



INN CROWD

GO FIGURE! A BRIEF REVIEW OF GOOD TURNS

It's probably my primary school-teacher background, but I often think of Inn from the Cold as the "Little Engine That Could". Start with a pretty daunting task; turn on the steam; go like you can! What keeps us moving forward is the heart we put into the job.

True enough, it often seems there's a wind at our back. It may be felt in the sensitive and alert service of our coordinator and staff, or the extra care and sacrifice that volunteers bring to their work, or the responsive, renewed energy of board members. I sense it when a new person is introduced to our program. Almost always, they start smiling halfway through the conversation, and soon they are saying how glad they are that this work is going on. I recognize it in Tara's article about our guests' Christmas - once my eyes un-blur. I keep hearing it from grant-givers and other donors: "We are very happy to provide funding." "We love the work you do!" "Let us help you with the steps to lay out your proposal."

A skilled video student offers to take promotional photographs; a pest control company rids us of our mice; a computer tech person unscrambles our communications systems and techno mysteries - all at no charge. A work party gets everything spanking clean. Our landlord provides a freshly painted exterior and a new roof to our building. Agencies compliment our efforts with encouragement, guidance and thanks. It isn't one miracle. A whole coal car full of them propels our little train along!

CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

The Christmas Wish List group came to the shelter again this year to gather wishes from our guests, in the hopes that some wonderful "Secret Santas" would fulfill these wishes. It was a terrific project and I just wish the people who gave gifts to our guests could have been here to see the full impact of their generosity. One moment in particular really stuck out in my mind. This is Tabitha's story.

Christmas had come and gone and we had not seen Tabitha here at the shelter. I was storing her gifts in my office when she arrived one really wet evening. That night the snow was so slushy that my boots were soaked through just walking to my car in the parking lot! Tabitha arrived drenched to her knees and shivering. She had walked from Rutland and she only had a light coat. She sat down next to the intake desk, shivering. I told her that we had some gifts for her and gave her the bags. What she found inside warmed her heart, and her toes! She immediately took off her wet, freezing running shoes and put on a pair of new dry socks and her brand new boots! She was literally dancing around, so pleased with the comfort and warmth of the gifts. They could not have come at a better time. She then put on her new, clean, warm jacket which fit her perfectly! She was so thrilled! It was my favorite "Christmas Wish" moment.

Shelter and Volunteer Coordinator, Tara Tschritter

*Total number of safe, warm sleeps we have provided so far this season:
over 2840*

Men: 2468 Women: 372

*Over 70 volunteers trained - Total Number of Volunteers in our database:
Approximately 332*

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

After renos and fund-raising, we started this season with a special blend of faith, misgiving and enough guaranteed funding to get our shelter through December, maybe January. Thoughtful individual donations, combined with a very special Christmas present from BC Housing, gave the oomph to get our straining little train over the summit. Service Canada and our private benefactor promise to get us well down the track into next year. For now, we're heading to March and fair weather!

More than ever, through our shelter, we have been able to provide real service to people who are living on the street, and Inn Home Support will continue to give support to persons at risk of homelessness throughout the year. Meanwhile, our coordinator Tara, our board and interested volunteers prepare for the future twists and turns and new vistas on the horizon.

We may all have our private convictions as to why this happens: that we care a lot, that we give of ourselves, that there is special chemistry in our mix, that we remain humble, that we recognize ourselves in "the other", that good attracts good, that Kelowna really is a concerned community, that we are blessed by the Spirit, that we change lives by how we live... Keep it coming!

Peggy Salaberry, Operations Manager

Guest Feedback: "I've suffered through physical and mental health issues for most of my adult life. I've been either living on the street or in sub-standard housing... but here we can live safely and most importantly, peacefully."

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS?

Here at Inn from the Cold - Kelowna we are always working toward our vision: a community where no person is homeless. While we often build relationships with our guests in the evenings, Community Consultation offers us the opportunity for our staff to connect with our guests one-on-one during daytime appointments. At these appointments we speak with guests about their situation and their current community connections, and help direct them to the appropriate community resources. We are also able to help with housing resources for those guests who are ready for that step. This program is not intended to duplicate existing community resources; it is a consultation process, not outreach. So far it has been very positive. One guest has gone to Drug and Alcohol treatment, one guest has begun working with E.I. on a retraining plan, one guest found housing and two other guests have connected with the appropriate community agency to help them move forward. Other guests are continuing to come back to us for support and encouragement to help them follow through with difficult, life-changing choices. We are so pleased with our new ability to serve our guests further.

Mark Your Calendars! Volunteer Appreciation/Guest Celebration: March 21 from 12 - 2:30 and our Annual General Meeting: May 6th. 7pm



Proud Canadian and IFTC Inn Home Support client, Sharon, gets into the Olympic spirit!

INN HOME SUPPORT ADVOCATES NEEDED

The Inn Home Support program is person-to-person support to help people who are formerly homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Advocates are a special group of trained volunteers who are carefully matched with clients, taking into account the interests, skills, and needs of each person involved. Advocates may perform a variety of services, such as offering a listening ear, assisting with grocery shopping or a trip to the food bank, negotiating a lease with a landlord, helping with filling out forms or budgeting, delivering a food hamper, accompanying a client on a visit to the doctor, and much more.

We will be holding a new advocates training session on March 18th from 4 to 7pm. Please contact Tara Tschritter at (250) 448-6403 if you are interested in becoming an Inn Home Support Advocate.

Guest Feedback: "The people who come through this door to help, with love and understanding, have enlightened me!"

CHRISTMAS DAY AT THE INN

This year I was lucky enough to experience again the feeling I had as a child on Christmas morning. I woke up with a sense of excitement and anticipation. I didn't know what the day would bring but I was excited to find out! I thought immediately of our guests at Inn from the Cold and hoped so much that our Christmas Day surprise brought comfort and some relief on this special day. As many of our volunteers know, one of the hardest jobs to do at the shelter is waking our guests and escorting them back out into the cold and darkness, far too early in the morning. The guests were not yet aware, but we arranged for an entire day of Christmas warmth and food and comfort - and no early wake up! My volunteer shift was not until 3:00 so I had many hours to wonder and imagine how things were playing out at our first full day at the Inn. When I arrived I was greeted by familiar faces and the smell of fresh baking. Guests were doing a variety of things, playing cards, chatting with volunteers and one another, relaxing on their mats and watching a film. People truly appreciated the day. The morning volunteers

served up a giant breakfast the likes of which were talked about for weeks! A sense of community could easily be felt. As I started to tidy up the mats, volunteers and guests alike pitched in. The young guys goofed around, the old guys sat around holding their full bellies. A few of the women looked especially pretty thanks to makeovers they had received earlier in the day. It struck me that this "family" was not so unlike any other, enjoying their time together on a day meant for just that. As the day drew to a close, friends gathered their belongings and set out walking together to the Parkinson Rec Centre Christmas Dinner, waving and promising to return to the Inn for the evening. It was a very special Christmas, one I will remember for a long time to come. Thank you to all of the volunteers who came and shared their Christmas with us all!

Shelter and Volunteer Coordinator, Tara Tschritter