

December 4, 2017

City helps fund new indoor location for Grassroots Kind Hearts Society dinner program

After a months-long search the Grassroots Kind Hearts Society has found a new, indoor location for their dinner program, thanks to the Radiant Life Church – and the City will pay for costs associated with additional use of the building during evening hours.

Beginning as soon as possible, dinner will be served for people in need seven days a week at the church's downtown location on Cypress Street.

“Since spring 2016, the City has been supporting this important social program by providing secure access next to the downtown fire hall as well as portable washroom facilities and waste services. During this time, the City has continued to explore possible options for a dinner program location with Island Health and a number of local social service providers and arranged meetings with other agencies to help the society find a more suitable location,” says Mayor Andy Adams. *“With colder, wetter weather, the move to a well-equipped indoor location will be most welcome for the people who come for meals as well as for the people setting up and serving dinner. We appreciate the cooperative agreement that sees Grassroots Kind Hearts supplying meal service, Radiant Life Church providing an indoor location and the City covering costs of using the building.”*

The agreement for use of the building will run until the end of April 2018 and includes access to a washroom. The City will cover costs up to \$10,000 over five months.

Led by founding director Krisandra Rufus, the Grassroots Kind Hearts dinner program has been serving meals to people in need since spring 2015. During the winter of 2015-16, the society had temporary access to serve dinner from the Radiant Life Church.

“This year has seen the addition of several social services through different agencies,” says city manager Deborah Sargent. *“Council receives regular reports on the success of support services at the downtown sobering assessment centre from Vancouver Island Mental Health Society. Since that facility opened this summer, several people have opted to use services to address substance abuse, addiction and mental health concerns.”*

Shelter from extreme weather for the 2017-18 winter season is being offered by the Salvation Army. Transportation from downtown and six temporary emergency shelter beds have been available since November 1 to keep people warm and dry overnight at the all-year shelter run by the Salvation Army. The expanded service at the Evergreen location is funded through BC Housing, and will provide additional staff to support this service.

“The City sincerely appreciates the continued support of BC Housing to support this necessary service for safeguarding the health and welfare of the vulnerable members of our community,” Sargent adds. *“Although the City is not mandated or resourced to manage these types of social services, we want to ensure that all of the programs are integrated in our community in the most suitable manner possible, and we have requested that the Salvation Army and BC Housing establish a good neighbour agreement related to these services.”*

In partnership with BC Housing, the Salvation Army's operates a year-round shelter with 22 beds as well as showers, laundry facilities, clothing, and approximately 5,000 home-cooked meals per year. The additional temporary emergency shelter beds will be available until March 31.

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