



TALITHA KOUM SOCIETY

FROM THE HEART

“LOVING OUR CLIENTS BACK TO LIVING”

OUR NEW PHARMACY PARTNERSHIP

‘More than a pill counter’



PHARMACIST KUMAR: *Focus on service to better a client's life.*

The Talitha Koum Society is happy to announce that it has accepted Oxford Pharmacy's offer to enter into a partnership that will see TK's clients receive a full range of services to meet their often-complex needs.

“This new arrangement provides a host of benefits for TK and our clients,” says Executive Director **Odo Nkum**.

“And the icing on the cake is that it won't cost us a penny more. We are most grateful for what Oxford Pharmacy is now providing.”

Oxford's proprietor, pharmacist **Lokesh Kumar**, says he views his work as more than “just counting the pills.” Instead, he sees his role as being an integral part of a patient's life.

“You have to use your power for patient betterment” Kumar says.

“And if you do that, trust me, you are making a big impact on a patient's life.”

Kumar has already met one-on-one with all TK clients to better understand their medication needs, related to both their addiction and their overall medical health—something that has often been neglected because of their past lifestyle.

Nkum says the new partnership with the Port Coquitlam-based pharmacy brings with it “several significant advantages” over TK's prior relationship with a big-name Coquitlam pharmacy.

“We were well served by their staff, but they couldn't provide the same sort of specialized service that Lokesh and his team can.” **CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE**

SAVE THE DATE FOR MAY 30TH CONCERT

We are pleased to announce that Brentwood Presbyterian Church will be staging a benefit jazz concert for Talitha Koum on Friday, May 30, at the church, 1600 Delta Ave., Burnaby.

The church has become a ‘jazz mecca’ in recent years, staging weekly Jazz Evensong services and commissioning jazz music for its worship services.

Please watch our Facebook page and website or check your email this spring for ticket-purchase and other details.

‘Coats for Kids’



TK'S O'NEILL: *‘Thoughtful donation.’*

This winter, we received 24 new kids' coats from the Knights of Columbus's Kids for Coats program.

Because TK allows clients to have their young children live with them, we are often in need of kids' clothing just like this,” says TK president **Mary O'Neill**, shown in photo with some of the coats.

“We are most grateful to the Knights for this very thoughtful donation.”

The Knights have distributed a million coats across North America over the past 15 years.

EMILY'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

1,170 kilometres to a new life

The Peace River city of Dawson Creek is famous for being “Mile 0” of the Alaska Highway, the historic route from British Columbia north to Alaska.

What's more important to recent Talitha Koum grad Emily, however, is the fact that it was also Mile 0 for a life-changing, 1,170-kilometre drive from her Dawson Creek home south to TK's Starr House in Coquitlam.

It was August of 2023 when, not long after hearing from a social worker that Talitha Koum's recovery program was “really, really good,” Emily, now 27, phoned TK Executive Director Odo Nkum and asked to be admitted. “I remember exactly what Odo said,” Emily recalls. “It was, ‘I don't care what state you're in, just get down here now and be safe.’”

What followed was an epic, 16-hour drive with her father, culminating in a midnight arrival at Starr House. It was her first time in recovery, Emily says, but “I never doubted that it was going to work. I said to myself, ‘I'll stick it out, no matter what.’”

Her motivation was a powerful one: her young son, who had been taken into care by the government because of her addiction. “I wanted him back. I wanted to be a mom again.” Emily says she had “a pretty joyful childhood” growing up but started smoking marijuana with friends when she was 14. “It was just fun,” she says. “It's that euphoria, right?” She was able to graduate from high school, but her seemingly harmless weekend habit had progressed to ever-harder drugs and to addiction.

It took the arrival of her son for her to begin to turn her life around. She had stopped using drugs leading up to his birth, which Emily describes as “the best day of my life.” Similarly, she says the following few days were the opposite of post-partum depression: “I was just so elated.”

But for reasons she does not explain, the moment she was left alone, she met up with her dealer, used again, and passed out. “There were drugs all over,” she says. “I don't know if I overdosed, or what.” Her father called the Ministry of Children and Families, and officials soon took her son into care.

Making matters worse, she was arrested on some outstanding warrants. That was the lowest time of my life, by far,” she says.



SIGN OF SUCCESS: 18 months and counting!

“Sitting in that jail cell, I was like, ‘I just want my baby. I'll do anything.’”

She was released the next day and ordered to receive drug counselling.

That's when her social worker mentioned TK. But she still wasn't ready. And then her boyfriend—the father of her child—was sent to jail, after which she fell “into a really bad crowd.” Finally, she called TK.

Events moved quickly after she arrived at Starr House. Just three months after entering TK she was able to regain custody of her son, now almost two, with whom she is living in Gianna House. “I experienced this ‘surrender’ that TK talks about,” she says. “I didn't feel judged by anybody. And I found that the more I opened up, the more doors opened up for me. It was liberating.”

Emily says an important part of her recovery was her acceptance of her relationship with a higher power. She recalls visiting a Coquitlam church and

thinking, “If God is anywhere, He's here.” She now finds comfort when she prays or meditates.

Not surprisingly, Emily has high hopes for a bright future. She is looking to further her education in order to become either a specialist in early-childhood education or a social worker.

When asked how she might feel when people read her inspiring story,

Emily's face brightens as she answers, “It makes me feel ambitious. I can do more. I can reach people. I can help people. That's a good feeling.”

She continues,

“Instead of taking from society, I'll be able to give back to the population I identify with; to see addicts on the street, I feel so much compassion for them. I just want to scoop them up and put them in a little safety box!”

Emily says she is extremely grateful for what TK has given her. “I didn't know it,” she says, “but it's all I ever wanted.”



EMILY'S GRADUATION: 'Liberating.'

Donated food fuels TK clients



DOOR DELIVERY: *Reihaneh Mirjani of Coquitlam's Food Link Society delivers lasagne, courtesy of Saputo, to Starr House support worker (and TK graduate) Kristen.*

The calls and emails can come at any time of the day, and at any day of the week. The messages are direct and time-sensitive: "Food Link has something for you. When can we drop it off?" Or "Second Harvest has a food rescue for you at our store. Pickup by 4 p.m."

The latter is the cue for a volunteer to spring into action.

There's a quick drive to the store, a push on the delivery-door buzzer, a greeting from a stock clerk, and then the big reveal: 12 boxes of frozen breakfast snacks, 10 boxes read-to-eat Asian chicken, and dozens of assorted goodies.

"With the high cost of food these days, our budget is really stretched," says TK Executive Director Odo Nkum. "So we truly appreciate these donations."

Likewise, TK is grateful for the volunteer drivers. *If you would like to be a volunteer driver, email admin@talithakoumsociety.org or call 604-492-3393. Thank you!*



CRAFTING UNDERSTANDING: *TK clients enjoyed their mid-March cedar-basket-making session with Elder Mary Jane and husband Wayne. The session was part of our ongoing cultural-understanding project, sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver's Indigenous Reconciliation Fund.*

TRI-CITIES SOROPTIMISTS

A new community connection

The mission of the Soroptimists, an international women's group, is to ensure women and girls have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and to live their dreams.

For the 50 members of the Tri-Cities branch of the Soroptimists, this mission has led them to Talitha Koum, where a dozen women have committed to sharing their experiences and knowledge with TK clients in support of their recovery.

"It's one part mentor, one part teacher, and one part big sister," says TK Executive Director Odo Nkum. "We are really looking forward to them being with our clients." Four members of the Soroptimists met with TK staff and board members in mid-March to discuss this new relationship. They



BRAINSTORMING SESSION: *Fulfilling potential.*

brainstormed ways in which the Soroptimists can fulfill their desire to serve while also understanding the often-complex journey of recovering addicts.

One of the volunteers is a retired doctor, who is eager to work with clients on issues such as smoking cessation and the importance of regular medical checkups. "I would really like to support them to get their health back on an even keel," she said. "I'm here to support them."

Another wants to focus on crafts such as stone painting. Others will share financial advice and cooking instruction. There's also a potential for some Soroptimists to become volunteer drivers.

"We are very grateful for the involvement of these intelligent, experienced, and passionate women," said TK President Mary O'Neill. "Thank you."



TALITHA KOUM
SOCIETY

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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, and life-skills training.

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

Designed to meet clients' Rx needs

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
Nkum says these services include streamlined client medication management, decreased wait times, and minimized disruptions to TK's programs, which will facilitate seamless client participation.

Nkum expects to see accelerated transitions for clients moving to TK, as delays related to prescriptions are substantially reduced. In addition, comprehensive prescriptions support will allow for efficient navigation through access to virtual general practitioners and on-call pharmacists. (Oxford Pharmacy's bustling Lougheed Highway facility is also home to the offices of several family doctors.)

Another important benefit of the partnership is that TK will not have to store medications, as Oxford personnel will deliver them on a daily basis, at no extra cost.

Lumar says that, when looking for organizations and institutions to reach out to in order to expand his business, he was excited to see that Talitha Koum is focused on empowering women's recovery; he now feels privileged to work with TK. When asked how he can afford to provide such a full range of services without charging extra, he answered with these inspiring words: "I don't work only for the money. Money will always come to you if you deserve it"

THREE HOMES, ONE MISSION

Former U.S. First Lady Rosalynn Carter once said, "There is nothing more important than a good, safe, secure home." We agree, and that's why TK believes in providing a loving, safe, and secure home for our clients and their children. *Actually, make that 3 homes!*

The first into which a new client enters is **Starr House**, our "program house," where women working on the initial stages of their 12-Step Program reside and receive wrap-around support. In mid-March, it was home to nine women with several more on a waitlist.

Gianna House, our "second-stage" home, welcomes moms and children along with clients working on their final Steps. The home allows for more-independent living, including employment and school, while still receiving our support. Gianna was home to seven women and three children in mid-March.

When clients leave Gianna, they can go home or we may accommodate them at our "bridging home," **Redemption House**. They pay a subsidized rent and live independently but still maintain contact with our outreach coordinator. In mid-March, Redemption was home to five women, all of whom had jobs. We are most grateful to B.C. Housing (Starr titleholder), the City of Coquitlam (Gianna partner), and Redemption Church (Redemption partner) for their support as we work to fulfill our mission to love our clients back to living.

PARTNER WITH US THROUGH A DONATION

Online: Visit www.tkrecovery.ca/donate, or use our 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.

