



# Bumpin Bakery

Bump Out Hunger

Non-Profit Organization

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## **Tyler: A Volunteer with a Vision**

**T** Tyler, a regular volunteer during Bumpin's Sunday handouts, delved into an array of insightful anecdotes as we conversed, his aspirations ringing strong and clear. He is currently in grade eleven attending Vancouver College, and it was only two years prior in grade nine when he heard about Bumpin by word of mouth through a close friend at school. Curiosity urged him to grasp this opportunity to work with Bumpin so he could form a deeper connection with a part of his hometown, namely the Downtown Eastside. He had for the most part only superficially observed the area in passing as his family occasionally drove through it on their way to his grandmother's house. He distinctly remembers the suffocating lack of hope he felt while gazing out the car window, a tangible sense of anger emanating from these people whose only interest seemed to be, at least with a passing glance, yelling at each other and pointing guns at each other. As a child, this was all Tyler saw and all he took away from this part of the city, his observations of the Downtown Eastside from an outside perspective making him draw the simple conclusion, which many people have adopted before and after him, that this is a 'rough' area.

The spark that enlightened Tyler's further interest in the Downtown Eastside, and that which made him weary of the previous stereotypes he ingrained in his head, was when his father took him for a walk through what Tyler considered to be one of the 'rougher' areas of the Downtown Eastside, before Tyler heard about Bumpin. His father wanted to expose Tyler to the reality of a place that seemed so vaguely menacing and dangerous from a distant eye, to 'put some sense' into his son, whom he knew had formed negative assumptions of a place he had zero physical exposure to. Tyler called this experience with his father a 'real eye-opener', something that spurred him to desire a deeper and more expansive understanding of the Downtown Eastside.

One specific moment of this outing Tyler mentioned was when his father was approached by a man who tried to sell him drugs. As soon as the man realized there was a kid standing next to his targeted person, he profusely apologized and quickly put away his product so it was out of Tyler's sight, leaving the pair soon after. This was the first time Tyler stood face to face with a sign of consideration that he originally assured himself was foreign for people living in the Downtown Eastside, especially after witnessing nothing but desperation and pain from the car window. This contradiction within his own mind was something he wanted to explore further, and Bumpin gave him the perfect opportunity to integrate himself within this community so he could form a realistic picture of Downtown Eastside residents and their individual virtues when his overarching, negative stereotype proved unreliable.

Tyler was intimidated by the environment when he first started volunteering. He stuck with shyly handing out sandwiches and snacks until he gradually grew more comfortable and familiar with his surroundings, consistent exposure encouraging him to engage with residents and fellow volunteers. The more conversations he initiated, the more the high

wall of misconceptions surrounding the Downtown Eastside crumbled, soon disappearing altogether for Tyler. There is no distinction between residents of the Downtown Eastside and those who live anywhere else, Tyler understanding that each person who comes to the



*"Tyler prepping pies at our Doors Open Lunch in October"*

handout on Sundays are people 'just like you and me' who have made decisions along the path of life that have led them to the Downtown Eastside, decisions no less valuable or thought-out than those made by people who end up in a business suit. He wanted to emphasize that the residents are not as hostile or aggressive as many people think from initial sweeping observations of the Downtown Eastside, a trap he fell into but had the courage to climb out of when Bumpin offered him a hand. He told me all the little conversations and exchanges with residents, that have crafted this current viewpoint, have merged together in his mind, creating a sense of unity between himself and the residents.

One of Tyler's favourite experiences within the Downtown Eastside occurred while walking with his little brother. One of the residents on the street signaled other residents close by that there were "kids on the block!", many residents

consequentially giving the kids respectable space as they passed. All those people ensured the kids' safety without ever once thinking of taking advantage of their vulnerability, proving to Tyler just how responsive, caring, observant, and down to earth the residents are, among many other positive traits, which repetitive exposure has taught Tyler that these people honour like everybody else.

Attending Bumpin on a regular basis has allowed Tyler to form relationships, not just with residents, but with fellow volunteers as well. Last year he got much more involved with Bumpin, reaching out to his school in order to create a club with 15 to 20 kids, along with a teacher supervisor. This made transportation to the handouts, as a group under one leader, much easier and more accessible for those who wanted to get involved, but didn't have the means, transportation, or access to a necessary supervisor. On Fridays, he started making sandwiches with some of the club members after school for the handouts, retrieving the bread from Safeway and crowdsourcing the ham and cheese. While crafting these

sandwiches in a backyard every week, Tyler told me that everybody really bonded as a community of people who share the same simple desire to help out the wider community, and it made him happy to be able to joke and have fun while knowing the effort him and his friends put out will be greatly appreciated. Bonding with the volunteers at handouts, too, has created lasting relationships for Tyler. Tyler would even go so far as to say that Bumpin has turned into a program that doesn't exist just for the benefit of Downtown Eastside residents, but also to spread awareness regarding false preconceptions that the Downtown Eastside faces everyday, and it does this by changing the perspective of volunteers through strong, impressionable interactions with residents every Sunday. Bumpin is here to create ties between the people it helps and the volunteers, but has gone further than that and created unbreakable bonds between the volunteers themselves, volunteers who sincerely desire to help and reverse stereotypes.



*\*(From Left to Right): Euphemia, Tyler, Ryan, Alex, Ben and Nico after one of our Sunday handouts\**

Tyler has not finished his journey with Bumpin. He is heavily focused on his grades this year, aspiring to enter the Ivy League after highschool, and has always been a hard-working person, but Bumpin has showed him to appreciate the hard work he puts into everything and has given meaning to his hard work. The handouts have taught him to be grateful for everything he has, for what the people in his life have given him and the opportunities he

has received, and he truly considers himself blessed. His hard work has been validated by the lessons Bumpin and the residents of the Downtown Eastside have taught him, that it is necessary to seize the moment, to take advantage of his favourable situation as a highschool student with endless potential, and to not waste the future he has ahead of him. He wants to give back to Bumpin and repay everything it has helped him realize, hoping that he will be part of Bumpin's future expansions. His ideas for the organization are phenomenal: he mentioned a shop that would open on the weekends and offer freshly baked goods, and even a food truck that could give out free, hot meals. Tyler is a person who has a solid vision for his individual life, his community, and the differences he wants to accomplish. Don't stop working hard, Tyler; more people need your positivity and hopeful outlook in their lives!

By: Keeley Aliya