



a community at the margins

Celebrating 125 Years

## News Update

### Golf Fore the Homeless—a successful event

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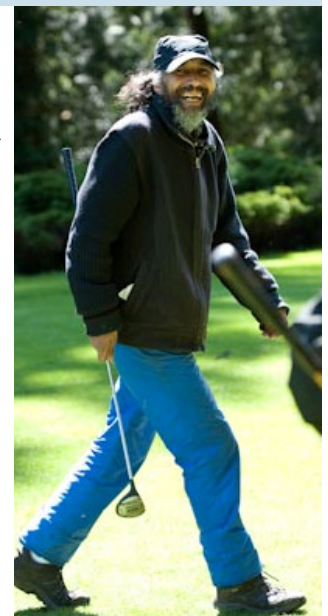
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A chilly wind did not deter 116 golfers who took part in First United “Golf Fore the Homeless” tournament on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. The third annual event with an increased number of players and some new innovations, raised an amount of over \$35,000.

Action shots of many of the golfers were captured by Noel MacDonald. A “beat-the-pro” contest at the 11<sup>th</sup> hole was hosted by golf pro Matthew Stansfield. Ann Thorsteinsson did a great job convincing golfers they needed mulligans to help their scores look more respectable. Thank you Noel, Matthew and Ann!

Bob Burrows, organizer and founder of the tournament said, “I was especially pleased with the good feeling that permeated the atmosphere in the dining room. People had enjoyed the golf, were enjoying the dinner and conversation and were pleased to hear from Ric Matthews the latest plans for First United Church.” The Fund Development team would like to thank all golfers, the sponsors, volunteers and the organizers for their part in making this event such a memorable occasion and a great fund raising success.



Jimmy Kinistino was among the golfers on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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### Thanks to our youngest player

A week after the golf tournament a corporate communications manager from a Vancouver company was in our offices to hear about the work of First United Church. Their CEO had come to work the day after the golf tournament, and with great excitement, he told her about the current realities at First United and about the plans for the future. He convinced her that their company could help make a difference. He happened to be a player at the golf tournament because his young son had seen an ad in the newspaper inviting golfers and had convinced his dad that they should both participate! Our sincere thanks go to Jack, our youngest player.



Robert Milton and Isabelle Pecqueur (above) before the Run/Walk for the Homeless event as part of the Vancouver Sun Run.

Members of the team that participated on May 9th (right)

## Run/Walk for the Homeless

First United's annual Fundraiser event was held on May 9<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Vancouver Sun Run. A team numbering more than 150 people were among the 51,000 Vancouver Sun Runners.

First United would like to extend thanks to all who joined in to raise awareness and funds for work in the Downtown Eastside. Robert Milton, community member who ran 10km in

an amazing 50 minutes said, "This community means a lot to me and I am happy to be able to help."

The Fund Development team is indebted to all walkers and runners for their participation and to Sugoi for donating red shirts and to the staff of the City of Vancouver, Haywood Securities and the Fairmont Hotel for joining us on this initiative.



*At First United everyone will be welcome. Names will be known and stories of pain and suffering will be heard and honoured.*

## Dealing with difficult people

There are occasions at First United when personalities clash and what begins as a straight-forward verbal altercation disintegrates into violence. Often these situations are fuelled by alcohol or drug use and/or may be the result of a mental illness that is not being adequately managed. When these situations occur, our host services staff do their best to de-escalate the tension before violence occurs. Sometimes a disruptive individual is asked to go for a walk until they cool down. Sometimes violence does occur. When those situations arise, we call Vancouver Police Department.

Some people have suggested that it might be easier to keep peace and order at First United if we refused to allow certain people in the building.

Although it would be simple to identify those individuals whose chronic behaviour is problematic and ban them from our building, we know that many of those people have already been banned from other agencies and institutions in the Downtown Eastside. As a result, **there is no place left for them to go.** While working hard with the police, the Downtown Eastside Community Court, Strathcona Mental Health and St. Paul's Hospital to come up with creative solutions, we remain committed to providing a place of welcome and belonging to the "least of these." We have learned from our experience that change can happen. At First United everyone will be welcome. Names will be known and stories of pain and suffering will be heard and honoured.



The completed mural painted by ChorBoogie, internationally acclaimed aerosol artist from San Francisco

## News Briefs

## Becoming One

In the early 1980's First United Church became actively involved in trying to stop evictions from hotels in the Downtown Eastside. As the tourist trade began to increase in Vancouver, loopholes in the Residential Tenancy Act permitted landlords to evict low-income residents and upgrade their facilities to attract incoming tourists. The result was that many people who had previously had accommodation were no longer able to afford to rent.

It soon became obvious to First United that something more concrete than words had to be employed to halt the acceleration of evictions and so First United decided to enter the non-market housing arena. With the permission of Vancouver-Burrard Presbytery, First United Church incorporated First United Church Housing

Society and after much work three buildings containing 189 units of social housing were created – two in the Downtown Eastside and one in Mount Pleasant.

While the Board of First United Church and the Board of First United Church Housing Society have operated separately over the years, in the past twelve months there has been an concerted effort to integrate the work of both organizations. Stephen Gray who had been the President of the Housing Society has been named Director of Housing. As movement toward redevelopment continues, we are looking to provide a range of housing which includes an integrated strategy for the Housing Society buildings and the housing that will be provided at 320 East Hastings.

## Community Voice Mail

First United is working with Lu'ma Native Housing Society to provide free voice mail to people who are homeless and/or phoneless in crisis and transition.

The Community Voice Mail program distributed by Lu'ma is providing 500 local phone numbers with voice mail to 25 service providers of housing, employment, healthcare and social services in Vancouver. Not only will

individuals be able to connect more effectively with places of employment, to health care providers and family, they will also receive broadcast announcements about job fairs, health and weather alerts, and shelter and food services in the community. First United will be receiving our first twenty telephone numbers in the coming weeks to be distributed by our team of community workers.

**Will Petrico**, a friend of First United from Winnipeg **has written a song called "Hope Lives Here"**. He was moved by the sense of community emerging at First United. We look forward to sharing this inspiring song with you in the coming months.

**A Time to Heal** CD's are still available. They can be purchased from the office or at [www.firstunited.ca](http://www.firstunited.ca)

**First United Reception needs** hotel-size bottles of shampoo and conditioner, small prescription bottles, and toothbrushes.

Join us on June 30th as we celebrate the **Thrift Store's First Anniversary!** Come and share coffee and cookies outside the store and check out the mini sale. *340 E. Hastings*

Mark your calendar for November 19th 2010! **Dee Daniels and Fred Stride and his Jazz Orchestra will again perform Duke Ellington's Sacred Music** together with Marcus Mosely, Alex Dugdale, and the Sacred Music Gospel Choir.

Bunk beds have replaced pews in the Sanctuary enabling 200 of the average 250 nightly sleepers to sleep on beds.



## You get right into the gritty real relationships

First United is the perfect atmosphere to satisfy your need to make a difference in your local area. Surrounded by like minded, encouraging, and creative people in a positive atmosphere fosters a community and bond that can never be taken away. As you step into the Church, the fog and fear of titles such as homeless or mentally disabled evaporate and you get right into the gritty real relationships that are essential for grassroots change. First United doesn't just bring food to people in need, it puts a face and story to the people our society has failed. I am so glad I have the

opportunity to be part of this movement and make change. *written by Max Stern*

I came to First United looking for 12 volunteer hours, and came out with a lot more. It is a place where labels are dropped at the door, and everyone feels accepted, including me. Each week I learn something new and interesting, and it is an environment that I love being in. *written by Kelsey Livingstone*

*Max and Kelsey are Vancouver high school students who volunteer every week at the Wednesday Evening Celebration.*

## A valuable experience

*For well over twenty years, First United has been providing advocacy services to people in the Downtown Eastside and the Lower Mainland. Our advocates, Stephen Gray, Susan Henry and Janet Berry, provide para-legal advice, help and representation to low-income people who need assistance with issues such as EI, WCB, CPP, welfare, housing, debt, identification, immigration and disability. They also provide emergency aid. In 2009 over 3300 appointments were made to see an advocate. In addition First United provides opportunities for social work and law students to gain valuable experience. A recent law graduate offered this description of a case she worked on while at First United.*

A First Nations woman came in with an Independent Assessment Process (IAP) form that she wanted me to help her fill out. I had never assisted anyone with this particular form, but expected it to be a fairly routine matter. It turned out to be closer to a book, than a form. It asked the applicant to describe in her own words the emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse suffered while attending residential schools. She described some terrible instances of emotional and sexual abuse that she had not told anyone about before. Over the course of a number of appointments, she ended up remembering abuse that she had forgotten after suffering a head injury more than a decade

previously. Remembering and describing these experiences was tremendously difficult to her and once she began crying and was too upset to continue. As I have no experience in counselling, or with talking to people about sexual abuse, I felt that she needed additional support. I looked into services available to survivors of sexual abuse at residential schools and found a First Nations counsellor and a lawyer who could represent her free of charge when she had a hearing to determine compensation for the abuse suffered. For some reason this woman trusted me, but had difficulty trusting other people, especially lawyers. I had to persuade her that the lawyer could provide better help than I could as he specialized in the Independent Assessment Process. She eventually gave me permission to talk to the lawyer on her behalf. I set up an appointment for her with the lawyer and accompanied her to the office. We were able to give him the IAP form with the descriptions of sexual abuse completed, so that she didn't have to talk about it again. I am proud to have connected her with an expert lawyer and a counsellor that she began seeing once a week. When I saw her after she was connected to these people, she seemed relieved, and told me that having the help dealing with it was like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders.