

# gratitude

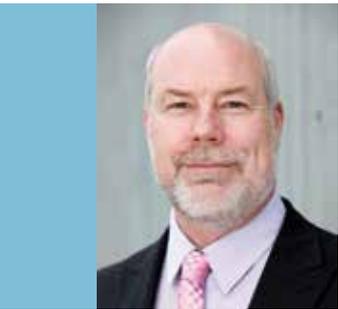
NOVEMBER 2012 UGM.ca

**A Song of Hope:  
John's story inside**



Feeding hope. Changing lives.

We thank Tech Web Direct for donating resources to print this full colour newsletter.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord among the nations. I will sing of You among the peoples. - Psalm 57:7

I was moved to share this verse with you because it reminds me of John, one of Union Gospel Mission's trained Outreach Workers, who blesses guests throughout the week with his music and worship to the Lord. After over 20 years battling with an addiction to alcohol and gambling, John found healing and health through UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery program. He now shares his story and music with UGM guests so they may find the peace and joy of recovery that has changed his life.

As you read John's story on page 4, you will see that his journey at UGM started with a hot meal and a night of shelter. The meals you provide – whether a special holiday meal, like our recent Thanksgiving dinner, or a daily breakfast, lunch, or dinner – not only physically feed those in need, they also feed hope and introduce people, like John, to opportunities that could change their lives.

With a full stomach, guests can think more clearly and engage with trained Outreach Workers who are available to listen and help by whatever means

possible, be it providing clean clothing and shelter for the night, or connecting someone with UGM's Alcohol and Drug Recovery program. A meal has potential to enliven and uplift those in need, giving them strength to take the first steps toward a life of health and wholeness, thus regaining their dignity.

Together we can help people take those first steps towards turning their lives around. This Christmas season, I hope you will partner with us as we serve meals to thousands of people living throughout Metro Vancouver. For just \$3.29, you can provide a meal that could help someone transform their life.

John, and every one of us at Union Gospel Mission are so thankful that you continue to reach out to those in need throughout the year. God's richest blessing to you and yours this Christmas season.

Sincerely,

William B. Mollard



A UGM guest enjoys a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, at this year's Thanksgiving dinner.

## Thanks to you, 3,060 guests had a joyful Thanksgiving!

A hot, turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, was served to every person who came through our doors at this year's Thanksgiving celebration on October 8th.

Guests gathered together at UGM's Vancouver facilities to enjoy a delicious meal, live music and a warm sense of community. For countless people, this meal represented a new beginning.

Skilled Outreach Workers connected with guests, listening to their stories and sharing information about UGM's transformational services, offering a tangible sense of hope. Alumni of UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery program also attended the meal to help guests feel welcome, chat with them over dinner, and make connections. There were many conversations about UGM's Alcohol & Drug Recovery programs and

Emergency Shelters - conversations which could be the starting point for someone turning their life around.

Delicious, home cooked Thanksgiving dinners were also served at UGM's facilities in New Westminister and Surrey, where guests connected with friends, family and caring staff members. By the end of the day 3,060 meals were served to individuals and families in need across Metro Vancouver.

The holidays can be a lonely and difficult time for many, but thanks to your outpouring of love, our guests left with a sense of family, and a reminder that they are cared for. Your compassion warmed hearts this Thanksgiving. ***Thank you for sharing so generously with those in need.***

## why i give

*We asked UGM donors: What inspires you to give? Here are just a few responses from our amazing community of supporters.*

**Sondra** | The many blessings God has given me - I try to pay it forward as best I can. We are all God's children and I hate to see suffering and need in others' lives.

**Alison** | Last night I spent hours trying to help an elderly man find shelter. He was confused, cold, and sick. Once we arrived at Union Gospel Mission, two kind staff members greeted us. I just feel very grateful to Union Gospel Mission for being there, not just to provide shelter but also kind words and respect.



# A SONG OF HOPE

Music always came naturally for John. At 10, he took an interest in learning guitar and started teaching himself songs by ear. However, like many adolescents, as he entered his teenage years, partying with friends took over as his top priority. By the time he turned 14, John knew he was starting to develop a drinking problem, which progressed well into his adulthood. He reflects, “At first, drinking gave me courage to be who I wanted to be, but after a while people started looking at me strangely for the things I did when I was drunk but couldn’t remember. Then the lying started, the conning, the manipulating, the excuses, the rationalizations, and the justification. I was living a lie, one day at a time.”

John worked as a manager in the lucrative hotel industry, which only fueled his addiction. “I led a high roller lifestyle. I used to start drinking at 4pm, and continued drinking till the end of my shift at 1am. My life before UGM was all about me, and all about money,” he remembers. Eventually, unable to juggle work, life, and his addiction to alcohol, John joined an Alcoholics Anonymous group and, after much hard work, recovered from his addiction to alcohol. Things were on

the mend, but then John got into gambling. He shares, “I was back into the same kind of lifestyle, I had just replaced drinking with something else. I had become addicted to gambling and as a result, lost my job. When you lose your job it’s hard to keep life rolling as planned.”

Struggling to make ends meet, while in between jobs, John ended up homeless and at his wits end. “I started to hear thoughts that the world would probably be a better place without me. Every waking moment, that thought was running through my mind, louder and louder as time went on,” he says. “That thought pattern is mental anguish at the highest level. If people asked me how I was doing, I’d just say, ‘I’m okay’. I was completely isolated in my addiction, in denial, and delusional about where I was at.”

John came to Union Gospel Mission for a hot meal, and was welcomed warmly by a trained Outreach Worker. “Out of the blue, a staff member came up to me and asked if I had a place to stay for the night. I said ‘no,’ and he arranged a place for me to stay in the shelter. Basically, my transition into a healthy, happy life started right then and there. I went

in for a meal, got a place to stay for the night, and then, while I was in the shelter, I made a decision to give recovery another shot.” With the support of UGM counsellors and staff, as well as his fellow recovery program participants, John was able to overcome his addictions, and nurture the things that mattered to him most, and it all started with a meal.

After several years clean and sober, John committed himself to the training and education necessary to become a UGM Outreach Worker so he could help others find the joy and healing that he’d sought for so long. “Every day I want to be there for somebody who is hurting, and needs a little hope. When I hear somebody say, ‘I’m okay,’ I pay special attention because I know that sometimes ‘I’m okay’ doesn’t really mean that at all.” Through his work at UGM, John discovered he has an ability to preach, teach, and share his story in a way that gives hope to the guests at UGM.

A few years ago, John rediscovered his love of music and realized it could be a powerful tool to bring peace and healing through his work. Now, at 7am most mornings throughout the week, John can be found

## I went in for a meal and made a decision to give recovery another shot.

leading UGM guests in music. “The music and worship starts to break down that outer shell, and says to people in a clear, gentle voice – You can find healing. You can find love. Amazing grace is kind of an anthem for me: once I was lost but now am found, once was blind, but now I see.”

Today, happily married to a beautiful woman, and with the recent arrival of a new baby girl, John continues to embrace the joys and challenges each day brings. “It’s amazing. Every day I wake up entering into uncharted territory. Life is a gift, recovery is a gift.” John has become an invaluable part of the UGM Outreach Team. His testimony and music continue to touch the hearts of those who are looking for a glimpse of hope, waiting for an invitation to turn their life around and embrace life, once again.



John shares his passion for music with UGM guests in The Cornerstone.

# Miracles Begin With a Meal

On December 8th, thousands of men, women and children will come to UGM for our 72nd annual Christmas Dinner. It’s a hearty, holiday feast that will nourish bodies, warm hearts and uplift the spirits of those most in need.

We invite you to invest in this tradition of caring by providing a hot Christmas dinner which could be the starting point for someone’s life transformation. Hosted by friendly volunteers and trained Outreach Workers, guests are welcomed into a festive, homey environment where they can enjoy a delicious meal and learn more about UGM’s life changing programs, from Alcohol & Drug Recovery, to Education & Employment services, or Affordable Housing.

Ultimately, it’s the beginning of a journey to health and wholeness that wouldn’t be possible without you.

Your \$3.29 can change a life this Christmas.

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY AT [UGM.CA](http://UGM.CA)



## HEARTS FOR THE CITY

Help maximize the impact of your gift today by becoming a *Hearts for the City* monthly donor.

Automatic monthly giving is safe and easy. It eliminates the need to write cheques, purchase stamps, or find a mailbox. It also helps UGM reduce the mail we send, our environmental footprint, and our administrative efforts, which means more resources are available to help those in need.

Please consider joining us as a monthly donor to create lasting solutions to poverty, addiction and homelessness throughout Metro Vancouver.

For more information, contact our Special Giving Officer, Vanessa Chase at 604.215.5440 ext 394 [vchase@ugm.ca](mailto:vchase@ugm.ca)



Tera visits Lydia Home, the place where she found recovery and a new life.

## Tera's Journey to Recovery

Tera's battle with drugs and alcohol started at the tender age of 12. Struggling to cope with her father's untimely death, she turned to alcohol and marijuana to dull the pain. Things escalated and, twelve years later, Tera's family and friends strongly suggested that she get into an alcohol and drug recovery program. She conceded, and started recovery at UGM's women's-only recovery program, called Lydia Home, in 2009.

A month and a half out of the program, Tera relapsed, and that's when things got really bad. "I started using drugs I said I'd never use. I suffered from mental, emotional, and physical abuse. I had to give up my daughter. I ended up homeless, living in shelters, and relying on UGM for meals. It was the only way I could get food. I was the girl picking up cigarette butts off the ground and rolling them. Every day I said I'd quit tomorrow, but tomorrow never came."

Afraid and alone, Tera phoned Lydia Home. "My old counsellor answered, and she was ready to help immediately. She invited me back. This time, it was on my own terms. I knew I needed help, and I trusted that they could give that help."

Over the next several months, Tera faced the challenge of recovery once again. This time, she knew what was at stake and brought all of her strength and determination to the table. With the support of UGM staff, and fellow participants, Tera found healing in recovery.

Now 2 years clean and sober, Tera reflects, "There were times in my addiction when I thought it would be better if I was dead. Thank God, I just didn't have the courage to kill myself. God had different plans for me."

Today, Tera is supported in her sobriety by a sponsor and a home group. She is actively engaged in the community, leading Bible studies, and sharing her story with the hopes that it will inspire others to seek recovery. It has been a tough road, but as Tera says, "Going through recovery, the good and the bad, is worth it. I never could have dreamed up something better than what's happening in my life right now."

Having regained her God given dignity, Tera embraces her role as an example for those who seek recovery, and has become a source of inspiration to all – a symbol of hope for the community.



*To see a recovering addict visit a place where they once used drugs, as a clean and sober photographer in search of beauty, is beyond remarkable. It's a miracle. - Leah Gregg*

Photo 101 participants pause for a photo during an excursion around the Downtown Eastside.

## Uncovering Vision

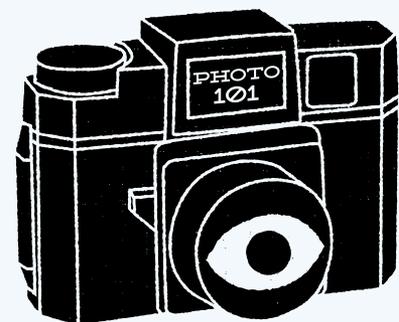
For the past 4 years, several renowned Vancouver artists have been dedicating their time and resources to mentor UGM guests in a meaningful exploration of visual art. Thanks to the generosity of these artists, UGM has been blessed to offer a range of art programs from Photo 101, co-led by Kevin Clark, Leah Gregg, and Andrew Taran, to Art from the Heart, facilitated by Pamela Masik. Sara Prins Hankinson also partnered with UGM to offer art therapy sessions. Students who participated in these courses learned to express themselves through art and have developed immensely as artists, sharing their stories in healthy, meaningful ways.

This year's art students are excited to share their work with you at the annual Eastside Culture Crawl, from November 16th-18th. We are also pleased to announce that this year's exhibition will include works from other non-profit and social enterprise partners committed to the arts. We hope you'll stop by!

*Special thanks to Rocket Repro, Framehouse Boutique, Opus Art Supplies, Beau Photo and Ethical Bean for their donations and support*



For more information on the Eastside Culture Crawl visit [eastsideculturecrawl.com](http://eastsideculturecrawl.com)



## EASTSIDE CULTURE CRAWL

JOIN US FOR OUR OPENING EVENT  
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16TH @ 5PM

NOVEMBER 16-18, 2012  
MAURICE MCELREA PLACE  
361 HEATLEY AVENUE

FRIDAY 5PM-10PM  
SATURDAY & SUNDAY 11AM-6PM

**UGM Auxiliary Presents**

# *The Annual Christmas Luncheon*

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 10AM  
EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH  
LOWER AUDITORIUM  
6858 FRASER ST**

Tickets are \$12 - to reserve tickets contact  
Sarah at 604.215.5452 ext. 369

Join us for delicious food, live local music, special guest speakers, and a report from UGM President, Bill Mollard. This event is a great chance for you to learn more about UGM, break bread with friends, and enjoy some fantastic entertainment! All proceeds from this year's luncheon will go towards supporting UGM's Alcohol and Drug Recovery programs.

*We would love for you to join us. All are welcome!*

## Helping Those in Need for Generations to Come

Eric and Ellyn, consultants in the information technology field, first got involved with Union Gospel Mission in 1997, when they returned to Vancouver after working abroad for 10 years. "We noticed an advertisement for UGM's holiday dinner and were amazed that a meal could be provided at such a low cost," Eric shares. "We felt that we had been extremely fortunate in life and wanted to help those who could use a helping hand."

While looking for work, Eric and Ellyn also decided to volunteer at UGM's Hope Learning Centre, teaching computer workshops and helping ESL students practice their English. This volunteer experience greatly impacted them both. "We were amazed at the diversity of peoples' circumstances that we encountered at UGM. We never realized how many people just need help to attain or maintain a basic living standard," says Eric.

Never forgetting this experience, Eric and Ellyn's dedication to helping those in need grew over the years, supporting

UGM throughout the year, at holiday meals, and inspiring friends and family with donations in lieu of birthday gifts. Several years ago, they made a big decision to take their dedication one step further. Eric shares, "It was time to

*Our contribution, however small,  
can help those who need it most.*

update our Wills. We have no children and our siblings, nieces and nephews were all either comfortably ensconced in their lives, or on their way to being so. They would not need our help, but UGM would. Together, we decided to bequeath whatever we leave behind to the caring souls of UGM so that our contribution, however small, can help those who need it most."

Through their generosity, they hope to send a message of love to people in Vancouver who are struggling to survive: Don't give up. There are people out there who care for you. The community cares for you.

## Let love be your legacy

Supporting UGM through a bequest in your Will ensures that your love and compassion for those in need lives on. At UGM, we call it your legacy of hope.

*Your Gift Could Save A Life.*

For more information on leaving a bequest, contact Carey Bornn at 604.215.5441 ext. 328 or [cbornn@ugm.ca](mailto:cbornn@ugm.ca)

*The love I've found  
at UGM will stay  
with me for the  
rest of my life.*

- Andre, former UGM guest



Gratitude is printed on environmentally friendly Nature Web 10 recycled paper. Choosing this paper supports the growth of responsible forest management worldwide, and reduces UGM's annual ecological footprint by 910 lbs of greenhouse gas emissions, 31.5 cubic feet of solid waste, 7 million BTUs of energy, 2450 gallons of water and 7 trees.



Please recycle  
or pass on to  
a friend!

## Gary's Story

For as long as he can remember, Gary has been volunteering his time to help people who are struggling to survive. This compassionate attitude was inspired by his mother who was dedicated to serving her community through the Army & Navy Airforce Veterans Club, and several other community groups. *"As a small child, I often accompanied my mom on her volunteer shifts, and soon, helping others was just a way of life for me,"* Gary shares.

In 1986, when he was 35, Gary extended a helping hand to his own parents. His mother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and needed a caretaker, so he decided to move into his parents' home to support them as they grew older. Eventually Gary quit his job to take care of his mother full time. He supported them financially, but after several years, money was scarce and Gary struggled to pay the bills. His step-father passed away in 1996 and his mother, in 2002. The cost of the funerals was more than he could bear, and as a result of the mounting financial debts, Gary was forced to sell his home.

After couch surfing for a while, Gary ended up homeless and alone. He came to UGM New Westminster and found

the support and community he desperately needed. With the help of trained Outreach Workers, Gary was able to get back on his feet and into an apartment. Having experienced the difficulty of being homeless, he made it his mission to connect people to various housing agencies in New Westminster. *"Helping others is my life. It's what I do. For me, the greatest reward is seeing people's lives changed for the better,"* Gary shares. Over the last 10 years he has helped over 100 people get into housing.

Gary is a mainstay at UGM New Westminster and is always ready to talk with other guests who need a hand. *"Often, I am the first guy people approach when they're ready to straighten their life out or get into housing. I feel God gives me insight to have the right words for people,"* he says. Gary's willingness to help anyone who seeks him out has helped many people transform their lives, and UGM New Westminster is blessed to have him in our community.

*For more information on how you can support UGM New Westminster, please call 604.525.8989*

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Photo 101 participants pause for a photo during an excursion around the Downtown Eastside.

### JOIN US FOR OUR OPENING EVENT

Friday, November 16th @ 5pm

November 16-18, 2012

**Maurice McElrea Place - 361 Heatley Ave.**

Friday 5pm-10pm

Saturday & Sunday 11am-6pm



More information on the Eastside Culture Crawl at [eastsideculturecrawl.com](http://eastsideculturecrawl.com)