

# Solitary pedal through a park



A youth rides past a playground, closed due the COVID-19 outbreak, next to Shelbourne Street on a sunny Wednesday. DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

# Swiftsure yacht race cancelled

MIKE DEVLIN  
Times Colonist

The annual Swiftsure International Yacht Race has been cancelled due to the increasing threat of COVID-19, marking the first break for the open-water race since 1946.

The Royal Victoria Yacht Club event was scheduled for May 21-25. The decision was finalized last week to skip what would have been the 77th edition.

Gatherings of more than 50 people are not allowed in B.C., and both Canada and the U.S. have banned non-essential cross-border travel.

Swiftsure attracts thousands of spectators each year, with a strong contingent of American participants.

“A week has transpired since we made the decision, and it’s gotten even worse,” said Randy Diamond, who co-chairs the race with Andrew McBride. “So we know that it was the right decision to make.”

Swiftsure was last halted for several years during the fallout from the Second World War, Diamond said. “It has certainly

been an institution.”

More than 160 yachts charted the course between Clover Point and the Inner Harbour last year. Diamond expected a similar number of racers this year. The decision to cancel early gave participants and organizers an opportunity to avoid last-minute headaches.

“We started working on some workarounds, but then as things got worse and worse and worse, there came to be a point where there was no workaround,” Diamond said.

“It’s not just the competitors — we were also looking at how do we do things to ensure the safety of the volunteers.”

The range of events included in Swiftsure Week depended on the work of about 200 volunteers, many of whom are also involved with the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, the oldest yacht club of its kind in Western Canada. All events at the club in the coming months have been cancelled, including the opening day festivities set for April 24-27.

“We hope we will be getting out on the water sometime this summer, but there’s no guarantee of that,” Diamond said.

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# The time for community to come together is now

JANIENE BOICE

A commentary by the senior director of the Mustard Seed Street Church.

COVID-19 has brutally affected Greater Victoria’s low-income families, members of our street communities and seniors. Getting meals to people unable to leave their homes, providing food hampers to families and feeding members of our Greater Victoria street community are some of the top priorities for local agencies.

And as food banks and shelters continue to navigate the balance between protecting staff and volunteer teams while getting those essential services to the front lines, demands continue to increase.

COVID-19 is a particular threat to seniors and those with underlying health conditions. Having members of our homeless population congregate or creating line-ups of families picking up food hampers can be a tinderbox of infection. This creates challenges that agencies are tackling head on.

Most agencies are choosing to serve meals outdoors, including in their parking lots, following social-distancing guidelines. Both the Mustard Seed and Salvation Army have placed tape on the pavement and have tables blocking individuals from getting too close.

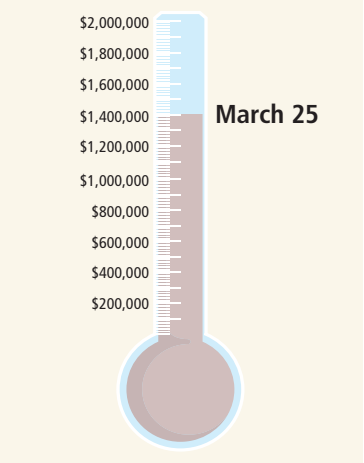
Food banks are collaborating and sharing resources. Most agencies have similar needs and requests — canned protein, new blankets, new socks, hand sanitizer, masks and gloves. Working together to figure out what are the essential services that each agency provides and who is doing what has been key.

For example, the Mustard Seed is providing 200 pre-packed family hampers and distributing 250 hot lunches daily in the parking lot. At the Food Security Distribution Centre the focus is on rescuing fresh produce, dairy products, and food items that support individuals’ immune systems.

As spring break comes to an end and school closures take place, agencies expect to see a surge in families needing more support, as these families will no longer be able to rely on the breakfast or lunch programs at their schools. And many parents will be working fewer hours with social distancing and childcare not being available for school-age children.

For members of the street community there is a great fear that agencies will shut

## RAPID RELIEF FUND



down and they won’t have a dry place to sleep. Food banks and shelters are facing their own fears of cancelled spring fundraisers and running out of money to purchase food and supplies.

The need for the Greater Victoria community to come together is greater than ever. You can help in a few ways.

**Volunteer:** If you are healthy and not in a high-risk group, please consider helping at your local food bank, food-recovering facility or shelter. Most agencies have a contact email or number on their website.

**Donations:** Your donation is needed now more than ever. During self-isolation, make a financial donation online to the Rapid Relief Fund. Agencies are working directly with local supermarkets to protect the supply to their food banks. All the proceeds will go to purchase food, blankets, gloves and masks.

I believe that during this time of fear and/or isolation there is a great need to come together, to love on each other and to continue strengthening our communities in a way that ensures the safety and well-being of all. Let’s believe in people. Let’s believe in each other.

**HOW TO DONATE**

Tax receipts will be issued.

- Online: [rapidrelieffund.ca](http://rapidrelieffund.ca)
- Phone: 250-381-5532
- Mail: Send cheques to the Victoria Foundation at #200-703 Broughton St., Victoria, B.C., V8W 1E2. Please ensure cheques are made out to the Victoria Foundation. Note the ‘Rapid Relief Fund’ in the memo line or in a cover letter. If you are open to receiving your tax receipt by PDF, please include an email address with your donation.

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You can help Our Place assist the most vulnerable without breaking your self-isolation by visiting [www.ourplacesociety.com](http://www.ourplacesociety.com) and clicking the Donate button. We will use those funds to provide meals, hygiene, medical supplies, emergency aid, and so much more.

We want to thank all of the contributing businesses for providing to this special meal; it was a morale boost for those struggling during this public health crisis.

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