

Belonging

How your support impacts youth.



**Covenant
House**
Vancouver



IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 4

Regulating Emotion with Physical Activity

PAGE 6

A Sneak Peek of Our New Building

PAGE 10

Donor Spotlight: Jackie Lee

To our Covenant House Vancouver Family,

When we embarked on our expansion project over ten years ago, we knew that our plan was incredibly ambitious. We also knew how important it was if we were going to continue to meet the needs of the youth in our care. At the time we were turning away young people who needed our help simply because we didn't have enough beds. Additionally, we didn't have the space to meet all the complex needs of these unique young people.

Since announcing the expansion we have been blown away by the support from the donor community. All of you have been integral to the success of this project.

It's been a long journey, but I'm thrilled to announce that the opening of our flagship building is just around the corner. This new building is a game changer. It's going to enable us to contribute to even better outcomes for young people. Not only will we be able to serve more youth, but the new services we'll be able to provide those youth will have long-term positive impacts.

In this issue you will learn about our new services and facilities, as well as how these new additions will allow us to serve youth better than we've ever been able to in the past.

All of you have been so connected to what we have been trying to accomplish, and I can't thank you enough for your continued commitment to the young people at CHV. Their future is looking brighter, and it's all thanks to you.

With gratitude,

Herb Eibensteiner



HERB EIBENSTEINER
Chief Operating Officer,
Covenant House Vancouver





LIFTING THE WEIGHT OF BIG EMOTIONS

All young adults dealing with work, school, relationships, and the world at large encounter stressful situations on a regular basis. However, traumatic experiences early in life, a persistent lack of safety and security, and mental health concerns often compound these situations for the youth at Covenant House Vancouver — sometimes to the point of fueling explosive or unmanageable emotional responses.

Part of the work we do is teaching young people to identify and regulate their emotions, to help them better ride out these strong responses. One incredibly effective method for youth who struggle to manage things like anger and frustration is physical activity.



A role model for this work is Dustin*, a youth who suffered abuse and neglect as a child and moved through the foster care system without consistent, stable support from caregivers. Dustin was aware that he often experienced stress as anger, but had never been shown a healthy way to manage the intense sensations that came into his body

during difficult moments. He would often yell and sometimes break things. Earlier in his life, Dustin would respond to stress by physically fighting.

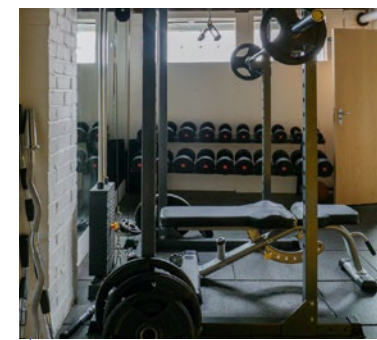
These angry responses left Dustin with a great sense of shame, which only led to more anger. Staff at Covenant House witnessed this cycle early in his stay in our Crisis Program.

Concerned both for Dustin's well-being and the feeling of safety for other youth in the program, his support team quickly realized that Dustin needed an outlet for his negative energy. His key youth

worker encouraged Dustin to find an accessible physical activity that appealed to him, and Dustin chose to pursue weightlifting. Over time, he learned to identify when his frustration was building and head to his room to lift weights and expel some of his anger.

The buildup of energy in the body that intense emotions can cause often feels dangerous and very uncomfortable for young people, especially those who didn't have access to the support required to develop healthy coping strategies. Becoming aware of what is

“Becoming aware of what is happening in their bodies and attuning to where they feel these strong emotions is one of the foundational steps in healing from trauma.”



happening in their bodies and attuning to where they feel these strong emotions is one of the foundational steps in healing from trauma. Things like working out at the gym, boxing, running, or even breakdancing can provide an effective outlet and teach youth how to self-regulate — an empowering and valuable skill.

On the following pages you'll read more about our new building, which will include a large gym and exercise space. Young people in our care will now have access to the space and equipment they need to learn healthy, productive habits in a safe and supportive environment.

**To respect the privacy of the youth in our care, Dustin is not one individual youth, but his story represents multiple youth stories*



Regular physical activity may be as effective as psychological and pharmaceutical treatments for depression and anxiety.

Source: Canadian Psychological Association



A HOME DESIGNED TO HEAL

📍 1280 SEYMOUR ST.

This spring Covenant House Vancouver (CHV) will be opening the doors to our new, purpose-built 10-storey building. This facility is the culmination of years of planning and research and was made possible by the generosity of our community, who supported our \$55 million capital campaign.

The additional space and new amenities will greatly enhance how we deliver our essential services and programs, and the thoughtful design of the building is the result of a deep commitment to addressing the biggest challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness.

More than just a physical space, our new home represents hope and possibility for the youth in our care. Every room was designed with their healing and growth in mind. On the following pages are some examples of how each room goes beyond its basic purpose, and supports the healing and growth of the young people at CHV.

1 80 BEDS

CLASSROOMS 2

3 COUNSELLING ROOMS

ART STUDIO 6

4 COMPUTER ROOM

GYMNASIUM 5

7 MEDITATION & MOVEMENT STUDIO



1

80 beds in the Crisis Program, with the potential to add more

By increasing the number of beds available to youth experiencing homelessness, we hope to drastically reduce turn-aways and offer sanctuary to the young people who need us the most.



2

The Classroom

Pursuing an education and learning new skills like budgeting, resume writing and other general life skills requires focus and quiet. The classroom is a space that encourages learning of all kinds, and provides youth with a sense of community while they work towards their goals.



3

Counselling Rooms

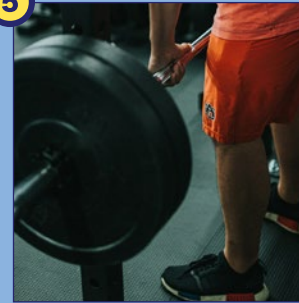
Private, sound-proof spaces for in-person counselling and social work sessions will improve youths' comfort when working on their mental health. As trauma survivors, this sense of safety is essential for healing and growth.



4

Computer Room

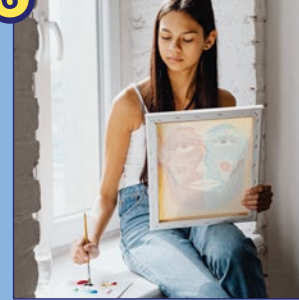
Computer literacy is an essential skill for adults in today's world. This dedicated computer lab will have individual workstations where youth can access the internet, look for employment, and work on school projects, all with the support of staff and volunteers.



5

Gymnasium

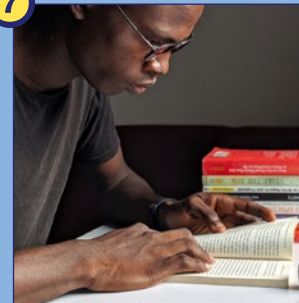
A dedicated exercise space will allow youth to work through strong emotions in a safe and productive environment while building healthy habits that support their well-being. (For more information about the role of exercise in mental health management, see pg. 4.)



6

Art Studio

Art therapy has made a huge difference in the lives of our youth, particularly throughout the pandemic. This dedicated space will allow for both group therapy sessions and free time, so youth can access supplies and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of making art at any time of day.



7

Meditation & Movement Studio

The more we work with youth, the more we recognize that therapies dedicated to moving the body and regulating the nervous system are key for trauma survivors. This quiet studio space will allow for embodied therapy sessions, meditation, and respite from stressors and stimuli.



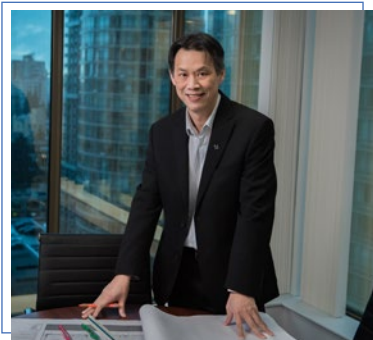
Young people were part of the planning process for the new building from its inception. In a series of consultations, they requested spaces with more natural light, outdoor spaces like balconies and patios, open access to internet and wifi, and private bathrooms. Overwhelmingly, they expressed a desire for Covenant House to feel like a home, as opposed to a more traditional shelter.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT: JACKIE LEE

Jackie Lee understands the power of small changes. In his twenties, he volunteered for an organization called Campus Crusade that worked with inner city youth. Every week he spent time teaching lessons and running activities for youth.

By the time he was in his third year of volunteering, Jackie started to wonder if it was worth it. He didn't feel like he was seeing any results. The children were between four and six years old and came from difficult environments. Some of them had guardians who were abusive, others had family members who struggled with substance use and other issues. He spent three hours with them every week, but every time they left he knew they were going back to unsafe and unstable homes. "Am I even helping?" He wondered.



Jackie shared these feelings with a counsellor at a retreat for program leaders. The counsellor's response completely changed his perspective.

"He gave me a mantra," says Jackie. "He told me: what you've done for these kids is alter a tiny degree of their trajectory from now until adulthood. Because you're helping

them at such a young age, by the time they grow up they might not even remember that you helped them. You've changed their lives, but you may never see the results."

Years later, this is exactly how Jackie feels about the work being done at Covenant House Vancouver: small changes are leading to more positive futures for the youth.

"If you can instill a sense of self-esteem, reignite passion in these kids, you know that you're going to change their lives around," says

Jackie. "They will never forget this experience and they will become a beacon for whoever they encounter in the future."

He thinks of the opportunities we provide to the youth as drops of bleach on blue paper. Eventually these small drops will grow into big white areas, which represent the light growing in our youth.

Jackie has never considered himself a philanthropist. He laughs, explaining that he had to Google the definition when we first referenced the term. "The way society has dictated philanthropy all has to do with wealth, but for me, I think of it differently," he says. "To me the real philanthropists are the ones who get involved and volunteer."

"To me the real philanthropists are the ones who get involved and volunteer."

Before the pandemic Jackie attended a Covenant House event. He was given a tour of our Pender Street location and heard from a young woman staying in our Rights of Passage program. He stayed to speak with her after the event and was moved by what he heard about her experiences. This connection inspired him to start investing in the Rights of Passage program.

"It can actually be exciting to give!" says Jackie. "If you believe in it and are invested in having a hand in the journey of these kids, it's a lot easier to give because it's not just about writing a cheque."

Jackie is also trying to instill this understanding of philanthropy in his own children. He talks to them about where and why he gives, and explains that it goes far beyond donating money. He teaches his kids that it's about doing the right thing, even if they never get to see the outcome.

"I want to be a good example for my kids. Whatever I do I don't care if anybody knows, as long as my family does," says Jackie. "We are groomed to always want to see results, but what I learned from the counsellor is that what matters is what we are doing to change the trajectory."

**Youth need a space
that is psychologically,
emotionally and
physically safe to feel like
they belong. Thank you for
providing all three to the
young people at Covenant
House Vancouver.**



**Covenant
House**
Vancouver

1302 Seymour Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 3P3
604-638-4438 • covenanthousebc.org