

ADMINISTRATION REPORT –
Goward House Society 2026 Annual General Meeting, May 21st

The Goward House Society entered 2025 brightly and confidently, having well-weathered the near devastation of the global crisis from the prior few years. The dedicated and focussed work of staff and Board and volunteers alike allowed us to continue to climb into a more secure financial state, with a stable membership and an active, vibrant program.

Continuing the legacy of the pandemic, Goward House has retained some **safety features** permanently (as recommended by the PHO), including readily available hand sanitizer and disinfecting spray cleaner positioned around the House, as well as masks available at primary entrances. We recently upgraded our two plexiglass shields, at the Front Desk and between the Kitchen and Tea Room, to better protect our volunteers and staff from seasonal illness. As well, the Society continues to retain its staff vaccine requirement.

As a not-for-profit Society, our financial health depends on **volunteerism** to keep staff numbers small. The vision of the Society from its inception was to rely primarily on volunteers, individuals who feel ownership of this beautiful House, garden and woodlands, and enjoy a strong sense of community with other members. In 2025, we maintained a roster of ~56 volunteers, donating over 3500 volunteer hours, or the equivalent of 1.7 full-time positions in the House. Clearly, volunteering at the House is valuable for many, and the benefit is for us all. We certainly cannot appreciate our volunteers enough! We host several volunteer meetings for specific areas of the House through the year – please do consider attending one of those meetings if you wish to find out more about a specific task.

Our Goward House **volunteers** look after Reception, run the Tea Room and Kitchen, cook and bake for the Pantry Program, maintain and organize the Library and lead our “blue ticket” activity groups. Our Board of Directors is entirely made up of elected volunteers. Still others help us with our Special Events, while some individuals have helped with “odd jobs” as they emerge. I would like to thank both Fern Davies and Gail Branton for their work in the beautiful planters out front – we get a large number of compliments about these seasonally upgraded and important fixtures by our front doors. We have new nametags (black with our logo) that can help identify our weekday volunteers; our Special Event volunteers are usually seen wearing flower leis or strings of Christmas lights.

Our **membership** remained stable in 2025, starting in January with 432 and ending in December with 426. Membership fluctuated throughout the year, as high as 440. Attrition has stabilized, with the majority of non-renewals coming from members moving away or into retirement living. Word of mouth and social media, as well as exposure to the House through community events and rentals, continue to be the primary sources of new members. We hosted 4 New Members’ Tea throughout the year, offered to brand-new members as a way

of getting to meet other new members, staff and board. These intimate events are key for informing new members how the House, the Society, Programming, the Art Gallery, the Tea Room, rentals and volunteering work.

One of the liveliest areas of the House on a busy day is our **Tea Room** and **Kitchen**, which offers beverages, snacks and light lunches, Monday to Friday. The smell of freshly baked muffins and Tea Bread certainly adds to the cozy ambience of the House! Our Pantry and Special Lunch program continues to be popular, with these “homecooked” meals often selling out before they can even make it to our freezers. Our volunteers offered batches of soup from scratch this last winter, too, and not a single serving ended up frozen. *(If you have a favourite dish you would like to share with other members, volunteering for the Pantry might be a good spot for you. . .)* The Kitchen also offers a Free Coffee (& Tea) Day once a month, on rotating days of the week, giving every activity a chance to take advantage. In addition, members can participate in our monthly Punch Card Draw, by submitting used punch cards to the Kitchen, from which is drawn a winner for a free beverage punch card. This last year, our Kitchen was also the beneficiary of a brand new, high-quality set of knives, courtesy of member David Collins and Custodian Brandi Ennis. In addition, we purchased a new microwave in 2025. Finally, as required by VIHA, we now have up-to-date and comprehensive Food Safety Plans and Kitchen & Tea Room Sanitation Plans, which our Kitchen Managers (Marlene Abney and Tara Jackson), have been implementing these last few months.

While the House seemed busier anecdotally in 2025, recorded visits did increase over the prior year (*a total of 18,727 visits, which is a 12.7% increase over 2024*). The number of **rentals** booked in 2025 remained static (*101 rentals*), however, the number of rental guests increased (*to 4077, which 21.7% higher than 2024*). We benefited from two small film shoot rentals in March and April, and continue to receive inquiries from the film industry. Tara launched a rental photo gallery on our website, which is useful for potential renters. Booking remain strong into 2026, with a few rentals for 2027 already booked.

Our lush **garden** and tranquil woodlands continue to be among the best features of the House and property, and I encourage all members to walk through both whenever they can. Our mutually beneficial relationship with Saanich means that the two outdoor areas of responsibility bleed into each other somewhat: Saanich takes care of the **Woodlands**, and the Society takes care of the garden proper. The Haro Woods Steward, Lindsay Coulter, agreed to be the temporary steward of Goward Woods for Saanich, following the retirement of our much-loved Merle & Everett Peterson. Saanich removes invasive species and maintains the trees as needed. We are also grateful to Saanich for delivering multiple loads of mulch directly to us, which our gardeners, Jeff and Ray Moser (of the Moser Bros.) distribute throughout the garden beds. This past year, a UVic honours student also conducted a study of our famous giant Sequoia tree, on the affects of hydration. We were also visited by the Cedar Hill Rec Centre Sketching Club in the summer, who gratefully painted in our garden twice. *(Finally, of note, we now have a trunk of lawn games, available to members. Bookings can be done through the Front Desk, members may invite guests to join them, and the fee is blue activity tickets.)*

Inside the House, our Curator, Tara Jackson, continued to re-invigorate our **Art Gallery**, with the goal of a fully booked 2-year schedule. This post-pandemic rebuild can be a slow process, but Tara managed to book shows for 9 months in 2025. Alongside our updated [Art Gallery brochure](#) (outlining details of application and the space), Tara started a [photo gallery](#) on our website for the Art Gallery, and hosted an “[information session](#)” in late Spring (open to all, see the space and meet the curator). Core to the bookings are shows from our three in-House art groups: our [Chinese Brush Painters](#) lead us from one year to the next, hanging their graceful art in December and January; our [Portrait Painters](#) bring us into spring with their show of skilled work in March; and our prolific [Drop-In Art](#) group beautifully cover our walls in May. Part of the package offered to hosted artists includes a complimentary [Sunday afternoon Art Reception](#) (Opening), and these have been gaining in popularity, not only with our members attending, but the community at large too. Applications to show are accepted on an ongoing basis.

Our 2025 **Programming** schedule continued to be busy! We offered a [Card Making Workshop](#), remodelled [IPAd Club](#) (now a courtesy for members), continued to offer [Money Matters](#) in a rental model, and our [Lectures & Presentation](#) series once again featured a broad and vibrant array of speakers. Many thanks to Mary Collins for facilitating the vast majority of the bookings, including politicians, authors, travelers, driving experts, The Office of the Seniors’ Advocate, The Victoria Native Friendship Centre, outreach speakers, health, wellness and end-of-life speakers, and sessions about Ikebana, our ocean and The Victoria Conservatory of Music. Members participated in the [Legacy Stories Project](#), courtesy of Luther Court, and were invited to participate in a [McGill doctoral study](#) of the long-term effects of heat waves on seniors. Member Deborah Dickson continued monthly [Guided Tours of Haro Woods](#) (exception was a cancellation due to a bear sighting!), and member Jim Brackenbury once again offered three 9-week sessions of [Bridge Lessons](#). Following Jim’s Bridge Lesson model, member Barb Mekelburg offered an inaugural 8-week series of [Chinese Brush Painting Lessons](#). We especially acknowledge and thank both Barb and Jim for their teaching expertise, free of charge. We are also grateful for every member who participated in our [mini Fall Programming Survey](#), the results of which help steer future programming.

As is normal with vibrant programming, change is ongoing. In 2025, we were delighted to welcome [Jacqueline Sloan](#) and [Gabriel Shaw](#) as our new [Yang Tai Chi and Qigong & Mobility](#) instructors. While we continue to update the scheduling for this class, we are grateful to these two instructors for their expertise. We also added [Somatic Movement](#) courses, with instructor [Jennifer O’Halloran](#), as a wellness class complementing fitness. Feedback for both these new activities has been positive.

Like our programming schedule, our **Special Events** calendar continues to grow, if not in number of events certainly with size of our events! In 2025, we offered a full slate of 12 annual events. As spring started brightening our days, we hosted our [Volunteer Appreciation Event](#) in April, followed by our [AGM](#) in May (alas, not in the Garden in 2025, due to rain). Also in May, our Board hosted a [Pancake Brunch](#), with eggs donated by

Galey's. In June, just prior to summer break, we hosted our Strawberry Tea & Choir Concert, featuring our very own Goward House Singers. Our thanks again to another branch of the Galey's for their donation of strawberries. We once again were lucky to have incredible weather in early July for our Music in the Park event (featuring Late Shift), with over 450 people attending the opening night of Saanich's summer concert series. During summer we were able to offer 3 BBQs to our members, as well as participate in the local Caddy Bay Days by the ocean. Also in the summer, we were invited by the Victoria Foundation to participate in a promotional event with the Victoria HarbourCats. Much of Fall was spent preparing for our immensely successful Craft Fair 2025, featuring three enormous raffle baskets – sincere thank yous again to Myrna Rouse, Margo Allen, Barry Mah Ming, Barb Turner and Tara Jackson for their significant efforts to create these beautiful baskets. Our ever-popular Craft Fair generated over \$6430 in revenue for the House, including almost \$1200 from sales of items created and donated by our own Crafters and Quillers. (Please note that these generous members create most of the items you can purchase from our Display Cabinet during the year.) Finally, we capped the year with our always sold-out Christmas Luncheon & Choir Concert, with special guests Mayor Dean Murdock, Saanich CAO Brent Reems and MLA Diana Gibson. Alongside the seasonal festivities, our members generously supported our in-House Holiday Food Drive, allowing staff members Russ and Tara to deliver a stuffed carload of non-perishables and hygiene products to The Shelbourne Community Kitchen on behalf of the Society. Concurrently, we donated our old deck furniture, old bridge tables and old staff fridge to Habitat for Humanity.

In addition to these singular events, we offer a couple of smaller events to members, namely the monthly Repair Clinic (again, thanks to our Crafters), and Barry's Bottle Drive which is ongoing (thank you, Barry!).

Alongside the generous and continuous **fundraising** efforts our in-House artisans provide, we once again facilitated Purdy's Chocolates campaigns for both Easter and Christmas in 2025, netting over \$1050 in operational revenue. Our ongoing fundraising through Pepper's Foods raised over \$600, while a similar program with Fairway Market raised over \$675. Our Holiday Raffle Baskets raised over \$1110, while our own Barry Mah Ming donated \$1575 from his Barry's Bottle Recycling project. None of these endeavours would be possible without active support from our members – thank you!

Looking at 2025, our **revenue breakdown** was as follows:

Rentals	21.9%
Programs	16.5%
Grants & Donations	32.2%
Kitchen	5.9%
Dues	13.1%
Special Events + Fundraisers	7.0%
Other (Art, Display Cabinet, Interest, GST, Misc)	3.4%

One of the pillars of our income is rental revenue, which saw an increase of 3.8% in 2025. This positive trend continues into 2026, as word of mouth, social media and our rentals brochure continue to publicize the House as a beautiful setting for both event and meeting rentals.

Our grants and donations funding remained more or less stable, and included a \$20,000 Gaming Grant, a Victoria Foundation Community Grant of \$16,500, Saanich grants of \$27,500, and the second grant from our Endowment Fund, of \$903. In addition, we were again approved for a Matching Program for our Endowment Fund from the Victoria Foundation, which jointly contributed \$5000 to the Fund, helping secure long-term funding for the Society. Finally, we received operational donations in memory of members Barb Downie and Shirley Tucker, as well as a Legacy donation of \$9,600 from the estate of Jane Telford.

We recorded a drop of 3.6% in program revenue in 2025, primarily due to a small drop in fitness course attendance. Miniscule declines or gains in other revenue categories indicate these categories remained more or less stable in 2025.

In addition to holding both a 5-year Contribution Agreement and a 5-year Facility Use Agreement with our Society, **Saanich** continues to be an agreeable and supportive partner in the success of the House. Saanich's Mike Tipton and Chris Cormie deserve continuous thanks for their roles in regular and emerging maintenance and repair, such as replacing and maintaining our HVAC system, gas maintenance and repair, replacing broken light fixture covers, clips and ballast, fire alarm and system testing, gutters cleaning and wasp nests removal. In addition, we hold two standing meetings with Saanich each year, one with Saanich Facilities to discuss capital plans and the other with the Mayor and CAO regarding our financial plan – these meetings keep us in communication with Saanich and help all of us with future planning. We are *incredibly* grateful for our friendly and supportive relationship with Saanich.

Our 2024 President's Appeal project was fulfilled in 2025, with the purchase of new bridge tables for both the Lower Hall and the upstairs Maple Room, as well as new tables, umbrellas and chairs for our deck. The response over these items has been overwhelmingly positive! I encourage you to take your lunch or coffee out to the deck on a nice day, and enjoy the new furniture. Our 2025 **President's Appeal** fundraiser was targeted towards rejuvenating and refurbishing our Lower Level. This is an area long overdue for repainting and floor replacement, and Saanich will be a partner in this significant reno. Members generously donated over \$17,000 for this project, and have been supportive of the scope of the project.

We also purchased both a POS system for our Front Desk in 2025, as well as a replacement CLOVER machine, both of which have streamlined our reception. In addition, we had all windows professionally washed, which hadn't been done for many years and instantly made an enormous difference to visibility and light through the windows.

Personnel grew in 2025, with the addition of a new Custodian, Brandi Ennis. Brandi has fit right in, helping not only with rentals but with Special Events, and relieved the pressure on the rest of staff to support Leslie as the lone Custodian. And, once again, Russ, our Janitor, supplied staff with a prime rib Christmas supper at our delayed (January) Staff Luncheon – thank you, Russ!

As always, solidly supporting staff and the Society has been your active **Board of Directors**. The Board enjoyed another hard-working and successful year with two changes at the AGM (Barbara Sawyer joined the Board, while Barry Mah Ming retired as Past President – sincere thanks to both!). Now an annual process, the Board again hosted two Retreats to evaluate current action plans and produce action plans for the upcoming year. We also continued monthly President's Corners as opportunities for members to ask questions of our President. The Board again offered their annual Pancake Brunch the week after the AGM, as a way to get to know your Board, and intend to make this an annual event. As has been the case for several years, this evolving team works well together, and is dedicated to the success of the Society. We heartily thank each one of them!

The last several years highlighted what a kind and caring community the **Goward House Society** is. Members and staff support each other, participating in activities and events, volunteering, connecting with new members and old friends alike, supporting the Tea Room and Art Gallery, and welcoming everyone to the House. Our world can feel beleaguered at times, which makes our community all the more relevant and important, this gem tucked away in Cadboro Bay, the Goward House.

Respectfully submitted by Heidi Hodgins – General Manager