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What's in the Update:

- Developments around Building Initiatives
- Discussions with First Housing Society
- VST Course to be run at First in the Spring
- Fund Development News
- Advocate to teach at UBC
- Advisory Council initiated
- Wednesday Night Celebration Services
- More Face Time
- Centre for Community Living

The Fall News Update is a publication produced by the Ministry Leadership Team to keep you up to date on what's happening at First United. It will be distributed monthly by e-mail. If you would like to receive a regular News Update, please send an e-mail to nina.matthews@firstunited.ca.

News Update

October 2008

Building Developments

The emerging vision for the First United community has been outlined in the previous First Things First. Our challenge is to ensure that our physical facilities support that vision. To that end, we have two points of focus:

Long Term: The Board has appointed a sub-committee to explore how best to anchor that vision in physical facilities (what our building needs to provide). The committee is supported by Robert Brown and Heather Tremain from ReSource Rethinking Building, Michael Clague (previously Director of the Carnegie Centre) and Jim Cox (Executive Director of Van-

city Enterprises). Significant funding for this exploration stage has been provided by the BC Real Estate Foundation and Vancity Enterprises. An offer on the site next door to the church (the parking lot on Gore Ave) is open until the end of December. We have contracted Walter Francl Architects to do some initial design work – so as to be able to explore what the viable options might be.

Short term: In the meantime the existing building is being adjusted to support the immediate needs. The kitchen has two new ovens, courtesy of a generous donation from West Vancouver United Church.

The wash-up area has been separated from the cooking area and is now immediately adjacent to the kitchen. Programme staff will share a newly structured office downstairs right next door to the Kitchen area. This releases the previous office that they occupied upstairs to be used for general programme activities. The Literacy class has moved to the refurbished front classroom (the room previously used by WISH who have moved to their new premises). And finally, the small office at the Gore Ave entrance has been restructured to allow for an additional counselling/advocacy room.

Discussions with Housing Society

Significant discussions have been initiated to build closer ties between First United and the First United Housing Society. The Housing Society has three buildings – of which two are a couple of blocks from the church. Both Boards have expressed an interest in ensuring

alignment of strategy and synergy in our impact, use of resources and managing of costs. In particular, both have indicated a desire to ensure that some individuals should simultaneously be members of both Boards.

VST Course in the Spring

Ric and Sandra will be teaching a mandatory second year course for the M.Div degree from VST. The course in Pastoral Theology is to be taught at First United over 11 weeks starting in January 2009. Students will attend classes in the Downtown Eastside each Tuesday morning.

Advisory Council

Once a week a small group of people who live in the Downtown Eastside meet with Ric to offer advice and guidance. Don Collette participates as a facilitator while Ric focuses on content. This is a small but significant step towards building an intentional community. The Board is encouraging this group to send a representative to monthly Board meetings to inform our ongoing decision-making.

Wednesday Night Celebration Services

A regular Sunday afternoon or evening opportunity for learning will be launched early in 2009. The evening will offer a choice of different classes and workshops covering a range of interests: bible study, healthy relationships, interpersonal skills development, various creative or artistic or recreational activities. Please contact Ric if you are interested in sharing your passion and/or skill!

Fund Development News

Bob Burrows leads our work on ensuring we have the funds to do our work. He is supported by the Fund Development committee and by Nina Matthews. Using software such as 'Raisers Edge', Bob and Nina have begun to implement detailed strategies developed over recent months. Part of this strategy is to ask people for their email addresses so as to lower costs of postage – and to

enable us to send out monthly news updates at minimal cost. You are asked to let Nina have your email address by emailing her at nina.matthews@firstunited.ca. You are also asked to let her have any other email contacts on your own address lists to which we could direct information about developments and needs at First United.

Centre for Community Living

A regular Sunday afternoon or evening opportunity for learning will be launched early in 2009. The evening will offer a choice of different classes and workshops covering a range of interests: bible study, healthy relationships, interpersonal skills

Development, various creative or artistic or recreational activities. Please contact Ric if you are interested in sharing your passion and/or skill!

More Face Time

Most of the new initiatives are aimed at increasing direct contact and personal face to face interaction. Freed from clothing management and food preparation, community support workers will be able to be alongside individuals in new ways. Specific programmes will be directed to groups with common

needs. Staff will be conducting regular team reviews of how best we might support individuals who need special attention. In this way we will be better equipped to align our efforts and to develop team strategies for collective effort. We will also be making increasing use of volunteers who have skills in con-

Staff Initiatives

Two new informal groups have been initiated for staff. One group will focus on how to best manage change. The other is exploring what it means to be and to build an intentional community.

Advocate to teach at UBC

Susan Henry (an advocate on staff) will be teaching in the Law Faculty at UBC for three months. This provides an exciting opportunity for sharing learnings from the Downtown Eastside. It also allows us to expose law students to the issues and needs of this community. While Susan is at UBC she will be back-filled by Cheryl McKittrick courtesy of funding from UBC.

ducting 'pastoral conversations' and building ongoing relationships with individuals. Please do let us know if you have an interest in volunteering. We will provide additional training.

Edited by: Nina Matthews Co-ordinator, Fund Development and Communication
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