

**How you can help:**

**Donate**

Cash, new goods, food, art supplies, bus tickets...

**Host an Event**

Plan a fundraiser to benefit Haven...

**Join our Friendship Plan**

Be a monthly donor with automatic instalments to support services...

**Legacy Planning**

Charitable Will bequests are the means by which ordinary people make extraordinary gifts...

**Provide a Gift in Honour**

Celebrate or honour someone special by providing a gift....

**Attend a Haven Society Event**

We invite you to participate in our events throughout the year...

**Volunteer**

Join the over 100 volunteers in Haven Society to support activities in the agency...



**Thank you for your continued support!**



# Breaking Ground...



**...making the impossible possible**



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About Us



Board Members 2014/2015

**Current Board of Directors**

Angela Nelson—President  
 Betty Price—Treasurer  
 Penny Bartlett—Director  
 Susan Muller—Director  
 Glenda Morrall—Director

Tara Campbell—Vice-President  
 Kathy Lowe—Director  
 Kim Cook—Director  
 Louise Otto—Director

**Successful training grant:  
 Creating Safe Haven!**

In the next fiscal year the Women’s Counselling team at Haven Society will facilitate two-day trauma informed training for service providers who work with women who have experienced violence. The training will offer practical information, as well as concrete tools and strategies that can be applied to a variety of settings and will be offered in four communities throughout BC. The communities will be chosen based on interest generated through existing coordination committees. Partnerships will be made with local anti-violence organizations in each community. We will explore the impact of trauma from within an analysis of power based crimes. The curriculum will be based on a three stage, strength based, empowerment model; focused on resistance, trauma recovery and community coordination.

We will bring together a broad range of service providers including: Ministry workers, mental health and addiction counselors, victim service worker and domestic violence investigators. We will connect with service providers through existing networks including CCDS committees, ICAT teams and DV units. The main objective is to support a broad range of service providers to better meet the needs of clients who have experienced violence. We know that a coordinated community response to ending violence against women and children is essential and we are confident that knowledge and information sharing, alongside relationship building is key. Activities will include; Information about trauma, the impacts of trauma, resistance and coping strategies. Along with information, we will facilitate skill building and experiential activities and review relevant case studies. Participants will be invited to share the unique challenges in their particular setting and explore strategies within the group.

*“Counselling helped me see that I am not to blame for the unhealthy choices other people make”*



*“It gave me an anchor, something to look forward to. It made me feel less isolated”*

**171 women supported, 180 requests for service**  
**138 phone intakes done by volunteer**  
**242 drop in session or crisis calls**  
**153 new women served**  
**754 individual counselling sessions**  
**33 group sessions**  
**Increase in referrals from Mental Health counsellors, psychiatrists and doctors, up to 15-25 a month from 7-10**

Coordinator: Karen  
 Counsellor: Inger & Rebecca

Women's Counselling

### Women's Counselling

#### More groups and volunteer support will reduce our wait list!

We have been working hard on a plan to address the wait list and we're excited to fulfill our vision in the upcoming year. Women will be able to flow through the program with multiple groups and one-to-one counselling tailored to her particular needs. By fully integrating volunteers into our program we are able to offer a telephone intake within a few weeks of calling. Volunteers are also supporting our groups, freeing up resources for more group facilitation. By adding more first stage groups we will be able to offer concrete tools, information and resources to all women within a few months of intake. As she moves through the program each woman will determine whether moving into a deeper group process or waiting for one-to-one counselling works best for her.



#### Women's Counselling Groups

**Weaving Our Voices** is an open group for women who have experienced emotional, psychological, sexual or physical abuse. This group provides women with information and mutual support in a safe, confidential environment. Our focus will be on building knowledge and skills, and sharing wisdom and experience.

**Strategies for Empowerment Workshop** – provides a six-session psycho-educational workshop exploring the impact of trauma on all aspects of women's lives. Each session offers practical tools, resources and coping strategies.

**Moving Beyond Trauma** – provides a 12-session closed group to help women process previous trauma in a safe and supported group setting, facilitated by two counsellors.

**Celebrate Life** is a four session group that integrates art and nature based healing experiences.

*Everything I move towards is my choice and I have found new courage to get me there.*  
-client

Women's Counselling

### Message from the President



It's hard to believe that another year has passed and we are in full swing of a new fiscal term. The Board of Directors and the team at Haven, led by our Executive Director Anne Taylor, have had a very full and gratifying year.

We are very pleased to announce that this year our financial position has improved and that we are no longer in a deficit position. We managed to address cost overruns and have a solid financial plan in place again for the new fiscal year. We continue to rely strongly on fund development to supplement our programs, and through generous donations from individuals and third party events we have managed to meet our expectations. Our Resource Development team is hard at work in both Nanaimo and Parksville and working on annual Haven events. I would ask that you check out our amazing webpage for updated information.

This year as last, we have seen an increase in the complexity of domestic situations that bring women and children to our front door. We are very pleased to announce that June 12, 2015, marked our official opening of the Domestic Violence Unit, a collaboration with the Nanaimo RCMP, funded by the Ministry of Justice. This collaboration better addresses the common challenges of Domestic Violence in the home. The launch was attended by many dignitaries including the Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton, RCMP Supt. Fisher, Ministry of Children and Families Representatives, Ministry of Justice Representatives, and Crown Counsel, to name a few.

The Boundary Project, a second-stage housing collaboration project with Vancouver Island Mental Health Society and Nanaimo Affordable Housing, is in full swing. The "gold" shovel ceremony was held in March and the event was attended by Nanaimo City Mayor and Councilors, MLA Michelle Stilwell, and BC Housing representatives.

We are hopeful for a formal door opening in early 2016.

We continue to work on upgrading our Transition House, and now have a wish list in place and a Special Projects committee led by one of our Board members to work on making more dreams come true. We can't afford to replace the Transition House, but upgrades to the home are one of our key focuses for fiscal 2015/16.

We have finally achieved NO WAIT LIST for our women's group counselling program, not because of fewer women in need- quite the opposite. Rather, this is a huge achievement and demonstration of our Women's Counselling team's ingenuity and great Haven employee teamwork!

We also honored two of our long-term Board Members, Betty Price (8 years) and Marilyn Chapman (6 years) both Past Presidents, for their dedication as they retire to pursue other exciting ventures in their lives.

An area of continued development and discussion is our work with men. We have seen increased participation in our Men Choose Respect program, and are reviewing the possibility of male volunteers in Community Victim Services, Resource Development and K-Court. All are areas where a male presence would be suitable, and would reinforce that not all men are abusers.

Remember to keep sharing the message that violence against women, children, youth and families is unacceptable and thank you all, for your continued support of Haven Society.

Angela Nelson, President

Message from the President



**Message from the Treasurer**

Our fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, showed an even stronger recovery over our 2014 position. We have actually negated our deficit and have a positive cash flow position, the first time in 4 years. Our primary source of revenue was up slightly, and with good fiscal management, we were able to reduce some of our related expenses without impacting programs. As in previous years, the strong support we have received through donations and various fundraising projects have continued to supplement our programs.

We at Haven Society are truly grateful for the member donations, and community support we have received and it is our hope that your support will continue in the upcoming years.

-Betty Price, Treasurer

Message from the Treasurer

**Sources of Revenue 2015**

Revenues Year—Ended 2015	
Province of British Columbia	1,283,838
Grants	65,568
Fundraising	335,419
Gaming	102,500
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	33,800
United Way of Nanaimo	14,576
Investment Income	2,965
Other	11,027
Memberships	405
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>1,850,098</b>

**Men Choose Respect**

Haven Society 'breaks ground' with providing services to men, as part of the continuum of services that promote safety in families in our community and works to end violence and abuse in intimate partner relationships. Men engage with change and think about their contribution to their relationships in a new way.

*Men choose Safety...Equality... Caring... Respect*

Four groups were offered during the year in Lantzville, providing services to Nanaimo and Parksville men. The group engages in eight key conversations designed to address clear definitions of Safety and Abuse, skills that promote positive, safe and healthy relationships, identifying decisions and choice, and understanding contributing factors. Men talk about their commitment to change, set goals, build on relationship skills and work to build a closer and safe relationship with their partner.



*"This group really opened my eyes and helped me move in my relationship in a positive way... I have never been happier."*

- 48 men received services
- 91% participation in groups
- 20 people waiting
- Numbers of men attending **doubled** this year

Men recommend this group to other men and say more people should go through this program. Support Haven Society to provide more groups and counselling for families in our community!

**"Through the conversations we have had during this group, I have been able to identify and start to develop strategies to deal with my frustrations, expectations and attitude...My facilitators have been intelligent and caring as they have led us through multiple situations where conflict is common. We have been shown the value of our actions in both negative and positive lights. I am happy to have participated in this class and plan to continue on a path to bettering myself for those around me who depend on me." MCR Participant**

Men Choose Respect Program Coordinator: Theresa

Men Choose Respect

Outreach

### Outreach Program

Outreach provides support to marginalized women in the community who are at risk of violence and homelessness. The program is based around harm reduction, meeting immediate needs, and promoting healthy choices.

#### What's New?

The Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) assists women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to the experience of violence or risk of violence. The focus is to address barriers to securing stable housing.

- The Outreach Program co-facilitated Weaving Our Voices and 16-Step Empowerment Groups in Parksville for the first time.
- We represent Haven Society as part of Nanaimo's Cohort Committee which has developed PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE, Nanaimo's Action Plan to Reduce the Harms Associated with the Sex Trade.
- 82 different women attended the 16-Step Empowerment Group, and with a total of 343 contacts it continues to grow.

Originally developed by Charlotte Kasl, Haven's 16-Step Empowerment Group for Women is intended to help women to explore personal strengths and healthy coping strategies while providing an opportunity to be introspective and to ask oneself the questions: Who am I? What do I value, believe and want? The women participate in a group setting that is safe and supportive.



- Short/long term support
- 1:1 or group support
- Transportation/accompaniment
- Life skills and goal settings
- Referral to community services
- Rental subsidy/supplement

**"I have a more stable living environment. It gave me more confidence, boundaries, communication"**

Donations received enable us to assist women with start-up: beddings, kitchenware as well as personal products

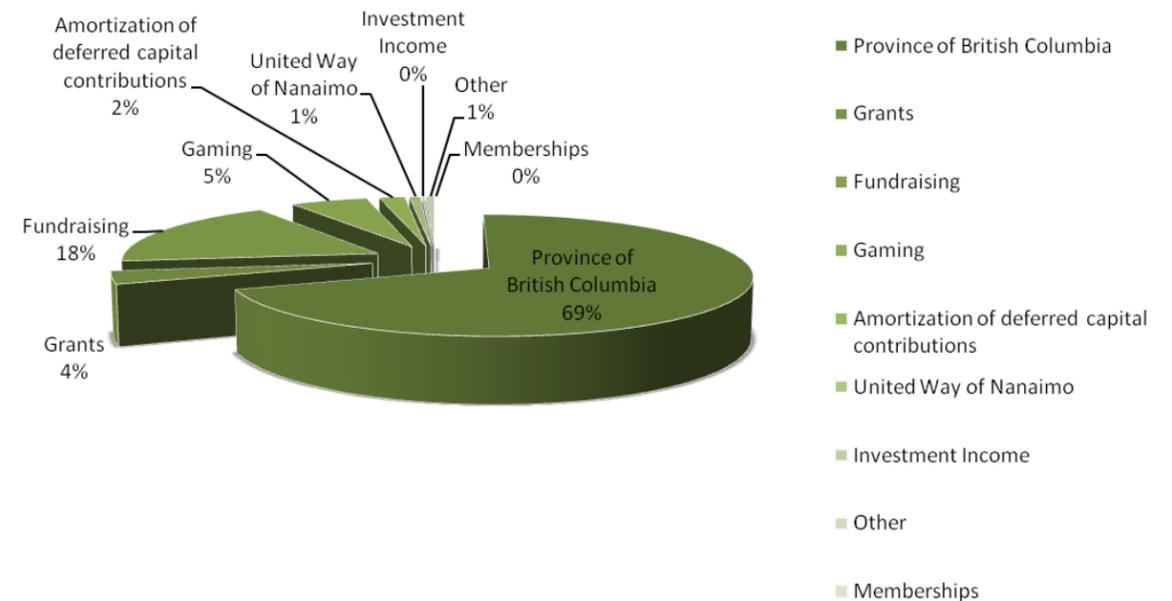
377 Women and their children served  
 25 HPP referrals  
 19 Supplements issued  
 \$3,800 in financial aid provided

Outreach Services Program Coordinator: Shelly  
 Outreach Services Program Assistant: Sukyoung

### Statement of Financial Position

Financial Position	2015	2014
Year-end 2015		
Assets	2,197,570	2,131,125
Liabilities	1,771,571	1,754,542

Financial Position	2015	2014
Year-end 2015		
Revenues	1,850,098	1,735,608
Expenses	1,800,682	1,736,784
Deficiency of Revenues Over Expenses	49,416	(1,176)



Haven Society would like to thank Costco, Quality Foods, HomeSense, Country Club Centre, Royal LePage Shelter Foundation, VIREB, Steve Marshall Ford Lincoln, Nanaimo North Town Centre, Home Depot Canada Foundation, Warehouse One, The Bay, Bootlegger, Woodgrove Centre, Friends of Haven Thrift Store, Cleo and many other community supporters for their kindness and generosity over the past year!



Message from the Treasurer



Anne Taylor,  
Executive Director

Our theme of breaking ground – making the impossible possible – is a clear statement of what Haven Society has been generating since its inception, and through-out this past fiscal year! Our Annual Report for 2014-15 highlights this in so many ways.

As I review all that has been accomplished this past fiscal year, I am struck by the determination, commitment and innovative spirit which defines so much of what Haven Society stands for and provides consistently in our communities.

The ability to break new ground, despite the obstacles, the odds and the inherent challenges of being an anti-violence organization—is reflected visually in our front cover picture. It reminds us that no matter what the conditions – and literally in spite of what may seem to be impossible circumstances – growth occurs! We know this is a fact. This is what the women, youth, children and families we are honored to work with demonstrate every day with each step they take to create lives free of violence. We know that this is not a one-step process. The range of services Haven Society is able to provide ensures that we find a way to offer what is needed, at the time, to support this “growth”.

The growth and developments for Haven Society this past year are reflected in every program area, in every community and most importantly in the faces of those we serve. Making the impossible possible takes more than what can be conveyed in words. We know that we do not do this alone - it takes us all!

It takes:

- Our Community Partnerships many of which have been generated through the Community Coordination for Domestic Safety (CCDS) committee which is focused on making our communities safer. This year marked the formal launch of the Domestic Violence Unit in Nanaimo, a huge accomplishment and an objective that CCDS set many years ago.
- Innovative group delivery that responded to long standing wait-list challenges within the Women’s Counselling program, resulting in immediate access for women to the Strategies for Empowerment group.
- A dedicated group of Volunteers, who donate their time, energy, expertise and spirit! They contribute to every facet of Haven Society and are always growing and developing. This year we celebrated the formal opening of our Serenity Garden created by Altrusa volunteers (see the story within our Annual Report for more details).
- Leadership, dedicated Resource Development staff and volunteer teams, as well as community support in small and big ways. All of these combined to meet, and even surpass our fund development targets this fiscal year which supports the operations of Haven Society.
- Collaborations with SOS in Parksville which ensures the continued development of the Parksville Qualicum Haven House in more ways than can be acknowledged here.
- Strategic Community Partnerships: This year we collaborated with Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA) to develop and offer training related to older women who experience intimate partner violence. This collaboration will continue through the next fiscal year.
- Dedicated Staff at all levels of the organization. I am always inspired by the quality and commitment I see each day!

Message from the ED

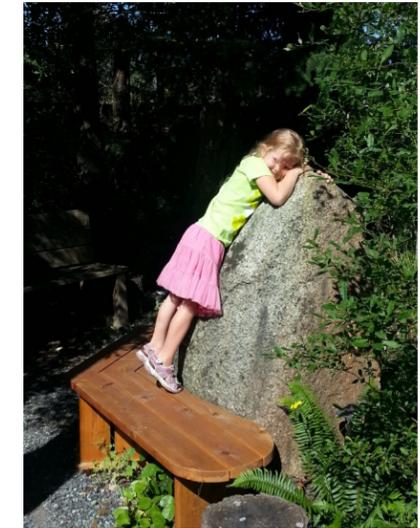


Children can make a wish in our wishing well

*“I don’t wanna stop comin’ to coun-slin!!”  
- A six year-old on her last day of group*

**This year we...**  
Reduced our waitlist by **34.5%**  
Served **159** children & youth  
Increased the numbers of parents served by **11%**

Our physical world plays an important part of our healing journey. This year a dream became a reality as Altrusa volunteers transformed a section of the grounds between the Transition House and our Community Services Building into a Serenity Garden. This garden has become a source of excitement, calm and healing for everyone. We have added mindful walks and treasure hunts, wishes are made at the wishing well and worries left at the worry rock. Maybe you will find that a gnome is home. Magic and hope are alive and well for the children and youth at Haven thanks to the help of Altrusa.



Children can leave their worries at the worry rock

**Due to the generosity of funding from the United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island, we are able to continue providing CWWA services to our community. Thank you!**

Children Who Witness Abuse Coordinator: Tracy  
Children Who Witness Abuse Counsellors: Jenn, Sara & Melissa

**Children Who Witness Abuse**

- With funding from the Canadian Women’s Foundation, a group of students at Woodlands Secondary School hosted a youth fair for all grade 10 students.
- Support to fathers of children and youth in our program increased this year with many fathers stepping forward to support their children.
- Relationships with community partners were strengthened this year and our team was part of building community coalitions to support women, children and families.

Children Who Witness Abuse



### Community Victim Services

The Community Victim Services program in Nanaimo is a fundamental partner in the Nanaimo Community Coordination for Domestic Safety (CCDS) team. We are a hard working group from diverse sectors who work exceptionally well together. We created the conditions for the dedicated Domestic Violence Court, the RCMP Domestic Violence Investigator, the Integrated Domestic Violence Unit and the Interagency Case Assessment Team in an effort to provide the best and most comprehensive response to victims and their families. We provide thoughtful guidance and continuous support for the enhanced response to Domestic Violence in Nanaimo.

Community Victim Services provides justice-related support services, information and emotional support for women, children, youth and family survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault, criminal harassment and relationship or dating abuse, violence and assault. We have been able to provide accompaniment to some clients for court support and for justice-related appointments with the RCMP and Crown, or to the hospital.

We recognize the severity of domestic violence and the importance of a co-ordinated and collaborative response by government, justice, community, and child welfare partners. An enhanced system response is accomplished through heightened information sharing, offender management, comprehensive and collaborative safety planning, and risk mitigation strategies.



**“I couldn’t have done it without you women at CVS. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I didn’t know what it felt like to be safe until I spent time with you.”**

463 new clients  
1,805 high risk clients  
Served 172 drop in/walk in clients

Community Victim Services Coordinator: Sally  
Community Victim Services Assistants: Linda & Jennifer  
Community Victim Services Worker: Courtney

Community Victim Services



Looking forward, it will take:

- Innovative Community Partnerships like what we have with Nanaimo Affordable Housing and Vancouver Island Mental Health in creating safe and affordable housing for individuals. The Boundary project, expected to open in early 2016, will create 13 homes for single women fleeing violence.
- Partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Vancouver Island to establish grant writing collaboration which we anticipate will contribute to both organizations and open possibilities for working on projects together.
- We are collaborating with NFLA to bring Dr. Allan Wade to Nanaimo for a community presentation of response based practice.

Above all else, as we move forward, we will remain committed to fulfilling our mission of creating safety for women, youth, children and their families in central Vancouver Island – always breaking ground to make the impossible possible!



*“When going home from anywhere else I get nervous, anxious and nauseous. But going home to group I feel strong, safe, happy and grateful”*

**“I cherish you all so much. I haven’t got the deep enough words to express how I feel about the counsellors at Haven and the system of Haven”**

*“Haven has donated a lot to me, I’m so grateful for that. It really gave me a feeling like I’m going to be able to make it. It gave me a sense of stability”*

**“I did not know what I was going through was common to others. It was profound as I have always felt so alone and helpless. Now I have greater understanding, I am able to move forward”**

**“The best thing was being in a place of safety. Being heard, not lectured to. Learning healthy ways to relax and ground myself. Realizing that I have safety within myself.”**

**If you are in crisis, please call our 24/7 Crisis Line at 250-756-0616**



Voices of Haven

Volunteer

**Volunteering at Haven**

It has been a truly moving year. It has been a privilege to witness firsthand the commitment and drive of volunteers who care passionately about the work that they do, and however large or small their effort, their unequivocal desire to be part of effecting change in our community. Thank you for this family of volunteers, and thank you for showing us all what this commitment looks like.



This year, we had **104 volunteers** dedicate approximately **5000 hours** to serving others through Haven.  
*Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. ~Elizabeth Andrew*

From events where you collected funds (such as the West Coast Women's Tradeshow, the Belly Dance Bazaar, and What Women Want event in Oceanside), to events where you helped us give to our Haven families (such as through programs and events like Christmas in July), it has been nothing short of inspiring to witness your tireless and joyful efforts.

Just like last year, your **5,000 hours of volunteer time** provided Haven with approximately **\$100,000 worth of human capital**. And yet, your efforts were truly priceless.  
*Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless. ~Sherry Anderson*



We look forward to many opportunities to be of service together, from playground revivals, to new and adventurous fundraising events, 2016 is looking to be an exciting year!

Let's aim high – let's surpass our 5,000 hour/\$100,000 marker in 2016!  
*How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. ~Anne Frank*

In so many ways, you are touching hearts. Thank you.

Volunteer Coordinator: Taban

**Parksville Qualicum Haven House**

- We received 110 crisis calls during this past year.
- 15 women participated in our Weaving Our Voices group.
- We successfully completed the 16 Step Group – a Discovery and Empowerment Group for Women and approximately 8 women attended weekly.
- PQHH can house up to 3 women and their children at any one time.
- Out of 32 women who sought shelter, 12 were over the age of 50.
- In February of 2015 alone, three women and two children had to access services at the Nanaimo Transition House because PQHH cannot accommodate higher security risks – this is the main reason we're working toward increasing staffing at the Safe House & establishing a fully-staffed Transition House.
- PQHH serves women, children, youth and families of Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Nanoose, Errington, Coombs, Whiskey Creek, Qualicum Bay and Bowser.
- Thanks to funding from BC Housing, we were delighted to complete renovations in 2014/2015, making the house more welcoming and comfortable for women and children. We now have a multipurpose room and are wheelchair accessible.

**In 2014-2015 we provided shelter to:**  
**32 Women & 5 children**  
**Unable to house at PQHH:**  
**3 No space in house**  
**11 Not suitable for mandate due to Mental Health, Drug & Alcohol, and/or homelessness**



Parksville-Qualicum Haven House

PQHH is a program delivered by Haven Society in collaboration with the Society of Organized Services.

Residential Program Supervisor: Paula



**Community Victim Services Parksville**

Community Victim Support Services in the Oceanside area provides free information and emotional support for women, men and child survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault, criminal harassment, family and dating abuse. In addition, there were four separate information presentations for mothers in the Pre-natal, Post-natal & Toddler Baby & Me Classes at Parkville Family Place during this fiscal year. Information about the dynamics of abuse, resources, program services & other information was provided. There were two different collaborative joint safety planning sessions with mutual clients during this year... one with a worker from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the other with VIHA.

**93 New files were opened**  
**760 total contacts throughout year, including six men**  
**4 files carried over from the previous year**

Community Victim Services Program Coordinator: Sandra

Oceanside

**Transition House**

- Monthly gatherings and outreach support to former residents enable a strong connection.
- Community Coordination of Domestic Safety (CCDS) Committee member and participation in Integrated Case Assessment Teams (ICAT), helping to mitigate highest-risk cases.
- Attended both BC Society of Transition Houses Annual Training and Ending Violence Association Conference ensuring essential training for our Women’s Support Workers.
- Meaningful development of community partnerships and collaborative relationships, with allies such as Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre.
- Active participation in community anti-violence initiatives.
- Expanded role of the Child Care Worker attached to the Transition House Program.

The role of the Women’s Support Worker is expanding due to the complex nature of our work and the limited availability of community services and resources. Consequently stays at the house are longer and we continue to work very hard to reduce barriers for women and children seeking shelter while providing a safe meaningful service for all.

Transition House



We provided shelter and support services to **121** women and 101 children.  
 Children are approx. **45%** of our residents.  
 Women’s Support Workers fielded **2949** crisis calls, an average of **8** calls per day.  
 Transition House was at capacity **203** day in the past year with an average stay of **23** days.  
**75** women were turned away due to lack of space.

“Positivity abounds in the face of confused thoughts and feelings. Thank you all for giving me the tools to stand up for myself and what is right for my life. Thank you so much!”

- former resident

*“Now I know why its called Heaven House”  
 ..5 year old resident*

Housing Manager: Dawn  
 Resident Program Supervisor: Cindy  
 Womens Support Workers: Ev, Jackie, Alice, Irene, Laurel & Stephanie

**Resource Development**

Without your incredible support of Haven, we couldn’t do what we do best - passionately provide services and support to nearly 4,000 women, children youth and families who have experienced violence in the Nanaimo and Oceanside communities.



Your donations go directly to providing temporary shelter, emotional support, counselling and most importantly—a safe place to begin healing from abuse. By giving to Haven Society, you better the community you live in and truly transform lives.



Resource Development Team:  
 RD Coordinator: Christine  
 RD Assistant: Alyson  
 Admin Assistants: Denise & Felicia

- Close to 85% of every dollar donated directly benefits client care and services. For some programs, donations and fundraising are essential to our success.
- In Parksville, 50% of the operating budget for the Parksville Qualicum Haven House comes from fundraising
- Every year, generous donors ensure women and children staying in the Transition and Safe Houses have the basic items they need for daily comfort and living including Christmas toys and school supplies
- Every single program and service at Haven Society relies on fundraising dollars to support close to 20% of their operating costs

On behalf of Haven Society staff and the thousands of women and children in the Mid Vancouver Island area who have benefitted from the generous support of donors in our community, we offer a very humble and heartfelt thank you, for all that you do. To find out how the many ways you can donate to Haven Society visit [www.havensociety.com/donate-to-haven](http://www.havensociety.com/donate-to-haven).

A very special thank you as well to our community partners and donors:



Resource Development



### Altrusa Breaks Ground

Haven Society has many sites: there is a Community Victim Service Program and Safe House in Parksville and there is a Transition House and a Community Service Building (CSB) in Nanaimo.

For most of Haven's history, the two Nanaimo buildings occupied numerous separate locations in town. When construction was underway for our new CSB, an attempt was made to leave as much of the natural flora as possible- to reduce the footprint. This meant the space between the buildings was rough- no proper pathways were made, prickly vines trailed on the ground, the site was not landscaped- and generally the way between the buildings was uninteresting and semi-functional.

This landscaping was the first project Altrusa took on. Members began to come regularly with shovels and bags of dirt, they literally began to move the earth. These volunteers diligently cleared space, planted flowers, weeded around ornamental shrubs and, as if by magic, the grounds around and between the buildings began to look inviting and cared for.

But Altrusa wasn't done with Haven!

Next, true to their love of inspiring literacy, Altrusa members created a library and reading nook in our children's area at the Transition House. A space was made beautiful with fresh paint and carpet, new lighting and our program was supplied with boxes and boxes of brilliant new books for children staying in the shelter.

So, well before the creation of the serenity garden Altrusa had generously donated both time and funds.

#### The Serenity Garden

Now, for some time, the Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) counselling team had been carrying a vision of a 'magical garden'; one with meandering pathways, the occasional treasure and a small dose of wonder. One team member in particular (Melissa) kept this vision alive and would remind us regularly at team meetings. We would allow ourselves to dream a bit about how much fun that would be. Or in our more practical moments, we would keep it simple and imagine expanding upon and fixing up two locations that children were already naturally drawn to: the wishing well and the worry rock.

A wooden wishing well had stood on the same spot for as long as our buildings have. It had been built and donated years ago, but had become a constant disappointment for children- as they would excitedly rush up to what looked like an enticing destination only to arrive... look into the well...and see rocks, straggly grass and more often than not even a few cigarette butts. The rotting wood made it abundantly clear that before too long we would have to remove this eyesore.

The large stone (standing almost 5 feet high) was named 'the worry rock' -a tradition started by Aileen - an Anishinaabe woman doing her Child and Youth Care practicum with CWWA. The worry rock became the place for a child or youth to leave their worries. A trip there to close a group or session with a child became part of our program. However, the path to the rock was overgrown, sometimes those trailing vines were hazardous and young children would try and climb up onto the rock or use some wobbly stumps to stand on- not exactly child-safe for our program.

But of course our dreams of physical improvements and magical gardens would eventually bump up against our budget line, bringing us back to reality. How would we ever be able to create a magical garden when we sometimes struggle for funds to cover snacks for our groups?



Altrusa Breaks Ground



#### Enter Altrusa yet again!

Over the course of eight months, 31% of the club membership got involved in this transformation. Many members brought personal items and the magic began. As it progressed, staff began to take children further and further into the garden. We added mindful walks into our sessions- seeing what children noticed had changed from the week before. It became such a source of excitement for everyone. The wishing well was raised off the ground to stop the rot. The bottom was lifted and filled with colourful glass beads. This created a beautiful base for children to place their wishes in and it was no longer disappointing to run up and peer into.

Beautiful wooden furniture was built and donated, chairs, benches and picnic tables began to arrive creating inviting places to stop and rest. Women who were seeking the services of other programs began to venture out- called by the inviting atmosphere. Altrusa arranged for the Nanaimo Art gallery to donate eleven banners of children's art. Loons, turtles, frogs, bird houses and bee hives joined the mix. Gnome doors were secured to trees, and even a tick-tack-toe game creatively made from stones and tile was placed near a pathway.

At least two truck loads and many, many car loads of garden waste and debris was removed to make room for pathways of adventure and wonder through the garden. For what was once a dis-used and forlorn space, new ground was broken for both the gardens and our clients.

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014 an unveiling ceremony took place with many staff and Altrusans in attendance and the work offered to Haven in the creation of the Serenity Garden was honoured

#### The Power of Community

Our physical world plays a huge role in healing. This garden sends a message to our clients that the community cares. That the community knows the violence is not their fault and that the community wants these families to heal in dignity. This is what community members can do for an agency in need of support. Our overworked staff and meagre government funding would NEVER have allowed us to create such a beautiful space.

There are many ways to make a difference to Haven Society and the women and children who access our services, just as Altrusa did. To find out how you can support us and families in your community, contact Christine at 250-756-2452 Ext. 239 or by email at christine@havensociety.com.



Altrusa Breaks Ground