



Sex Worker Day of Action



Performers, researchers, activists, community members and others shared their messages of support in Peers Victoria's new video.



Peers is thankful to the people at Wilkinson Road Correctional Centre for building us a garden box and tables in their woodworking program.

On June 2, 1975, about 100 sex workers occupied Saint-Nizier Church in Lyon, France, to express their anger about their criminalized and exploitative living conditions. On June 10, the Church was brutally raided and cleared by police forces. This action sparked a national movement, and the day is now celebrated in Europe and around the world.

This year, Peers Victoria marked this Day of Action in support of sex

workers by putting together a little video featuring members of our Victoria community and supporters of sex workers' rights. Stand up for sex workers' rights!

Peers Victoria would like to thank Jody Paterson for her work helping us to compile this video.

Sex Worker Rights Matter:
safersexwork.ca/about-peers/videos

-Natasha Potvin

Small Business Program

The Small Business Training Program is back for 2015/16, thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Justice.

Applications are available from Peers front desk in August, interviews will take place in September and the program runs from October to March. We will meet for two hours, on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week, with coaching sessions on every other Wednesday.

Participants will learn skills related to their specific business ideas and will complete a Community Micro Lending business plan.

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

-Julie Higginson

Hot Pink a Steamy Success

Hot Pink was held May 30 at the Belfry Theatre. Thanks to the glitter, glamour, and sexy striptease of the Cheesecake Burlesque Revue, and the wit and humour of the Boxers are Brief Boylesque, Hot Pink was sold out again this year. The silent auction portion of the event was a major success. Local businesses generously gave double the number of donated items they did in 2013, a clear indication of the community's support of our organization.

Each year this important fundraiser earns more money, and raises greater



A glitter makeover at Hot Pink.

public awareness about Peers and the important work we do.

-Leah Shumka

Greetings from the Interim ED



Peers interim Executive Director Leah Shumka.

My name is Leah Shumka, I would like to introduce myself as the interim executive director of Peers. I will begin in this position in September, taking over for Rachel Phillips as she goes on maternity leave.

I come to the position after having spent the last three years sitting on the Peers board of directors. Some of you might know me in terms of my role organizing our annual Hot Pink fundraiser and as coordinating the redesign of our website. I am a medical anthropologist by training and an instructor in the Department of Women and Gender Studies at UVic.

My passion lies in the areas of gender, sexuality, and social justice. I have over a decade of experience conducting community based research in relation to the sex industry in Canada, specifically looking at the structural barriers to the health and well being of sex workers. I am looking forward to this opportunity to further deepen my association with Peers, an organization that I value deeply.

-Leah Shumka

ED's Message: Funding in 2015 and Farewell (for now)

In late 2014 and early 2015, we submitted many, many grants and were successful in obtaining program funds from BC Gaming, Island Health, the MAC AIDS Foundation, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (CRD/Canada), the United Way, and The Ministry of Justice (Civil Forfeiture). In partnership with the University of Victoria (Drs. Benoit and Reading, Co-PIs), we were also successful in obtaining a small research grant to train peer sexual health educators. Together, these funding sources mean that we have been able to keep all programming in place in 2015 including our seven-day-a-week night outreach schedule. We we have even expanded some of our health support services through the MAC AIDS fund which supports a one to one worker to facilitate access to health care. While our programming is secure through early 2016, the vast majority of funds have been provided to us on an annual basis. We therefore have to keep up the grant writing pace.

This fall, Peers will celebrate its 20th birthday. Some exciting plans are underway for a community event where we showcase very rich history of the organization. We are looking for all alumni and friends of Peers to get involved, so stay tuned for more updates!

Earlier this summer, with the help of Jody Paterson we organized a community video in support of sex workers' rights, and it was very heartening to hear all the voices in our community who have a

message of support. In general, over the past year, I have found Victoria to be a very welcoming environment for our work and organizational values, and we enjoy wonderful relationships among the people who take part in our services and help run our programs, including our many partner organizations - thank you.

I am pleased to announce that I will be taking a parental leave this fall, but look forward to staying connected to Peers and working closely with Leah to ensure continuity of programs and funding at Peers. As I sign off for now, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage 10 new generous and community-minded individuals to sign up as monthly donors to Peers through the automatic debit program—even \$10 per month! The form is at the end of the newsletter, and together with a void cheque sent back to Peers, you are on your way. The monthly donor program makes a huge difference to our individual donation revenue and provides Peers with a consistent source of funding.

Many thanks to all of the staff, program participants and members of the community that I have had a pleasure to work with over the past 15 months. I look forward to picking up where we left off upon my return!

-Rachel Phillips

Volunteer corner



"Volunteering gives me a feeling of purpose. Cooking is a passion and to be able to share and give back to our community, doing what I love, and receive so much love and gratitude in return, is one of the best

feelings you can imagine. I am proud to be on the volunteer team. Peers Victoria has become my second home."

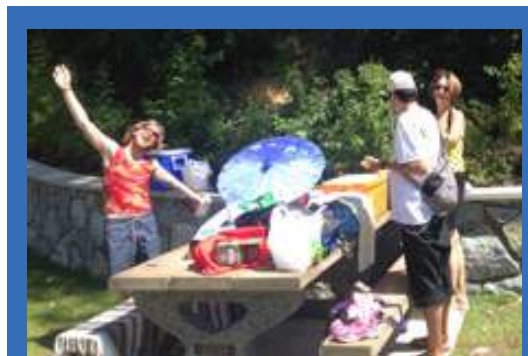
-Anna Maglio, volunteer, meal preparation and food donations

Summer at the Drop-In

At Peers Drop-in we strive to provide a warm, welcoming, safe and mostly fun place for our current and former sex-worker friends to come hang out, chill, have lovely hot lunches prepared and served by our amazing volunteers, perhaps pick out something new to you from our donation room and check-in with us as to how your life is going and how we may be able to assist you. We seem to have been successful in this endeavor as our numbers steadily increased from an average attendance of 13 clients per day in the fall/winter to a maximum of 19 clients per day this spring although attendance has been somewhat lower as the dog days of summer arrived.

We continue to provide educational workshops most weeks, beauty day including hair care every second week, street nurse services twice per month, legal assistance once per month as well as harm reduction and safer sex supplies on a daily basis. We also continue to provide referrals to detox and/or drug/alcohol treatment services, as well as to other community supportive agencies that might be able to provide assistance.

We were very fortunate to have three excellent practicum students join us this spring/summer, Maeve, Collette and Lindsay. Maeve has now joined us as a casual employee and Lindsay will



Fun in the sun at Beach Day.

be helping out with the second edition of the Small Business Training Program this fall. Although we were sad to say goodbye to Isha we were happy to welcome Sarah, who had been heading up Peers Beauty Boutique for the previous year. We also had two very special events this summer; Beach Day at Langford Lake — thanks Tammy! and a visit to a Cowichan Sweat Lodge — thanks Lindsay!

Personally, I would like to thank all of our drop-in clients for a very rewarding past year at Peers and it is with mixed emotion that I will be leaving Peers in September. It has truly been an honor and pleasure. Please drop by on September 10 to sing a song (or not) at my going away karaoke party that Sarah is graciously planning for.

-Laural & Sarah

Roots and Roofs: Housing Program Update

The housing program is going well. Over the last couple months, we have assisted eight people who were chronically homeless to find stable housing, and helped many more with various things such as purchasing household items, rental subsidies, housing searches, tenancy disputes, assistance with bill payments, storage fees, repairs, subsidized housing applications, and more.

The people we have helped to obtain stable housing have shown immense

improvements in their health, well-being and stress levels. It is very exciting to watch people's lives change by getting their basic need for shelter met. There are many more people on my caseload that need and deserve the same opportunity and support. The program could benefit from more funding, as we would be able to assist a lot more people if there were more funds available.

-Casey

Night Outreach Update

Night outreach continues to serve people seven nights a week on stroll and has been quite busy this summer. In the last quarter (April-June), over 120 separate individuals accessed the van with close to 1,300 visits in total. We have worked with our Victoria police liaisons to follow up on a number of bad date/aggressor reports.

We have also benefitted from the introduction of monthly educational workshops for night outreach clients held at Trees Dispensary on Rock Bay. So far, we have facilitated a Q & A between participants of the night outreach program and our Victoria Police liaisons Kathy and Alison (June), a naloxone training by Heather of AIDS Vancouver Island (early August), and a testing clinic conducted by Karen of Cool-Aid Clinic (August). All workshops have been well received and we are happy to have this additional prevention education initiative as part of the night program. Thanks again to Trees Dispensary for allowing us to use their wonderful space to host these workshops. Thanks also to community partners — Alison, Kathi, Heather and Karen— who have been part of the workshops!

Did you know?

Peers will celebrate 20 years as a non-profit society in October, 2015!



Help Peers Get Moving with Rolls on Strolls



In July, we honoured Susan Strega's more than 14 years of service to Peers at a volunteer appreciation dinner.

Indoor Sex Workers Group

The indoor workers group has now reached over 20 members and we are still meeting monthly to discuss work, policy, health and legislative issues alongside dinner. Over the summer, the group has focused on preparing for the election and asking candidates to speak about their position on prostitution legislation. We were very pleased to welcome Randall Garrison's (NDP) office in July and will be welcoming Joanne Roberts and Elizabeth May (Green Party of Canada) in August – thank you to these individuals for taking the time to meet with us during the busy election period.

In the fall, we will continue to meet monthly and are interviewing group facilitators who can lead a group process wherein members share concerns, questions and stresses of the day, and benefit from member guidance and support. In November, one of the group's members will travel to Chicago to join in the North American meetings of NSWP (Global Network of Sex Work Projects). This will be the first time that Peers has participated in a meeting of this international sex worker advocacy organization, and it's a tremendous networking opportunity.



Peers is on the hunt for a camper, van, or small RV for outreach.

Peers Victoria needs your help to buy a van to use as a mobile drop-in on Victoria's sex-work strolls. The van will be a friendly, welcoming space for sex workers who are working the sometimes cold and lonely strolls in the Government and Rock Bay areas, and will provide a home base on stroll for our late-night outreach team to welcome sex workers into the van for a conversation; a cup of hot coffee and a sandwich; access to condoms and other harm-reduction supplies; or maybe just to grab a pair of mitts to warm up a winter night. The van will also provide a safe, private space for workers to report violent encounters with customers to ensure the Peers "bad date" sheet is always up-to-date and useful for the region's sex workers.

We need \$25,000 to buy the van. We hope you will donate or even throw your own fundraising event for Rolls on Strolls to help us reach that goal before the winter sets in. All donations are tax-deductible.

More than 140 sex workers rely on Peers outreach services on stroll over

the course of a year, and on a typical night we connect with anywhere from 15 to 25 sex workers on stroll. Our late-night outreach team is out there every night of the week between 7-10:30 p.m., and that service is especially important as the weather starts to change and darkness settles in earlier. The connection we make with outdoor workers can be a lifeline for a vulnerable person desperately needing help with housing, health, reporting a crime, or just some hangout time with a non-judgmental team whose own life experiences inform everything we do. Those connections on stroll bring new people through the doors of our Esquimalt daytime drop-in, where sex workers can find everything from a hot lunch to business-training workshops, beauty days, and one-to-one support and referral.

Our crowdfunding campaign officially kicks off September 21 - and will be linked to our website www.safersexwork.ca -but you can donate now via cheque or Paypal now.

-Jody Paterson



Green Party candidates Elizabeth May (centre) and Jo-Ann Roberts (far right) visit Peers.



peers

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Donation type:

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

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

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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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