

Sovereign Order of St. John raises \$187,000 and
assists 191 mentally ill clients through their Living Spaces program

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For Immediate Release

Victoria, BC — Today the Victoria Hospitals Foundation announced that since the Sovereign Order of St. John, Victoria Commandery, launched its *Living Spaces* program in December 2007, the Order has donated a total of \$187,000 and assisted 191 mental health clients in Victoria. The *Living Spaces* program supports mentally ill clients either entering the transitional housing program or receiving services through the downtown Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams. Clients are provided with the necessities of life such as beds, pillows, bedding and mattresses which they can keep as they move towards more independent living.

"*Living Spaces* reaches one of Greater Victoria's most vulnerable populations," said Leslee Farrell, chair of the charity committee, Sovereign Order of St. John, Victoria Commandery. "We want to support these individuals as they are making the difficult move from homelessness to a hopefully more stable, improved life."

The Sovereign Order of St. John's *Living Spaces* project originally worked through Vancouver Island Health Authority's (VIHA) supportive housing program, which provides intensive 24-hour support and regular professional medical services to mental health clients. Clients of the program live in community-based apartment-style units in the Victoria area and may also receive living skills training and vocational rehabilitation.

Over the past year, *Living Spaces* expanded to include more of a downtown focus by supporting the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams. These teams focus on individual clients and their recovery by facilitating community living, psychosocial rehabilitation, and recovery for people who have the most serious and complex mental illnesses. Services provided by the ACT Teams are individually tailored to meet the needs of each client and are delivered by a mobile group of mental health staff from a variety of disciplines, working as a team.

"Living Spaces is a fantastic example of a group of community-minded individuals getting behind a worthwhile cause to really make a difference," said Bill Thomson, board vice chair, Victoria Hospitals Foundation. "We are grateful the Sovereign Order of St. John has made such a solid commitment to support this important program."

VIHA provides supportive housing to approximately 800 individuals in 24 separate facilities in the Greater Victoria area.

The Victoria Hospitals Foundation works with VIHA to facilitate the donation of funds to key area of need. Individuals wanting to support to the *Living Spaces* project can contact the Victoria Hospitals Foundation or go to www.victoriahf.ca.

For more information about the Order of St. John visit: www.sosj-victoria.ca.

About the Victoria Hospitals Foundation:

The Victoria Hospitals Foundation works in partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority to enable donations to Vancouver Island's two largest and most comprehensive hospitals: the Royal Jubilee and the Victoria General. Every year we fund 40 per cent of capital equipment purchases for these hospitals, and last year this amounted to more than \$6 million for urgently needed medical equipment and special projects that help these two hospitals provide care to all 752,000 residents of Vancouver Island. Since 1989, the Victoria Hospitals Foundation has raised more than \$70 million to benefit our hospitals. For more information, call the Foundation at 250-414-6688 or go to www.victoriahf.ca.

About the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller:

The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller is a non-political, ecumenical, international organization with branches around the world and a head office in Vancouver.

Its history dates back to the late 11th century, before the Crusades, when a hostel was established to provide respite for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. During the first Crusade, this hostel was converted to a hospital to serve both pilgrims and crusaders.

The active branch in our city, known as the Victoria Commandery, has continued the tradition of supporting those who are in need. Its members are known for their extensive voluntary contributions to a variety of charitable organizations in the Greater Victoria community and elsewhere. They become members of Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem by invitation. People invited to enter the Order are recognized for their achievements and contributions to their community, as well as their desire to contribute to the goals of the Order.

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