

Vancouver Charity Combatting Youth Homelessness Selected as One of Canada's Top 10 Impact Charities

VANCOUVER, BC – Aunt Leah's Place, a Metro Vancouver charity providing housing and support for youth aging out of foster care and young moms and babies, has been **selected as one of Canada's Top 10 Impact Charities for 2017 by Charity Intelligence (Ci).**

Charity Intelligence has **picked the Top Ten 10 most effective Canadian charities that combat issues such as hunger, homelessness, health, and improving education.** According to Ci's Director of Research, Greg Thomson, **"High impact charities are likely to be the most effective at changing lives.** For your dollar, these charities are creating the most positive change we have seen These 10 high-impact charities, as a group, are likely to produce over \$600 in value from a \$100 gift!"

"What we do at Aunt Leah's is to stop the cycle of homelessness and foster care by providing housing and a family-like support system for youth who are aging out of foster care and for young moms." Says Executive Director Sarah Stewart, "Without a supportive home to go to, these moms—many of whom were foster kids themselves-- would be homeless and lose their babies to the foster care system."

It is estimated that half of BC foster youth will experience homelessness. The University of Victoria report, [Avoiding the Precipice](#), found that Aunt Leah's services and supports helped former foster youth avoid homelessness and maintain market housing. According to the study an average of 86% of *Aunt Leah's* participants were safe, independent and in housing. In 2016, 93% of moms leaving the Aunt Leah's Threshold Program, a unique program that provides housing and support for homeless moms and their children, secured safe housing and maintained custody of their children.

A recent report, [OPPORTUNITIES IN TRANSITION: An Economic Analysis of Investing in Youth Aging out of Foster Care in their 20s](#) states "Support for social and community connections should recognize the role of service organizations in assisting youth aging out of care find and maintain adequate housing... An evaluation of Aunt Leah's Link program found that it successfully helped youth aging out of care work through housing issues."

The report demonstrates the cost benefit of supporting this vulnerable population. Annual costs of up to \$268 million are associated with the adverse experiences many youth aging out of foster care at 19 encounter, while a much lower level of investment - \$57 million per year – would be required to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

Aunt Leah's is looking forward to having even greater impact going forward. They have recently partnered with BC Housing to acquire ownership of a 10-unit apartment building and a five bedroom home, giving them increased capacity to provide affordable housing to youth from foster care and moms from care and their babies.

Marcia Tait is one of those moms who has benefited from Aunt Leah's support. Marcia came to the Thresholds program on a cold day in February of 2015. The staff listened to Marcia's story and assured her that this was the place she needed to be. She moved into Thresholds a few days later.

Today Marcia and her youngest daughter, who she is now reunited with, are living independently in their own apartment and Marcia acts as a Peer Mentor for Threshold's current and past moms.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2018, Aunt Leah's has a long tradition of social entrepreneurship, operating several businesses which both give employment opportunities to youth from care and generate almost 20% of its annual revenue.

The biggest revenue generator is the **Aunt Leah's Tree Lots which are now open in** Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby, New West and Coquitlam. One hundred per cent of profits from the sale of the trees go to support the housing programs. In addition Aunt Leah's youth gain valuable job experience working on the lots.

"Our customers love the fact that they can help provide housing for vulnerable youth and young moms and babies by just buying a Christmas tree." says Angelina Oates, Tree Lot Coordinator. "For a lot of families an Aunt Leah's Christmas tree is a cherished part of their Christmas tradition."

<https://auntleahs.org/social-enterprise/tree-lots/>

To download a media kit, backgrounders and photos go to the Branding section on the [Media Centre](#)

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