

Burnaby Connexions

Feature Story 1

The Fashion Runway Senior, Donna



Burnaby Seniors' Transportation client, Donna

Donna Cooper is one extraordinary senior. Currently in her mid 60s, she has her nails painted aqua blue with sparkles and her shoulder-length hair perfectly styled (along with newly cut bangs!). She wears glittery lip balm that glistens when she talks and puts on platform sandals that display her red toe nails. But like many seniors, she struggles with finding transportation, and that's the reason why she turned to Seniors' Transportation for help. Presently, at the final stages of COPD (Chronic Obstruc-

tive Pulmonary Disease), which is a disease where the lungs are damaged, making breathing difficult, Donna must go see the doctor several times during the summer and more often during the winter. "During the winter time, there is a lot of moisture in the air. The moisture makes it so hard to breathe."

She was first introduced to Seniors' Transportation by her friend, who worked at Charlford house, and quickly be-

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came a client in July 2006. Volunteer drivers pick her up from her house, bring her to her doctor's office, wait for her while she has her appointment, and bring her home in just under two hours.

"Before, I had tried the HandyDART services, but they would pick me up four hours after they dropped me off. It was a big expedition! I also tried taxis, but I had to wait for an hour just for a taxi to come by. I never take the bus," explained Donna about her difficulties with other modes of transportation.

However, Seniors' Transportation is not perfect. "I haven't always been able to get a driver," commenting on the shortage of volunteer drivers, "And it would be great if I could get rides to other places besides to only medical-related appointments."

Of course, there are those times when shopping is a must and staying at home is not an option. For Donna, who is extremely fashion-trendy and who "loves to piece clothes together", shopping is one of the things she enjoys doing the most. In times like this, she would have to find other means of transportation when our program can no longer cover her needs. "Sometimes Lynne would drive me to Lougheed and Brentwood Town Centre. Metrotown is too far," Donna reflects on her two favourite malls.

With only 1/5 of her lungs fully functioning, it is a constant struggle just to get around her basement suite, which she rents from

her best friend, Lynne. She carries an oxygen tank every time she goes out and uses it when she sleeps. Apart from that, she takes her medicine four times a day, which explains the many boxes containing tubes of medicine in her small living space.

Despite all this, Donna is very independent. "I cook my own breakfast and lunch. I only go upstairs for dinner with Lynne and her husband." And even though she may need to sit in a wheelchair and carries an oxygen tank every time she goes out, Donna's friendly and outgoing personality paired with her passion for fashion and beauty will certainly keep her out of the ordinary! ■

If you are in need of the Burnaby Seniors' Transportation services, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver, please contact Burnaby Community Connections at 604-299-5778 ext 23.

Feature Story 2

Voices of Burnaby Seniors



Members of the Burnaby Seniors Interagency Society

The baby boomers generation is reaching their golden years. Are there enough services available to accommodate the growing needs of such an increase in the number of seniors in our population? This question prompted a group of concerned seniors to take action.

This group of seniors initiated the Voices of Burnaby Seniors project, which is a steering committee of the Burnaby Seniors Interagency Society (made up of many seniors service providers in Burnaby). After securing a grant in December of 2006 from New Horizons for Seniors, the group initiated the first phase of their project – a comprehensive needs assessment of Burnaby seniors.

The Voices of Burnaby Seniors Committee brought on board Margaret (Margie) Manifold to act as the Project Coordinator for a survey whose goal was to survey 400 Burnaby residents aged 55 and older about their current and future housing, transportation, support services and health care needs.

The results of the survey were collected, and a report was

published in December 2007. This survey was also featured in the Burnaby Now newspaper. The article focused on high housing costs for seniors, which was also a big concern for Margaret when she saw the results.

“I’m surprised to see the huge number of older seniors who are living alone or a couple in single family homes who have no intention of leaving or moving into anything smaller,” responded Margaret, “and many of the seniors who are renting are struggling with housing costs.”

With the results in hand, the second phase has already begun. Funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, a task force was formed to create a community action plan to address the concerns raised from the survey. It will involve all the stakeholders in the development of the plan, ensure there are solutions to gaps in current services, and make sure all concerns are realistic.

“Our goal is to reorganize service delivery, create new services, and make use of services out there,” added Margaret.

A forum is planned for April of 2009 to bring the action plan to the public. These are only the beginning steps to answering such an enormous question like this. Putting the solutions into action will be slow but its reward will be a treasure to future generations to come.

Burnaby Community Connections is a non-voting member of Voices of Burnaby Seniors, providing guidance and support to this initiative, and hosts the funds for the 2nd phase. ■

Feature Story 3

News: Getting to Wellness



Many seniors have limited access to transportation, so they stay home often.

Most of us have places to go and people to see. But do all Canadians have the same opportunities to pursue daily activities? A study by Statistics Canada suggests that a portion of seniors have absolutely no access to transportation, which may lead to limitations on their day-to-day living. The study analyzed Canadian seniors' access to a vehicle, public transit, or the help of a family or friend to travel.

It was found that the seniors who were most vulnerable to having no access to transportation included senior women, seniors with low-income, and seniors living in rural areas. These groups account for 6% of seniors across Canada.

Without transportation they experience difficulty accessing community and medical services and are at a higher risk for social isolation. In fact, there is a 49% chance that these seniors will stay home on a day-to-day basis and as a result, miss out on activities that lead to a healthy and fulfilling life.

In addition, 14% of seniors had access only to public transit, and 9% of seniors had access to a vehicle only as a passenger. Seniors with a valid driver's licence and a vehicle were the most likely to travel on a daily basis. ■

Feature Story 4

Current Events at our Office



Volunteers and staff at the Hats Off Parade

The weather is looking up at last, and it seems like summer has finally made its grand entrance. We at Burnaby Community Connections began our summer months with a bang, starting early with the registration of the Burnaby Camping Bureau, followed by our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and website launch, and finally, our most recent involvement at Hats Off Day.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM on May 22 was an overall success. Although there was a slight panic in the beginning when we couldn't get internet access to our website, we held our heads high and continued with the AGM; the show had to go on. Nonetheless, our website was launched and people were free to browse it wherever there was internet connection!

The rest of the AGM went smoothly, with talks from Chairperson Sonya Wachowski, and Program Manager Sue Spencer. Executive Director Stephen D'Souza also discussed about the world's happiest city.

Aside from the launching of our website, our first edition of this newsletter was also launched and was printed and handed out to all present. It marked the beginning of one of our most powerful tools, which will keep our stakeholders connected with us.

Burnaby Camping Bureau

Registration for the Burnaby Camping Bureau started May 5 and ran through to June 13. However, it's not too late for those who have missed the deadline because we will be giving out subsidies until we have used up our budgeted amount.

Up to date, we've helped send 348 kids (a total of about \$48 000) to camp with many more to come. This year, our aim is to exceed last year's number of 419 children. Thanks to our many contributors and donors, we were able to increase our maximum subsidy amount to \$175 per child, which is a raise from last year's \$150. Also through our generous donors, we were able to raise \$37 250 so far.

On Friday June 13, Buddhist Compassionate Relief Tzu Chi Foundation held their ceremony at Hilton Vancouver Metrotown in which they handed out scholarships to 33 children they sponsored through our program. It was an afternoon filled with entertainment, education, and interactive activities (which included a question and answer period and face painting).

Hats Off Parade

It was a chilly Saturday morning on June 7th, and grey clouds loomed over the Heights area; it looked like it was going to rain heavily. After months of planning and anticipation for our participation in Hats Off Day, this was not what we wanted to see.

Cheering and yelling out "Burnaby Community Connections" while handing out candy to children on the sidewalk, 15 staff and volunteers bravely took on the cold and walked in the parade that ran along Hastings Street.

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walked in the parade that ran along Hastings Street.

While the parade was happening, other staff and volunteers looked over our display booth. It certainly attracted a lot of attention from walkers-by as all the 300 water bottles used as part of our crafts activity was gone in under three hours, leaving only stickers and smiles on our faces at the end of the day.

Things to Look Out For

Look for us at the upcoming Discovery Day happening on Sunday July 20, 2008 at Deer Lake Park from 10am to 4pm. There will be games and prizes so mark that day on your calendar and get ready for a day of fun! ■

Do you have any suggestions, comments or a story you would like to share?

Contact us by email at info@burnabycommunityconnections.com or call us at 604-299-5778 ext. 22.

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