

Burnaby Connexions

Peace is our Gift to each other



Left to right: Nabil, Akhmad, and Sahar

Sitting on couches given to him by a friend who had recently moved away, Mohammad and his wife have lived in the same apartment since they arrived in Burnaby two years ago with their young son, Akhmad. Before that, their trip had not been easy.

In Afghanistan, he owned a pharmacy for ten years. Then, three years ago, with Afghanistan in the middle of a violent insurgency, he and his wife were forced to flee with Akhmad to the neighbouring country of Tajikistan.

While Tajikistan provided relative safety, life as a refugee there was very difficult, especially with a child. The opportunity to come to Canada seemed like a chance to rebuild their life and start a new beginning.

Since arriving in Burnaby, he has not been back to Afghanistan to visit family. In the meantime, Mohammad and his wife are focusing on raising their own family, which has grown to include two more beautiful children.

With Akhmad, now 4, Sahar, 2, and Nabil, 1, everyday is a juggle of activity for both parents. "There are five people here, it is very small," he says as Sahar plants a big kiss on his cheek. He smiles and hugs her close as she plays with her Piglet toy.

Wishing the best for his children, Mohammad works hard to give them an education. "In Canada, my children can go to school and have a better future."

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He has a friend who comes over every week to teach him and his wife English, so that he can get a better job. "It's difficult to find a job, I need to learn English," he says.

Working a few nights a week delivering pizza, he manages to pay all the bills. "I pay the Hydro bills, internet, diapers! They're all very expensive. I even manage to put money in the education savings plan." Especially with young children, visits to the doctor are important. "[Income assistance] doesn't cover the doctor, and the government does not pay for the dentist."

As a result, the holidays can be a very difficult time for

them. This is the second year that he has registered for the Burnaby Christmas Bureau, after hearing about it from a friend last year.

However, this year will be different. The Burnaby Christmas Bureau has matched Mohammad and his family with a sponsor. The sponsor is comprised of a group of coworkers who will bring them a hamper which will make help new and memorable moments for the holidays. This hamper is a possible combination of gifts, food, household items, and gift certificates, and is put together lovingly with much thought and consideration for the family's individual needs.

When I call Mohammad to let him know that they have been sponsored, he lets out a sigh of relief. "Thank you," he said. His simple words speak volumes about his happiness that the Burnaby Christmas Bureau is able to help him in his time of need.

To learn more about the Burnaby Christmas Bureau and how you can help Burnaby families with low-income, call us at 604-299-5778 ext 28 or visit our website at www.burnabycommunityconnections.com. ■

Community Events

December can be a busy month, but there's always room for some Christmas activities! Check the E-Calendar on our website (www.burnabycommunityconnections.com) to see other upcoming events.

Twelfth Annual Seasonal Celebration

When: December 6, 2008; 5:30p - 8:30p

Where: Deer Lake Park

Join us for a Winter Wonderland at Deer Lake Park! Admission is free, and there is loads of things to do, including wreath making!

Brunch and Crafts with Santa

When: December 13, 2008; 11am - 1pm

Where: Cameron Complex

A Chance to eat and make crafts with Santa and Mrs. Claus!

Skate with Santa

When: December 20, 2008

Where: Bill Copeland Sports Centre

Skate with Santa and have some fun on the ice

Burnaby Village Museum gives generously to a night of family fun

A Burnaby Christmas Bureau Donor



Father Christmas goes for a stroll

Take a trip back in time and head over to the Heritage Christmas at the Burnaby Village Museum! From November 22 to January 4, 2009, you can frolic in the streets with the infamous Gingerbread Man or help to Light up the Night with tree decorations that you can make yourself. There is always something to do during the day or well into the glittering and sparkling evening with your friends and family.

However, be sure to visit during the Half-price Evening on Thursday, December 11, 2008, in which all revenue made from admissions will go towards the Burnaby Christmas Bureau! There will be a festive feel in the chilly air on that particular night.

In previous years, there have been nights dedicated to donating to the Burnaby Christmas Bureau, but according to Nancy Stagg, the Marketing and Sponsorship coordinator at the Burnaby Village Museum, "This will be the first year we'll be doing half off! [...] We donate all revenue that night with staff costs – all of that is like a donation as well."

Even though the Burnaby Christmas Bureau sends over volunteers to promote and to welcome guests, the expense for advertising the Burnaby Christmas Bureau is

covered by the Burnaby Village Museum.

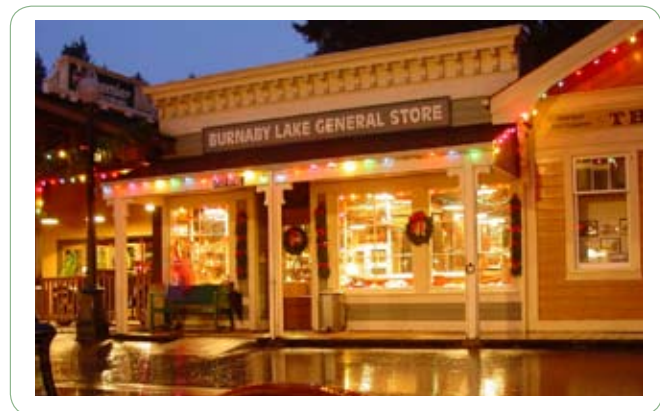
Being one of the Top 10 attractions in the Lower Mainland, the Burnaby Village Museum is coming equipped this year with a collection of entertaining appeal after undergoing a big restoration period during last spring and summer.

Amongst the ten acres of land and full size buildings both old and new, there will be unlimited carousel rides for children 5 years and younger. ABC Recycling is sponsoring the carousel rides for the third year in a row. A Scavenger Hunt that is based on the '12 days of Christmas' song will also be featured.

For many families in the Lower Mainland, it has become a tradition to visit during the Half-price Evening that is dedicated to Burnaby Christmas Bureau. "It's a lot of work to prepare for that many people!" says Nancy, as anywhere from 200 to 800 people arrive, depending on the weather.

The Half-price Evening is a way of giving back to the community, and to making new and happy memories for Burnaby families with low-income during Christmastime.

If you are interested in going to the Heritage Christmas or the Half-price Evening at the Burnaby Village Museum, tickets are available at the door, or call 604-293-6515 for more information. ■



Current Events at our Office

BC has highest provincial child poverty rate

According to the BC Child Poverty Report Card that was recently released by First Call, the BC Child & Youth Advocacy Coalition, British Columbia has the highest provincial rate for child poverty at 21.9%, compared to the national child poverty rate of 15.8%.

Over 181 000 children live in poverty in BC, even though more than half of them live in families where the adults worked full time or more. Based on 2006 Canadian statistics, most of these families have gross incomes that are thousands of dollars below the poverty line.

The report explains that BC has the highest proportion of working poor families in the nation because it has the highest percentage of low-wage jobs. A single person has to make \$10.76 an hour, working full-time year-round to reach the poverty line, but those with families have to make more than that in order to compensate for dependent children.



In the long run, child poverty can have a lasting impact. They are more subject to poor health, and lower grades at school; as they get older, many of them do not finish high school and harbour job insecurities.

Especially with a downturn in the economy, child poverty is only expected to increase, as is the demand for help. Go to <http://www.firstcallbc.org/pdfs/economicquality/3-reportcard-b&w.pdf> for more information.

Burnaby Community Connections aims to help alleviate some of the child poverty in Burnaby by connecting people, services, and community. Please call 604-299-5778 ext 21 to see how you can help. ■

Fill a Stocking, Fulfill a Wish Event Wrap-up



It was a dreary rainy night on Thursday, November 20, 2008, but there was a real party going on inside the Eagle Creek Restaurant where the Fill a Stocking, Fulfill a Wish Event. A great turkey dinner was served, and the event was able to raise more than \$10,000 in which all proceeds went towards the Burnaby Christmas Bureau.

The Burnaby Christmas Bureau would especially like to thank our sponsors from the City of Burnaby, the Burnaby NOW Newspaper, Burnaby Firefighters Association Loc 323, and the CAW Local 111 for their support in helping give Burnaby families with low-income a wonderful Christmas.

We would also not be able to achieve all this without the help of volunteers and individual donors. By providing gifts and food certificates, together we can help provide a little more in the lives of others.

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

Contact us by email at newsletter@burnabycommunityconnections.com or call us at 604-299-5778 ext. 21.

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Publisher:
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