



“Exemplary Standing”

ANNUAL REPORT



**The George
Spady Society**

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A Tale of Two Cities

Our Board

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Devon Jones
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 Janice Lee
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 Denise Woollard

Thank You!

Inner city tents overshadowed by construction cranes. That image, photographed from the entrance to the George Spady Society (GSS) downtown site, captures two very different city experiences. Edmonton continues to evolve with new buildings, enhanced roadways and much needed infrastructure additions but, amid ongoing progress, the struggle for survival continues for some.

That struggle reinforces the value of GSS services in our city. The Supervised Consumption Service team supports safe injection use and staff inform service users about housing and recovery services. Detox teams stabilize individuals and support their plans for recovery. Housing First, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Clinical Access Teams help individuals find and maintain housing and wellbeing.

The continuum of GSS services is a pathway that individuals use to successfully leave tents behind and become part of the prosperity and security evident around us.



Photo courtesy of Andrew Wilson, Addiction Specialist, GSS Medical Detox Unit

“I’ve gotten nothing but support from staff!” - SSPSH Client

George Spady Society Three-Year Strategic Plan 2021-2024



Strategic Priorities

1. Reducing Homelessness
2. Patient/Client Safety
3. Client Engagement
4. Organizational Development
5. Resource Stability

CHAIRPERSON’S MESSAGE

2022-2023 was a significant year at the agency and program levels. In June, surveyors from the leading health care accreditation body in Canada did a 4-year accreditation review. Surveyors looked for, and found, evidence that the agency services, safety, and organizational systems meet global best practice standards. All staff should be proud of the ‘Exemplary’ accreditation status that confirms GSS is an exceptional service provider.

Several program developments show that GSS service quality is recognized in the community. In the fall, GSS was invited to implement a new 54-unit Permanent Supportive Housing site in the Westmount area. This aligns perfectly with our mission and vision but, unfortunately, means the agency’s Scattered Site Permanent Supportive Housing (SSPSH) Program will close. Established in 2020 as the pandemic began, SSPSH successfully supported higher acuity individuals in market housing. I want to commend the SSPSH team on their impressive work in setting up and growing that innovative program.

Another exciting program development in the past year was GSS receiving funding for a new Medical Detox Unit facility. Detox services were first established along with Shelter beds at the downtown site in 1983. During the pandemic, Shelter services were put on hold creating an opportunity to transform the space into a larger Medical Detox Unit. The search for a new site began in 2022 with site selection expected in 2023. Renovations will result in a facility tailored to the needs of more specialized, complex Detox services.

This was my first year as Board Chair and it has been another productive and successful year for the agency. I’ve appreciated the generous support of my fellow Board members throughout the year. On behalf of myself and the Board, I want to acknowledge the invaluable leadership that Lorette Garrick, the Chief Executive Officer, provides to the George Spady Society, and I want to acknowledge the contributions of all staff to this very successful year for the agency.

Accredited with ‘Exemplary Standing’

‘Exemplary Standing’ is the highest level of accreditation possible through Accreditation Canada and is the level at which GSS accreditation was renewed this year. This rigorous accreditation body covers the full spectrum of health service providers including Alberta Health Services.



Accreditation assesses organizations against evidence informed global standards of health care and social service excellence. Every 4 years, Accreditation Canada surveyors review an organization’s practices to determine if it will remain accredited. Over 600 standards apply to GSS in areas like governance, leadership, safety, and client care.

The 4-year review at GSS was comprehensive. In addition to examining agency documents and materials, the survey team met with agency leaders, administrators, Board members and community partners. A particularly important part of the review was spending time with leaders, frontline staff and clients from the Clinical Access Team and the Medical Detox Unit to explore client service delivery.

After their extensive review, the surveyors recommended that GSS accreditation be renewed ‘with Exemplary Standing’. That means the agency met 633 relevant safety, service, and leadership standards. Congratulations to everyone at GSS for this ‘exemplary’ achievement.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S MESSAGE

Every year at GSS seems like a milestone year but 2022-2023 dramatically showed how our agency’s growth and improvements are recognized, valued, and trusted in the community. In 1983, GSS was established with 60 shelter mats and a 20-bed non-medical detoxification program. By 2022, ten programs provided a full continuum of services for the unhoused from detox to palliative care. That is remarkable growth.

It’s not only service growth that is outstanding. A decade ago, we were just converting to computer-based processes. This year we uploaded our online GSS Systems & Accountabilities Map to SharePoint with links to all the resources used to monitor and improve operations. The System Map’s clear connections and easy-access resources contributed to the stellar outcome of our 4-year accreditation survey in June—renewed with ‘Exemplary Standing.’ Surveyors saw evidence of high-quality safety and service best practices like emergency response drills, hand hygiene audits, client safety plans, and program service models. And they were impressed by quality improvement best practices like our PDSAs, client file and program audits, comprehensive incident response system, Client & Family Advisory Committee, and new Staff Council.

This year, funding and program opportunities also showed that our service and operational quality is recognized in and beyond the community. As the Detox program completed its transformation to a medical detox service, the government committed funds for our purchase of a new MDU site. Also, we were invited to organize and operate a new, 54-unit, permanent supportive housing site in Westmount.

As we move into 2023-2024, I am so proud to lead the staff that made this year’s milestone achievements possible. It’s hard to believe I’m beginning my 26th year of service but years like this show how working in the George Spady Society is a continually new and fulfilling experience. Thank you, everyone, for creating a truly exceptional organization that clearly and consistently helps make a positive difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in our community.

New Westmount PSH

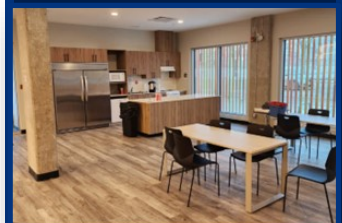


This year, the George Spady Society had the opportunity to build on and expand its experience and success with permanent supportive housing (PSH) programs.

The agency was invited to set up and manage a new purpose-built facility with 48 studio and 6 single suites in the Westmount area. This is the largest PSH site for the agency so far with twice the number of units as at the Balwin PSH site, launched in 2017.

A staff of 22 will operate the 24 x 7 program. The target was to have Westmount ready for occupancy in December but heating system delays led to, initially, opening just the first two floors. Program Manager, Nicole Webber, describes the delays as “...a mixed blessing that unexpectedly gave us a chance to fine tune the services and site with only 12 residents instead of 54.”

Full occupancy at Westmount is expected in August. In the meantime, the display of jigsaw puzzles that residents have completed together in the community room is already making the site feel like home.



Food Security Skills



A unique collaboration is increasing food security among Clinical Access Team (CAT) clients. During COVID, CAT introduced Meals on Wheels to support access to nourishing food. Being home consistently for meal delivery was a challenge for individuals so CAT explored ways to help clients maximize food resources.

That led to a Save-On-Foods partnership and information sessions like 'Cooking on a Budget' and 'Eating for Health.' Community Kitchens followed with Save-On-Foods donations. Then the Edmonton Public Library Main Branch made its new state-of-the-art kitchen available and the project moved to a whole new level.

This initiative led to Sue Lawrence, Project Coordinator and CAT Outreach Nurse, receiving the Food Bank's Janet Hughes Award for helping to improve inner-city food security.



Congratulations to Sue and the CAT team.

CLINICAL ACCESS TEAM

The **Clinical Access Team, Spady CAT**, continued to challenge barriers faced by program participants during another year of exciting learning and evolution.

The Indigenous Cultural Helper has been busy organizing ways for participants, programs, and leaders to experience cultural and spiritual supports. The team continued the in-person groups, and tackled food security from a programming perspective.

There was much to celebrate despite the challenges left in the wake of COVID-19. Program Manager, Robynn Strikwerda

declares, "the strength of the human spirit lights our way and sharing a simple smile, or a laugh, or even sharing tears, reminds us why we do this work. We are honored to walk with people on their journeys."

CAT is a multi-disciplinary outreach team of 13 staff, with 11 providing frontline physical and mental health, substance misuse, family, community, and peer supports. Spady CAT helps Housing First participants access suitable mainstream services and offers groups, contracted services, assessments, and application assistance.

HOUSING FIRST

The **Housing First** program can be a life changing opportunity for unhoused individuals. The team helps participants secure housing and then, for a year, helps them to develop the skills and supports needed to successfully retain their new home.

The world of Housing First is ever changing. In the last year, the team has seen higher acuties, a more difficult housing market, and barriers to income supports. Despite the challenges, the team was able to offer cultural links to 100% of Indigenous-identifying participants, help 99% of

participants maintain housing at any given time, and see a 16% decrease in acuity from housing to graduation.

There was much to celebrate given the complex life circumstances among Housing First participants. Program Manager, Lyndsay Aiton, describes the past year as "...exciting, challenging and adrenaline filled and a valuable base for the next year. Everything we learned has helped us develop some exciting, innovative projects that will benefit our participants as we move forward."

PSH & MST

Permanent Supportive Housing Support programs provide long term housing to those most in need. At GSS, Balwin Place, Scattered Site, and the new Westmount site provide this important support.

Balwin welcomed 6 new participants at the 25-unit site. Senior Manager, Tara Sobey, describes new social opportunities added as COVID restrictions eased: "We implemented a modified guest management process and a new recreational calendar that will make events and activities available to residents on all shifts."

The **SSPSH program** provides ongoing case management and 24-hour intensive supports to clients who are housed independently throughout the city. The pro-

gram was supporting 56 clients going into its third year then, with the new purpose-built Westmount PSH site opening, began to close services by transferring clients to other programs including Westmount.

Westmount accepted its first participants in December. The experienced team has been busy establishing processes for the new site and expects the 54-bed site to be at full capacity by August.

The Mobile Support Team continued to support Jockey Dorms and SSPSH participant medical needs across the city, adding visits to the new Westmount site twice a week. New referral procedures for the Jockey Dorms and Westmount have clarified support needs from both programs.

MDU & SCS

The MDU continued to transform into a full-fledged medical detox service this year. Emergency Services Director, Lindy Dowhaniuk, noted the quality and commitment of staff: "We hired a clinical director, nurses, and a nurse educator to help move us towards high quality medical care. Still feeling the ramifications of the pandemic, nursing coverage was a struggle but we still maintained an 85% occupancy rate and did 1038 admissions."

To enhance client care, MDU made improvements to the triage system and the medication management practice, and created a collaborative team that works closely together.

Safe Consumption Services staff saved lives in or around SCS almost 1000 times while providing access to safe services over 30,000 times. Recovery Coaches had over 200 people on their caseload and completed 347 warm handoffs or referrals.

Program Manager, Scott Zhu, describes the service challenges and successes: "It's hard to keep up with the contaminated street supply and the growing number of houseless people, but we make a difference by literally keeping people alive and connecting them to services that will improve their wellbeing."

"All staff treated me with nothing but respect. There's no stigma." - SCS participant

CLOVERLEAF & POD

The **Cloverleaf Intensive Supports Program** and **Place of Dignity (POD)** program serve individuals with multiple issues that limit independent living.

Cloverleaf, in Warburg, supported up to 11 residents this year with several staying after a new 3-day respite opportunity. A federal grant reduced rent by \$250 for the year and Program Manager, John Norton, is impressed by how savings are used: "Some clients put the money into savings

and others purchased laptops or tablets to keep in touch with friends and family."

POD, located in the downtown GSS site, is a six bed, harm reduction program that gives transitional care to individuals with complex medical, mobility, and addictions challenges. A major development for POD was a merger with the MDU program. That merger will let POD clients benefit from the medical and social work care available in MDU as well as the therapeutic classes, groups and workshops.

GEORGE'S HOUSE

George's House has the privilege of providing holistic end-of-life care to the city's most vulnerable population. In the past year, the team has welcomed twenty two individuals with over half passing on site, most within six months.

Program Manager, Michelle Valiquette, emphasizes that George's House is much more than an end-of-life care facility. The team creates a peaceful, welcom-

ing, and caring atmosphere that comforts clients and their families.

A highlight for Michelle has been how eager families are to re-connect with and support individuals who have been lost to them for years. "With that connection," Michelle says, "clients are much calmer toward the end of life, like they've found a centre that's been missing for so long."

Home & Walking

'Mary,' a Balwin participant was finally discharged after being hospitalized with Covid for four months. One of those months was spent in ICU. Back in Balwin, mobility was a challenge for Mary as she hadn't been able to walk during her hospital stay.

The AHS occupational therapist and Balwin team helped Mary get mobility aids. After working with physical therapy staff, Mary was able to walk in a month. That really made her feel like she was finally 'home sweet home.'



Happy Birthday!



George's House staff are committed to creating a warm, supportive environment that welcomes family, friends, and celebrations.

When a patient, 'Cindy', was turning 33, staff helped make her birthday party a big event at George's House. There was a cake, a pizza dinner, presents, and a movie. Friends and staff sang songs with Cindy and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening of celebration.

Later, Cindy told staff just how special this celebration was: "This is the first birthday party I can remember ever having."

YOU TOUCH LIVES WITH DONATIONS – THANK YOU!

“...it’s not just about being able to write a check. It’s being able to touch somebody’s life.” Oprah Winfrey

This year, many generous donors have ‘touched the lives’ of our clients ...

Giving Again

A special thanks to our regular donors. Your continued support, year after year, benefits our clients and encourages our staff.

Giving Warmth

Community members and organizations stepped in to make the harsh winter season more comfortable. A smiling Grey Nuns Community Hospital team arrived at the downtown site with much appreciated boxes of warm winter wear, and Watson Gloves staff delivered over 70 boxes of precious hand protection!

Giving Ways

Some donations were for general use which is always appreciated. Others were for specific purposes like new bookshelves or a program’s Christmas celebration. And some donations were a special way to show support for a loved one served in a program or, sadly, to memorialize and honor a loved one who passed in a program.



We know that every donation means you appreciate and empathize with the road our clients travel.

Thank you for bringing comfort to these journeys...



At the top, Grey Nuns and MDU staff with winter wear donation boxes. Below, Watson Gloves staff unloading boxes of new gloves for GSS clients.

TICKETS TO EMPLOYMENT AT HOUSING FIRST

Individual commitment, government funding, and Housing First (HF) program support are factors in the notable number of participants who successfully regained full time employment this year.

Usually there are a few employed individuals on team caseloads but Lyndsay Aiton, HF Program Manager, saw that, at year end, 13 of 78 re-housed participants, or 20%, were employed in full time, casual, or temporary jobs.

The biggest trend for full time workers is camp work. The BC job market, in particular, is booming for individuals with tickets. Those regaining full time work usually have a history of employment so Lyndsay finds, “just need a foot in the door for housing and stability”.

The HF team helps these individuals navigate community services and overcome barriers to renewing tickets. For example, for someone recently housed, the cost of H2S training or a pair of steel-toed boots can be a significant barrier because such employment expenses aren’t funded.

Workers stepping back into trades-related, camp jobs realize the risk in this lifestyle. Those who stay successfully employed tend to come from a sober living program and have a strong sober community built up around them. They know the risks of camp life and are ready. “Sometimes they have relapsed but,” Lyndsay says, “then they just pick themselves up.”

Through the HF program, clients have time to stabilize their housing and their employment. Government funding allows

individuals to stay on full rental assistance during their probationary period and funding continues until the person earns over \$1400 a month.

Even if the participant is employed, the HF worker can continue monthly visits through the program year to make sure all is going well. The trend to successfully re-housed and employed individuals is one the HF team would definitely like to maintain and even increase going forward.



STRONG BENEFITS MADE STRONGER

GSS staff are the core of GSS services and success. Recognizing that vital resource, the agency has a benefits package that is among the best in the non-profit sector. The plan includes robust life insurance, health, vision, dental, and disability benefits as well as Health and Personal Spending Accounts. This year, after a comprehensive review, GSS changed providers. The change resulted in reduced plan costs and added benefits like those shown below. To further strengthen staff benefits, a second personal day was added at GSS.

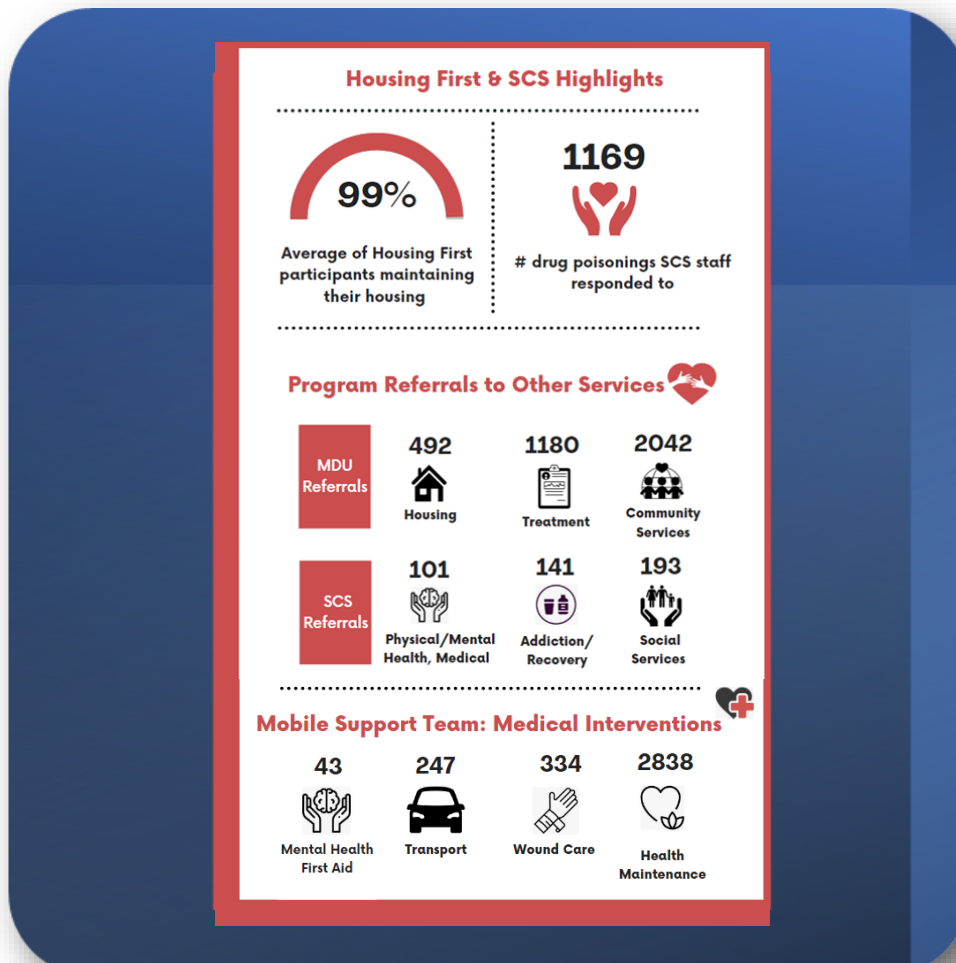
The agency is proud of its strong benefits. Supports like this acknowledge the challenging and important work employees do throughout the year for GSS clients and show that staff contributions are valued.



Enhancements to GSS Staff Benefits in 2022-2023

- ⇒ Specialty drug protection
- ⇒ Extended accident and serious illness coverage
- ⇒ Hospital indemnity benefits
- ⇒ Increased out of country emergency and new trip cancellation coverage
- ⇒ Increased dental cleaning and oral exam frequency
- ⇒ WorldCare second opinion support in case of a critical or life-threatening diagnosis
- ⇒ Telus Health virtual health care access
- ⇒ Specialized disability management

WHAT PROGRAM NUMBERS SAY



Long Healing Journey

This spring, Tamlyn Sunchild started a very special Social Work Student Practicum at the MDU. It's special because Tamlyn first came to the site in 2012 to sleep and sober up. It was the first visit in a long healing journey.

After the loss of her mother in 2008, Tamlyn moved from the Sunchild First Nation to Edmonton where alcohol started to push aside school, work, and family. From 2010 to 2018, she tried to stabilize with detox and treatment programs, volunteer work, and cultural practices but alcohol and street life kept calling. A favorite uncle passing was the final push back into the harsh cycle of alcohol and the streets.

Spady was always someplace to go

and sleep during a downward spiral. In 2018, after Shelter staff carried her in, got her dry clothes and a shower, Tamlyn persevered through a multi-day withdrawal experience that ended with her clearly hearing her daughter's voice. That was the turning point.

From Detox, Tamlyn went to a treatment program, focusing for strength on the cultural teachings shared by her mother and grandfather. From 2019 to 2021, she completed the Indigenous Home Care Support program then went into the Indigenous Social Work program.

Stepping into a practicum at the MDU shows how far forward Tamlyn has travelled. GSS staff were there again

and again in Tamlyn's journey so having her back preparing to graduate as a Social Worker closes a remarkable circle of acceptance, support, and healing. Congratulations, Tamlyn!



Above, Tamlyn and her daughter, Hillary, at annual Missing and Murdered Indigenous Community Walk.

"I'd like to shake your hand and thank you for this great program. They reached out and they accepted me just like that. All the right tools and people are in place. In all my life I've never had such support."

Cloverleaf participant message to Board members

Choosing Recovery and Finding Family

The whole Supervised Consumption Services (SCS) team was excited when 'Bill' finally asked for a referral to the MDU program. Bill, a long-term SCS client kept telling staff that 'someday' he'd be ready for detox.

SCS Recovery Coaches enthusiastically advocated for Bill's acceptance and cheered as he began the MDU program. The team kept on cheering when, after graduating from detox, Bill continued on to Poundmaker's Lodge for further treatment.

A highlight of Bill's recovery journey is that, during the process, he re-connected with his family back East. Family members hadn't heard from Bill for five years so thought he'd passed away and they lost him forever. The SCS Recovery Coaches helped keep the new communication lines open and relatives supported Bill's recovery with gifts and many encouraging messages. That strong family support continued as Bill moved through treatment and into his Sober Living program.



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