

Autumn 2015

FIRST

First Things First



Meet Terry.

Terry Charlie first walked through the big blue doors of First United five years ago. A committed father of two, he was left with an impossible decision when he and his live-in partner broke up. "I couldn't afford my own place and also help out with the kids, so I came to stay at the shelter," explains Terry.

At First United, Terry was connected with a legal advocate who helped him get identification and successfully apply for social assistance. Shelter staff connected him to the Carnegie Outreach team, who helped him find permanent housing. Terry now lives in a SRO run by a non-profit in the neighbourhood, but still comes by First United most mornings to enjoy a cup of coffee and stay connected.

[Read more inside...](#)

A time for gratitude...

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on all we are grateful for. I am thankful and honoured to join First United and return to work in the Downtown Eastside. Since I first came to this neighborhood 20 years ago, I have always known in my heart that this is where I belong.

At Thanksgiving, we gather with our loved ones and reflect on our blessings. But for some, the struggles of life separate them from those they love. Complex socioeconomic factors limit their opportunities and options. Hope feels out of grasp. At First United, we work every day to bring hope into reach.

First United is here for all who are struggling. To provide a place of care, love and belonging. To create opportunities for a better life. To make hope possible.

First United's long legacy of service is made possible thanks to the generosity of our committed and diverse donors. Thank you for your ongoing support. It truly makes all the difference.

I am inspired every day by the resilience of the Downtown Eastside. It is a privilege to work in support of this community, and to be welcomed so warmly into the First United fold. Thank you all for being a part of this project of hope.



**Executive Director
Genesa Greening**

...and a time for reflection.

"I arise today... Blessed by all things; wings of breath, delight of eyes, wonder of whisper, intimacy of touch, eternity of soul, urgency of thought, miracle of health, embrace of God."

John O'Donohue

I love this quote from John O'Donohue. His wisdom is always grounded within blessing; a gratitude for all of creation, thankfulness for the flowing Spirit and the complete joy of being.

This time of year gently reminds us to practice gratitude. I encourage you to make it a daily practice. Gratitude feeds the soul. It changes your perception and connects you to the eternal wisdom. It reminds us all to celebrate our community's triumphs, however humble they may feel.

Thank you for being a part of First United and joining in the celebration of all that is precious in the Downtown Eastside.



**Community Minister
Sally McShane**

Continued from front: Giving back

Terry is committed to giving back. “I started volunteering about 8 months after I moved out of the shelter,” he says. “I enjoy it. I meet a lot of interesting people.” Terry also works a couple paid shifts each month in the kitchen, helping out the chefs and volunteers in whatever areas they need help.



Terry and Andrew enjoy a laugh after a shift in the kitchen.

“Volunteers from the community are an important part of what makes First United so special,” says Program Manager Keely Hale. “Every day, people from the Downtown Eastside community – many of whom actively rely on our services every day – come to volunteer. It really shows the generous spirit of this community.”

Terry says it’s the people that keep him coming back to volunteer at First United. “The staff are really good,” he says. “They offer encouragement, and are always there to point you in the right direction.”

Thanksgiving: A feast of gratitude

Thanksgiving is just around the corner and our chefs are getting ready to serve a hearty meal for up to 250 people. That means we cook up to 50 turkeys and over 200 lbs of yams!

Thanksgiving dinner is a community affair at First United. We depend on local businesses, faith groups and individuals to provide funding and donate turkeys, vegetables and other supplies to help make the meal special.

If you would like to help make Thanksgiving a joyful feast with a financial or in-kind donation, please contact Natalie at 604-681-8365 ext 104 or nlanoville@firstunited.ca.

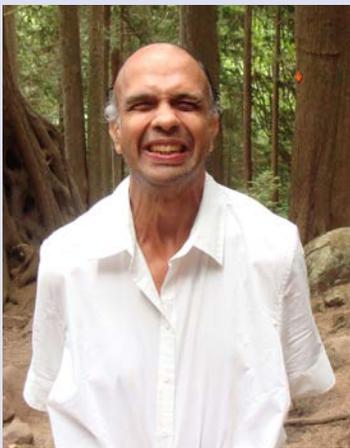


Getting away from it all in Deep Cove

First United community and staff had a fantastic mini-vacation to Deep Cove in August, thanks to the kind support of Mount Seymour United Church.

Getting outside the city for a day to enjoy canoeing, hiking and other outdoor activities was a welcome respite from the daily challenges of life in the Downtown Eastside. Thank you to everyone who made this annual outing possible!

Getting into nature is an important way First United supports the community. Next up, our local men's group is looking forward to a full weekend retreat to Camp Fircom on beautiful Gambier Island.



Community Needs

As the seasons change, people turn to First United for clothing and other basic essentials to help make life a little easier.

Please donate these vital items today by contacting Jerri at 604-700-7385 or jmorrisk@firstunited.ca

- Toiletries
- Lice shampoo
- Tampons & pads
- Casual clothes
- Underwear & socks
- Coats & jackets
- Blankets
- Kitchen supplies
- Coffee mugs
- Biodegradable cups & cutlery
- Groceries & canned goods

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