

April 10, 2008

## Vancouver Foundation targets youth homelessness

Vancouver Foundation today announced that it will focus on a new area -- youth homelessness - and has approved \$414,000 in initial funding for two programs that address this important issue.

Every day in Vancouver, 400-600 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are homeless, or at risk of being homeless. Last year, there were only 169 housing spaces in the city specifically designated for youth.

"Youth fall through the cracks in the system", says Faye Wightman, President and CEO of Vancouver Foundation. "They generally haven't had the support needed to transition successfully to adulthood, and often they're no longer eligible for the supports available to children. Many are dealing with issues related to sexuality, histories of government care, troubled home lives, and significant mental health and addiction issues. They need help to continue with schooling, to learn to live on their own and manage their finances, find and keep work, and develop employment skills."

Vancouver Foundation's Board, based on recommendations from the Foundation's new 13-member advisory committee on Youth Homelessness, approved \$414,000 for the first of many projects that will focus specifically on youth homelessness:

Pacific Community Resources Society - Broadway Youth Resource Centre  
\$114,000 to expand an existing pilot project that provides market rental housing to at-risk youth in Vancouver.

Central City Foundation  
\$300,000 contribution to a capital campaign of approximately \$6 million for The Crossing at Keremeos, which will provide 42 long-term residential treatment beds for young people aged 14-24 who are challenged by addiction. This is the first long-term residential treatment program for youth in BC.

Jake Kerr, Chairman of the Board for Vancouver Foundation, stressed that it was important to start with a defined population of interest for the Foundation's work. "Poverty and homelessness is a huge issue," says Kerr. "Starting with a piece of the problem -- with youth homelessness -- made sense because we already had established, strong relationships between the Foundation and key youth-serving organizations in the city, and our staff is involved in the Vancouver Youth Funders Committee. Also, focusing on youth has a significant element of homelessness prevention."

On April 8, results of the 2008 regional homelessness count were released. According to the report by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, there were almost 2,600 homeless individuals in the metro Vancouver region (an increase of 19 per cent over 2005).

Vancouver Foundation has a long history of granting in areas related to poverty and homelessness. In 2007, the Foundation formalized that interest when it identified poverty and homelessness as one of four strategic priority areas. As a result, the Foundation recently added homelessness to its other eight fields of interest, and established an expert advisory committee to help review grants.

Earlier this year, Vancouver Foundation awarded three other grants that are designed to tackle homelessness from other angles. It provided \$75,000 to Covenant House to help them expand their Crisis Shelter program; \$10,000 to help Metro Vancouver undertake the regional homelessness count; and \$40,000 to the City of Vancouver to fund a forum that will share learnings and identify next steps in addressing the needs of people with mental illness and addictions who experience homelessness.

*With more than 1,100 funds, and assets of almost \$800 million, Vancouver Foundation is Canada's largest community foundation, and one of the oldest in North America. In 2007, Vancouver Foundation, in partnership with our donors, distributed almost \$60 million to communities and innovative projects across British Columbia.*

For more information:

Barbara Grantham  
V-P Community Leadership, Vancouver Foundation  
604-688-2204