



2009 Annual Report
Advocacy, education, community building

"It is justice, not charity that is wanting in the world."
- Mary Wollstonecraft

WHO WE ARE

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) is the largest anti-poverty organization on Vancouver Island. We have a positive impact on people's lives in ways that honour and promote human rights, justice, and a healthy, sustainable community. TAPS is a recognized leader and resource for citizens, community groups, and social agencies attempting to reduce poverty. Our education and advocacy services touch nearly 5,000 people per year – and we are not yet meeting the needs of all who approach us. We provide services to residents of the Greater Victoria area and adjacent municipalities including the Western Communities, Saanich Peninsula and the Southern Gulf Islands.

TAPS was established and registered as a Society in 1989, receiving charitable tax status in 1994. TAPS is a non-profit society whose membership is open to individuals or groups concerned with the preservation of civil society, the social justice movement, and the eradication of poverty.

THE PURPOSES OF TAPS

- » To better the lifestyle and living conditions of persons on a low income
- » To enable social services and faith-based groups to network for the purpose of helping persons requiring assistance
- » To make the general public aware of the problems persons on low income have and ways in which they could assist in solving these problems
- » To focus a special interest on the welfare of children.
- » To educate and inform persons on low income of their rights and to provide a support system assisting such persons.
- » To form a network of people in poverty to enable them to solve their own problems.
- » To maintain current records of what assistance is available for persons in need and where to obtain this assistance.

WHAT WE DO

- » Advocacy services in the areas of income assistance and tenancy including information, summary advice, negotiation and or representation to persons of no, low or fixed income;
- » Training and educating low income persons and other interested community groups and organizations, which then enables them to advocate for themselves or for their members;
- » Identify, research and address issues relating to poverty with particular emphasis on those that affect our local community and;
- » Work in cooperation with other community groups and social service providers in advancing poverty issues.

2009 PRESIDENT'S REPORT: JOAN MCHARDY

On March 1st we celebrated twenty years of TAPS at a wonderful benefit at the Belfry Theatre. There were almost three hundred people at the Belfry to celebrate our success over the years.

We called the benefit at the Belfry Theatre Voices for Social Justice because we wanted to hear the sounds of many voices – some of us are musical, and some are not, some voices are loud, some voices are poetic and some are thoughtful – these are the voices of social justice.

We also called the benefit Voices for Social Justice because we wanted to make sure we are listening. There is a range of voices that must be heard – some are living on very low income, some are homeless and some have mental illness. And some of the voices we need to hear the most are very angry voices talking about the necessity of affordable, supportive housing, the first step to give respect and hope to many.

In July 2009 the Ministry of Housing and Social Development reported a 28 per cent increase in requests for income assistance throughout BC. As a result, the TAPS advocates are experiencing a significant increase in request for assistance

The staff at TAPS has now grown to five advocates and a coordinator. John Cooke, our tenant advocate for twelve years, now works with Thea McDonagh on tenant advocacy. Lorraine Bates works with our newest employee Candace Witkowskyj on income assistance advocacy. Kati Tanigawa works with many volunteers as advocates for persons with disabilities. I want to thank the staff, including Tricia Roche, our coordinator, who works so hard on behalf of our clients. A special thank you to Heidi Berry, our volunteer coordinator.

When TAPS tackles poverty, one of the biggest social challenges of the day, we cannot do it alone. I also want to thank all the volunteers, including those who work as Board members, for their many, many hours of work.

TAPS has a strong voice as we do work together. We have a long and proud legacy of advocacy work and community service. We provide legal information and representation to people on low income. Often working in cooperation with other community groups, TAPS also provides public education on poverty issues.

During the current economic crisis, our advocacy is needed more than ever. Each year we are making a difference to thousands of people, women, men and children, in Greater Victoria and outlying areas including the Western Communities, Saanich Peninsula and the Gulf Islands.

TAPS has a lot of celebrate – and a lot of work to do. Many have shown their support by donating to TAPS, volunteering at TAPS and attending TAPS events. All of us at TAPS appreciate this support over twenty years.

2009 COORDINATOR'S REPORT

TRICIA ROCHE

TAPS would like to take this opportunity to thank the Law Foundation of BC for its continuing support of our Income Assistance and Volunteer Disability Advocacy Projects. This year TAPS celebrated our 20th anniversary and the need for legal advocacy services in the Greater Victoria Area has never been greater. The year held successes and challenges and we take this opportunity to provide a brief overview of the advocacy projects and our organizational development.

KEY ORGANIZATION WIDE ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR INCLUDED:

- » A strategic planning process including survey development and delivery to TAPS stakeholders, several board and staff meetings on organizational direction and work with a strategic planning consultant: Brenda McBain
- » The development of a community engagement and membership building strategy that involved a special membership appeal to individuals and partner organizations
- » The development and delivery of Public Legal Educational sessions to non-traditional groups
- » The design and production of several communication tools (poster, cards) indicating the office location and contact information
- » A community event at the Belfry Theatre celebrating TAPS 20th anniversary with guest performances by Miles Black jazz piano, Carla Funk, poet, House of Music fiddle orchestra and the Getting' Higher Choir.
- » The Mayor of Victoria declaring "Poverty Reduction" weekend in recognition of TAPS 20 years of service to citizens of the city.
- » The consolidation of a mentoring program for all TAPS legal advocates to ensure they meet the performance standards for each position developed by the personnel committee of the Board of Directors.
- » The expansion of TAPS Tenant Advocacy Project with an additional part time legal advocate.
- » The creation of a board nominating committee to develop and support board composition in the up-coming year.
- » The design and delivery of community educational walk about tours (Reality Tours) to offer a glimpse of life on the streets in Victoria and showcase the capacities of people living in poverty and their perspectives on what needs to happen to eradicate poverty.
- » Staff reflection on additional legal advocacy services and volunteer training.
- » A continued emphasis in our community engagement work on the need for a Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy with measurable targets and timelines.

TAPS' work on social justice issues happens within partnerships and with intentional collaboration. Our philosophy was expressed by one student last year who said:

“At TAPS I didn't feel like I was just applying a band-aid, I felt like we were finding real solutions.”

Here are a few examples of partnerships from last year:

- » **Prepared** new communications and website tools thanks to the generosity of the Victoria Foundation
- » **Wrote** summaries of legal research and advocacy tools on contemporary topics such as: the criminalization of the homeless and the feminization of poverty in partnership with the Pro Bono law students of University of Victoria.
- » **Co-hosted** a community forum at Alex Golden Hall attended by over 200 people on the need for a Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- » **Added** the TAPS Tenant Advocacy Project to our continuing programs partnership with the Law Foundation of BC
- » **Provided** an opportunity for Povnet and TAPS staff to discuss the use of technology to foster BC-wide communication on legal advocacy concerns and the sharing of knowledge and practices
- » **Showcased** a photographic exhibit at several Victoria sites
- » **Hosted** a coop law student from University of Victoria in our Income Assistance Advocacy Project
- » **Designed** an in house training series as part of TAPS' long term commitment to being a learning organization

Staff turnover has been a particular challenge this year in the legal advocacy projects. We are addressing this at an organization-wide level putting in place orientation and mentoring support with greater depth. We continue to reach out to new volunteers to support our work in disability advocacy. Without the over 70 volunteers involved in front desk reception, volunteer advocacy, the production of the TAPROOT community newsletter, legal research, tax preparation and the Silent Witness project, TAPS could not continue to operate. We thank all TAPS volunteers for the understanding and support they offer TAPS clients on a daily basis.

We would like to offer our congratulations to the Law Foundation of BC on their 40th anniversary this year. As we close TAPS 20th year, we note the over 5000 individuals and families that we have served through our legal advocacy and education services and recommit ourselves to working to end poverty in Greater Victoria. We can be sure that 2010 will see TAPS speaking out on poverty issues and addressing the increase in requests for our on the ground legal advocacy services. There are challenges ahead.

2009 TENANT ADVOCACY PROJECT

JOHN COOKE AND THEA McDONAGH

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Residential Tenant Advocacy Project of TAPS provides unique and vital services to the Greater Victoria community including:

- » Legal information for tenants about the BC Residential Tenancy Act and other applicable legislation, including the provincial Human Rights Code
- » Mediation for and negotiation on behalf of clients with their landlords toward the equitable resolution of disputes
- » Legal advocacy on behalf of clients at Residential Tenancy Branch Arbitration hearings
- » Education for tenants, professionals and the community regarding tenancy issues, rights and responsibilities
- » Assistance and support for individuals to develop the skills necessary to advocate for themselves.

Direct advocacy services are provided to the public by way of summary advice, providing information through phone consultation, drop-in or appointment and as part of a caseload. The ongoing services of the caseload may include contacting a client's landlord and/or providing ongoing support and representation at the Residential Tenancy Branch Arbitration proceedings. The Tenant Advocate also spends a significant amount of time interviewing clients, preparing witnesses for hearings as well as researching relevant case law, in addition to the collection, disclosure and dissemination of evidence.

CASE WORK

Case files are opened when a client requires advocacy at an Arbitration hearing, a Human Rights Complaint has been initiated or when any other form of quasi-judicial dispute resolution with regard to a tenancy has been commenced by one or both of the parties involved. Some case files are legally complex in their origins and may take more than 20 hours of preparation before they are finally resolved. Last year for example, 169 case files were opened. Two thirds of the cases of the TAPS Residential Tenancy Project were resolved at Arbitration and one third were resolved by Negotiated Settlement. The issues presented included: eviction, security deposit, repairs & maintenance, rent increases, and claims in damages. The majority of cases dealt with "eviction notices". Over half of all case files involved families with children.

CASE TRENDS

Last year, the Tenant Advocates saw an unusually high number of clients coming into the office with two-month eviction notices for renovations. Under the Residential Tenancy Act (section 49) landlords can, by issuing one of these notices, evict tenants if they want to do a substantial renovation on a suite. Unfortunately, some landlords misuse these notices to evict tenants in order to raise the rent, and not to do renovations. Or the landlords intention is to do a minor renovation, such as replacing carpeting, and then to re-advertise the suite at a substantially higher rent. This is not the intended purpose of the legislation. The Tenant Advocates were able to work with the tenant and landlord to negotiate a mutual solution or the Advocates represented the tenants and the notice was set aside at the Residential Tenancy Branch and the tenancy preserved.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

During the last year the Tenant Advocacy Project designed and delivered Public Legal Education presentations within the Greater Victoria area. These presentations were provided both to tenants as well as to service providers who work with this community. The primary focus of the workshops is educating tenants about their rights and responsibilities as tenants and empowering them to protect those rights.

This year the tenant advocates offered a series of Public Legal Education presentations directed towards senior citizens. The workshops usually run for one to one and a half hours and include a lecture style portion as well as a question and answer period. The style in which the material is presented is individually adapted to each audience. In addition to the verbal material presented, participants are provided with handouts of written advocacy material for their own reference.

The tenant advocates prepared several articles for the TAPS newsletter in hopes of reaching an even greater number of tenants. These articles covered such issues as: “One-Month Eviction Notices for Cause” or “Ten-Day Eviction Notices What You Need to Know.”

CASE PROFILE

A young single mother with three dependent children under the age of eight received a Notice of Eviction for Cause. The family has a history of involvement with the Ministry of Child and Family Development. The children’s father does not normally live with the family but did for one week while the mother was away. During this week there were disturbances and the mother received a Notice of Eviction for Cause. She was at risk of losing not only her home but also her children when she presented the situation to the Tenant Advocacy Project.

Through the intervention of a Tenant Advocate the mother was able to reach a negotiated settlement with the landlord – thus preserving her rental home for her family.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LEGAL ADVOCACY CLIENTS SERVED BY THE TENANT ADVOCACY PROJECT THIS YEAR: 1061

VOLUNTEER DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROJECT

KATIE TANIGAWA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

TAPS' Disability Advocacy project provides legal advocacy and support to economically disadvantaged persons applying for Persons With Disability (PWD) status. The Disability Advocacy Project delivers a well-coordinated training and support initiative to volunteer advocates - in the interest of reducing the wait for individuals seeking advocacy services.

OBJECTIVES

1. Assist people with disabilities to apply and qualify for Persons With Disabilities (PWD) status with the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.
2. Train, maintain and supervise an innovative and diverse volunteer network of advocates specializing in disability advocacy.
3. Update and refine the TAPS Disability Advocacy Training Manual
4. To design and deliver a regular training program for volunteer advocates
5. To engage in public legal education on disability issues.

VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES

The Volunteer Disability Advocacy Program currently relies on dedicated volunteers. Volunteer advocates engage in an initial interview with a client where they discuss the requirements for PWD status, explain the layout of the form, and listen to the client's explanation of their disability and how it affects their day to day life. These interviews generally last an hour and a half and can often be longer. After the interview, an advocate writes a section one report for the application. The advocate also ensures that the information provided by the physician and the assessor are consistent. Throughout the process, the advocate ensures that the client understands the process as well as the outcomes. The volunteer advocates work tirelessly and diligently, committing approximately 6 hours a week to their TAPS advocacy position.

Prior to engaging in advocacy work volunteers attend a three part training program delivered by TAPS Volunteer Disability Advocacy Project Coordinator that reviews the PWD process, legislation, and professional standards of advocacy. The training program also includes observation sessions with current advocates in order to see advocacy skills and methods in action. Advocates are provided a training manual which includes all the materials relevant to advocacy for the PWD form.

VDAP SPEAKER SERIES

The Volunteer Disability Advocacy Program has recently launched a speaker series for volunteer advocates. Members of the community graciously offer their expertise and advice to the advocates and talk about current issues in Victoria and across Canada.

CASE TRENDS

Between the recession and recent budget shortfalls in the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, TAPS' Volunteer Disability Advocacy Program has seen a steady increase in the demand for assistance from our trained advocates. Individuals are finding it more and more difficult to get approved for benefits they are in fact eligible for. Often, it is not until an advocate facilitates the process that an individual gets approved. Through the assistance of dedicated volunteer advocates many people have been assisted by the program in the past year.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

VDAP also engages in Public Legal Education. This includes the training sessions for TAPS volunteer advocates as well as training sessions for community organizations. The program has provided training sessions to the Friendship Center, the Action Committee for Persons with Disabilities, and a general income assistance educational to the MS Society.

CASE PROFILE

A man with arterial sclerosis who had recently had invasive heart surgery came to TAPS after being denied Persons with Disabilities status. He was living with his elderly mother and barely making ends meet at the end of the month. Because of his heart condition and surgery, he could not perform simple tasks like vacuuming and cooking without significant difficulty. It was clear that he required outside help, but currently did not have the resources to access assistance. On top of this, his condition had led him into depression. He also did not have the financial resources to get the counseling he required.

The first time he received the application form was when he got out of the hospital from his invasive heart surgery. The hospital social worker told him to apply for PWD status. The social worker had only met with him briefly, but took the time out of a hectic schedule to help the client fill out part of the PWD application. The client also took it to their doctor who filled out the other section of the form. He did not bring this first application in to TAPS. It was denied.

He had also filed for a request for reconsideration and supplied a doctor's note and a note from the social worker. This too was denied.

He came to TAPS with a new application. The VDAP advocate worked with the client for hours to get a concrete view of his day to day life. Through the VDAP program TAPS was able to work with the client, the doctor, and the social worker to provide an accurate description of the client's day to day activities to the Ministry. This application was approved and he is able to access additional programs, transportation, medical benefits, and finances that improve his ability to navigate his day to day life while also trying to help his aging mother.

LAST YEAR, THE VOLUNTEER DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROJECT WORKED ON OVER 283 CASES.

2009 INCOME ASSISTANCE ADVOCACY PROJECT

LORRAINE BATES

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Income Assistance Advocacy Project of TAPS offers quality legal advocacy by two advocates (one full time, one part time). Information, summary advice, negotiation and representation at hearing on all classifications of provincial income assistance benefits (including hardship assistance income assistance, persons with persistent multiple barriers assistance, and persons with disabilities assistance) and the federal income replacement program, employment insurance, are offered.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Enhance access to justice by providing reliable legal information to people living in poverty about their benefits and entitlements available to them through income assistance programs
2. Provide vigorous advocacy services to people living in poverty by negotiation and written submissions with ministry staff and full representation at appeal hearings
3. Offer engaging and informative legal presentations to community groups and their clients about entitlement to benefits on income assistance programs
4. Educate and empower individuals to effectively advocate on their own behalf

CASE WORK

The majority of our advocacy work has been in the area of provincial income assistance programs, currently administered by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. The advocates responded to a wide variety of requests for service ranging from answering questions about eligibility for assistance and benefits to full representation at tribunal panel hearings. The advocates assisted clients with applications for the full range of classifications of benefits, health supplements (dentures, nutritional, orthotics, bracing, scooters), crisis supplements, moving cost supplements and provided support through appeal processes as denials occurred. The advocates found that increasingly clients were requesting service due to the complexity of their circumstance as it related to the applicable legislation and policy. The more challenging issues included lump sum payments (insurance settlements, inheritances), overpayments, fraud allegations, and sanctions.

In doing this work, the advocates have noted that people on assistance, regardless of their classification, are struggling to meet basic needs of food and shelter. The advocates also continued to support clients to communicate with the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, and to access the appropriate services in a timely manner. The Ministry continues to 'streamline' its access points in an attempt to serve clients in a timely and effective way including creating a single access phone number for the Ministry and its Prevention and Loss Management branch, group orientations when first accessing the system, and continuing with the model of no assigned workers. In reality, these changes have resulted in an inability to access a worker – often, clients must leave messages in a general voicemail box and wait days to have a return call. The advocates have seen periods of time in which urgent and time sensitive matters have been 'waitlisted', and workers are unable to respond for 24-48 hours, and in some cases, longer. Clients are interacting with different workers, often regarding the same issue, and continue to receive conflicting responses and directions from the Ministry. This leads to frustrations and unnecessary delays in processing applications for benefits and supplements.

CASE PROFILE

A single man with part time care of one child, and full time care of a child with a disability approached TAPS for help. He lived in subsidized housing. Approximately 2 years prior, there was an outbreak of bed bugs in his housing complex, and his landlord paid the costs of fumigation due to the publicity of the problem at the time.

Unfortunately, he noticed the same types of bites on his children, and realized he had another infestation. He contacted his assigned worker at the housing project, and his suite was fumigated. The landlord was now pursuing him for the costs – approximately \$650.00. After consulting with the tenant advocate, it was determined that the landlord was legally entitled to recover these costs. While sympathetic, the housing provider was not able to continue to cover these costs due to their own limited budget. The landlord sent a letter stating that the tenancy would end if payment was not forthcoming thus putting the family at risk of homelessness and intervention from the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The Ministry had already denied this client's initial request for a crisis supplement to cover the cost of fumigation – it was the Ministry's position that the landlord was responsible for the costs, and that the infestation was ongoing rather than an unexpected crisis. The advocate prepared a request for reconsideration on behalf of the client addressing these two issues. The reconsideration was denied.

The advocate agreed to represent the client at a tribunal hearing. At this hearing, the advocate submitted arguments that supported the client's eligibility for the crisis supplement. The tribunal unanimously rescinded the Ministry's decision, as it was unreasonable given the legislation and the circumstances of the client at the time of the request. The advocate had to follow up with the Ministry to ensure compliance with the panel's finding; the Ministry at first refused to issue the funds as the worker did not understand the decision. A supervisor confirmed the funds should be issued, and a cheque was sent to the housing provider. The client was able to preserve his tenancy.

SILENT WITNESS PROJECT

The full time income assistance advocate coordinates the Silent Witness Project in which TAPS volunteers accompany recipients to meetings with Ministry staff. These meetings may be an initial application for benefits, an eligibility review, an annual review, and/or an investigation conducted by Prevention Loss Management. The Silent Witnesses do not provide advocacy for the client, but rather serve to record the interaction between the Ministry and the client and offer support during meetings that are often highly stressful. The Silent Witness provides a typewritten report of the meeting that includes the specific details of the interview and the outcome of the interview. This helps clients to understand and remember the interview and they have a record of any further action that is required on their part, and also of any follow up the Ministry should be doing. The report is also forwarded to the advocate for review and any follow up advocacy that is required is done by the staff advocate.

This year we had between 5 and 10 active volunteers from a range of backgrounds including law, early childhood education, people living in poverty, and students.

PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

15 presentations were provided and involved over 170 participants. These presentations were provided to current and prospective recipients who were seeking the assistance of community organizations, staff of those organizations, and law and social work students. The presentations were primarily regarding income assistance rights and entitlements. Handouts of written advocacy material were prepared and presented to each participant attending the presentation.

Public Legal Education was also provided through the TAPROOT, our bi monthly newsletter. The articles published by this program included “Supplements You May Need This Winter”, “Security Deposit Legislation Amended”, and “Natal Supplements: What To Expect When You’re Expecting on Income Assistance”.

Another component of education and outreach is the advocates’ commitment to participating on the Moving Forward Steering Committee. This is a quarterly conference call where advocates from the same region speak with policy and management level Ministry staff. The object is to identify trends and areas of concern, and bring these areas to the attention of the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.

CASE PROFILE

A young woman approached TAPS for assistance. She had been living with her partner for some months, and financially supporting him and his children. The partner found employment, and ended the relationship. The young woman scrambled to find her own housing. Shortly after the relationship ended, she was laid off from work due to the economic situation. She was unable to pay her rent, and was facing homelessness.

On the day she came to the office, the young woman had already been to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development for help. She had a job interview lined up for the following day. She had applied for employment insurance, and been told it would take several weeks for her claim to be processed. She was denied income assistance, and did not know what to do. During the interview, it became clear to the advocate that she had been assessed for income assistance. She should have been assessed for hardship assistance – a different classification of benefit, available to people not otherwise eligible for regular assistance (due to her application for employment insurance). The advocate advised her right to apply for hardship assistance. She returned to the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and successfully applied for hardship assistance. She was also successful at her job interview the following day. This case shows how important it is for clients to be assessed quickly and appropriately for benefits – providing a one time, repayable benefit, allowed her to regain her financial independence through employment.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS ASSISTED DURING THE YEAR BY THE INCOME ASSISTANCE ADVOCACY PROJECT: 1488

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION PROGRAM

HEIDI B.

Volunteers are an integral part of TAPS. They work in all aspects of the organization, from reception to disability advocacy to the newsletter to the board.

The 72 people who have volunteered at TAPS over the last year come from various backgrounds and volunteer for a variety of reasons. Some live in poverty or have previously lived in poverty. Some have a commitment to social justice and want to work to end poverty. Retirees volunteer at TAPS, as do students, people with disabilities, and new immigrants to Canada. Some have particular skills they want to use, such as drawing or writing or computer graphics, while others come to gain skills that may help them in the job market or in their lives generally.

Volunteers work as receptionists on the TAPS front desk, where they are the first contact clients have with the organization. Volunteers provide legal advocacy to clients applying for provincial disability benefits, they provide tax preparation help, they accompany and provide moral support to clients attending appointments at the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, and they write articles and draw pictures for TAPS' newsletter. A few help with computer problems, or do light maintenance or handyman work around the office, or work on art and communication projects.

TAPS also has volunteers who assist with income tax preparation available to people of low income, both individuals and families. While the emphasis is on the current year, almost half of all returns are for prior years. People often don't realize that they must file all tax returns before they are eligible for government benefits, both federal and provincial, to which they would otherwise be entitled. Much of the tax volunteers' time is also spent in just answering questions about taxes and related matters, and apprising people of benefits to which they might be eligible. The tax volunteers have assisted over 246 individuals and families this past year.

In the words of TAPS volunteers:

"Right now I'm on welfare. It's just sad what's going on. I came to TAPS because I wanted to help."

"It's a meaningful activity for me to engage in."

"This is a great job. I really enjoy this job."

"We deal with people on a personal basis. They're not numbers. I like that."

TAPROOT NEWSLETTER

TAPS' newsletter, Taproot, provides members of TAPS, clients, and members of the community at large with information on income assistance, tenancy, and poverty. TAPS' staff advocates write articles in the areas of their expertise, tenancy, income assistance, or disability. Several volunteer writers also contribute articles. Two volunteers provide artwork.

The newsletter is mailed to members, and is available at organizations around Victoria, including among others the Single Parents' Resource Centre, the John Howard Society, Our Place, and the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre.

Taproot comes out six times a year.

Our newsletter is posted on our website at www.tapsbc.ca.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

“Why I work for Together Against Poverty Society – I think the name says it all. We at TAPS all enjoy working with the community and public on several poverty issues that occur in Victoria everyday. TAPS is an inspiration for me to help others to represent themselves in a more positive beneficial way when they are dealing with provincial government agencies such as Provincial Disability or Ministry of Housing and Social Development. I also believe in the love I have for human rights and the people that I work with are unbelievably friendly and caring to the staff and clients. I started working at TAPS while in school training to be a legal secretary and legal administrative assistant; however working at TAPS in social justice is where I belong. I have noticed since the change in government there are a lot more homeless and people in poverty in Victoria.

When I started at TAPS in 2001 there were a few people on View Street where our office was located for many years, I would pass these people on the way to work and often thought of the many reasons for them to be homeless. I would give some of them spare change if I had any extra to give, offer a smile or greet them with a nice hello. The increase of the amount of homeless and people in poverty has worsened and yet there are still people who pretend they can't see any of this.

I took some time off from TAPS in 2003 and volunteered at another community agency where I was doing Supervised Access for Court Orders. This was definitely not the career path for me. Family Law had too many grey areas, whereas human rights and social justice is my desire. So once again I started at TAPS in 2007 working on the front desk doing reception. In the end of 2008 I was approached by a TAPS legal advocate to volunteer as a PWD Advocate. I was enthused and needed a new challenge and this was it. Since that day I have been trained as a legal advocate to help with provincial disability applications. I LOVE my volunteer job at TAPS and admire the many people I work with and that TAPS stands for social justice. Our mugs say the truth: *'It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world,'* -Mary Wollstonecraft 1792.”

2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We thank the talented individuals who served on the Board of Directors 2009.

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Dr. Joan McHardy – President
Past Chair: BC Chapter of the Canadian
Evaluation Society

Barbara Celu Amberstone – Vice-President
Writer, Community Volunteer

Zoë Macmillan – Secretary
Law Student

Kris Constable – Treasurer
Information & Privacy Consultant

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Robin Bassett
Retired lawyer

Freya Kodar
Faculty of Law: Assistant Professor

Rose Henry
Human Rights Activist

Melanie Hudson
Law student, University of Victoria

Tim Richards
Faculty of Law: Senior Instructor

“I helped a woman who was quite traumatized because she lived in Rwanda during the genocide. She had post-traumatic stress disorder and agoraphobia. I had to gather all of the information she needed to apply for income assistance. This woman had absolutely no resources and no income. She was so grateful during the whole process and very appreciative of everything I had done. Clients like her remind me of how important this type of work is to the community. People don't have to face issues on their own – there are people out there who care and who want to help.”

-Taps Legal Advocate

**TOGETHER AGAINST POVERTY SOCIETY GRATEFULLY
ACKNOWLEDGES OUR FINANCIAL PARTNERS:**

The Law Foundation of BC

Provincial Employees Community Services Fund

The Vancouver Foundation

The Victoria Foundation

VanCity

Coast Capital Savings Credit Union

And our many generous individual donors.

**Together
Against
Poverty
Society**



#302 – 895 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1H7
Tel: 250-361-3521
Fax: 250-361-3541
E-mail: tapsbc@shaw.ca
www.tapsbc.ca