



Red Umbrella Day



Red Umbrella Day participants gather on the steps of the Legislature.



On December 17th, approximately 150 people gathered to recognize Red Umbrella Day, a day calling attention to violence against sex workers.

The event was made possible by the UVic Women's Centre, Peers, UVic Pride, Students of Colour Collective, VIPIRG, Department of Gender Studies, Anti Violence Project and the many individuals who formed part of

the planning committee.

We wish to thank the speakers and performers as well as Deadbeetz food truck for feeding everyone.

A special thanks to The City of Victoria for the use of Antechamber for the speaking and performance portion of the evening.

-Rachel Phillips

Night Outreach Update

I think we continue to do what we have always done: we try and meet people where they are at from a place of compassion and respect. This winter we have been able to go from 6 nights to 7 and our services have gone from being more stationary to more mobile.

The RV is very missed by folks because they used to be able to come on and warm up and hang out a bit. That is harder to do with a van packed with food, harm reduction and outreach supplies. The people we serve on night outreach are dealing with a lot of stigma, violence and discrimination. Harm reduction saves lives and reduces suffering and doing this work

without judgment reminds people that someone cares when it can often seem like no one does. That is healing or at least a small piece of it.

People love Peers because we don't judge. That is one of the most destructive and toxic things our people have to deal with every day: the judgment for sex work, using, poverty, racism, or whatever it is. I think the antidote to stigma is respect and compassion. That is what we try to do.

-Juli Savage



Small Business Program

The Small Business Training Program is a partnership between Peers, Bridges for Women and Community Micro Lending, organized by the Township of Esquimalt and funded through a grant from the Ministry of Justice (Civil Forfeiture). The program began in October of 2014 and graduation will take place on April 2nd.

Six talented and resourceful participants have created business plans using the Community Micro Lending templates and are ready for business!

For more information, please email julie.arunaconsulting@gmail.com

-Julie Higginson

What's up at Drop-In

Over the last few months the drop-in program has been busy with workshops, hosting practicum students, agency



Isha and Laurel, Peers drop-in

visits, beauty day, Wellness Wednesdays and our newly added Movie Mondays. Next month we will be starting our body casting breastplates with Heidi from AIDS Vancouver Island. All the participants loved the project last time so we are excited to host it again. If you want to see some examples, we still have a few hanging up. With our numbers increasing, it's been exciting to welcome old folks back, as well as to greet new people. No matter what else is going on, it's the people coming in each day to have a meal, grab something from donations and chat with us that makes Peers the welcoming, safe and comfortable place that it is. Thanks for stopping by!

-Laurel and Isha

ED's Message: How did we do in 2014?

In 2014, with your help Peers raised just under \$55,000 in donations, which is close to 15% of our revenue. We also raised an additional \$11,000 at fundraising events. This was roughly equal to the donations raised in 2013 and a \$15,000 increase over donations raised in 2012.

One of the things we are excited about is that we know have close to 35 people contributing to Peers through monthly donations which are direct debited. These individuals give anywhere from \$5-\$100/ month for a total of \$1100 each month - proof positive that every donation, big or small, makes a tangible difference. We hope to increase these direct debit donations - which provide a reliable source of organizational revenue - over the course of the year. We hope to close 2015 with over 50 people donating monthly!

Consider a one-time donation to our scholarship programs

Donations received at Peers are used to support all of our programs, including two really important scholarship funds. For many years, Peers has had a scholarship fund called the "Elizabeth Spedding Scholarship," named after a famous

madame who was known for her generosity and leadership. The Elizabeth Spedding scholarship is used to support people in/ from the sex industry who are pursuing postsecondary or employment related education.

This year, the Board of Directors voted to start a companion fund called the "SexWork Mentorship and Leadership" fund. Grants from this fund will be used to support people in the sex industry to either organize or participate in conferences, meetings and training events that increase capacity and networking with regards to sex workers' rights. Already this year, the fund supported a group of people associated with Peers to attend a networking meeting of in Vancouver organized by FIRST, which is a national coalition of feminists in support of sex workers rights (see www.firstadvocates.org). Both of these funds are exciting because they provide a direct benefit which supports sex worker leadership in the community.

Please consider making a one time donation to these scholarship programs, and as the year progresses we look forward to reporting on the achievements of the awardees.

-Rachel Phillips

HOT PINK
A FUNDRAISER FOR PEERS VICTORIA RESOURCE SOCIETY

Peers Annual Fundraiser, May 30th, 2015, 7 pm at the Belfry. Tickets \$35 available at tickets.belfry.bc.ca
Featuring The Cheesecake Burlesque Revue and the Boxers Are Brief Boylesque

Feeling at Home: The Peers Housing Program

The housing program has been extremely successful in a number of areas including housing people, helping others to maintain their housing, networking with other service providers in identifying people who require support, providing a presence at shelters to enable accessibility to support, participating in online housing searches, purchasing household supplies, accompanying participants to view suites, liaising with landlords to resolve tenancy conflicts and concerns and doing home visits to provide additional support when needed.

Many of our folks have been served in ways that would not otherwise have been possible without the funding and support this program provided. (Funding provided by the Government of Canada – Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Administered by the Capital Regional District)



Casey Newman

-Casey Newman

Program Testimonials

Housing Program Participant “SL”: “I’ve been very blessed and grateful to have been assisted with the housing outreach worker....When my room was cold and mold was growing, I was helped with a portable heater and new blankets and other household items that help me live much more comfortable...I give so much thanks and love to all their hard work, time and caring they put into their work.”

Housing Program Participant “B”: “I have been a client at PEERS for approximately 2 years. Last July my choices took my life on a downward spiral, and I became homeless. I sought assistance through the housing outreach program at PEERS. Within 2 months, Casey helped me to secure a room and helped me to furnish it. The delivery of service was above and beyond, with such sincere empathy. I

was truly rescued from my own despair.”

Volunteer Profile



Lindsay Delaronde,
Counselling volunteer

"My name is Lindsay Delaronde and I am very grateful to be the new practicum student counsellor at Peers as part of my education in the Indigenous Communities Counselling Psychology Program. Being a First Nations woman, I have been taught many traditional values around healing, community, protocol, customs and cultural practices that I have had the opportunity to bring to group workshops and individual counselling.

"I come from a visual arts and traditional arts background, therefore, I have been providing group art therapy workshops using the moccasins as a means of creative expression, deep concentration and developing meaningful relationships with clients. I provide one-on one counselling services to clients at Peers to further develop a therapeutic alliance and work through some challenges as well as celebrate successes on their journey. I am very excited to work with the inspirational women at Peers in a meaningful and creative way."

FIRST Meeting

On January 31, five representatives from Peers were invited to participate in an exciting Vancouver conference to discuss innovations on the BC sex worker movement's priorities for 2015, which is a federal election year. Together with sex workers and allies, including Pivot Legal, PACE, and

SWAN, topics were covered such as outreach, relationship-building, as well as strategies and actions for furthering the movement locally and nationally.

Peers was thrilled to be involved and our representatives were inspired by the connections and conversations we had there.

-Sarah Miron



Peers representatives at the January 31 conference in Vancouver.

Volunteer Profile



Devon Greaves, Donation Team volunteer

"I am a Camosun College student in the Criminal Justice Program. I've been interested in working in social justice and believe that our society is only as good as how we treat our most vulnerable citizens. I'm grateful to be a volunteer at Peers and hope to learn as much as I can from this experience."

Indoor Sex Workers Group

Monthly since July, I have enjoyed meeting for dinner with other indoors-working sex workers at Peers. We've hosted many professional guests, including accountants, lawyers, health professionals, and representative from the Victoria Police and City Hall. We are building relationships with each other in what can be an isolating sector of our industry, and we are establishing and strengthening connections between ourselves and the wider community. I look forward to continuing to participate in this group, which is already growing beyond the capacity of the meeting room at Peers.

-Anonymous

Sex Worker and HIV/AIDS Education Day



The crowd at the HIV/AIDS Education Day on November 28

On November 28, Peers hosted a day long training event with funding support provided by the Island Health Stop HIV program. There were 50 attendees representing various sectors of the sex industry and related health and social services.

Speakers included Sophie Banner Martin (Island Health), Chris Atchison,

Cecilia Benoit, Charlotte Reading and Kecia Larkin (UVic), Vicky Bungay (UBC), Chrissy Taylor, Sherri Pooyak (CAAN-AHA), Billy Taylor (Hustle-HIM), Anne Drost (Cool Aid), Alison Clancy (SWAN), Michael Yoder (VPWAS).

-Rachel Phillips

Brushing up at Peers



Applying a fresh coat



The painting crew

Over the past month, myself and two other Camosun College students had the opportunity to spend time painting the upstairs 'yellow brick hallway.' We choose to volunteer because of the important and unique services Peers provides to individuals who are often marginalized in our community.

During our time there, we learned a lot about the strong atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement at

Peers. Whether it was through the quotes and pictures on the walls or our interactions with volunteers and staff, we all grew in our understanding of how to celebrate each other, no matter our past, present or future.

-Alicia Baerg (Siobhan Lafreniere & Trynn Bob) Community, Family and Child Studies Program Students at Camosun College



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Donation type:

One time Monthly

If monthly, please debit my bank account: (attach VOID cheque)

\$20 \$50 \$75 or Other Amount _____ (specify)

The debit will be processed to your account on the 16th day of each month or the next business day.

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Donor Name: _____

Address: _____

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This donation is made on behalf of: an Individual a Business

I may revoke my authorization for pre-authorized donations at any time, subject to providing notice of 10 days. Cancellation can be done by emailing finance@peers.bc.ca or by phoning the number below.

PEERS Victoria Resources Society

1-744 Fairview Rd

Victoria, BC V9A 5T9

Tel: 250-388-5325

E-mail: finance@peers.bc.ca

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