as opposed to his previous one-line responses. His interactions with his co-residents improved too, and he has developed new friendships. Cody also did a surprising turn-around in keeping his apartment clean and consistently staying on top of his chores.

“ *His eyes glowed in excitement and a bright smile flashed across his face. It was a priceless moment!* ”

Cody is moving out soon and on his last weekend, I will invite him to cook frittata with me one last time. I hope to relive the moment when our relationship grew stronger. Whatever the outcome is, one thing is for sure, we will cook the best frittata for brunch, and everyone will be welcome.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR GENEROSITY

Complete audited financial statements are available by request by calling 604-638-4438, or online at www.covenanthousebc.org



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