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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Local Musicians Collaborate To Reach Out To DTES Vancouver Residents In Need  
With Food For Body And Soul On 'Playing For Change Day'**

*Vancouver, BC – September 19, 2016* – On **Saturday, September 24, 2016**, Project Blue Hands Society (PBHS), a local non-profit organization, will host a special collaborative community outreach event that has come to be known as **#GiveThanksDay!**, being held in **Vancouver's Victory Square**. Starting at 11am, volunteers will serve food to residents-in-need living in Downtown Eastside (DTES); and, local musical artists will provide inspiration by giving live performances with uplifting messages throughout the day. Residents will also be engaged through interactive arts activities, and receive complimentary haircuts provided by volunteer student stylists from the VCC Salon & Spa.

September 24th is also known as "Playing For Change Day", a global day of action to promote positive social change through music. Vancouver's #GiveThanksDay! is designated as an official Playing For Change Day event. Musical performers include Star Captains, Wooden Horsemen, David Morin, GroundUP!, Ian Is, Angie Faith, Jessi Nicholson, Ian Cromwell, Mikuak Rai, DJ Thelonius Dule Mthombeni, and others. Money to support this outreach event has come from donations given during GroundUP! Thursdays at Guilt&Co. in Gastown, as well as through CalaBLAST at Calabash Bistro.

The upcoming #GiveThanksDay! event is being supported, in part, by Knights of Columbus (Coquitlam Council 5540), House of Dosas, Calabash Bistro, Cartems Donuterie, and other local businesses, providing food for DTES residents. 4Cats Arts Studio (Coquitlam) will engage attendees in painting a live mural; and, VCC Salon & Spa students will provide free haircutting services.

Coco Rosario, a single mother and nurse, formed PBHS in 2012 initially as a way to engage her two young children, then ages five and seven, in direct acts of compassion and loving-kindness. On several occasions, she would bring them to Downtown Eastside to walk the streets and feed the destitute, fostering a deep sense of gratitude within them. Since early 2014, PBHS has initiated outreach efforts to feed those in need living in DTES, with the help of elementary school-aged children as young as four years old, their parents, and other caring volunteers. Rosario states, "It's important to involve children, especially from a privileged background, so that we may instill a sense of philanthropy at a very young age."

#GiveThanksDay! serves to commemorate the life and music of the late Randy Ponzio, a Vancouver musician who tragically died in DTES in 2011. Randy's song, "For The People", remains an anthem of unity and cross-cultural understanding, bringing positive change into the lives of others. Several of the contributing musicians worked closely with Randy, and are inspired to keep his creative legacy alive. In conversations a few years ago, it was Ponzio who encouraged Rosario to develop what has now become Project Blue Hands Society.

"In this fast-paced world, with such a prominent separation between the wealthy and the poor," Rosario asserts, "It's important that we have a sense of gratefulness; because, it is this attitude of gratitude that will bridge the gap."

Anyone interested in volunteering, or contributing food items and toiletries to be given out during the event can call **(778) 233-5874** or email [info@projectbluehands.org](mailto:info@projectbluehands.org).

Press and media are encouraged to attend #GiveThanksDay!, and support the work of Project Blue Hands Society by spreading the word and covering this positive community outreach initiative.

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