



MEDIA RELEASE

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A LIFETIME OF GIVING

Rev. Tom Oshiro is named as recipient of 2010 Leadership Victoria award

After major seasonal holidays, storage shelves are often more empty than full at many food banks across our country. This year's recipient of the annual Leadership Victoria Lifetime Achievement Award knows only too well what an empty pantry can mean to the hungry, the addicted and the homeless of our communities.

Reverend Tom Oshiro, the director of the Victoria Mustard Seed Street Church and Food Bank, will accept the Lifetime Achievement Award at the sixth annual Victoria's Leadership Awards fundraising event. The afternoon reception takes place Thursday, Jan. 28 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Fairmont Empress Hotel to honour all nominees of the 2010 Victoria's Leadership Awards.

Oshiro has devoted his life to a ministry of care for the communities in which he has lived. He was born in Kenora, Ontario, the second youngest of seven children. Oshiro was a quarterback on his high-school football team and spent time in his early years delivering newspapers, working on the railway and playing a lot of pool and curling. In his curling days, his team went all the way to the Northern Ontario Brief Playdowns, losing the Northern Ontario title by only one game. He graduated from McMaster University and led his first pastorate for the Rainy River District in the small Ontario town of Emo. He met his wife Vietta Gingrich, a nurse, in Emo. Next came ministries in Brantford and Cambridge in Ontario and a short stint in the Baptist denominational head office in Toronto in the early 1980s. Shortly after, he headed to New Westminster where he was assigned to be Area Minister – a pastor to the pastors – for British Columbia, a high-ranking position which he held for nearly five years.

Throughout that time, Oshiro's contributions to all those in his pastoral care have been monumental. He has worked with high-school students; has been unfailingly available to business communities; directed camp ministries; built a retreat centre; hosted a radio show and even ran a coffee house in the 1970s. Ever the adept and friendly sportsman, he has played floor hockey, baseball and volleyball as a means to connect personally with people outside the church.

Oshiro came to Victoria as pastor of Royal Oak Baptist Church. In 1991 he became counselor and eventually pastor at the Mustard Seed where he has been a gentle, vigorous and selfless fixture ever since. He was awarded Citizen of the Year for Victoria in 2002. His wife, known to many as Vi who passed away in 2008, was of immeasurable help to him, working as a tireless organizer for the Mustard Seed's annual Christmas banquet and offering nursing help in the organization's small clinic. They have three children and 10 grandchildren.

“To have been chosen for such an award in the city of Victoria whose reputation is known for its generosity, its care of its people, I am deeply honoured to have been selected,” says Oshiro. “When I realize the previous recipients of this award, then I am indeed humbled to join such a select company of people. Please forgive me, if I confess to you a sense of deep joy and thanksgiving to those who made the selection.”

“Leadership Victoria relies heavily upon the myriad of existing community leaders not only as volunteer resources but for inspiration and advice in our work developing the next generation of leaders. Rev. Oshiro is the epitome of the community leader to emulate—the selection committee has once again very wisely chosen this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award honoree,” says Kate Mansell, president of Leadership Victoria.

At the Jan. 28 event, the local organization receiving the second annual Victoria Foundation Community Leadership award and the recipients of the individual Victoria’s Leadership Awards in four categories—the Rotary Community Leadership Awards, the Vancity Youth Award, the University of Victoria Community Leadership Awards, and the Leadership Victoria Alumni Award (new this year)—will be announced. For tickets to the event, please call 250-386-2269 or send an email to layla@leadershipvictoria.ca.

Leadership Victoria, an action and study program dedicated to honing the skills of current and future local leaders, established the annual awards program in 2004.

Details about the program and a full list of this year’s award nominees are available at www.leadershipvictoria.ca.

A photo of Rev. Oshiro is also available upon request.

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Media contacts:

Kate Mansell (President, Leadership Victoria) at 250-478-3872 or katemansell@shaw.ca
Jack Shore (Executive Director, Leadership Victoria) at 250-386-2269 or jack@leadershipvictoria.ca
Tara Sharpe (UVic Communications) at 250-721-6248 or tksharpe@uvic.ca

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