

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT --
Goward House Society 2021 Annual General Meeting, September 16th

*Respectfully submitted by **Heidi Hodgins***

Goward House, like every organization, experienced an unpredictable and almost unbelievable year in 2020. January and February were calm but productive months, following a very busy and successful 2019. By March, grumblings of what was to come were observed in other parts of the globe, but right up until we closed our doors on March 17, no-one had any real sense of the magnitude of the global crisis that was about to envelope all of us. Staff and your Board soldiered on, shaping procedural and budgetary plans for ever changing targets. While still closed, our own Crafters group leapt to work, creating hundreds of masks for our community. Our President personally phoned every single member, several times, to make sure everyone was OK. Staff redesigned the House to fit safety protocols, and adjusted programming to involve as many members as possible. ZOOM became a useful tool for virtual programming and meetings. A core group of volunteers returned to the Front Desk, valiantly learning how to use our new debit/credit machine, and allowing staff to focus on time-consuming and mandated safety procedures. Staff missed the busyness of the House, but appreciated the kind and friendly phone calls, emails and careful visits. Pared down, the Goward House Society exposed its core – that of a vibrant, caring and relevant community,

If the pandemic highlighted a few central facts, one of those would be that Goward House can NOT operate without its volunteers. **Volunteers**, even in a vastly reduced situation, are one of the keys to our success. We had 451 members by the end of 2020, and just over 30 volunteers who had returned to their somewhat altered posts. Despite limitations, we recorded 3170 volunteer hours, which is the equivalent of 1½ full-time employees. Unfortunately, illuminating the catastrophic effects that necessary health restrictions had on all in-person activities, visits to Goward House were significantly down, to around 8,000 visits. This includes only 1276 renters, from 69 individual rentals. We mitigated some of the 58% loss of visitors by offering a few activities on-line, some activities outside (when possible) and moving the rest of our groups to larger spaces with smaller allowed attendance. Of course, one of the factors that attracted a Netflix location scout to Goward House at the end of 2020 was its then serene solitude. Silver linings. . .

Lavatera Landscaping was again our gardening contractor for 2020, tending the Goward House **gardens and lawns** since 2017. Lester Easton and his team offered to move to a “maintenance model” for our gardening needs, with rentals and activities significantly curtailed, and staff and the Board looking for viable methods of cutting expenses. We gratefully accepted his offer, and are looking forward to moving into an “enhancement model” as restrictions ease.

Everett and Merle Peterson continued to assume the roles of Stewards for the Goward House **Woodlands** in 2020. It is impossible to adequately define the impact these two long-time members have had, and continue to have, on our Woodlands and adjoining green spaces. Of course, the closure of the House did not stop the Petersons from working in the woods, almost daily. Woodchips, mulch and native plants were requested from Saanich, and then carefully incorporated into the forest. The Petersons remained friendly and knowledgeable front-line volunteers for Goward House, as footpath traffic increased through the pandemic.

Another volunteer I would like to thank is Peter Bruce. With his work often hidden from most of us, Peter helps maintain our **website**. Working with Suzanne, he ensures that content is current, and often prompts staff for necessary updates to current weather, pandemic or seasonal changes in the House.

Our in-House Italian chef, **Gianfranco**, continued to offer us his expertise in 2020. When the kitchen and Tea Room closed, he offered to pivot to a monthly takeout meal – every single one sold out. Despite several attempts to re-open the Kitchen modestly, ever-changing restrictions prohibited us from doing so. *We are hopeful for a very slimmed back Fall 2021 re-opening, for takeout only, following the success of some summer BBQs and our Strawberry Tea. Please note: Gianfranco has left us for sunnier climes in Portugal – although we miss his culinary skills, we wish him and Daria the best of success in their busy retirement!*

Despite the significant restraints stemming from the pandemic, we managed to host 10 **Special Events** in 2020: 4 educational presenters, a set of bridge lessons, a New Members' Tea, an Appreciation Wine and Cheese for a retiring staff member, our much delayed AGM, a Flu Clinic and even a delivery version of our annual Christmas Luncheon (with thanks to your Board and staff for deliveries). Staff organized a Food Drive for the Mustard Seed in the early days of our closure, and managed to host a few fundraisers safely, including the Mask Task Fundraiser, Purdy's Chocolates, and seasonal cookies available at the Front Desk. Many events around our normal fundraising programming were also modified or cancelled.

Our annual Christmas **Craft Fair**, which is usually our single biggest fundraising Special Event each year, had to be put on hold for 2020. A simple alternative was created by staff: the Pop-Up Catalogue, selling primarily craft and art items created by members. This fundraiser was modest, raising just over \$800, as it represented only the Craft sale room of our usual multi-vendor large event Craft Fair. Special thanks to Marlene for creating the beautiful catalogue, and to all members who donated their creative products!

Like all programming in 2020, our **Art Gallery** was significantly impacted. The January and February shows were hung as planned, but our curator, Suzanne, was forced to steadily cancel all other planned shows and openings as the year progressed, including shows for our own three in-House artist groups. COVID protocol required pre-registration for House visits, which would significantly curtail casual walkthroughs of our Gallery, and, as the potential for sales rapidly diminishes without an audience, cancellations became our only option. Fortunately for some of our in-House artists, the Office of the Seniors Advocate used their lobby space as a Gallery, exhibiting Goward House artists in return for an Honorarium to the Society. This, and the sales from our two pre-pandemic shows, netted Goward House over \$1500.

For safety reasons, our lending **Library** was closed during most of 2020 (although a number of books seemed to leave and return on their own. . .). Our dedicated Librarians, Trish Brooke and Gail Flitton, started preparing the Library for a cautious return of members in late Fall, implementing safety protocols modelled after public libraries. *Of course, 2021 will see great change in our Library, discussed in current Gazettes and at our AGM next year.*

Our **fitness** classes became a staple following our initial re-opening in the summer of 2020. Feeling a little stir-crazy from blanket closures across our city, and the need to get some exercise, members flocked to Strength & Balance, Yoga and Tai Chi. Our instructors quickly embraced the new safety protocol, and helped keep members active. Our yoga instructor, Andrea Baudic, offered a hybrid ZOOM and in-person class, to both space out participants and include those members not

yet ready to return to the House. Our Strength & Balance instructor, Manda Ghag, included a third session of her class, to accommodate the high interest in participation. Gordon Muir, our Yang Style Tai Chi instructor, continued to offer both first and second sections of the long form. Our Walkie Talkies Group Leader, Wendy Denyes, valiantly offered to keep her group going, through several openings and closings. This small but dedicated group explored our lovely neighbourhood and beyond, through all kinds of weather. Finally, our Line Dancing instructor, Betty Doherty, offered our only high-impact fitness class as long as the government allowed it, much to the delight of her pupils. All in all, we managed to offer 10 varied fitness classes on a weekly basis, through most of 2020.

While we did not add any new weekly activities to our **programming** in 2020, our Instructors and Group Leaders assisted us to reframe most existing groups into new models. Our membership is a determined lot, and once our doors re-opened, groups pivoted again and again and again to continue enjoying and supporting Goward House. Our Program Committee created a series of educational sessions entirely on ZOOM, aptly named “Coffee and Conversations.” Several groups used ZOOM to safely continue their meetings, and others moved to a hybrid ZOOM and in-person model. Some groups met outdoors, for as long as possible. As well, before we closed in March we managed to offer most of a sequence of Jim Brackenbury’s very popular bridge lessons. I would like to highlight and thank Jim Brackenbury who facilitated moving the Goward House Duplicate Bridge players to an on-line platform. He insisted all players be members in good standing, and firmly suggested players donate to Goward House in lieu of in-person games. This group alone donated almost two thousand dollars towards the upkeep of the House, while playing safely from home.

Following unprecedented revenue shortfalls, our Board evaluated membership, activity and rental **fees**. All fees were upgraded – the first time in many years – to help mitigate some of the loss. Overwhelmingly, the response for these minor adjustments has been positive from members and patrons alike.

Our **revenue breakdown** for 2020 was as follows:

Rentals	5%
Programs	15%
Grants & Wage Subsidies	55%
Kitchen	4%
Dues	14%
Special Events	4%
Other (Art, Display Cabinet, Interest, GST)	3%

Rental revenue is normally a significant source of funds to cover our operating costs. This source of revenue dropped to less than \$10,000 in 2020, reflecting the absence of event rentals. Some of our small ongoing rental groups returned late in the year, in modified settings, and graciously following safety protocol. We are currently experiencing a large interest in future bookings, which indicates the significantly lowered numbers of 2020 (and 2021) are temporary.

We applied for a number of **grants** in 2020, and successfully received a \$12,500 BC Gaming grant, a Saanich operational grant for \$20,000, and monthly Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy grants that totalled over \$65,000 from March to December. Our 2019-2020 washroom upgrade was completed in the Spring of 2020, in part due to the funding we received

in 2019 from the New Horizons Federal grant program. To date, Goward House has received over \$150,000 from this program. Through NHSP funding, we have made significant upgrades to Goward House, as well as provided much needed replacement furnishings and supplies for our programs. As well, we earned over \$3000 from our Thrifty Foods Smile Card program, and initiated programs with both Peppers and Fairway Markets. Special thanks to Naz Rayani, who tirelessly spread our Thrifty Foods and Fairway Market cards to hundreds of local residents, happy to support the House.

Like absolutely everything else at the House in 2020, our annual **President's Appeal** fundraiser, which raises funds for a significant capital project, pivoted to raising funds for "Covid Relief." Supporting our operating costs, members donated over an unprecedented \$25,000! Almost every donation came with a supportive or reassuring note, again highlighting the sense of connection our membership feels with Goward House.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the estate of Rhoda McDougall, for a timely donation of \$5000 in 2020. Her son asked us to put the funds "towards operational costs, in these challenging times."

Long serving **staff** member, Mary Homer, retired in January of 2020, following 13 years of valuable work for Goward House. We honoured her with a Wine and Cheese Retirement Party, and she was set to enjoy a life of travel and wine tasting. Her successor, Marlene, had barely a few months of settling into her job, when the pandemic hit. Administrative staff, including Suzanne (in her position since 2018), and myself (a relative newcomer since 2019), were just beginning to get a sense of each other as a team when March of 2020 rolled in. This trial by fire has been a test of our teamwork, asking us to constantly shift and manage enormous amounts of change, with no template. Administrative staff, and our Janitorial-Custodian, Lyle, (entering his 12th year at Goward House), have had to expand job descriptions in unpredictable and flexible ways, with every peak and valley of the pandemic. Now over a year and a half into the crisis, I can proudly boast that my co-workers are worth their weight in gold! Despite anxiety or exhaustion, these individuals have tirelessly stayed on task, 110%. We all have one immense goal: to support our members, and keep the House thriving.

Of course, solidly supporting staff has been your **Board of Directors**. This very busy team has embraced staff leadership on all aspects of the pandemic, while focusing on keeping the House sustainable. Your Board is a highly engaged team that also works well together. Sensible and pragmatic, the Board has proved flexible, taking advantage of lower House usage to update some long-overdue areas. From having to move our 2020 AGM repeatedly through the calendar, to unexpectedly and quickly finding a new auditor (and the attendant overhaul of our financial record-keeping), this Board has a "can-do" attitude, even finding humour in challenging situations. It simply can't be overstated how important their collective cohesiveness is. My sincere thanks to each and every one of these hard-working volunteers.

Goward House has been serving seniors in the Cadboro Bay neighbourhood for the past 30 years. The founding members had the vision and foresight to establish a sustainable model for the future and for the growth of the centre. There has never been a test of this vision quite like the one we're experiencing now, and I would say "the proof is in the pudding." Goward House continues to be a very special and engaged community, in a great place to work and play: a home away from home.