

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Society goes the extra mile to help in fighting addiction

The Victoria Hope Society is making a difference for people with addictions.

The non-profit group, formed in 2003 as a successor to the former Dallas Society, is calling for applications to its annual community grants program — designed to fund projects that deal with addictions like substance abuse and gambling.

Addiction programs were at the heart of the Dallas Society's mandate before its services were amalgamated with Vancouver Island Health Authority programs.

Katherine Cook, the Victoria Hope Society grants administrator, said last year's funding recipients were an impressive bunch.

"There were two to do with youth and others to do with women and addictions. We're open to the whole



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gamut, and the purpose of the funding is really to stimulate innovative activity at the grassroots community level."

The money for the grants program, now in its second year, comes from donations and investments accumulated by the Dallas Society during its 30-year history. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 and are spread over six to 12 months.

"The members of the board of Victoria Hope Society are former board members for the Dallas Society," Cook said. "They had assets left so they re-incorporated as the Victoria Hope Society to use those funds for the benefit of issues to do with addiction prevention."

Cook said the grants are provided to acknowledge important work across the region.

"There's a lot of good work being done on a smaller scale," she said. "It's encouraging. There's so much discouraging news at the moment about addictions and mental health and homelessness and that whole cluster of issues, and it's really encouraging for people to realize all the creative work that's happening in Victoria, as well.

"We're hoping that we'll interest people we may not know about in the community who are also doing very creative work to apply and be supported by the Victoria Hope Society."

Here are the four projects funded by the society last year:

- Volunteer Victoria — Youth Volunteer Connections brings marginalized or at-risk youth together to take on volunteer tasks in a supportive setting to keep them away from substance abuse and other behaviours.

- The Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre — The Seeking Safety project addresses the related issues of substance abuse and post-traumatic stress from sexual violence. The project provides counselling services to women and has been "very effective," said the centre's Tracy Lubick. She said funding that came from VIHA, also allowed for two counsellors to be involved.

"The Women's Sexual Assault Centre is really very innovative in terms of a problem that hadn't been dealt with," Cook said. "Based on research, they've come up with a very effective way of treating it."



Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre counsellor Linda Jennings, left, and Tracy Lubick, the centre's resource development officer, are pictured at the entrance to a room used for group counselling. *Ray Smith/Times Colonist*

Lubick said the project had been piloted and showed great promise, but funding had to be obtained.

"The Victoria Hope Society has been very supportive," she said.

- The Prostitute Education and Empowerment Society started a pair of weekly drop-ins for women on the street, held at Streetlink and Sandy Merriman House. The sessions were created as an interim step between the streets and more involved programs for sex workers seeking to improve their lives.

- YM/YWCA — Bridging the Gap. The Y program combined with Theatreworks Victoria to develop *Meth: Iron*

Fist. The interactive theatre productions feature stop-action, where the youth actors pause and ask audience members to come up on the stage and take on a role.

"The play has been written by kids who have had some involvement with crystal meth," Grant said.

Projects have to start by Sept. 1 of this year to be considered for 2007 grants.

The deadline for applications is Feb. 28. For complete details on the application process, send an e-mail to victoria-hopesociety@gmail.com or call 598-6619.

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