

**SPRING  
2024 ISSUE**

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# Covenant House News



“A lot of the youth are persistently unhoused, and many have had negative experiences accessing support. It’s important for us to regain their trust.”

**JON SPILLER**  
MANAGER, COMPLEX SUPPORT SERVICES

[READ THE FULL STORY ON PAGE 4 →](#)



“Despite the profound difficulties that so many young people encounter, I am inspired by the resilience of the youth we serve, the strength and dedication of our staff, and the commitment of our donors.”

**STEPHANIE GILLINGHAM**  
DIRECTOR, CLINICAL SERVICES & COMPLEX CARE

Covenant House Vancouver acknowledges with gratitude that our work takes place on the traditional lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations.



## Until June 30th, Every Gift You Make Will Be Doubled!

Our Spring Match Campaign is made possible by the generous support of Westland Insurance, who will match every dollar up to \$50,000.

With this matching gift from Westland Insurance, your gift will go even further in providing a safe, stable home, where youth in crisis can heal, grow, and change the course of their lives.

Cari Watson, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Client Experience at Westland Insurance, wanted to share why they were so inspired to help young people experiencing homelessness in our community:

“We are so proud to support such an amazing organization. Covenant House Vancouver is there to help youth experiencing homelessness with everything they need — from meals to housing and the loving care that all these young

“We’re honoured to make this matching donation to help more youth in our communities.”

**CARI WATSON**  
WESTLAND INSURANCE

people deserve. We’re honoured to make this matching donation to help more youth in our communities.”

Will you take advantage of this special opportunity? Please know that any amount will make a big difference, as your donation will go twice as far in helping young people in our community.

**Donate today: [covenanthousebc.org](https://covenanthousebc.org)**

A CONVERSATION WITH JON SPILLER

## The Importance of Low-Barrier Services



Jon Spiller, Manager of Complex Support Services, discusses the importance of having our Drop-In Centre be a low-barrier service.

“Low barrier basically means removing any obstacle that’s stopping a youth from accessing our services. To come into the Drop-In Centre, youth just need to be within our age range of 16–24.”

Jon discusses some of the challenges that youth face. “A lot of the youth are persistently unhoused, and many have had negative experiences accessing support. It’s important for us to regain their trust.

Without a safe place to stay, youth are at risk of being exploited. Youth experiencing homelessness are often isolated, they often struggle with their mental health, and they have the toxic drug supply to contend with.

Some youth simply want some extra support, like using the laundry facilities. Some youth just want to connect with people.

Youth also face the stigma of homelessness which impedes access to services.”

Jon says, “Ultimately, that puts people’s lives at risk.”

To meet these challenges, the Drop-In Centre is open seven days a week and provides youth with showers, clothing, laundry, and food. Youth can access medical supplies, healthy meals, and computers. They can also access services like counselling, life skills, and mental health and medical support. Youth use the Drop-In Centre during the day to rest and stay safe.

Jon’s team is passionate about removing barriers that might prevent youth from accessing our services, and meets weekly to discuss ideas on how to solve the challenges faced by youth.

What does Jon love most about his job? “The youth and the staff. You meet some incredible people and it’s nice to be a part of their journeys, however big or small that is.”

A large, vertical photograph of the interior of the Drop-In Centre. The room has a high ceiling and walls decorated with large, colorful, abstract murals. In the foreground, there are several tables and chairs. In the background, there are glass doors and windows. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

“You meet some incredible people and it’s nice to be a part of their journeys, however big or small that is.”

JON SPILLER

MANAGER, COMPLEX SUPPORT SERVICES

YOUTH ALUMNA STORY: REEM

## From Trauma to Triumph — Reem's Journey to Independence



Reem grew up in the Philippines in an oppressive patriarchal household.

When Reem was 10, her mother travelled to Canada alone, to try to create a better life for the family. Reem became the primary caregiver of her siblings. Her childhood was filled with abuse and fear.

Twelve years later, Reem came to Canada with her siblings to be with their mom. After being a “parent” for most of her life, Reem didn’t know how else to act. Having two matriarchs in the household led to conflict, until Reem finally left home.

Reem arrived at CHV at the age of 22 and entered the Crisis Program. “I just knew that I was in the right place because they were very respectful of my feelings and my boundaries.”

Reem’s wraparound care included a year-long commitment to one-on-one counselling sessions. Reem was also connected to CHV’s Lead Spiritual Care Practitioner so that Reem could immerse herself in her first Ramadan, in Vancouver.

A short time later, Reem transferred into CHV’s Rights of Passage program. Here, Reem applied for scholarships, became

involved in the Mentorship Program, and received housing support. Reem worked with her social worker to learn about safe relationships, healthy boundaries, and how to achieve her goals sooner.

Reem decided to try something out of her comfort zone. She entered the Miss Philippines International of BC Pageant and won! “I want to use my title to give back and pass on what I have learned so that youth can advocate for themselves as they work towards their dreams.”

Reem is working as a legal administrative assistant and dreams of becoming a lawyer one day.

“I never imagined that after what I’ve been through that I would come out stronger and more at peace. What changed my life was CHV’s support, unconditional love, and counselling.

As I was leaving CHV, I said, ‘When you’re helping women, you’re not only saving a life, you’re saving a whole line of generations to come, who will make a difference in the world.’”

“I never imagined that after what I’ve been through that I would come out stronger and more at peace. What changed my life was CHV’s support, unconditional love, and counselling.”

REEM  
COVENANT HOUSE VANCOUVER ALUMNA



## Volunteer Feature: Hannah

Covenant House Vancouver's Mentorship Program provides youth with opportunities to cultivate healthy, trusting relationships with responsible adults.

Our mentors make a year-long commitment to help youth achieve their goals.

Meet Hannah. Hannah volunteers weekly in our kitchen and she mentors youth.

For the past one and a half years, Hannah has mentored two extraordinary individuals who fled their homeland. Through hiking trips, city explorations, and shared experiences, the trio have forged a close relationship.

The changes in both youth have been remarkable. From facing possible deportation to securing residency, work placements, and independent living, their journeys reflect resilience, strength, and perseverance.

Hannah shares, "Mentorship has opened my eyes and my heart to youth who face serious challenges. I am so grateful for my relationship with these youth, and I care about their futures greatly."

Hannah plans to continue her mentorship with the two youth. Hannah's dedication

showcases the lasting impact that mentorship can have on both mentors and mentees.

CHV's Mentorship Program is a catalyst for positive change in the lives of youth facing homelessness. Hannah's dedication is a reminder of the profound impact that mentorship can have on creating brighter futures.

**"Mentorship has opened my eyes and my heart to youth who face serious challenges."**

**HANNAH**  
MENTOR AT CHV

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit us online at: <https://www.covenanthousebc.org/take-action/volunteer-with-us/>

## Secure Your Legacy with Covenant House Vancouver

Legacy donors understand that a gift in their will to Covenant House Vancouver ensures timeless support that will leave an enduring impact on vulnerable and at-risk youth.

Your existing support offers hope, respect, and love to those in need; a legacy gift deepens your commitment to vulnerable youth.

By including Covenant House Vancouver in your will, your legacy becomes a potent force in providing critical support to youth in need. Through our partnership with Willfora, you can now create an online will, free of charge, using their guided software that simplifies the process of leaving a legacy to our cause.



**"Creating my will online was convenient and effortless, and provided me with peace of mind."**

**WILLFORA USER**

**SCAN THE QR CODE** and embark on this seamless journey to create your legacy today, or visit: [covenanthousebc.org/willfora-chv](https://covenanthousebc.org/willfora-chv).

Thank you for your enduring commitment to Covenant House Vancouver.



## CHV Programs and Services Expanding to Meet the Need

The demand for CHV's resources has increased significantly, which underscores the importance of our low-barrier programs and services.

The number of young people visiting the Drop-In Centre has surged, which emphasizes the need for expanded and accessible support.

### OUTREACH: NURTURING TRUST BEYOND WALLS

Outreach is the initial point of contact to CHV's services, for many young people, and Outreach workers build trusting relationships with vulnerable youth, by offering them food and medical assistance. Through these interactions, youth begin to trust our staff, feel safe receiving support, and gradually access the spectrum of services available at CHV.

### DROP-IN CENTRE EXPANSION: SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

Our Drop-In Centre is now open seven days a week to provide a safe place for young people to access services over the weekend. This expansion ensures that our doors are open every day to provide a continuous source of support for young people in need.

### COMPREHENSIVE DROP-IN CENTRE SUPPORTS

Our Drop-In Centre offers a comprehensive array of supports, each a crucial component in the journey towards stability and well-being.

### Drop-In Centre supports include:



Covey's Cupboard, our free grocery pantry



Primary care and physical health services to address the holistic well-being of youth



Showers and washrooms



Tools to minimize harm during the ongoing toxic drug supply crisis



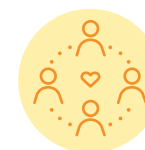
Laundry facilities



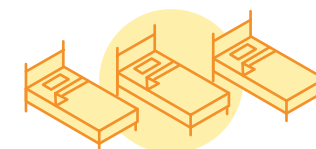
Computers for communicating with loved ones, searching for housing, and working on resumes



A quiet room, so youth can relax



One-on-one support from dedicated staff and counsellors



Foundations — a new warm and welcoming seven-bed program tailored to young folks who want to address their substance use in a supportive environment

As we expand our low-barrier programs and services, we are building healthy communities of support where youth can feel like they belong.