



Bissell Centre

2020 Fall Newsletter
bissellcentre.org



Protecting Members of Our Community
From Lost to Found: Mickey's Story
A Snapshot of What You've Made Possible!

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Message from the CEO

 GARY ST. AMAND



Thanking YOU for a truly priceless partnership!

CELEBRATING NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ DAY!

This summer, we celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day at the Expo Centre. Guest emcee, Lloyd Cardinal, hosted the event and elder, Ed Lavallee, provided a warm welcome and a blessing in Cree. Community members were served a traditional meal of stew and bannock before being treated to a beautiful performance of singing and drumming by the River Cree Singers. Nous reconnaissons l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada. We'd like to thank the Government of Canada for making this wonderful occasion possible!

Dear friends,

This year has been one for the history books. Despite the shifting challenges of the pandemic, some things remain constant. Your unwavering support in the face of so much uncertainty has amazed us each and every day.

We can't thank you enough for rising up to care for Edmontonians in need during COVID-19. You ensured that everyone in our city could attend to their health and well-being at the Expo. And this summer, your gifts restored dignity to people in need with thousands of pairs of new underwear through our Drop Your Gonch campaign.

As we begin to leave the warmer months behind, it's time to gear up for fall. When the cold weather arrives, people experiencing poverty and homelessness face new and grueling difficulties. The pandemic underscored just how critical safe housing is for everyone. The need for housing is equally important during the frigid months of winter when basic survival is people's foremost thought.

But with your steady helping hand, I know we'll be able to meet the rising need.

Here at Bissell Centre, we are looking ahead to brighter days. Our annual Thanksgiving dinner will be a little different this year, but that doesn't take away from the warmth and joy of the holiday. Delicious turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy and pie will all be made to-go, so everyone in need can safely enjoy a holiday feast this fall.

I want to thank you again for continuing to partner with us to make Edmonton a better place. As we work towards our goal of eliminating poverty, your support has been—and will continue to be—priceless.

Gratefully yours,

GARY ST. AMAND
CEO, BISSELL CENTRE



Thanks to donors like you, the Expo Centre served an average of 650 people per day!

Protecting Members of Our Community At the Edmonton Expo Centre

The Edmonton Expo Centre officially closed the doors to its COVID-19 relief services on July 31st. When the outbreak began, staff at Bissell Centre rolled up their sleeves and joined staff from other organizations to provide a space for people without a home to safely access information and supports during the pandemic. Now, with life slowly transitioning back to normal, Bissell Centre staff have returned home to our Community Space—with adjusted safety protocols.

An average of 650 people came to the Expo each day. It was a one-stop-shop where people could access nutritious meals, clothing, and other essential needs. People could also access housing, employment, and financial services. Over

500 people were housed through the work done at the Expo—this is unprecedented! We're still working to provide housing supports to about 2000 individuals.

We are extremely fortunate that we haven't had a local outbreak of COVID-19 amongst people who are experiencing homelessness. The Expo Centre played a central role in this fact. Without it, and without your help, the isolation season would have looked grim for Edmontonians without a safe place to call home.

"Ending homelessness in Edmonton is no longer just a theory, it's a real possibility."

We acknowledge that this work wouldn't have been possible without help from the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Expo Centre, Alberta Health Services, the Government of Alberta, other agency partners, and, of course, generous donors like you!

COVID-19 is far from over. But we can confidently say that when we work together, ending homelessness in Edmonton is no longer just a theory—it's a real possibility.

Give Online to Support Life-Changing Programs!

Please give today to help transform even more lives!
bissellcentre.org

Your gifts mean that Mickey and others like him can receive the support they need to find affordable housing and stay housed. Thank you for making Mickey's story possible!

life with epilepsy, so I'm more familiar with chronic health issues than most people. But I don't think you can prepare for a diagnosis of dementia. I managed my seizures with medication just fine for years, until the memory loss kicked in.

Shortly after moving to Edmonton, while staying with a friend in Leduc, my health got really bad. He could see I needed more help than he could offer. My friend tried to get me into a senior's facility so someone could help make sure I took my medication.

But that didn't last long. In the end, I had nowhere to go but a local shelter.

"Thanks to Bissell Centre, I'm on a good path. I just gotta remember to keep looking in the right direction and keep moving forward."

—Mickey

I must've forgotten where I was staying, because I ended up sleeping on the streets most nights. I had no idea how bad my memory had gotten. Sometimes I'd go out for a walk and just get lost. Forgot to eat too.

When I finally saw a doctor, it was a turning point for me. I weighed in at just 124 pounds and was told that I was super underweight for someone who's nearly six feet tall. But as I told you earlier, there was even worse news coming.

When the doctor told me I had dementia, it all started to make sense.

Luckily, the doctor suggested I reach out to Bissell Centre for a hot meal and some help finding housing. And I could not be more glad that she did.

When I got there, I met a support worker named Heather. And I have to tell you—I don't know where I'd be without her. Not only did she help me find a clean, safe place to live. She checks in with me regularly to make sure I'm adjusting to my new home and helps me get whatever I need. Whether it's groceries or a ride to the mall, there's no guesswork. All I have to do is ask.

On top of that, she set me up with a trustee for my finances, organized Meals on Wheels for food, and scheduled home care visits so that I don't accidentally forget to take my pills. I realize now that I gotta be a lot more careful with myself.

Because of my dementia, I'm relearning a lot of basic things. Heather has helped reintroduce

me to almost everything I know. Heather also taught me how to recognize sightlines and visual cues, so I can go on walks and find my way back home. I'm definitely not running at a hundred miles per hour, but I'm slowly coming along.

I like my new place and my landlord is pretty great. She set me up with a smoking area and helped me get a couple of plants. It gives me something to check on when I go outside. I try to water them every morning, and I must be remembering, because there are a couple of flowers!

I know I've still got a long way to go, but I'm adjusting and taking things in stride. When I talk to one of my buddies, he always tells me, *"just keep facing the way you are."* And I think he's got it right.

Thanks to Bissell Centre, and people like you, I'm on a good path. I've just gotta remember to keep looking in the right direction and keep moving forward.

Help other Edmontonians facing unexpected crises like Mickey by donating today!

Please give today to help transform even more lives!
bissellcentre.org

Mickey's Story

From Lost to Found

Finding Mickey's Way Home

This might surprise you, but before Bissell Centre, I literally didn't know where I was.

I used to think I was just a little forgetful, but the doctors assure me that it's "just" dementia. All jokes aside, it's true—my short-term memory is completely fried. When I wake up, every day feels like starting over brand new.

I'll tell you what I do know.

My name is Mickey and I'm 60 years old. I was born on Vancouver Island. I've lived my whole

What You've Made Possible!

Snapshots From Summer

Your support has been absolutely critical to our community during the evolving challenges of COVID-19. When hard times hit, people like you jumped at the chance to lend a helping hand. Here's just a glimpse of all the things your generosity made possible over the last few months. For more information on the Expo Centre and Edmonton's collaborative pandemic response go to bissellcentre.org/homelessamidcovid.



AT THE EXPO CENTRE, CANDACE CAREFULLY ORGANIZES IMPORTANT HYGIENE ITEMS.



MARIA IS ALL GEARED UP AND READY TO START PERFORMING HEALTH CHECKS.



ELIZABETH WAVES HELLO AS SHE PREPS FOR OUR DAILY FOOD SERVICE INSIDE THE EXPO CENTRE.



PASSING TIME, MAKING INDIGENOUS ARTS AND CRAFTS AT THE EXPO!



SHERRI IS ALL SMILES COORDINATING BUS SERVICE TO AND FROM THE EDMONTON EXPO.



KEN SORTS GARMENTS AT OUR TEMPORARY CLOTHING SERVICE INSIDE THE EXPO CENTRE.



THOMAS AND MICHELLE HARD AT WORK PROVIDING HOUSING ASSISTANCE!



BISSELL CENTRE'S MAIL SERVICE KEEPS VIJAY ON HER TOES!

Our provinces may be reopening, but COVID-19 is far from over. People experiencing poverty and homelessness in our city are especially at risk during this time—but your help makes an enormous difference! Not only will you offer people in need dignity and support, your contribution today could quite literally save a life.

Please help Bissell Centre keep Edmonton's most vulnerable population healthy and safe.



Your gifts make a world of difference to someone in need!



Community Heroes

Have you ever thought of becoming a monthly donor? You can split up your yearly contribution to Bissell Centre into monthly gifts.

By becoming a monthly donor, you'll be reducing administrative costs, and making it possible for Bissell Centre to confidently plan ahead to meet the needs of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness and poverty.

It's quick and easy to become a monthly donor online at bissellcentre.org/fallnews, just remember to check off the "I would like to give monthly" box!

Your Support In Action

Changing Lives — One Person at a Time

This summer, our annual Drop Your Gonch underwear drive was an online event. Underwear supplies are always low. But thanks to you—those needs have been met.

Clean underwear is one of the most requested items from people who are experiencing the hardships of homelessness, but it's one thing that people don't usually think about donating. Drop Your Gonch aims to raise awareness and bring in the goods! Your contributions provided thousands of boxers, briefs and bras to Edmontonians in need.

Thank you for your incredible support!

As we head into fall, we're looking forward to our annual Thanksgiving meal. We may not be able to see the smiles beneath the masks, but we know nothing makes people light up quite like a mouthwatering, good meal.

With your help, this year we'll be modifying our traditional sit-down meal to serve our delicious Thanksgiving dinners to-go! Despite the pandemic, we're determined to make sure everyone in our community gets to safely enjoy a festive meal of turkey, mashed potatoes and roasted vegetables this fall.

Do you want to help more Edmontonians struggling to make ends meet?

Give online at bissellcentre.org/fallnews!

THRIFT SHOPPE

8818-118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB 780.471.6644

Drop Off Hours:

Mon–Sat 10:00am to 4:30pm Closed Sunday

SOUTH-SIDE DONATION CENTRE

5120-122 Street, Edmonton, AB 780.432.2377

Drop Off Hours:

Mon-Sat 9:00am to 4:00pm Closed Sunday

