

# Burnaby Connexions

## Volunteer Grandma makes a Difference in Family Life



We are family! Yi-Chun and Andre pose behind Diana, Yi-Van and Yi-An.

**S**itting on the floor of the boys' playroom, Diana appears to be completely at ease with the energetic hubbub surrounding her. Yi-An, 6, and Yi-Van, 3, call out "Grandma! Grandma!" while they scramble to the top of a home-made jungle gym and drive toy cars around. Yi-Chun, their mother, tells them to be careful in Mandarin, and quickly repeats it again in English.

Even though the boys call her 'Grandma', Diana is not their real grandma. Yi-Chun and her husband Andre knew it was fate when they wanted to look for a grandparent figure for their boys and found Volunteer Grandparents. It is a program that matches families with older adults who want to be a part of another

family's life. The objective is to help create long term extended family relationships.

"My father is in Taiwan, and Andre's mother is in Russia," explained Yi-Chun. "We wanted the boys to have a good experience with a grandparent."

Diana, on the other hand, heard about Volunteer Grandparents through a friend. She wanted to do something to help a family and to foster a relationship with children even though she has her own twin granddaughters who, unfortunately, live in Ottawa.

After a long application process, the family was in-

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roduced to Diana, who conveniently lives within a couple of blocks away from their house. She quickly bonded with the entire family and they were soon going kayaking and attending concerts together on Granville Island.

“Often in the evenings, Andre and I take Yi-An and Yi-Van for a walk to the ball park and we watch baseball games together,” says Diana. The boys got so involved in baseball that Yi-Chun bought some baseball games on DVD which they now avidly watch.

Volunteer Grandparents and the Florio family offer bursaries each year and Diana nominated her new family. To their delight, the family was granted a \$200 bursary that will be used to send Yi-An and Yi-Van to art classes at Arts Umbrella on Granville Island, giving them the opportunity to participate in courses that they would normally not be able to afford.

Yi-Chun is also very grateful for having Diana there to give her some time to herself. “I stay at home with the kids all day, so when Grandma comes over, it’s my downtime when she and Andre take the kids out,” she says. She is a stay-at-home mother and can often feel overwhelmed from teaching them how to read Mandarin and going on long bike rides with them to Metrotown. Whenever she needs help, she calls Diana for some wisdom and advice.

Diana is a friend not only to Yi-Chun and Andre, but also to Yi-An and Yi-Van. Together, they have fostered a relationship that can match that of blood relatives.

*If you are interested in welcoming a Volunteer Grandparent to your family, or becoming one, call Volunteer Burnaby at 604-294-5533. ■*

## A Wordless Thanks



Som Lee gets by on her own

She walks into our office quietly, guided by an employee from our building. Her short, grey hair is sleeked to the side, and she peered through her round glasses, searching for a familiar face. When she recognized us, her distressed face lit up. “Hi!” she exclaimed, with a huge smile.

Som Lee is in her eighties. Speaking very limited English, she finds it extremely difficult to live in Canada because it is always hard for her to find a translator wherever she goes.

“I’m too old to learn English now. The only place I do learn English is at Carnegie Community Centre when I go to volunteer,” explained Som in Cantonese about her knowledge of English.

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Having first immigrated here in 1995 from Hong Kong to look after her grandchild, she now lives by herself as everyone has all grown up and moved away to another place. Carnegie Community Centre offers her a place of inclusion and companionship that keeps her coming back to volunteer and help out in the kitchen.

"Everyone there calls me 'mama' and hugs me!" she exclaimed with great enthusiasm.

With no income or monthly allowance from her children, Som Lee must rely on welfare, community programs, and most of all, herself to get by.

"I always go line up at the church in Downtown Vancouver to get free meals. There are people who take drugs there, but I'm not scared," she said.

She applied for the Parks and Recreation Credit Program a few years ago to get a swimming pass, and she still remembers how well she was treated.

"The lady from your office went over to Eileen Dailly in the snow to talk to the people over there to approve my application. She's such a good person," said Som as she described Anne George, our Income Verification Coordinator of many years.

To express her appreciation, she brings gifts and fruits for Anne every time she comes to apply for the credit program. And even though no words are exchanged between them - only hand gestures and smiles on their faces, her show of thanks is one that cannot be replaced by words.

*If you are a family or a senior with low income, or are receiving Long Term Disability, you may be eligible for the Parks and Recreation Credit Program. Please contact Burnaby Community Connections at 604-299-5778 ext. 24. ■*

## Current Events at our Office

### Chevron Event "Movie in the Park"

Chevron Event "Movie in the Park" was held on August 31st in Confederation Park. It was a wonderful evening and was a great way to end summer. The movie "Alvin and the Chipmunks" was featured on a big screen at the track field and many Burnaby families came equipped with their lawn chairs and blankets to watch.

From muffins by McDonalds to the popular Eccles Cakes by Valley Bakery, there was something for everybody to enjoy. Children in particular gathered around the cotton candy, the burgers supplied by M&M, and the clowns. Many stayed up past their bedtime to watch the movie!

Together, we raised more than \$2000 in which proceeds will go to the Burnaby Christmas Bureau, Burnaby Camping Bureau, and Burnaby Seniors Transportation.

We thank Chevron, M&M Meat Shops, Costco Wholesale, McDonalds, Valley Bakery, Starbucks Coffee from Brentwood, Van Houtte, Save-On-Foods, and Safeway. We also thank volunteers, and organizers, who made this event possible and enjoyable for everybody.



Volunteers chill out by the chips



## We're Moving! A new beginning!

After a great 37 years at this office, we are sad to say that we are moving to another location, the Holdom Community Resource Centre, on October 2nd.

Our new location is within walking distance of Holdom Skytrain Station.

204-2101 Holdom Ave  
Burnaby, BC  
V5B 0A4



Everyone is invited to attend our Open House event on October 30th, 2008 from 4pm to 7pm. We would

like to welcome you and give you a tour in the new building. We also hope you will become acquainted with the programs and services offered by Burnaby Community Connections.

There will be refreshments, presentations, and much more!

Please note that the Burnaby Christmas Bureau Toy Drive will still be held at its original location, downstairs of 250 Willingdon Avenue.

Thank you for your support during this time, and we hope to continue connecting people, services, and community at this new location. ■

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

Contact us by email at [newsletter@burnabycommunityconnections.com](mailto:newsletter@burnabycommunityconnections.com) or call us at 604-299-5778 ext. 21.

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