



# ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025





Executive Director, Marieze Tarr

## WHERE WE ARE

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As we reflect on the past year at Desert Sun Counselling and Resource Centre Society, I am filled with gratitude and pride for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by our team, partners, and community. This year has been one of growth and transformation, as we navigated the evolving needs of those we service amidst a changing landscape. Our commitment to providing accessible, compassionate, and effective support has never been stronger. Through innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and the unwavering support of our donors and volunteers, we have been able to expand our reach and deepen our impact. Together, we continue to build a community where every individual can thrive and I am excited to share the achievements and milestones of this year with you.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

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**SOCIAL MEALS:** Desert Sun was fortunate to obtain funding from United Way to launch our Social Meals program in the fall of 2024 in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and OK Falls. The social meals program is offered weekly in all three communities. We offer a nutritious meal to seniors with an opportunity for them to engage socially. Our Community Support workers host the social meals, which give them an opportunity to engage with our seniors and to ensure that seniors are connected to the services and the resources that they need. In this period more than 3000 meals were served!

**COMMUNITY LIFT:** Through a partnership with Rural District of the South Okanagan and the towns of Oliver and Osoyoos, Desert Sun was able to purchase a brand new 14-seat, wheel chair accessible bus. With funding from New Horizons and United Way we operate the bus weekly to Kelowna, Penticton and more locally between Oliver, Osoyoos and Ok Falls. Seniors are picked up and dropped off at home and are transported to medical appointments or can run errands and go grocery shopping for a nominal fee.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTOR:** The new Community Connector role is a vital addition to our efforts in supporting seniors who are not linked to the primary care network due to a shortage of family physicians. Recognizing this gap, especially after witnessing the positive influence of our Community Support workers in local doctor's offices, we established this role to bridge the divide between seniors with access to a physician and those who do not. The Community Connector collaborates with seniors to explore and access community services and access community services and activities that enhance their health, well-being, and independence. Beyond logistic support, the Community Connector offers a compassionate presence, providing a listening ear for seniors to express their feelings, thereby significantly improving their overall well-being and quality of life. This program is made possible through funding through United Way.

**VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE:** This program was piloted last fall in one of our elementary and high schools and will be expanded to more schools in the coming year. The objective of the program is to break the silence on domestic violence by making it safe for children and youth to speak up in schools about domestic violence and the issues that impact their lives; to increase awareness among teachers, school staff, parents and students about violence in relationships and its effects on children witnessing it, and to facilitate partnerships between schools and communities in order to respond to the emotional, social, academic and psychological needs of children exposed to domestic violence. We are excited about the expansion of this preventative program.

**“If you become a helper of hearts, springs of wisdom will flow from your heart.”**

**-Rumi-**

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR CONTINUED

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**SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:** Funding was secured through the JW McConnell foundation for Desert Sun To work with Purppl consulting (Kelowna) to create a business model for a social enterprise. Desert Sun worked with Purppl for the last year to launch a social enterprise this summer that focuses on reducing food waste while improving food security in the local communities. By rescuing surplus and “imperfect” produce from local farms, we will preserve this food using freezing, dehydrating and freeze-drying methods. The preserved food will be packaged and distributed in the fall as pre-purchased “shares” modelled on a community supported agricultural system. Each share will contain a variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables processed for long term storage and consumption. Unsold shares will be used in our food programs. This initiative will address three goals: reduce farm-level food waste, improve access to local, nutritious food, and will create sustainable employment through a value-added food preservation model.

**ALCOHOL USE DISORDER (AUD):** Desert Sun partnered with the Canadian Alcohol Disorder Society (CAUDS) to 1) educate people about Alcohol Use Disorder as a treatable health condition; 2) encourage and support people to access various care options; and to 3) foster informed mindful alcohol use to promote a healthier culture. During the 2024/25 year we held a Community Workshop, provided information about AUD and harm reduction at the Festival of the Grape event, hosted a Sober October social media campaign and held a public screening of the documentary SMASHED at the Oliver Theatre. Our goal was to get people talking, learning and connecting about AUD to reduce the stigma of this disorder and to build a healthier community.

**In closing,** the achievements and progress showcased in this annual report are a testament to the collective efforts and dedication of the Desert Sun team. The passion and commitment of our staff, alongside the invaluable support of our board members, have been instrumental in paving the way for another successful year of growth. Together, we have embraced innovation, challenges, and celebrated triumphs. As we look to the future, let us continue to work hand in hand, driven by our shared vision and unwavering commitment to excellence. Thank you to all who have played a part in making 2024/2025 a truly remarkable chapter in the Desert Sun story.





# WHO WE ARE

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## STAFF

Our dedicated staff and coordinators combine experience, perspective, and passion to deliver quality programs and resources that make a difference in our community.

### ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

**Marieze Tarr**, Executive Director

**Jas Nahal/ Alex Orlovskyy**, Director of Finance

**Michelle Bell**, Executive Assistant

### PROGRAM COORDINATORS

**Nancy Aatelma**, Parent Connection/Community Kitchen/Community Garden/Early Years/Roots of Empathy

**Marieze Tarr & Michelle Bell**, Parenting Skills Program Okanagan Correctional Centre

**Armelle Garska/Kassandra Atkins/Cindy Smith**, Better at Home for Seniors

**Michelle Bell**, Affordable Housing

**Ariel Ozorco**, Men's Shed

**Bonnie Dancey, Donna Morgan, Alicia Osland, Lisa Lewis, Jasmine Calisto, June Marcotte**, Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (TAPS)

**Arlana Tanner/Michelle Bell**, Volunteer Coordinator

**Annie Davidson**, Youth Connection Program

**Stacey Melara, Kassandra Atkins, Jennifer Waterman**, Community Support Workers

**Jeremy Knechtel/Marco Calisto**, Community Lift

### COUNSELLING AND OUTREACH STAFF

**Rebekah Humphrey**, Clinical Manager

**Chad Teigen/Tonya Sonai/Pavan Dhaliwal/ Jeremy Crowe/Rossana Garcia/ Brittany Von Burg/ Danica Roos**, Counsellors

**Lisa Lewis/Ashley Frederick/Jennifer Waterman/Michelle Bell**, Outreach staff

**Michelle Bell**, Fee for Service

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Board of Directors provides steady guidance and unwavering support. Their dedication helps Desert Sun thrive and better serve our community.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Maureen Doerr**, Board Chair

**Gayle McConnell/Marko Bosjniak**, Treasurer

**Heather Andrews/Patricia Roberts/MaryAnne Galey/Susan Cran/Teresa Fortune**, Board Members



“ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH.” — HELEN KELLER

# REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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Looking back at 2024-2025 fiscal year, I am happy to share that the Society's financial condition remains robust. Our commitment to providing crucial services as effective as we can, while ensuring long-term sustainability for our stakeholders, is central to our financial strategy.

This year, we enhanced our monitoring by engaging with an independent accounting firm to perform an audit of our financial statements prepared in accordance with Canadian Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations (ASNPO). The auditors provided a clean audit opinion for the Society's financial statements.

#### Income & Expenses

- Revenues rose notably to \$2,124,509 mainly due to effective fundraising efforts, donations, and increased funding for the Canada-BC Housing Benefit (CBCHB) program – a vital BC Housing rent subsidy that helps prevent homelessness by making housing accessible for at-risk individuals and families in our community.
- Expenses increased to \$2,008,203, highlighting our strategic growth of services, which include hiring more personnel for our expanding Desert Sun programs.

#### Balanced Budget

- With the careful financial management, we secured a surplus of \$116,306, allowing us to reinvest in programs and uphold financial stability

#### Balance Sheet and Cash Reserves

- Our balance sheet is strong, highlighted by solid cash reserves that ensure operational stability and upcoming initiatives. This encompasses reserves for unforeseen difficulties and tactical funds for chances to fill community service voids. During the year, with the assistance from RDOS, the Town of Osoyoos, and the Town of Oliver, we acquired a passenger bus that is now in service, enhancing community transportation for those requiring assistance.

#### Key Budget Drivers

- Wages & Benefits (60%): Being a service-based organization, our staff represent our greatest resource. Wages and benefits represent our biggest investment, and correlate directly with increase in scope of services offered at Desert Sun.
- Program & Client Services (16%): This year, our direct expenditures on programs increased to facilitate the growth of our services, especially for the CBCHB program.

#### Conclusion

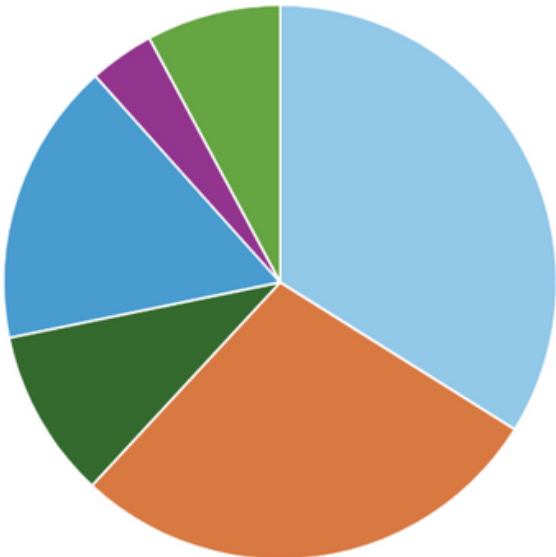
Thanks to the unwavering support and confidence from our funders, donors, and community partners, the Society is financially strong and well-positioned to achieve even more in the coming years.

Alex Orlovskyy, CPA, CA  
Director of Finance

# FINANCIALS IN NUMBERS 2023-2024

## REVENUES

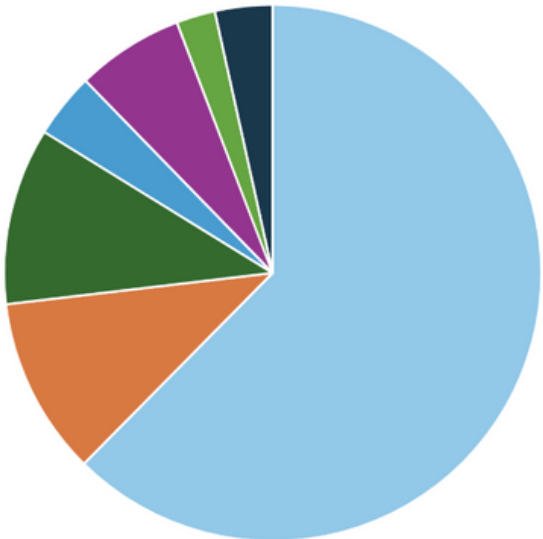
Government Funding	605,734	34%
Program Specific Grants	500,526	28%
Donations & Fundraising	296,011	17%
Educational Partnerships	176,640	10%
Rental & Property Revenue	140,154	8%
Earned Revenue	67,985	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,787,050</b>	<b>100%</b>



■ Government Funding
 ■ Program Specific Grants
 ■ Educational Partnerships  
■ Donations & Fundraising
 ■ Earned Revenue
 ■ Rental & Property Revenue

## EXPENSES

Personnel Costs	1,050,551	62%
Program & Client Services	180,707	11%
Facilities & Operations	179,757	11%
Depreciation and Financing	108,867	6%
Administrative and Professional Fees	65,952	4%
Transportation	58,276	3%
Marketing and Fundraising	39,422	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,683,532</b>	<b>100%</b>

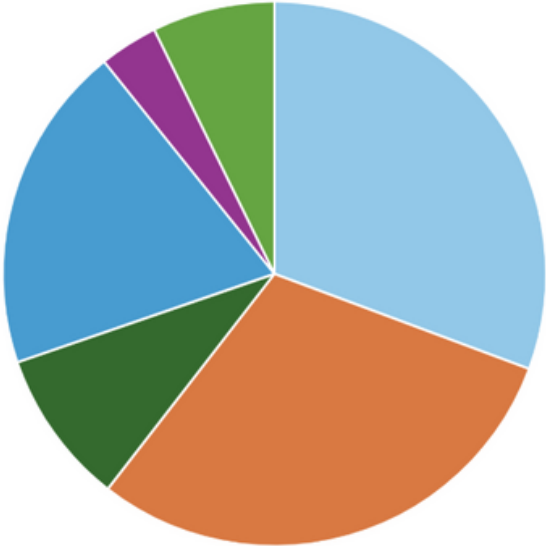


■ Personnel Costs
 ■ Program & Client Services  
■ Facilities & Operations
 ■ Administrative and Professional Fees  
■ Depreciation and Financing
 ■ Marketing and Fundraising  
■ Transportation

# FINANCIALS IN NUMBERS 2024/2025

## REVENUES

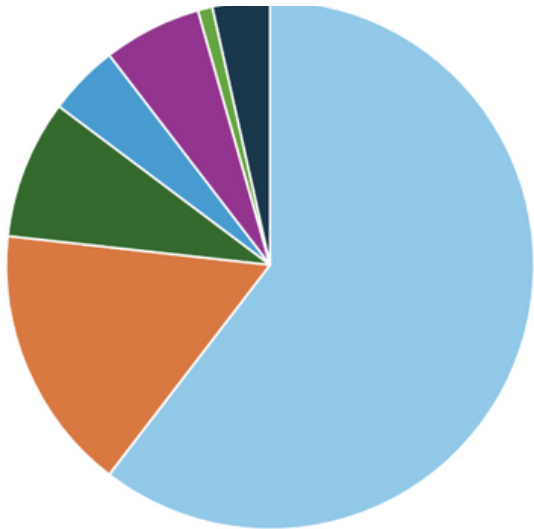
Government Funding	651,718	31%
Program Specific Grants	633,749	30%
Donations & Fundraising	414,040	19%
Educational Partnerships	196,016	9%
Rental & Property Revenue	154,882	7%
Earned Revenue	74,104	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,124,509</b>	<b>100%</b>



■ Government Funding
 ■ Program Specific Grants
 ■ Educational Partnerships  
■ Donations & Fundraising
 ■ Earned Revenue
 ■ Rental & Property Revenue

## EXPENSES

Personnel Costs	1,213,641	60%
Program & Client Services	327,369	16%
Facilities & Operations	170,547	8%
Depreciation and Financing	120,869	6%
Administrative and Professional Fees	87,168	4%
Transportation	70,647	4%
Marketing and Fundraising	17,962	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,008,203</b>	<b>100%</b>



■ Personnel Costs
 ■ Program & Client Services  
■ Facilities & Operations
 ■ Administrative and Professional Fees  
■ Depreciation and Financing
 ■ Marketing and Fundraising  
■ Transportation

# STRATEGIC PLAN



# YEAR IN REVIEW

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Community Connector funding from United Way. The CC works with seniors in community to help find them the right supports and resources.

\$62,000 raised with our virtual Empty Bowls and Baskets Fundraiser

26 programs to empower people of all ages to experience an enhanced quality of life in community.

Senior Meals program launched in Osoyoos, Ok Falls and Oliver with grant funding from United Way

Fields to future social enterprise. With funding from McConnell foundation Desert Sun has worked with a business development consultant to build a business model and plan for a food rescue service enterprise.

Advocacy meetings with Ministers, Attorney General and Lieutenant Governor.

Violence Is preventable funding for in school program from BCSTH allow Desert Sun to teach children/youth about healthy relationships and domestic violence.

AUD awareness campaign - harm reduction campaign at Festival of the Grape, showing of AUD movie "SMASHED" followed by panel discussion.

Funding secured for School's Out Program at both Osoyoos Elementary and Oliver Elementary

Second Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event



Elder Abuse Awareness barbeque to create awareness of elder abuse locally.

Second October dedicated Domestic Violence Awareness Month by the Towns of Osoyoos and Oliver

Expand TAPS program to Okanagan Falls. Program runs once a week from Senior Centre.

Community Lift Program launched. Program provides transportation for seniors to Kelowna, Penticton and locally.



# WHAT WE DO

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We facilitate supportive programs to empower people of all ages to experience an enhanced quality of life in their homes, schools and communities. We at Desert Sun focus on the following service areas:

## **Referral and Advocacy**

**Community Outreach**, assists individuals and families in connecting them with the appropriate services. We provide help with completing income assistance and other legal forms. We advocate on behalf of our clients to relevant agencies and organizations

## **Safe Home and Crisis Support**

**The Women's Crisis Line**, provides emotional support to women who struggle with relationship issues and feelings of isolation. We provide information regarding community programs and make referrals to supports that meet the individuals need.

**Safe Home Program**, provides food, clothing, shelter, transportation and advocacy to women and children fleeing from intimate partner violence, 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

**Youth Shelter**, provides shelter for youth who are fleeing violence or conflict at home and are at risk of homelessness.

## **Parenting Education & Support/Community Kitchen**

**The Parent Connection**, a place for parent/care givers to meet and share their parenting concerns. The Parent Connection is an interactive participant focused program, which offers a variety of supports for families. We offer: Mother Goose, Nobody's Perfect, Circle of Security, Baby Talk, tips on parenting, nutrition, and budgeting. Information on community resources, gently used clothing exchange, car seat lending program plus much more.

**Parenting Skills Program**, is offered at the Okanagan Correctional Centre and is designed for inmates interested in enhancing their parenting skills. The program aims to break the cycle of intergenerational violence and trauma by educating participants on the impact of trauma on a child's developing brain. Through this program, inmates gain valuable insights into effective parenting strategies, fostering healthier family dynamics and contributing to positive generational change.

**Desert Sun Cooks (DS Cooks)**, program is a comprehensive initiative focused on enhancing the physical health and well-being of both children and adults. By educating participants on the importance of nutritious foods, the program empowers individuals to make healthier dietary choices. It offers practical guidance on shopping within a budget, and the preservation of food (canning, freezing). The program also provides pre/post natal vitamins to pregnant and nursing women.

**Early Years Program**, provides support for parents of children 0-6 years old. This program is an outdoor based program to teach children and families the importance of play, nature and being outside and unplugged from technology. We model positive parenting and provide parenting support. All learning activities are play-based.

**Roots of Empathy (ROE)**, teaches students emotional literacy by using a mother and a baby in a specific classroom for the duration of the school year. Students become more self-aware and also see their own vulnerability in the vulnerability of the baby. They see empathy in action by watching the bond between a mother and a baby.

# WHAT WE DO CONTINUED

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## **Counselling for Women, Children, Youth and Men**

**Women's Counselling** provides individual and group counselling to women over the age of nineteen who have experienced childhood abuse, are in adult abusive relationships and/or experiencing sexualized violence.

**Women's Circle** provides women with a ninety-minute group session once a week. The Women's Circle is a safe place of support for women who are going through difficult times and the circle also provides support to women who are currently on the women's counselling wait list.

**Children & Youth Counselling** provides individual and group counselling for children 3-18 years of age, who are exposed to intense family conflict/transition and/or abuse. Our counsellors also provide in school counselling and supports to children and youth of all ages who are facing mental health issues.

**Youth Connection** -this program provides positive childhood experiences to our at-risk 9-12 year old's through connection with caring adults. This program is an after-school program that was offered at one of our elementary schools this past year.

**Community Support Worker (CSW):** This program is in partnership with Interior Health. Desert Sun provides one CSW to each of the communities of Oliver and Osoyoos to work in local family practices. The CSW provides socio-emotional support to patients as part of the new team-based primary care network. The CSW provide outreach support (help with following treatment plans, psychosocial support, stabilizing vulnerable patients), help with completion of forms, and assist patients and families with life skills support. The CSW's are the connection between patients in need and the services they need in the community.

**Fee for Service:** At Desert Sun, we are committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of individuals in our community. The expansion of our services to include Fee for Service Counselling sessions, fills an important gap for individuals who require support that falls outside the mandate of our existing free counselling program. By offering a free consultation call and a range of skilled counsellors, we strive to provide accessible and effective care to all those seeking our services. We invite individuals and couples alike to visit our website and take the first step towards their journey of healing and growth. It is our aim to positively affect the lives of our community members through preventative programs, parent support, ending violence, promoting healthy relationships, supporting early childhood development and seniors independence.

**Community Lift,** provides safe transportation (wheelchair accessible) for seniors, with pickups and drop-offs at home, to medical appointments, shopping and errands in Penticton, Kelowna and locally between Osoyoos, Oliver and Okanagan Falls.

**Social Meals,** This program is offered weekly in each of the communities of Osoyoos, Oliver and Okanagan Falls. Seniors gather to share a healthy, homecooked meal together. Before and after the meal there is time for some social connection, games and cards.

**Therapeutic Activation Program for Seniors (TAPS),** connects isolated seniors who face challenges accessing programs and services on their own. The program enables seniors to access activities, nutritious meals and social support, and to get connected to other community services.

**Better at Home,** helps local older adults continue living independently in their own homes by providing simple, non-medical home support services. BAH services include housekeeping, transportation, yard work, snow removal, grocery shopping and friendly visits.

# HOW CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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## **Volunteer:**

**"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It is not." - Dr. Seuss**

- Transport clients to vital appointments
- Provide crucial administrative support
- Offer compassionate childcare
- Help out with our food social enterprise

Your time changes lives. **Sign up today!**

## **Fundraise:** Turn events into impact!

- Join our dynamic fundraising team
- Organize your own community event
- Spread the word and rally support

Every dollar raised transforms our community. **Get involved now!**

## **Donate:** Your generosity fuels our mission!

- Make a one-time or monthly donation
- Support specific programs close to your heart
- Consider a legacy through Planned Giving

Without you, our programs can't exist. Your support directly improves lives in our community. Don't wait - **donate today!**

Ready to make an impact? Contact us now at 250-498-2538 or visit our website to learn more about how you can change lives in the South Okanagan. ([desertsun.ca](http://desertsun.ca))

**Together we can build a stronger, more resilient community!**



# THANK YOU!

We would like to thank the many businesses, private donors and service organizations that donate to our organization, without your support we would not be able to help all of the people reached in this snapshot below.

- No Frills Grocery Store
- Government of Canada
- Province of BC
- Community Foundation of South Okanagan/Similkameen
- Osoyoos Credit Union
- Valley First
- Decoda Literacy Solutions
- Town of Osoyoos
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Royal LePage Shelter Foundation
- BC Gaming,
- Quilting Guild of Osoyoos and Oliver
- Women of Oliver for Women Society
- United Church of Osoyoos
- Roman Catholic Women's League in Oliver
- BC Housing
- United Way
- RDOS

