



## First Things First

### Fielding a Team of Hope

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*First Things First*  
is a quarterly News-  
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*If you would like to  
receive a monthly  
electronic News Up-  
date, please send  
an e-mail to  
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Strathcona United Football Club played its second game of the season on Saturday, September 19th and won 4-1. The emergence of this new team in Division 3 of the Metro Vancouver Soccer League is a source of delight for First United. Players range in age from 16-30 and are residents of Strathcona or the Downtown Eastside. Most of them are immigrants with the majority being from East and West Africa. A small percentage of the players are from Mexico. Almost all members of the team have lived lives of tragedy and trauma and are in Canada trying to make their way to a better future.



*Strathcona United in their new kit warming up before the game on September 19th*

One young man tells the story of having witnessed at the age of nine the rape and beating of his mother. At the age of seventeen, he found himself on a bridge ready to throw himself into the river having decided that death was better than the life he was leading. While he was standing there, he felt a tremor go through his body, and heard a voice in his head say, "You were made for more." First United agrees.

### Ongoing Support for Round-the-Clock Place of Refuge

"This place is my home" said John as he made himself comfortable on the floor. "I hope it's going to remain open" sighed Jenny from a few feet away. The good news for John and Jenny is that our ability to be open 7 days a week 23 hours a day has been given another boost. First United will continue to receive funding from BC Housing until April 1st 2010.

Last winter an average of 240 people slept in the building each night with some nights reaching a high of 350— providing a place to sleep and three meals a day to over 50 percent of the homeless population using the shelter system in Greater Vancouver. During the summer months our totals have averaged 150 people per night.

The funding received from BC Housing supplements our food budget and enables us to staff our evening and night shifts when we welcome people into our building, provide blankets, problem-solve, administer first aid and maintain the space as a clean, safe place to sleep. While generous, the funding from BC Housing does not provide for our day to day programmes. These ongoing operations are funded by the generosity of our supporters.

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## Support Our New Thrift Store ....

We welcome gently used and seasonally appropriate Men's and Women's Clothing, Jewelry and Accessories, Household Wares, Bric-a-Brac and Nick-Nacks, Vases, Dishware, Lamps Linens & Blankets, Seasonal Items – Halloween, Christmas, Valentines etc.



However, we have limited capacity to store and sort donations. Store Manager, Leona Bentz says with deep gratitude, “Some folk have been wonderfully helpful in keeping certain items at their homes and churches and only bringing things down when we need and have space for them — That makes a world of difference!”.

If you have goods you think we could use, please first call the office at 604-681-8365 to confirm our need and capacity. It will also help us ensure we can be available to receive donations at the front door of 340 East Hastings on Tuesday through Friday between 10a.m. and 2:30 p.m. (just three doors east of the Church) .

## Nursing Students Help Prepare for H1N1

We are very fortunate this Fall to be working with Dorothy Cumming, BCIT Instructor from the School of Health Sciences and Nursing students, Lisa Felker and James Duffy who are helping us prepare for a possible outbreak of the H1N1 virus. Lisa and James are working on a strategic plan to help us know how to deal with an outbreak of illness and are also gathering information so that we know how the vaccination of vulnerable people will be carried out by the health authorities. Lisa and James are at First United as part of an eight week practicum in their final term of their nursing studies.

## First United Partners with the City

Carrying everything you own with you from place to place increases the difficulty of living on the street. Having all of your belongings with you makes it hard to look for housing, to go shopping, to attend medical appointments, to use a washroom or to go to work. Most homeless people in the Downtown Eastside do not have a safe place to store their belongings. Blankets, clothes, mementos, books, toiletries and other supplies invaluable to someone without a place to call home are often hauled around in garbage bags or stored in shopping carts.

First United, in partnership with the City of Vancouver, will be running a six-month pilot project to provide a cart storage facility in the DTES. This project is part of the province’s Great Beginnings Project which celebrates the province’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary by providing funding to improve the physical environment of Vancouver’s urban areas and by creating low-threshold employment opportunities.

First United will be creating space in our underground parking garage to provide storage space for up to 30 shopping carts and 150 storage totes. The facility will be open 10 hours a day/seven days a week and manned by both staff and volunteers from the community. The project will provide an important research opportunity for both the City and First United to examine the feasibility of a year-round facility in the DTES.

## A Generous Heart is Not Always Enough

In July of this past summer, First United opened a small thrift store at 340 East Hastings, 3 doors east of the church and began to sell some of the clothing and household wares that we had received from our donors. Since that time, a number of people have expressed concern about this action trying to understand why First United would move into the used clothing business and why we had not simply continued as we had in the past to give free clothing to those in need in the community. The decision to open the store was one that we struggled with for over a year. Our decision was based on an assessment of the needs of the community and our challenge of meeting those needs in ways that increase the long-term physical and emotional health of the people with whom we work.

*Continued on Page 3*

## You Can Be the Difference...

There is always a need for volunteers! Whether it's weekly, biweekly or monthly we need your help with coffee time, thrift store and sorting of clothing, day programmes, advocacy office reception, foot washing, completion of income tax forms or the Christmas Card Programme, to name a few.

Volunteering is even possible without actually being in the building — by making sandwiches for our coffee time or completing income tax forms off site.

*Some Current areas where Volunteer Opportunities exist are:*

Thrift Store, Office, Coffee, Advocacy Reception, Dinner Service, Refuge, Storage, Signage, Kitchen and Foot Care. To learn more about volunteer opportunities please contact Marion Young, Volunteer Coordinator, at 604-681-8365 ex. 108 or [mcyoung@firstunited.ca](mailto:mcyoung@firstunited.ca) - or visit <http://www.firstunited.ca>

## A Generous Heart is Not Always Enough *(cont from p. 2)*

Those who are homeless are often in need of a change of clothing having nowhere to store their possessions or to wash the clothes they have. **First United remains committed to providing clothing for those with emergency needs.** We keep a store room stocked with emergency clothing from our donations and we are always interested in receiving jeans, t-shirts, fleece jackets, running shoes, new underwear and rain gear for those who do not have an income with which to buy what they need. Because those who are homeless have a limited ability to carry possessions with them and because we are aware that clothing is often sold on the street in exchange for drugs, we limit the amount of clothing any one individual receives. While unlimited access to donations might seem a good idea in theory, it creates a kind of dependence that doesn't do anyone any favours.

Although a large portion of the people who come to our building are homeless, not all are. We see many people on a daily basis who are poor, living on fixed incomes and renting social housing or SRO (single resident occupancy) hotels in the neighbourhood. Those who are able, work – doing odd jobs in the area like unloading containers at the docks, or doing short-term jobs on construction sites. Those who are not able to hold steady employment often volunteer at First United, or spend their days in our building in search of community and participating in activities at the Mission. Self-esteem is an important part of healthy living and that also holds true for those who live in this neighbourhood. The opportunity to earn or manage your money and to exercise the power of choice through being a Canadian consumer is a value shared across socio-economic differences. The thrift store provides low income people in this community with an opportunity to shop for what they need. The low prices means that everyone can participate. It also means that we are able to reach a broader range of people who need access to affordable clothing. Families, seniors, and other low income Strathcona and DTES residents who might not otherwise access our services now have a bright attractive store in which they can find what they need. Income generated from the store will provide us with the resources to increase our programming to those who are most needy in the community.

We are doing the best we can to meet the needs of those whom we are committed to serve. We thank you for your donations and your continuing support.

## We Always Need These Items .....

### Socks

### Toiletries

New toothbrushes and razors, toothpaste, dental floss, shampoo, lotion, hair conditioner, combs, shaving cream, sewing kits, deodorants, feminine hygiene products, laundry soap, shoelaces, safety pins

### Food items

Fresh fruit or produce, packaged or frozen meat, cereal or oatmeal, powdered milk, casseroles, canned salmon or tuna, instant rice or noodles, packaged macaroni and cheese, pasta and pasta sauces, canned chili, peanut butter, coffee, pork & beans, crackers, soup

### One Zone Bus Tickets

### Containers

empty prescription bottles  
Clean plastic bags

### Household items

Limited to mugs, dinner plates, forks, spoons, bath size towels and blankets

### Books

If you have any questions about donations please contact our office at 604-681-8365 extension 0

## First United Thrift Store

340 East Hastings

Hours:

Mondays to Fridays  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

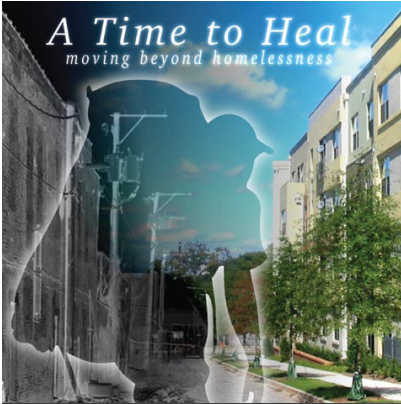
Deliveries:

Tuesdays to Saturdays  
10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Phone: (604) 569-1117

Store Manager:

Leona Bentz



**A Time to Heal**  
moving beyond homelessness

## Fund Raising in High Gear in the Fall

"A TIME TO HEAL" is the name of a CD being produced by First United and Laverne Gfroerer and Jacquie Forbes-Roberts. This collection of beautiful and inspired music is intended to raise awareness and contribute to the end of homelessness. The CD brings together the skills and talents of Canadian musicians, including inner city artists, both musical and graphic. "A Time to Heal" is an hour-long CD of compelling and uplifting vocal and instrumental music. Canadian composer Larry Nickel has created some arrangements specifically for this project and Pinchas Zukerman, Director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra and world renowned violinist plays the violin solo in Larry Nickel's "Come Unto Me".

"A TIME TO HEAL" will be launched on October 14th during Homelessness Week at a concert at St Andrew's Wesley United Church at 8pm. Many of the local musicians featured on the CD will be performing. Admission will be by donation. Be sure to mark your calendar!

THE SACRED MUSIC OF DUKE ELLINGTON - A Concert featuring Dee Daniels, The Fred Stride Jazz Orchestra, James Caddell, Troy McLaughlin and vocalists from the Phoenix Chamber Choir will be presented on Friday November 20, 8pm at St Andrews-Wesley United-Church. Tickets are selling fast. Make sure you don't miss the opportunity to be in the audience at this amazing concert! Call Nina Matthews, 604 681-8365 ext. 117 to reserve tickets.

PORRIDGE BREAKFASTS are currently being planned for late fall. In previous years they have proved to be a great way to gather friends and help raise funds for the work of First United at the same time. If you would like to find out more or would like to host one of these fund raising events, please contact Nina Matthews at 604-681-8365 ext 117.



Duke Ellington



Leoni Milano and Gavin Romanis raising money for First through tweetmyride



Tweetmyride is a Twitter-driven global charity campaign, created to raise money for 10 charities around the world. Vancouver-based Australian, Gavin Romanis will be participating in the international mountain bike race, La Ruta de los Conquistadores in Costa Rica from November 11-14, 2009 and raising money through the Tweetmyride campaign. First United is privileged to be among the 10 charities.

Please help us help them raise donations for us by asking friends and family to visit the website [www.tweetmyride.com](http://www.tweetmyride.com) and to follow their tweets at [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com).

## Inter-Faith Supporters Make Meals Possible

In addition to the wonderful people of the Christian church community who make meals possible at First United, there are some people from the Interfaith community who also participate in serving food. Among those groups is the Sikh community's Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen which provides a lunch once a month. The group brings music to share with the community and invites people to sit on carpets to share in a vegetarian meal.

Service is an important part of Sikhism. According to their website ([www.gurunaksfreekitchen.com](http://www.gurunaksfreekitchen.com)):

*"The practice of langar- the communal kitchen, and seva – the selfless service of humanity; (are) philosophies taught by our first Guru, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji many hundreds of years ago. For the Sikh community, this project is not missionary in nature, instead it is an opportunity for us to extend this true Sikh spirit of helping those in need regardless of caste, colour, creed, and economic status."*

We are grateful to the participants of the Sikh community who have chosen to live out their faith by sharing food with the community of First United Church Mission.