

Burnaby Connexions

Feature Story 1

A mother's love endeavours all hardships



Barbara Hall and her youngest daughter, Paige.

The Christmas season is always a stressful time for everyone, be it buying presents for loved ones or planning out recipes for Christmas dinners. For Barbara Hall, this time of the year is especially trying. Apart from worrying about presents and dinners, she must also tend to the needs of her children while managing her finances.

Paige, aged one and a half, is diagnosed with m-cmtc

A single mother of four, Barbara is unemployed and is relying on income assistance to cover for her everyday and medical expenses for her daughter. While two of her children are "all grown up", Barbara still looks after her other two young children, Paige and Chase.

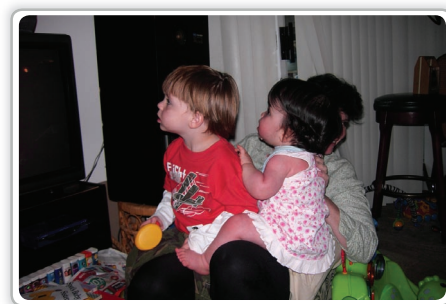
Her youngest, Paige, aged one and a half, is diagnosed with m-cmtc, a rare syndrome characterized by a large head, elasticity in arms and legs, and a floppy voice box. Despite

all that, Paige is always happy. "She has a good personality, and she's a very social person," says Barbara. Paige's rare syndrome keeps Barbara at home and she has "so many doctor's appointments that [she's] always broke".

So she turned to the Burnaby Christmas Bureau for help, and for the last two years, her family has been sponsored. Although she was with Paige in the hospital last year, Barbara and her family were able to enjoy a wonderful Christmas with the generous help of her sponsors. Young Chase, then two years old, received products from LeapFrog, a learning aid for speech therapy.

"I have so many doctor's appointments that I'm always broke"

"Paige would love a personal DVD player because she loves watching movies and cartoon. Barney and Doodlebops are some of the cartoons she watches," says Barbara in response to the possible presents Paige would like.



Barbara Hall and her two youngest children, Chase (left) and Paige.

"[The Christmas Bureau] is for the kids who can't get presents from their parents," replied Barbara in reflection of the work of the Christmas Bureau and the donors. The Christmas Bureau reaches out to low-income families especially those who cannot return to work, like in the case of Barbara Hall. ■

Feature Story 2

Training Innovations innovate to help Christmas Bureau



Staff at Training Innovations

Every Christmas, low-income families from Burnaby are provided with toys and gift certificates so that they can enjoy a holiday filled with warmth and laughter. It is with the generosity of those who sponsor the Christmas Bureau that such joy can be shared within the community during the happy season.

“We had members of our staff deliver our gifts and hamper in person”

Training Innovations has been sponsoring families for the last three years. Just last year, they sponsored a single parent family with two teenagers and donated close to \$350. They also make their every effort personal. They said, “We had members of our staff deliver our gifts and hamper in person, which has always been a really rewarding experience!”

As the staff at Training Innovations feel that it is a great opportunity to help the local community, they have established the Christmas Bureau as one of their

annual fundraisers. The staff thought that “it’s been a way of building team spirit, bringing a bit of the holidays into our working lives, and coming up with fun and innovative fundraising ideas.” Such ideas included silent auctions and bake sales. It is because of these creative ideas that bring such joy into the lives of children.

Training Innovations has over 14 years of history, addressing the career development needs of individuals, and human capital challenges of employers. As these programs are provincially and federally funded, it is of no cost to individuals and employers seeking help with Training Innovations.

If you want to find out more about the Christmas Bureau, please contact Burnaby Community Connections at 604-299-5778 ext. 28. For more information about these career management services, contact Training Innovations at 604-298-4720. ■