



# *In Limine*

## THRESHOLD HOUSING SOCIETY: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

### Interview with a Board Member

When Richard Couch became a Board Member in January 2007, little did he know he'd become the President by May 2008.

It was the outgoing President, Frank Thoresen, who initially drew Mr. Couch to Threshold Housing Society (THS).

"He was the fire chief and I was the deputy chief. I knew the good and excellent work he was doing," Richard said in a recent interview.

As a career firefighter and chief, he remembers going to first responder calls and "seeing youth on the streets with nowhere to go."

As Richard's retirement approached, he wanted to do something to give back to his city. Supporting youth was the way to do that.

"The community of Victoria has been very good to me," he said.

After attending his first Board meeting in the fall of 2006, Richard found a welcoming, diverse array of Directors who displayed a striking "unity of purpose". That positive energy was foundational to the establishment and continuing success of THS.

Richard said he believes in "jumping

in with both feet" when making a commitment.

"Your heart has to be in it."

Taking on a leadership role has so far been a great learning experience for the new President. He has become more closely acquainted with the key players serving youth on Vancouver Island, such as other social agencies, community networks, and the BC Ministry for Children and Family Development.

"You really have to get to know who your directors and employees are. I have a better sense holistically of the organization," Richard said. "(I'm) accountable for the organizational goals that were set out."

Those goals involve working on branding THS so it becomes more of a familiar name. Another important purpose is raising awareness about the organization and its purposes.

Richard also said the key foundation for the Society's success is to expand the semi-independent transitional housing program to include more locations in Victoria and on Vancouver Island.

One of the greatest challenges to the

mandate of THS is money.

"Financially, we need to be sounder," Richard said. "We are still fiscally challenged every year."

He works closely with the Executive Director, Marion Little (see back page), and the Treasurer, Bob Porter, to improve the Society's financial position and to oversee general operations.

While Richard devotes much of his energy to advancing the causes of THS, he does take time off.

Aside from spending time with his wife, Joanne, and his two grown children, he stays active by bicycling, walking, golfing, and working out. He and Joanne have a passion for travelling and have visited many parts of the world.

Richard is also the Vice President of Mariner's Landing Strata Council, where he recently moved.

His dedication to helping the community is evident when he talks about the current housing crunch. Being the President of the Board of Directors gives Richard a chance to help improve the situation.

"The role THS plays in the community is very important . . . There's a real challenge for youth to find safe housing," he said.

"It's rewarding work. We're very pleased with the employees who are dedicated to their jobs, and also with the Executive Director (Marion Little) who is passionate and professional."

— Penelope Hagan-Braun

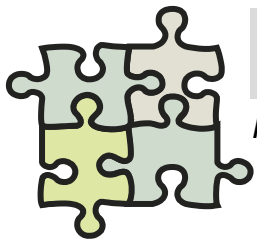
Do you know what the name of this newsletter means in English?

**In Limine** means "on the threshold". It is a term commonly used by lawyers to indicate that certain evidence may or may not be introduced to the jury in a trial.

Our youth are making life decisions that similarly may or may not serve them in the future.

We use **In Limine** to describe the often awkward, in-between times that inspire transformation from one stage into the next.





# A Tale of Two Jobs

*Relief Supervisor Jessica Pankhurst offers a perspective on working with challenged youth*

I have had the pleasure of working for Threshold Housing Society for a year now. This is my casual job, meaning I just come in and cover off shifts when regular staff has a need to have them filled.

My full time job is assisting Mr. K, a youth with Spastic Cerebral Palsy. He is twenty years old, legally blind, and has the use of one arm and hand. His day begins when I arrive there to assist him in everyday aspects of life we without a disability take for granted.

I get him up and showered, shave him, brush his teeth, dress him and place him in his power chair for the day. I make his meals and cut them up for him so he doesn't choke when he eats them with the only hand that is capable of holding a spoon.

Some of the only things this youth is capable of doing for himself is feeding himself, driving his power chair, and using his new found voice to advocate for his needs and wants as well as his

thoughts and feelings. I do all the rest.

I am required to be supportive in both my jobs. So when Mr. K, and I were sitting having breakfast the other morning, he asked me what is the same with both my jobs.

I had to stop and think for a moment. I explained to him that I am there to lend an ear and support for youth that don't have the support he has from his parents and the rest of his team.

He then asked if any of them were in a chair like he was. I replied, 'No, they're all capable of looking after themselves without the same amount of assistance that you require'. Kind of a blunt statement for a youth who can't count the surgeries he's had so that he doesn't bleed in his brain, is able to sit up like the rest of us, or so his 'bad hand' — as he calls it — will open to hold something.

Mr. K knows no different. He's had the same amount of support his whole life. He of course took this all in stride, smiled, and said, 'Do they have a team like I do?'

I said, "Well yes, but not as caring as a team as you do. They are a number to most people, just another youth or young adult for the government to look after".

Mr. K knows he is on PWD, so he knows he too is just another number to whoever his case worker is. This is when he spoke such wise words without even knowing what an impact they had on me.

Mr. K said, "Well, I guess we are both lucky and the same then." I asked him what he meant. He replied, "Well, they have more independence then I do, but I have more support than they do, and at the same time we both kind of got the short end of the stick."

What a statement for one youth to make about another, knowing we all need support. So in comparing the two jobs with one another, there isn't much difference between the two. I am required to nurture and encourage growth as a person, no matter what the obstacles might be.

— Jessica Pankhurst

## Funding Needs at THS

*These are some good ideas for helping to raise money for the work we do!*

1. Request Threshold as an annual designated charity for your workplace or church
2. Purchase cleaning supplies at "The Soap Exchange" – 10% goes to THS on request
3. Consider sponsoring staff attendance at a professional development event.
4. Consider supporting our general operating costs

### DONOR INFORMATION

First Name:	Last Name:	
Street Address:	City:	Postal Code:
Day-time phone:	E-mail:	
Funding designation:		

### HONOREE INFORMATION - *We will send a gift card on your behalf for each donation.*

First Name:	Last Name:	
Street Address:	City:	Postal Code:

## Christmas is Coming!

### Our Wish List

Two sturdy picnic tables

Art supplies

Punching bag, including hardware to hang it up

Pots and Pans  
( no used Teflon, please )

Monetary donations

Good quality books

# New Staff Members at Mitchell & Holly Houses



Welcome to Graham Kelly, the new supervisor at our boys' house. Graham comes to Threshold after completing a youth outreach contract with the Capital Families Association.

He offers his broad experience with Restorative Justice youth mentorship programs and the Power of Hope's residential arts, music, and social justice youth programs.

After studying in Journalism and working in television, Graham decided to travel the world. He came back renewed and reinvigorated ready to speak with rhythm and story. He found that those who listened most closely were the young.

Over time, Graham developed many ways to help youth find their own means of expression, using visions, voices, and imaginations.

When his young friends started to speak about the things that troubled them, he tried to do his best to help them through. Now he hopes to be with them in every step of their young lives.

— *Graham Kelly, Penelope Hagan-Braun*



Welcome to Holly Winter, the new supervisor at our girls' house. Holly comes to Threshold with extensive experience working in residential youth programs. She has also provided level 3 foster care to over 200 adolescents over the last 20 years.

Holly came to Victoria from the Yukon in 2001 to study Child and Youth Care at University of Victoria. She is currently completing her MA in Counselling Psychology. Her goal is to become a Registered Clinical Counsellor.

Holly and her 13-year-old dog, Chester, bring a spontaneous warmth to the girls' house.

"The name of the house drew me, and the scope of possibilities within the position. I really like Marion's vision of caring," says Holly.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Executive Director Marion Little, and the other staff members at Mitchell House and Holly House, we'd like to give our best wishes to these new full-time supervisors, as well as to Rick Sandberg, the new weekend supervisor at Mitchell House. Threshold Housing Society will benefit from your expertise, compassion, and commitment to youth.

— *Penelope Hagan-Braun, Marion Little*

**THRESHOLD HOUSING SOCIETY** would like to thank the following people and organisations for their help during our garden renovation project:

- \* Staff, Board Members, and Volunteers
- \* Plant donors
- \* Victoria Master Gardeners (Loredana Simpson & Carole Richer)
- \* Saanich GardenWorks [www.gardenworks.ca](http://www.gardenworks.ca)
- \* Urban Oasis on Quadra [www.urbanoasisgardening.net](http://www.urbanoasisgardening.net)
- \* Saanich Tuf Turf [www.tufturf.ca](http://www.tufturf.ca)
- \* Victoria Landscape-Gravel Mart
- \* Green Earth Landscapes [www.greenearthlandscapes.ca](http://www.greenearthlandscapes.ca)

Without you, we couldn't have made it happen! Your efforts and commitment ensure the continuation of our services to the youth in our community, as well as making their homes beautiful and comfortable.

## Give Friends & Family a Piece of Threshold for Christmas

Please select a gift to be given in honour of a friend or family member, and mail the form along with your cheque to: Threshold Housing Society c/o 900 Vancouver St., Victoria BC, V8V 3V7

- o \$30 To stock the emergency food bank in 1 house for 1 month.
- o \$50 Towards the purchase of books or art supplies for a household.
- o \$75 For a house meeting meal, to celebrate a birthday or A.A. anniversary, or provide a seasonal feast.
- o \$100 To purchase quilt materials (handmade by Threshold Quilters & gifted to youth on departure).
- o \$130 To purchase a welcome package (pillow, sheets, duvet, & towels).
- o \$160 To cover household cleaning, maintenance, & supplies for a month.
- o \$200 To support monthly arts, culture, recreation & social responsibility programs for 1 household.
- o \$300 Towards staffing (ex: mediation, mentorship, program facilitation, community building...)
- o \$\_\_\_\_\_ personally selected amount to be used where it is most needed.



# Notes from the Executive Director

Hello Dear Friends,

I am reflecting with some amazement on the months since our winter 2008 newsletter.

While carrying a deficit for several years, Threshold has tenaciously continued to provide quality youth housing even as it has teetered on the edge of financial collapse. This summer, we came frighteningly close to making hard decisions about whether or not we could continue operating.

In August, after a year of negotiations, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) agreed to an increase that will bridge our longstanding funding gap. I think the board and staff heaved a collective sigh of relief when we realized that we would be able to continue providing our much needed service. Your donations are a central part of our ongoing stability.

The fact that Threshold has continuously housed youth over the past 15 years, despite significant financial struggles, is a tribute to the perseverance, care, and hope, of many dedicated individuals. I deeply

appreciate the steady hard-work of staff, volunteers, board members and donors, who have carried forward this critical housing service for youth on Vancouver Island.

This summer we were also offered two houses and the possibility to double our housing capacity. With a 14-day deadline before us, a business plan was drawn up, funders were contacted, and youth service providers were consulted.

In the end, we were able to secure start-up costs for three months, and chose to hold off on expansion until we could ensure a year's worth of operational funding. Now that our current program is more stable, excitement is building around the possibility to increase youth housing options.

Each house costs approximately \$130,000 per year for staffing, maintenance, programs, and monthly lease (assuming a \$3000/month lease). According to current Canadian data, each person living on our streets costs between \$65,000 and \$75,000 per year in policing, emergency response, and public works. It costs Threshold approximately \$35,000 per person, per year, to intervene, provide stable housing, daily mentorship, encouragement, and access to arts and recreation opportunities. That investment sees youth find work, complete high school, attend college, begin to dream about the future and graduate into independence.

This past spring The Child and Family Counseling Association (CAFCA) and Threshold commissioned the Community Council to undertake a youth housing

research project (see <http://www.communitycouncil.ca/resources.php>). Our preliminary research shows conservative estimates of over 500 people aged 13-24 who need stable housing in the Greater Victoria region.

As a community, we must decide how we want to invest our resources, and whether we want the return to be increased distress for all of us, or increased social stability. Together we can accomplish whatever goal we set. I look forward to working with you to house our youth.

Marion Little, Executive Director



Decorated door: the beginning of a new series of art projects happening at the houses.

*In Limine* is edited by  
Penelope Hagan-Braun

THS is a registered Canadian Non-Profit Charity.  
**Your support is appreciated and will go directly towards housing and serving youth on Vancouver Island.**

*Opportunities to contribute include:*

Become a regular financial sponsor

Become a mentor

Volunteer your energy and ideas

Include us in your prayers and good wishes

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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