

SOS Community Impact

Fall 2023

Good comes from many small things

I met a new friend yesterday. To be honest, neither of us were looking to be friends when we were standing outside SOS early on a Wednesday afternoon. We were both waiting for the door to be unlocked and it was really awkward to ignore each other.

I think his name was Garth, but I'm not totally sure as he was slurring his words a bit. He was there with all his worldly goods, waiting patiently. I asked him what he knew about SOS, but it was pretty clear that he wasn't looking for a conversation with a complete stranger. Instead he told me that he really needed "help" and that someone had told him that he could find that help here. I told him that I was also looking for help, but that my needs weren't that urgent so I could wait.

Someone unlocked the door and Garth hustled inside. I thought

I would wait a while so that he wouldn't feel uncomfortable to have someone else around while he checked in with our front-line staff.

By the time I got up the stairs, Garth was seated in a chair and one of our wonderful staff was chatting with him. I don't know what was being said, but it looked like he was getting the help he thought he needed.

After I left the building I got to thinking that I had just witnessed one of the small things that makes SOS great. Look, I understand that there are many instances where big things change the world — just witness what Bill Gates is doing to eradicate malaria — but I honestly believe that great good can come from many small things, like how Garth was treated like a human being when he visited SOS. Even if we can't solve all his problems,



we can give some help when he really needs it, and probably give him some comfort that he doesn't get in his hard life on the streets.

We wouldn't be able to help Garth, or countless other people in Oceanside, without some of the small things that you do — donating to our Thrift Shop or shopping there, volunteering or supporting our programs.

So, on behalf of Garth (and I really hope that was his name now we have all met him), thanks for everything you do for us.

— Paul Ruffell, SOS Board Chair

SOS Learning Series events proving valuable

Keeping our community healthy and supported is very important to SOS. That's why we started our free Learning Series in 2022 as our gift to residents.

These seminars run quarterly at the SOS Community Services Centre in Parksville and provide useful and relevant information on a variety of topics.

So far we have covered legacy giving, how to cultivate a resilience practice, the importance of play and recreation

for young minds, and our most recent event in October focused on aging with purpose and grace. Registration for that event filled up quickly.

Attendees learned about brain and memory health, physical, emotional and social wellbeing, aging in place, Will planning, choosing Power of Attorney and Executor, planning for end of life, and leaving a legacy.

Sign up for our E-newsletter through our website or follow our



SOS Learning Series event in October.

social media pages to learn about the next event, and register early to reserve your seat!

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**Society of
Organized
Services**

Celebrating 55 years of SOS

It was a celebration to remember. To commemorate 55 years of meeting needs and improving lives in the community, SOS held a pair of Legacy Events on June 28 featuring renowned Canadian actor, musician, activist, and Companion of the Order of Canada, Tom Jackson.

"It exceeded our expectations," said SOS Executive Director Susanna Newton. "It was wonderful to hear the feedback from residents who share our vision of a strong and inclusive community."

The celebration took place at Berwick Parkville, the host sponsor, and began with a reception on the sixth floor Topside Lounge. Berwick staff served hors d'oeuvres and guests sipped beverages provided by Mount Arrowsmith Brewing and 40 Knots Winery. Emcee Don Dempson talked about SOS's history and



Tom Jackson greets guests at the SOS Legacy Reception on June 28.

thanked all the sponsors, including major sponsors Raymond James Qualicum Beach Branch, The Bay-side Oceanfront Resort and Windsor Plywood Foundation, along with numerous SOS Biz for Good partners.

Following the reception, guests enjoyed the sold-out Legacy Concert

held in the Berwick Theatre. Tom Jackson told stories and entertained on his guitar. A new film debuted, *Inspiring the Future*, sponsored by Kim Holl from Stories Told on Film, and glass artist Robert Held presented his Legacy Globes, which he sponsored as a fundraiser for SOS.

Thrift Shop marks 20 years at 188 Hirst Avenue

It was an even busier day than usual at SOS Thrift Shop on September 21 as the social enterprise celebrated 20 years at 188 Hirst Avenue and 55 years in the community.

"We're very proud of what the Thrift Shop has been able to accomplish and we're so grateful for the community support," said Thrift Shop Manager, Paulette Harcourt.

Customers enjoyed food and refreshments, live '60s themed music by Bob & CJ, and everyone had a chance to spin the wheel for discounts. SOS Thrift Shop has 37 staff members and an average of 44 volunteers per month. It is the main funder of all SOS's programs and services. If you have time available, we are looking for more volunteers!



Customers enjoy live music at the Thrift Shop Anniversary event.

Serving Meals On Wheels for 50 years

Early on, SOS founding members recognized there were residents who had trouble maintaining a healthy diet, so they started Meals On Wheels. From SOS's book, *Celebrating a Caring Community*, founding member and SOS President Pauline Touzeau had this to say after the first delivery in 1973:

"Many months of planning by Mrs. Margaret Rush and her committee, with many obstacles to overcome, resulted in hot meals being delivered to twenty-one recipients by six cars of volunteers on the first day."

Last year, the Meals On Wheels program provided 19,604 meals to an average of 115 clients each month.



SOS volunteers deliver thermal bags to Meals On Wheels clients to celebrate 50 years.

Expanding our reach and assistance

For years, SOS has been providing programs for children, youth, families and seniors that promote healthy social connections and combat isolation. In early 2023, a pilot project began to engage the missing middle age group, and it was named SOS XYZ Generations.

"We started this group to connect with local adults in the 25 to 55 age range, and provide something fun for them to do while helping to expand their social network," said Lissa Alexander, SOS Communications Manager. "It's also a great way to expand our reach, share information about SOS, and help people feel more connected to our community."

So far the group has hosted two events, a Throwback Thursday Game Night, and a Foraging Tour in Coombs. Plans are underway for quarterly events that will take place at SOS and around the community.

SOS also expanded its Family



SOS XYZ Generations group enjoys a Foraging Tour in Coombs hosted in partnership with SOS and Vancouver Island Foraging Tours.

Night program to include seniors this year. The new Intergenerational Family Night brings in local seniors to take part in activities with families and enjoy dinner provided by SOS.

"This new program aims to facilitate new relationships with our

older and younger generations," said SOS Child, Youth & Family Programs Manager, Alice Tulia. "We hope these new connections enrich both their lives."

For more information on programs, visit the SOS website, www.sosd69.com.

SOS Christmas program helps relieve stress

Last Christmas, Sharon was very worried thinking about what she would be able to provide for her children (her name has been changed to protect her identity).

When the single mom heard about the SOS Caring for Community at Christmas program, she felt a huge sense of relief. She was able to get gifts for her children at the SOS Toy Shop, and a grocery store gift card to buy food for the holidays.

"As a mom, it took a lot of stress off my plate," she said. "It put extra money in my pocket to give them things they needed for winter. The

cost of living is so expensive, so it definitely took a lot of stress away from me."

The SOS Christmas program is available to all District 69 residents who need extra support providing gifts for children, and putting food in the cupboards.

The program provides a special gift for children and youth so they can find something special under the tree Christmas morning, and families and individuals receive grocery store gift cards, so they can choose food that is important to them over the holidays. Registration



takes place at the SOS Community Services Centre in Parksville. Visit the SOS website for more information on registration, and ways to support the program.

Providing meaningful support at Christmas

For 50 years, Acera Insurance (formerly Megson FitzPatrick Insurance) has been working to improve the lives of their clients, team and community.

This year, the company made a donation to the SOS Caring for Community at Christmas program to help meet needs and spread joy to residents in the Parksville Qualicum Beach region.

As active community champions, Acera has supported numerous national, provincial and regional organizations that help to empower individuals who are often unfairly marginalized.

Genevieve Pinard, Community Engagement & Event Coordinator at Acera Insurance, said the company recognizes the challenges in accessing services and food due to the current economic climate, and by offering aid, they foster community growth. That's why she was excited to support SOS at Christmas.

"Having the chance to bring holiday joy to local families is incredibly meaningful to us," said Genevieve. "We believe that everyone, regardless of



their circumstances, should enjoy both essential needs and the magic of the season."

Acera Insurance's Nanaimo team actively engages the Nanaimo-Parksville area, demonstrating their commitment through time, talent and resources. For more information visit www.megsonfitzpatrick.com.

SOS CARING FOR COMMUNITY AT CHRISTMAS DONATION REPLY FORM

YES! I want to help struggling residents this Christmas. Here is my donation of:

☐ \$75 ☐ \$100

☐ \$150 ☐ \$ _____



Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Payment Options:

☐ Cheque (Please make cheque payable to Society of Organized Services.)

☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____

Expiry date ____ / ____ CVV code _____

Signature _____

Phone _____

Email _____

We value our donors' privacy and do not share our lists. Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more.



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