



TALITHA KOUM SOCIETY

FROM THE HEART

“LOVING OUR CLIENTS BACK TO LIVING”



A CHRISTMAS TRADITION: Our clients gathered at Gianna House recently to take part in a holiday tradition—baking and decorating Christmas cookies! A big TK ‘thank you’ to volunteer Milena Bebic for acting as Chef de Cuisine.

Thanks and farewell to Sr. Denece

In the 25 years of TK’s existence, 64 men and women have served as directors of the society, none more faithfully than Sister Denece Billesberger.



Earlier this year, Sr. Denece, a member of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, announced that this fruitful relationship would be ending and that she would not be seeking re-election to the board at our September AGM.

But while her retirement leaves a void in our collective heart, the memory of her service as board president, treasurer, and director will surely sustain us.

During her near-quarter-century on the board, Sr. Denece graciously and enthusiastically shared her skills, talents, and

love with TK clients and staff alike.

As well, her “institutional memory” was invaluable in ensuring founder Starr Peardon’s vision for Talitha Koum continued to be honoured. We are most grateful for all she contributed. Thank you, Sr. Denece, and God be With You!

--Mary O’Neill, President

Christmas is the season for love and hope

You’ve no doubt read many times that the most vital quality of our recovery program is the unconditional love we extend to our clients.

Indeed, as a fundamental virtue, love is central not only to our work at TK but also to our daily life.

Our relationship with our clients is not a one-way street when it comes to virtue, however.

Whether they realize it or not, our clients also bring something special to us. And this is the virtue of hope—hope for recovery from their addiction, hope for a better future, hope for happiness.

The desire for happiness is in everyone’s heart, and it’s our honour and privilege to be a vehicle through which our clients can express this hope and realize their dreams.

The inspirational profile of one of our recent graduates, Brittany, on page two of this newsletter, is certainly an example of this.

As we approach Christmas with love and hope in our hearts, our thoughts also turn to our partners and supporters, without whom our labour of love here at TK would not be possible.

We are most grateful for the charity and love that these partnerships embody.

Thank you!

Here’s wishing you and your family a joyful and hope-filled Christmas!

—Odo Nkum, Executive Director

'It was the best decision of my life'

TK grad Brittany shares her story

How did she do it?

How, in just 10 months, did Brittany transform herself from an angry, depressed, and suicidal woman, addicted to drugs, into a sober, optimistic, and determined lover of life? How did the now-29-year-old Abbotsford resident go from being someone who thought her life was over to an engaged young woman with big dreams and an even bigger heart? How *did* she do it?

In truth, the light first flickered on when she stumbled on something as innocuous as a friend's Facebook post.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. To better appreciate Brittany's journey, we've got to go back to the beginning. Brittany says her childhood was one in which she experienced neglect and abuse. She started drinking when she was just 12, began "experimenting" with drugs a year later, and then, under the influence of an older boyfriend, tried heroin at 19.

"I went back to drinking in my early 20s, but it was heavily and every single day," she says. "That's the only way I knew how to socialize." Brittany managed to graduate from high school, but her drinking continued and "eventually I just turned to using straight drugs, all the time."

The end very nearly came two days before Christmas last year, when, with no money and no job, and seeing no way to escape her addiction and an abusive boyfriend, she deliberately overdosed.

"It was a really lonely time, when I felt that nobody loved me, nobody cared," Brittany says. Thankfully, her grandmother (with whom she was living) found her. Emergency responders were able to save her life.

A short while later, she came across a Facebook item posted by an old friend—someone she had done drugs with as a teen. The post showed that the friend was in recovery and thriving. This gave Brittany the ray of hope she needed.

"I asked her to take me to an AA meeting," Brittany says, "And so I went, and then she gave me Talitha Koum's phone number." The friend had gone through the TK program and said it really worked. Brittany made the call and was welcomed into Starr House in January of this year. "I was just terrified at first," she says. "I was scared. And I was angry that I had gotten to that point in my life." It was her first time in recovery.

Moving into Starr House wasn't easy. "I wasn't used to all the rules, the structure," she says. "But they really do get you prepared for real life."



God had abandoned me," she says. "Really, it was me who had abandoned God."



Here's exactly how Brittany describes what happened when, prayer-like, she read her Step 4 journal aloud to God:

"I got more emotional than I expected to. And then when I was done, I just took a few minutes to breathe. It was really rainy out and all of sudden it got really sunny.

"And I just felt that it was God saying, 'I forgive you.' And then after that it just felt like there was a lot of weight off my shoulders. I'm forgiven, and I just keep doing better."

Today, she is a thankful graduate of TK, employed full-time at a furniture store, and, with the support of an anonymous TK donor, has started training to be a chef. Her goal is to work

on cruise ships, see the world, and earn enough money to buy a home.



"Then I want to foster or adopt some children," Brittany says, adding that she cannot have children herself.

"I want to take care of kids who need it and be the person I needed when I was a kid."

Her advice to others struggling like she did: "Anything is possible. Stick it out. I mean, if I can do it, anybody can do it. Going into

recovery was the hardest decision of my life, and it's the best decision of my life.

"And I'm grateful for it every single day. You can do it!"



OH WHAT A NIGHT! Our 25th Anniversary ‘Set Her Free’ Fundraising Gala on Nov. 2 was a tremendous success, raising funds for our recovery programs and building memories that will last for at least another quarter of a century! Thanks to all the folks who organized, volunteered, entertained, served, bought tickets, donated, and otherwise supported the event. A special thanks to the women of Talitha Koum—clients, graduates, directors, and staff—who graced us with their presence, especially alumna Helen for her moving testimony. And we are very grateful to ‘Diamond Sponsor’ Beedie and all the other donors. Thank you! Photo info from top left, going clockwise: Singer Tami Comuzzi entertained us with her beautiful voice; part of the full-house audience at the lovely St. Clare of Assisi Parish Centre; our balloons were from St. Clare’s own 25th-anniversary celebration a month earlier; MC Terry O’Neill with TK supporters (l-r) Anna Rosa Stewart, June Chen, and Daniela Asmundson; our celebratory cake was baked by volunteer Milena Bebic.

BARBER BENEVOLENCE

Stylists’ patrons rally ‘round TK

Hats off to the hairstylists at Vancouver’s Marine Hairstyling for Men for organizing a multi-month fundraising campaign for Talitha Koum—something they do every year for one lucky non-profit society. As shown in photo, TK directors Terry and Mary O’Neill met with stylists (l-r) Anna, Iveta, and Ana in early November to accept the “big” cheque of \$12,550, which will support our mission of loving our clients back to living. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the generosity of Marine’s customers, “The Gentlemen of Marine Hairstyling,” whose generosity is exceeded only by their loyalty to Marine Hairstyling. Thank you!





TALITHA KOUM
SOCIETY

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Registered Charity

#89054 8910 RR0001
Mail: Como Lake Post Office
Box 64596 Coquitlam, BC V3J 7V7
Office: (604) 492-3393
admin@talithakoumsociety.org
www.talithakoumsociety.org

Our Mission Statement

Talitha Koum Society is a non-profit organization empowering women with addictions to lead healthy and fulfilling lives by providing a home, a nurturing community, 12-step programming, & life-skills training.

The society operates three homes in partnership with **B.C. Housing**, the **City of Coquitlam**, and **Redemption Church**.

Reconciliation program builds bridges between cultures ... and clients, too!



DRUM-MAKING CLASS: A space for all clients to learn about Indigenous culture.

TK clients are embracing a new program that helps bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and individuals.

The program, which is supported by a grant from the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, builds on TK's history of supporting its many Indigenous clients through such practices as group discussions with Indigenous Elders, nature walks, and traditional-meal preparation.

As Indigenous and non-Indigenous women came together, staff recognized there was a need for deeper understanding and reconciliation between clients.

Some non-Indigenous clients are not familiar with Indigenous histories and experiences, leading to misunderstandings and, at times, tension.

To bridge this gap and build a more cohesive community, Talitha Koum has launched regular group sessions dedicated to Indigenous learnings and reconciliation. Led by Indigenous Elders, recent activities have included a beading workshop and a drum-making class.

Executive Director Odo Nkum explains that, through traditional arts and crafts, as well as storytelling and discussions, the program is offering a space for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients to learn, share, and connect.

"We are most grateful to the archdiocese for providing us with the means to deliver this invaluable program," Nkum said.

PARTNER WITH US THROUGH A DONATION

Online: Visit www.tkrecovery.ca/donate, or use our new QR code at right:

E-transfer: E-transfer: admin@talithakoumsociety.org.

Cheque: Mail (include your return and email addresses): Talitha Koum Society, Como Lake Post Office, PO Box 64596, Coquitlam, B.C., V3J 7V7

Phone: Call 604-492-3393 for more information.

A charitable tax receipt will be sent for donations of \$20 or more. For more information, email admin@talithakoumsociety.org. Registered Charity #89054 8910 RR0001. We will keep all personal information in strictest confidence. By providing your email address, you are agreeing to receive emails from Talitha Koum Society. These may include e-newsletters, event invitations, and requests for support.

