



Aunt Leah's Independent Lifeskills Society Service Provider Award of Excellence

When youth in care are about to make the transition to independence or when young moms need skills to cope, Aunt Leah's Independent Lifeskills Society has been a safe harbour and a loving 'aunt' for the past 21 years.

Gail Stewart, Aunt Leah's executive director, founded the society in 1988 when, as a foster parent, she recognized that youth in care needed extra support as they approached their 19th birthday. As they aged out of care they required life skills to make sudden independence more manageable. She also established a program to assist pregnant and parenting teens.

Over the years Aunt Leah's has added programs to fill gaps for vulnerable young people so that they can gain marketable skills like retail and restaurant training. The society has 15 homes for teens, two for youth over 19 and five homes for women with babies. It also provides one-on-one support, life skills workshops and training.

Aunt Leah's programs are innovative and supportive. They help young people to weave their own safety nets of skill and coping.

Quotes from Nomination Letters:

"This is a group of committed individuals with an established track record of providing support and housing for at risk individuals and families in Vancouver."

"Aunt Leah's is developing a model that will be a precedent for both the government and the community to emulate."

"They are proactive and innovative in their approach to adjusting programs as needs demand. Their returning members speak to the key influence that Aunt Leah's had in helping direct and prepare them for a more positive life. Aunt Leah's positively transforms lives and therefore contributes to the health and well being of our society."