

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Sun Sets in BC for Homeless Youth, But a New Day is on the Horizon

Surrey, British Columbia The Fraser Valley region has been slow to respond to the needs of youth who are reaching the age of majority and entering adulthood, but SOS Children's Village BC's Transition to Adulthood program is stepping up to provide desperately needed solutions to keep teens off the streets. **Vulnerable youth, especially those that move from home to home in the foster care system, are extremely ill prepared for the transition to independence** - as illustrated by stories and facts revealed in the *Vancouver Sun* series 'From Care to Where' and the public outrage that followed it. Rising numbers of teens are falling through the cracks into lives of crime, unemployment, homelessness, and addiction.

The Transition to Adulthood program is a bright solution to a dire societal problem, and the program is growing, having recently been injected with a \$142,000 three-year grant from the Vancouver Foundation – Youth Homelessness Initiative. **SOS Children's Village BC has hired a new Youth Worker, Shayne Forster, to complement the two experienced staff already on hand.** Shayne will be facilitating a Youth Advisory Council to ensure that the program is driven in the direction that the youth served desire it to. He is passionate about supporting youth who have no one else to turn to, and has expressed a feeling of privilege in having the opportunity at SOS BC to support clients in establishing and actualizing their goals and dreams.

"We are overjoyed to have Shayne join our dedicated team of professionals in changing the lives of at-risk young adults in our province, and we look forward to his next three years with our program," said Douglas Dunn, Executive Director of the charity.

SOS Children's Village BC and its 550 sister Villages globally make a generational commitment to orphans and foster children who come into its care, from newborns to the age of majority, continuing the support and services long after the kids "age out" of care. **While the youth in the Transition to Adulthood program may not have lived in an SOS Village, once they join the program they become part of the SOS family.** "*They are our kids!*" The program is a formalized expression of this key element in the SOS philosophy.

At-risk youth can refer themselves to the program – a feature unique to SOS BC – or they can be referred by social workers or other professionals. To find out more information, visit:

www.sosbc.org/our-programs/transitiontoadult.

Transition to Adulthood Program Summary

Goals: To support, educate, prepare, establish, and connect youth to live independently and successfully in their communities, while being positive contributors to greater society.

Objectives:

1. For youth to be meaningfully engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of the program.
2. For youth to be able to maintain safe, affordable, healthy and hygienic housing situations while adequately caring for themselves.
3. For youth to be receiving and maintaining adequate employment enabling them to live in safe housing situations.
4. For youth to be positively connected to their communities.
5. For youth to be healthier with increased mental health and more able to live independently.
6. For youth to have wrap-around support services and a safety net contributing to a more normalized experience of transitioning to adulthood.
7. For youth to have greater connection to others by developing relationships with other children, youth and caregivers in the SOS Village. The Village is a family, and will likely become a family to youth in the Transition to Adulthood program. *“It takes a village to raise a child.”*
8. For youth to begin giving back and becoming contributing members of their communities.

About SOS Children’s Village BC

SOS Children’s Villages is the world’s largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 60 years with presence in 133 countries and over 550 villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children’s Village in Canada. SOS Children’s Village BC provides community-based family care services to improve and sustain the quality of life for foster children and foster families through a variety of programs that address social development and healing. Headquartered in Surrey, the organization actively creates opportunities, programs and services to increase stability and continuity for foster children and their foster parents.

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Stay tuned for an exciting new era in the Transition to Adulthood program, which will be commencing the first week of June.

For more information please contact:

William Brennan, Communications Coordinator
SOS Children's Village BC
T: (604) 574-2964 ext. 231
E: williambrennan@sosbc.org Web: www.sosbc.org

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