Front Cover Artwork: Cori Creed - “The Things We Remember”
Our Mission

Aunt Leah’s helps prevent children in foster care from becoming homeless, and mothers in need from losing custody of their children.

To support them on their journey to self-sufficiency, we provide supported housing, job training and coaching on essential life skills.

Our Core Values

Celebration is essential to a successful life.

An individual’s artistic/soulful centre must be expressed and appreciated.

Success is fragile and must be tended to and supported with care.

All behaviour has meaning and is the human tool for communication.

Entrepreneurial spirit builds individuals and organizations.

Community building ensures that we all have a place to go when we need support.
What We Do

Aunt Leah’s offers four main areas of support services in Metro Vancouver for youth and young moms to help them transition to independent living.

Housing

The housing we provide consists of semi-independent living suites, as well as communal living for young single moms and their babies.

Job Training

Job Training opportunities are available for work in Restaurants and retail stores. Training includes work experience, help with resumes, interviewing and help finding jobs for youth.

Life Skills Training

We teach basic life management skills necessary for independent living, including banking, budgeting, health and well-being, laundry, cleaning, shopping, and cooking.

Plus-19 Services

Aunt Leah’s Place is one of the few childcare providers in Canada that guarantees a continuum of care and planning past age 19 for the foster children we serve. We provide support based upon the individual challenges faced by each youth.

“I like how they go above and beyond to get answers and find support for us. Practical too. They help me get my laundry done. They help me and my partner with our relationship. They help me get along with another Link participant. Otherwise we’d get into a fight. They help distract me, help me to calm down.”

- Aunt Leah’s Participant
It is with pleasure I report to the membership, supporters and friends of Aunt Leah’s for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. The past year marked significant milestones for Aunt Leah’s, notably having been chosen as one of 2012 Top Picks by the Charitable Intelligence Organization and celebrating 2013 as the society’s 25th anniversary.

This year we saw Aunt Leah’s House and Thresholds at full capacity. Support Link referrals remained consistent and the relatively new LINK program continues to gain exposure, evidenced by growing numbers of youth registering for services. This year Aunt Leah’s core programs served 194 youth. The tree lots also had another successful year having achieved record profits that support programming.

While the staff at Aunt Leah’s continues to deliver valuable programming and support for youth and young moms, the Aunt Leah’s larger community has also continued to support the organization through challenging financial circumstances as well as exciting periods of growth. The year-end financial statements are indicative of the value donations and grants continue to have on the success of Aunt Leah’s.

The upcoming year will be an exciting time for the board as we look to bring on new board members and work with Aunt Leah’s staff toward another successful 25 years.

On behalf of the Board of Directors thank you for your ongoing support of Aunt Leah’s.

Bina Bawa
This coming year we will celebrate 25 years of service and we are anticipating a great party. “Celebration” is one of the core values at Aunt Leah’s Place. We believe that it is foundational to a successful life. No doubt you have and will hear more about the various events being planned. During these past 25 years we have cared for over 1000 kids and another 500 moms and babies. We have introduced celebration to a group of young people who were never celebrated themselves and who often lack the skills to know how to celebrate.

Our 25th Anniversary is an amazing milestone. Starting as a new service in the fall of 1988 and with full government funding, we were trained and educated by the moms and youth we served. We grew and for a decade provided a unique and valuable service. Then in our second decade we experienced the beginnings of significant government cuts. Once again we educated ourselves (this time in fundraising), we grew and survived to reach this important anniversary. Perhaps we are the little organizational “engine that could”. Many of you financially participated in this endeavor and for that, I thank you.

In the early years, we knew that foster kids did not do well when they reached their nineteenth birthday, when they aged out of government care. We would see them return to our offices looking for connection, asking for help and support in gaining or maintaining their housing. They would ask for a phone to use, a bus ticket, or emergency food. In those days we could only minimally provide assistance. Today what we have always known anecdotally about foster kids and their transition to adulthood has become fact and proven by research. We now know that Foster kids aging out of government care and left without support are the next vulnerable group to enter the homeless population.

In this 25th year, we can celebrate the existence (for the first time) of “The LINK” program that provides a continuum of care for foster kids from age sixteen through to their mid-twenties. It mirrors what mainstream families provide for their adult children. What a great achievement.

As always, I would like to thank the staff of Aunt Leah’s Place. These are the caregivers, administrators and fundraisers who make it happen. The past year has had its challenges but their strong commitment has brought us to this 25th year of service. Thanks also to the Aunt Leah’s Board and a special thank you to Bina Bawa for her work as board chair. Please join me in celebrating a new awareness, a new understanding of the plight of foster children and a new and hopeful message being communicated. "Thank you for being part of a steadily growing group of people who care about foster kids and want to make a difference in their lives.

In the spirit of Leah

Gale Stewart
2012-2013 has been a year of expanded programming based on needs-led evidence. Our Post Majority Services and advocacy for former foster children in The LINK Program along with the moms and babies (Thresholds Supportive Housing) has doubled in the number of persons served. In 2011-12 we worked with 57 young people. In this past fiscal, those numbers have increased to 101.

The young people and families that we are working with are struggling to find and keep their housing while juggling the many other challenges in their lives. At the age of 19, finding yourself suddenly having to earn money for shelter and food, when you have no previous experience to draw from is difficult. Compounding these challenges are struggles around addictions, mental and emotional health that are often triggered with increased anxieties. Aunt Leah’s young people desperately need a place to connect with adults who care and understand what’s happening to them. Our Support Workers are often providing a bag of groceries from our food cupboard to help a youth get through the week and also providing short term assistance while the youth gains sufficient funds to rent their own place.

Many times the young person is forced to live in unsafe or unstable housing. This is often due to family conflict, a roommate dispute, or an unscrupulous landlord. The youth can become threatened in his or her own home. Often young people are at our office door first thing in the morning to get a coffee and a piece of toast. They are there because they have had to spend the night on the street or they have to be out of their shelter by a certain time.

On Mondays we provide a “Fresh Food Program” for our moms and babies. The program provides a space for moms to build community, provides access to milk, eggs, bread and fresh produce and relevant workshops on parenting skills. This is such a vital program. Many of these families are dealing with isolation connected to poverty and wrestle with choices between rent payment and food for their children. Access to food, bus tickets and advocacy reduces the anxiety these young moms face and supports better health and positive growth in their family relationships.

Government budget cuts continue. Agencies under government contracts continue to struggle to find the resources to provide a continuum of care for former foster children who need to transition into adulthood. The Representative for Children & Youth states that there is a “low ministry compliance in ensuring children in continuing custody have an active plan of care.” Social workers do not have time to effectively plan for the many children they are assigned. Fortunately for some of these young people, they are connected with Aunt Leah’s Place and have adults who can provide a
continuum of care from adolescence into adulthood. Aunt Leah’s Place tries very hard to mirror what mainstream families provide for their children when they reach adulthood.

This year, we are excited to report a new partnership with the University of Victoria (Faculty of Human and Social Development). Aunt Leah’s received a Federal Grant through the Homelessness Partnership Secretariat to complete a Quasi-Experimental Assessment of Youth Homelessness Prevention through our Link Program. It is very gratifying to read the interim report on this research project and see what we have known anecdotally is now recorded fact. Our hope is that this research will provide Aunt Leah’s Place and other agencies with valuable data to support their programs and mandates in the work they do to prevent youth homelessness.

Sarah Stewart

“I have no other supports. My social worker said ‘come and visit’ but there is no support. 19? That’s BS; just because you can drink booze doesn't mean you don't need help. You should be able to get support until age 21.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant
Board of Directors

Current Board Members as of September 7, 2013

Bina Bawa
Board Chair
Senior Account Manager, Commercial Banking
HSBC Bank Canada

Robert Jackes
Treasurer
Faculty at UBC
Sauder School of Business

Elizabeth Bowker
Board Member
Lecturer, Sauder School of Business and Principal of Blue Moon Management

Margaret Ross
Vice Chair
Retired BCTF Staff

Andrea Harris
Board Member
Manager, Community Investment
Vancity Credit Union

Sharon Smith
Secretary
Sales Manager, Print and Digital for The Georgia Straight
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Team</th>
<th>Program Coordinators</th>
<th>Programming Staff</th>
<th>Development &amp; Administration</th>
<th>Aunt Leah's Urban Thrift Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gale Stewart</td>
<td>Pam Costello</td>
<td>Amanjot Mohem</td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
<td>Ali Andeku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Stewart</td>
<td>Autumn Moreno</td>
<td>Shari-Lyn Rougeau</td>
<td>Event &amp; Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>Caede Pungente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina Oates</td>
<td>Roshine Morrison</td>
<td>Laura Balaski</td>
<td>Fundraising Assistant</td>
<td>Chloë Dunn</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cindy Reinhold</td>
<td>Development Officer</td>
<td>Karin King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Veronica Valade</td>
<td>Communications &amp; Website Mgr.</td>
<td>Drew Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Husain Vahanvally</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>Trina Bagnall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Michelle Roque</td>
<td>Technical Manager</td>
<td>Dumisile Owane</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah Mitchell</td>
<td></td>
<td>Karen Sorenson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brittany Timmons</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Stewart</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elin Staniforth</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Andre Richer</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bridget Orford</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Current Staff as of September 7, 2013 |

- Gale Stewart
- Sarah Stewart
- Angelina Oates
- Pam Costello
- Autumn Moreno
- Roshine Morrison
- Amanjot Mohem
- Shari-Lyn Rougeau
- Laura Balaski
- Cindy Reinhold
- Veronica Valade
- Husain Vahanvally
- Michelle Roque
- Sarah Mitchell
- Brittany Timmons
- Paul Stewart
- Elin Staniforth
- Andre Richer
- Bridget Orford
**Aunt Leah’s**  
*Independent Lifeskills Society*  
Statement of Operations  
For the Year Ended March 31, 2013

### Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees for service</td>
<td>$1,136,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects and fundraising</td>
<td>112,009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>229,255</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>546,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,024,468</strong></td>
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</table>

### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising and promotion</td>
<td>9,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization</td>
<td>8,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank charges and interest</td>
<td>29,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and clothing</td>
<td>105,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Fees</td>
<td>32,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>10,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and operating expense</td>
<td>22,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional fees</td>
<td>9,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program and training</td>
<td>156,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>11,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent – Supportive housing</td>
<td>260,513</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent - Administration</td>
<td>97,455</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance</td>
<td>27,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and benefits</td>
<td>1,046,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff development</td>
<td>9,888</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology services</td>
<td>27,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>61,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>54,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,980,705</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Excess of Expense Over Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excess of Expense Over Revenue</td>
<td>43,763</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like a copy of our audited Financial Statements prepared by Galloway Botteselle & Company, please contact us at auntleahs@auntleahs.org or by phone at 604-525-1204
## Participants Served Through Aunt Leah’s Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Programs</th>
<th>Persons Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Link</strong> – Youth transitioning out of care</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aunt Leah’s House</strong> – Pregnant and parenting teen moms</td>
<td>Moms: 10, Babies: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thresholds</strong> – Supportive housing for at-risk moms</td>
<td>Moms: 13, Babies: 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Residential Programs Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Participants through Aunt Leah’s Programs in 2012-13</th>
<th>194</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Outreach/Life skills Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach/Life skills Programs</th>
<th>Persons Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential Skills Workshops</strong> – Weekly life skills workshops, 43 workshops were held</td>
<td>15 avg per workshop*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Link Program/Drop-In</strong> - Continuum of care</td>
<td>Youth/Young Adults: 63, Families: 7, Children: 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Training Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Programs</th>
<th>Persons Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooking Club</strong> (June 2012 cooking club closed, as partnership with kitchen space ended.)</td>
<td>Graduates: 5, Classes: 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail Training</strong> – three 12-week sessions</td>
<td>Youth/Young Adults: 29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tree Lot Retail Training</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average number of participants per workshop – total attendance was at 671 participants, but this total reflects many of the same participants attending different workshops.

* Attendance at Essential Skills workshops are mainly comprised of individuals participating in Aunt Leah’s Residential Programs or participating in Aunt Leah’s Link Program

** 14 participants were connected to MCFD

Total Participants – this total does not include attendance at the Essential Skills Workshops
Residential Program for Teen Mothers

“The family you come from isn't as important as the family you're going to have”. -Lardner Ring

Aunt Leah’s House is a licensed residential program that provides 24 hour housing and support services in a safe, healthy and positive environment for four pregnant or parenting Aboriginal teen mothers and their babies.

At Aunt Leah’s House, moms are supported through the changes that are happening in their lives. They have an opportunity to learn the parenting and life skills needed for a healthy start. We provide workshops designed around essential life skills, including information to support the mothers in caring for their children. We also provide practical support, such as meals, housekeeping, and child care. We arrange for a variety of art and craft programs and support moms in learning to incorporate creativity and self-expression skills into their lives. We also provide guidance and opportunities for moms to learn and practice positive coping skills and self-care. To facilitate a sense of connectedness and spiritual growth, moms learn about and incorporate their Aboriginal culture and spirituality into their lives.

“The worker gets on a personal level. I can talk with her about anything. She shows that she cares. I can even talk about girl talk. She is very open and warm. It isn't a business relationship.”
- Young mother

Moms and babies are also connected to a public health nurse, alcohol and drug counselors, and other professionals. An outreach worker is available to provide support and referrals to resources and services provided outside of the program. Moms at Aunt Leah’s House have their own key support worker who works one-on-one with them. This enables the support workers to develop close relationships with the moms while supporting them to become more successful both as parents and as individuals.

Moms accessing Aunt Leah’s House often come from unstable and unhealthy environments. They are in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and they have had very little, if any, experience receiving the
support that ideally, an extended family would provide. Many have had the traumatic experience of being removed from their parents’ care and now they risk losing custody of their own child. While living at Aunt Leah’s House, Moms have an opportunity to experience positive attachment, to be supported through this difficult time, and to learn how to support each other.

Each year, twelve moms and babies have lived at Aunt Leah’s House. Many of those moms transitioned successfully into independence with their babies and we believe the skills they learned, as well as the experience of being supported and cared for will continue to benefit them for a long time after they have left. For a variety of reasons, not all babies remain in the custody of their moms, but because of the support of Aunt Leah’s House, all babies have had the opportunity to experience healthy bonding and positive attachment, while they are safe, loved and well-cared for. Research shows these experiences, along with nutrition and health care, have a significant impact on brain development, cognitive and language skills, as well as their overall emotional and physical health.

“If more young mothers knew about Aunt Leah’s, there would be less children being taken from their parents; the cycle could stop.” –Young mother
Support Link is a semi-independent residential program which integrates housing with life skills training and pre-employment opportunities.

Children who are in the care of the Ministry of Children & Family Development have to learn how to live on their own by their 19th birthday. At the age of 19, they can no longer receive the supports that they had up to that point. Aunt Leah’s Place developed the Support Link Program to meet this need. The Support Link Program is a semi-independent living program for youth ages 16-18 who are in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

“We'd be homeless without them. I'd be in a homeless shelter not knowing what the heck to do with my life.”
– Aunt Leah’s Participant

We have a total of 16 Support Link suites. Two of the Support Link suites are for youth who need additional one-on-one supports with a Support Worker. During this fiscal year a total of 33 youth were in the Support Link Program. The youth in the program are provided with a fully furnished basement suite and a support worker to assist the youth in working on their goals and life skills development.

One of the core values for Aunt Leah’s is “Celebration is Essential to a Successful Life.” We feel it is important to celebrate with our youth and also acknowledge their accomplishments. A youth in the Support Link Program was picked as a youth delegate for the Gathering Our Voices Conference. Another youth was able to attend a Robotic Camp at UBC this year. Staff attended an Honoring Ceremony at Metis Family Services for two youth that turned 19 years old during this fiscal year.

The average length of stay for a youth in Support Link was 7.5 months. The time in the program enables the youth to connect with other youth, the community and build bonds with staff that can last for years, many leaving with a sense of belonging and a sense of family. The youth who leave the Support Link Program are transferred to the LINK Program so they can have a continuum of care and support.

“My social worker suggested I go on Independent Living so that I would be used to living on my own. I got to learn how to budget for bills. I’m learning how to live on my own. That was an important part of the Support Link.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant
Aunt Leah’s Thresholds program provides new moms, who are at risk of losing their babies to the foster care system, with supported housing, help learning how to care for their baby and support in creating a healthy environment for themselves and their child.

Last year, eleven new moms who lived at Thresholds and its sister program The Link, were able to maintain custody of their baby; a success rate of 85%. This represents thirteen young babies who avoided the often debilitating effects of entering the foster care system and, instead, stayed with their mother who was given the skills, community and resources necessary to become a successful parent.

Eleven moms and eleven children were served in Aunt Leah’s Thresholds Program in 2012/13. The majority of these families were struggling with addictions and homelessness. The risk of losing housing and the challenge of overcoming addictions creates significant anxiety for the women involved with Thresholds, often hampering them in their roles as mothers and triggering significant setbacks. The Thresholds Program begins its work removing these anxieties/triggers by providing safe affordable housing and support. When a family first settles into the Thresholds House, staff members work to establish a professional, trusting relationship. Then they begin teaching parenting skills and life skills that will enable moms to envision and create their own positive traditions and routines.

Thresholds Programing in 2012-2013 included:
- Accessing Income Assistance & Disability support
- Doula services
- Facilitating and advocating for child visits
- Accessing mental health, addictions and counseling services
- Ages and Stages- increase participants knowledge on how to handle behaviors at different ages
- Workshops on - Anxieties , Baby Safety, Post-Partum Depression, Communication Skills, Fussy/Picky Eaters-Strategies, Couponing, Relationship Building, Menu Planning, Recipes with Leftovers, Bullying, Health and Nutrition, Relaxation and Meditation techniques
- Exploring/connecting with cultural heritage; smudges, drumming circle, sweat lodge
- Physical exercise- aerobics class, 5 KM runs, swimming
- Cooking & Gardening
“Being able to get help when I wanted. Money help. I got a $200 loan when I started work. They really help out when you most need it.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant

Aunt Leah’s Participants on recreation outing to Galiano Island.
The Link Program continues to provide support to youth who have aged out of the foster care system and are now transitioning into adulthood. Link has expanded in the last year, thanks to continued funding from the Homeless Partnership Strategy, Vancouver Foundation and funding from the City of Vancouver. The program has a flourishing partnership with The Broadway Youth Resource Center providing an office space allowing many Vancouver youth to access valuable support as they need it.

The Link Program continues to have set drop-in days although many youth also access the program on other days of the week. Support is in areas such as: schooling, housing, job search, budgeting, emotional /mental health, filing taxes, finding a doctor, preparing for a job interview, and other life-skills.

On Mondays the Link program offers a “Mom & Baby/Fresh Food Program”. This program gives our Moms and their babies the opportunity to build valuable relationships with their peers while having access to fresh milk, bread, eggs and a variety of seasonal produce.

In 2010-11 there were 36 youth who accessed support from the Link Team; this increased to 58 in 2011-12. In the past 2012-13 fiscal year those numbers have increased to 76 — we’ve seen a notable increase in youth accessing the Link Program—a clear indication that the Link Program is a successful and important program to the youth and young adults accessing Aunt Leah’s services.

The emergency food cupboard is still a vital part of the LINK program. This support alleviates some of the burden they carry allowing the individual to focus on other important supports that they are in need of. A total of 167 bags of food were given to Link youth during this past fiscal year.

Through our work, we’ve found that the two primary areas of need are housing and emotional/counseling. Many of our youth suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder to name a few and often struggle with connecting to appropriate resources that they are comfortable with.
The Essential Skills Program is a series of interactive workshops where participants learn practical skills and tools that help them make healthy choices.

The workshops are held once a week, every Wednesday evening from 5pm to 7pm. They are designed to provide a fun and interesting opportunity for the young people that we work with to develop various life skills.

Over the past year we have held workshops on the topics of Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Awareness, Health and Well Being, Environment, and Cultural Awareness. We continue to build relationships with outside agencies and community members by booking guest speakers to cover a wide range of topics.

At the request of our youth and young moms, Aunt Leah’s has focused on holding workshops where participants would gain certification and this can be added to their resume.

“They help with pretty much most of everything, so if I need help with anything, they do it. They are like family to me; they helped raise me.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant
For the second year, we are pleased to partner with Odysseys Drug and Alcohol Counselors who connect informally with our youth. Thanks to this arrangement, some workshop participants have accessed more formal Drug and Alcohol counseling relationships.

“Great outreach and support for youth. Meet them where they are at. No judgment. Offer lots of options for reducing barriers in order for them to attend programs, engage with supports etc.” - Aunt Leah’s Participant
Training

Aunt Leah’s Training Programs are typically twelve-weeks and are designed to provide students with an overview of some of the most high demand industries, and teach them the basic skills they will need to obtain a job in that field. We run three sessions per year. Trainers follow the curriculum outlined below but also customize the program for each student based on their strengths and abilities to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made whenever possible. Students will leave the program with experience in many different skills. They will also complete eight hours of World Host training. Upon successful completion of the program, students will be invited to attend a graduation ceremony and be provided with a job reference from their trainer.

Aunt Leah’s has successfully completed the second year of Retail Christmas Tree Lot Training. Youth trained 96 hours over 5 weeks at our Christmas Tree Lot in Burnaby. Youth learned skills in customer service, cash handling, sales, promotions, inventory, stock, opening/closing procedures, communication, professionalism, efficiency, following directions, and initiative. Youth engaged in physical labour through setting up and taking down the lot.

With the generous support of the Central City Foundation we have opened a second Thrift Store location on 20th Street in New Westminster, called Aunt Leah’s ETC. We have reopened our 12-week Retail Training Program for youth. The program is designed to provide students with experience in the Retail Industry, teaching them the skills they will need to obtain employment. We have completed 3 sessions serving 29 youth and young moms with 13 graduates.

“I have received great training and moral support through this program. I feel it has helped me prepare for the working world.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant

“The Link takes very messed up kids and helps them to become great kids and fine young people. Staff have a way of connecting with them. They want to see us succeed. They have taught me to grow up and be an adult.”

-Aunt Leah’s Participant
Aunt Leah’s is sad to say good bye to the St. Mark’s Community Meal Program after our 10 year partnership with the Kitsilano Church Community.

A new Food Service Training Program will open at our ETC location for youth and moms.

“They have helped me not feel bad about not having a good childhood. They have helped me feel like I have a family. I feel like I have a chance. I have hope. I can have a life. They give one-to-one support that is practical and emotional. There is no one else like the Aunt Leah’s community. They can break through my brick wall and create an emotional bond.”

-Aunt Leah’s Participant
Link participation numbers have increased by over a 110% since the program’s first funding in 2010 (from 36 to 76). A quarter of people we worked with this year were the dependents (children and babies) of our youth meaning Aunt Leah’s had a far greater role in helping young families maintain custody of their children.

The Link: A Continuum of Care, Compassionate & Efficient

Nearly 9 out of 10 youth we were worked with last year through The Link were former foster children. This shows that Aunt Leah’s is successfully pushing aside the arbitrary ‘cut off’ of 19 years of age, where young people lose many of their financial and emotional supports. Instead, we act as any good parent would act – extending supports to young adults as they transition to independence.

The Link: A Continuum of Trust, Compassionate & Effective

Over 8 out of 10 youth we worked with through The Link last year was formerly ‘in care’ with Aunt Leah’s as their primary caregiver during their childhood.
Participants of The Link also have 24-hour phone access to Aunt Leah’s staff in times of crisis or need. Nearly 4 out of 10 visits with a worker were a planned meeting with specific predetermined goals and activities that the youth wanted to accomplish with the help of a trusted adult.

- The primary goal of Aunt Leah's is to prevent the foster youth we serve from experiencing ANY homelessness.
- We’re getting better at it year over year…
- Third-party evaluations of The Link, performed by McCreary Society:
  - 2010: 67% of youth reported that The Link helped them to find housing
  - 2011: 80% of youth reported that The Link helped them to find housing
  - 2012/13: Average monthly percentage of Link participants with safe, independent housing: 86%
- Couch surfing among the remainder was common.
- Street homelessness was rare.

“It's a big difference. It's much more difficult when you don't have anyone to help you. For a while, I didn't have a youth outreach and support worker. I was going through a depression. ...Now the Link helped me with resources. They helped move me to Surrey. They were at my meeting with the Ministry; they drove me to places like the doctor's. Anything I needed done, [the Link support worker] made sure I got it done.”-Aunt Leah’s Participant
2012-13: Average percentage of Link youth with safe, independent housing per month (Homeless figure includes 'invisible homelessness' - e.g. couch surfing):
Notable Accomplishments

Aunt Leah’s Place chosen as a “Top Pick” by Charity Intelligence!

We are honoured to have been chosen by Charity Intelligence as a “Top Pick” in their survey of Canadian charities. Charity Intelligence is a registered nonprofit group that researches charities to help donors decide where to direct their giving.

Aunt Leah’s Place was one of 45 charities chosen from across Canada that “stand out for their leadership, cost-efficiency, and, most importantly, their bottom-line results in getting the job done in helping their clients.” As Aunt Leah’s staff, we see the impact that your donations have every day in the lives of the kids we work with, but it feels really good to have this external acknowledgment and validation too!

In 2012, Aunt Leah’s Place entered into a partnership with researchers (Deborah Rutman, PhD, Carol Hubberstey, MA, and Sharon Hume, MSW from the University of Victoria (Research Initiatives for Social Change (RISC) Unit at the School of Social Work), in order to evaluate outcomes from The Link program through a two-year research project, The Link: An Assessment of Youth Homelessness Prevention.

The objectives of the proposed project are to:
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the The Link program, as developed and delivered by Aunt Leah’s Place, and
- Identify promising approaches and practices that support youth who are aging out of foster care, in order to prevent or reduce homelessness amongst this particularly vulnerable population of Canadian youth

The research project will conclude with a final report in March 2014. The interim report (June 2013) can be viewed on Aunt Leah’s website: http://auntleahs.org/the-link-evaluation-interim-report-from-uvic-school-of-social-work/

This project is funded by the Homelessness Knowledge Development, Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

“[Staff] are very accessible by phone and text. When I'm having tough time on weekends, I can text her and she will respond.”

-Aunt Leah’s Participant
Grand opening of Aunt Leah’s E.T.C and Training Program

April 6, 2013 marked the grand opening of Aunt Leah’s E.T.C. in New Westminster. The facility is owned and provided by Central City Foundation to enable Aunt Leah’s to offer training for youth at risk, second stage housing for new mothers, and a social enterprise thrift store.

With financing provided by Vancity and Vancity Community Foundation, Central City Foundation purchased the New Westminster building to provide space for an expansion of Aunt Leah’s much-needed programs. As part of their commitment to investing in innovative solutions that improve the lives of our neighbours in need in the inner city, Central City Foundation has made this latest investment in social purpose real estate.

Acting Mayor of New Westminster, Betty McIntosh, brought greetings from the City, and the facility opened with an official ribbon cutting ceremony. As well, graduates of Aunt Leah’s Retail Training Program celebrated finishing three months of training, and the thrift shop held a grand opening sale.

L-R: Jennifer Johnstone, President and CEO of Central City Foundation; Betty McIntosh, Acting Mayor of New Westminster; and Gale Stewart, Executive Director of Aunt Leah’s Place, gather to perform the official ribbon cutting.
Thrift Stores

Aunt Leah’s Urban Thrift is a ‘boutique’ second-hand store, with a focus on higher quality women’s clothing, unique pieces of furniture, and interesting jewelry and knick-knacks. It is in its second year of business.

Profits from this social enterprise support Aunt Leah’s Thresholds program to help prevent mothers in need from losing custody of their children. Items not sold at Aunt Leah’s Urban Thrift may be used to furnish suites for teens or new moms in our many programs.

Aunt Leah’s Urban Thrift could not operate without the support of over 30 volunteers who have donated over 2500 hours of service during the past year.

We are always accepting gently-used clothing and household items and appreciate your donations! Please consider collecting items from friends and co-workers, or hosting a get-together where guests bring their high-quality, pre-loved donations for Aunt Leah’s Urban Thrift.

177 East Broadway (at Main Street)
Located in The Lee Building
Vancouver BC V5T 1W1
Tel: (604) 709-3254

**URBAN THRIFT HOURS:** Monday to Saturday 11 AM – 6 PM

**Donation Drop-off Location and Hours:**
Feel free to drop off donations any Thursday or Friday 12:30 PM – 8 PM and Saturdays from 10-5 PM at 816 20th Street, New Westminster. Contact Angelina Oates for more information or to arrange a pick up: aoates@auntleahs.org 604-525-1204 ext. 232
VOLUNTEERS: We are also accepting applications for volunteer opportunities at the Thrift Store. Please contact us if you would like to help with sorting, pricing and arranging donations and providing customer service. You can call our Store Manager, Ali Andeku, at 604-709-3254.

HOW ARE DONATIONS USED: Items not sold at Aunt Leah’s Urban Thrift may be used to furnish suites for teens or new moms in our many programs.

“...even though I will miss working it is great working with this store and my supervisor.”- Aunt Leah’s Participant
Revenue from Aunt Leah’s Christmas Tree Lots supports Aunt Leah’s Link & Thresholds Program and is matched through the Homelessness Partnership Strategy.
- Approximate Net Profit: $80,000
- Total Number of Volunteers: 345
- Average Number of Hours Worked per Volunteer: 5.32
“It’s helped me become more independent, that was very big for me. I was very terrified at the thought of living alone. I kept feeling like I’m not ready. But then later I thought what was I so afraid of? This program helped me get to my independence.”

-Aunt Leah’s Participant
Aunt Leah’s Then
Aunt Leah’s Now
In Memory of
Isabella Anne Constance Marie Wiens

June 11, 2011 – March 16, 2013

Isabella was a loving, energetic two-year-old who loved to play, read, and spend time with her mom. Staff at Aunt Leah’s Place were deeply saddened when we heard of her passing. We will always remember her smiling face full of joy during visits with her mom. We will continue to honour her memory by valuing the unique perspectives of the children connected to Aunt Leah’s Place.

My Angel - Poem by John F Connor

To my dear angel in heaven
I just want you to know
That you are always in my thoughts
And how much I love you so

I know you are in Gods care
That is how it should be
But when I get to heaven
He will give you back to me
The Leah Award

“Unconditional Love and Support”
In honour of Bruce Ambrose

Bruce was a friend and long-time supporter of Aunt Leah’s who passed away on March 16, 2010. It was important to Bruce to be more than a donor—he also gave his time as a volunteer and he shared his wisdom, helping Aunt Leah’s in various fundraising endeavors. Bruce was known in his family for giving them his unconditional love and support and was always proud of their many achievements.

2013 Recipient of the Leah Award

Shaelyn Bayduza

Shaelyn Bayduza moved into Aunt Leah’s house with her son Zane in February 2011. When she first came to Aunt Leah’s house, Shaelyn presented as a quiet young woman who appeared to have a great amount of anxiety. Throughout her stay at the house, it became apparent that Shaelyn was actually quite outspoken and she was unafraid to stand up for herself. In time, Shaelyn supported quite a few of Aunt Leah’s house residents by modeling and teaching them how to advocate for themselves and she often offered support to residents while they were going through the experience.

Shaelyn used arts and crafts as a creative outlet in her life. She set a great example for other residents of Aunt Leah’s house, demonstrating how to use creativity in their life and how to develop self-confidence. The idea of learning and using self-expression as a positive tool was a gift Shaelyn passed along to the other residents of Aunt Leah’s house while she was living there. Since then, staff had incorporated this idea into their tool-set they use for the benefit of new moms who move into Aunt Leah’s.

Shaelyn was very excited to start the next part of her life with her son Zane and her boyfriend Nick. Shaelyn and Zane transitioned out of Aunt Leah’s house into independent living on June 25th, 2011. Since then, they are all working together towards developing and maintaining positive family dynamics. They continue to work on developing new skills by attending parenting programs provided by Aunt Leah’s.

Both Shaelyn and her 2 sons are doing great and are living in Surrey. Shaelyn has blossomed into a caring, loving, affectionate, and attentive young mom. Shaelyn is currently self employed as a consultant for a local company and she is volunteering for the Federation for BC Youth in Care. Shaelyn has become a great inspiration for the current and future participants of Aunt Leah’s. She is a shining example to our youth today that with determination, confidence and support one can achieve anything. Congratulations Shaelyn! Keep being amazing!
The Jeremy Wright Award

The Jeremy Wright Award was created to honour the memory of Jeremy Wright. Aunt Leah’s presents this award yearly in memory of Jeremy Wright, a Support Worker who was very special to the organization.

The award is to recognize and support a Support Link youth with goals that they have set and are actively working towards.

It is presented to a youth living in the Support Link Program who has strived to achieve their personal best and who most “follows their bliss”.

The award is based on character and determination.

2013 Recipient of the Jeremy Wright Award

**Cindy Flores**

Cindy came to Aunt Leah’s when she was 18 years old and moved into the Support Link Program. She took full advantage of all the program has to offer by attending all Essential Skill workshops and participating fully, when she was not in school or working. Cindy is a kind and thoughtful young lady, who is always willing to learn from others. She is a positive person who looks for the good in others.

Cindy has a clear idea of what she wants to do in her life and is pursuing her dreams to become a nurse. After graduating from high school, Cindy had to wait to do an upgrade course in college in order to get into the nursing program. Cindy chose not to wait. Instead, she attended BCIT and completed a Medical Office Assistant course in hopes of working over the summer and contributing financially towards college. She is now working full-time and saving money.

Cindy is also an accomplished musician who can play a number of instruments. She took piano lessons with the hopes of teaching piano lessons one day. We all know that when Cindy sets her mind to something she will reach her goals. Congratulations Cindy!

“I am super-impressed with the amount of youth I see coming through the doors. Aunt Leah's has a great reputation in the community, and that is affirmed by the youth that I work with. I especially like that there are youth who are no longer in a specific program, but are past participants, and as such they feel welcome to return to see the staff and use the space.”

- Social Worker
The Rona Award

This award is presented in honour of Rona Castagnier, a long time co-worker and friend of Aunt Leah’s Society. Rona was a very strong, kind, compassionate and proud person. Rona wouldn’t hesitate to give someone her last dollar if they were in need, even if it meant that she would go without.

In honour of Rona, Aunt Leah’s gives an annual award and bursary to a student from one of Aunt Leah’s Training Programs who has shown the characteristics that Rona appreciated the most: Kindness, Compassion, Strength, and Pride.

2013 Recipient of the Rona Award

Aaron Tam

Aaron graduated from our Retail Training Program in April 2013. He was a student with Burnaby South Secondary Alternative School Program and was completing hours for his work experience to graduate high school. Despite Aaron’s learning disability he was able to overcome the challenges that he faced throughout the program and showed growth in many areas.

Aaron was consistent in his attendance and showed a high interest in the program during every shift. The training program required Aaron to interact with customers and use the cash register. This was his most favourite part of the program. Aaron was always willing to help a customer in need and welcome them into the store. He worked really hard at mastering the cash register and was very proud of his accomplishments.

Throughout the session Aaron was well liked by his peers, other volunteers and staff. During the World Host training, Aaron brought pop for everyone to have which was a very thoughtful and kind gesture. He always showed compassion for trainees and was always willing to lend a helping hand.

Aaron showed qualities such as compassion, kindness, dedication, pride, consistency and strength. He is a most deserving recipient of the Rona Award.

“... I have been able to learn the skills I need to open more opportunities for getting a job in retail in the future” – Aunt Leah’s Participant
Thank You to our Partnering agencies!

Aunt Leah’s would like to thank you for your generosity and support. Without our volunteers, community partners, event sponsors, donors, and especially our monthly donors, we could not provide these important services to youth and at-risk moms and babies. We’d also like to thank the churches that have donated precious space to our Tree Lots each year.

Frontier College operates a variety of literacy programs in locations across Canada. They recruit and train volunteers to work with children, youth and adults in a great array of settings.

Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC) is an integrated one-stop centre that provides a wide range of social, health, education, employment and life skills services to homeless and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24.

Odyssey I through the Boys and Girls Club of South Coast BC -counselling program for youth and families struggling with issues related to substance abuse.

Quest Food Exchange - British Columbia’s largest not-for-profit food exchange program.

Cameray Child and Family Services - Parent Support Program

Circle of Eagles, Anderson Lodge Women’s Shelter assists and educates homeless women by providing a safe nurturing environment that encourages positive changes and builds inner strength allowing them to achieve their goals.

The McCreary Centre Society is committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education and community based projects. Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to identify and address the health needs of young people in the province.

St. Stephen’s United Church in Vancouver

All Saints Anglican Church in Burnaby

Eagle Ridge United Church in Coquitlam

“Aunt Leah’s is very helpful. They take the time to get to know you. They don't talk to you like you are a kid. They’re just consulting. They work with people coming out of care with no mother or father and I respect that. We’re so lucky to have this!”

-Aunt Leah’s Participant
Thank You To Our Lead Programming Donors

Funded in part by the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy

HPS Funds for the Metro Vancouver community are managed by Metro Vancouver in partnership with the Vancity Community Foundation and the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness
Trivia & Tree Lot Sponsors

In Kind Sponsors

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- Raincoast Books
- Save-On Foods
- Shadbolt Centre for the Arts
- Starbucks Coffee
- Thunderbird Press Ltd.
- Tim Horton’s

“They got me to focus. I struggle with focusing so they helped me to focus and get things done such as an application for disability, helped me find housing, taxes, scheduling.”

- Aunt Leah’s Participant
How You Can Help

Aunt Leah’s Independent Lifeskills Society depends on your support to provide programs and services for vulnerable youth and families. Please call us at 604-525-1204.

Financial Donations – Make a donation; become a monthly donor or a multi-year pledge donor by calling us today! Karin King kking@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 228 or Chloe Dunn cdunn@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 224.

Host a Fundraiser – Host a fundraising event with your friends or co-workers and raise money for Aunt Leah’s. Ask us for our helpful event kit full of tips and suggestions. Karin King kking@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 228 or Chloe Dunn cdunn@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 224.

Circle of Friends – Invite a small group of friends to your house or other venue to enjoy an interactive presentation by one of our staff. Learn about the amazing work Aunt Leah’s is doing and the many ways you and your friends can help foster youth, moms, and babies! Karin King kking@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 228 or Chloe Dunn cdunn@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 224.

Sponsorship – Promote your business in the community through sponsorship of an event or program. Drew Stewart dstewart@auntleahs.org or Trina Bagnall tbagnall@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 225.

Thrift Store Donations – Donate your gently-used clothing and household items to our Thrift Store social enterprises. Pick up is available! Angelina Oates aoates@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 232.

Christmas Tree Lots – Buy a tree at our Burnaby, Vancouver, or Coquitlam Christmas Tree Lots. More locations opening soon! Angelina Oates aoates@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 232.

Aunt Leah’s Events – Attend our annual music benefit featuring local artists and our Trivia Night featuring lively competition and prizes! Chloe Dunn cdunn@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 224.

Volunteering – Sign up to volunteer at one of our thrift stores, tree lots, or fundraising events. We could really use your help! Chloe Dunn cdunn@auntleahs.org, 604-525-1204 ext 224.
"The Link/Aunt Leah’s was willing to pay my rent for me. I was able to pay them back. Having a place to go to so I wasn't in jail or homeless, or on Hastings or on drugs. If I hadn't been connected [to Aunt Leah’s], if I was just in foster care, now I'd be on drugs, jail or dead.” – Aunt Leah’s Participant
Building a Brighter Future for Foster Kids

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