

Burnaby Connexions

Community comes together to help single mother



A neighbourhood in Burnaby glistens in the snow

There are no greater joys in Natalie Marson's life than her son Evan, and Scout, their German Shepard. "Scout and Evan grew up together," she says, "Scout is 9 years old and getting older, while Evan is only 10 years old getting more and more active!" With an aging dog and a growing boy, Natalie tries to keep up with them as a single parent.

"Children teach us patience everyday," says Natalie with a huge smile as she pulls out a school picture of Evan.

Preparing to go back to full time work at a BC Liquor Store in Vancouver, Natalie does her best to maintain a strict schedule even though she often has shift work. Evan has Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, commonly known as ADHD, and was recently diagnosed with a learning disorder that affects his motor skills and makes it difficult for him to write or to have a big vocabulary. So, it's important that she is home at certain times to ensure relative normalcy.

"We've already built up a community" Natalie said when

asked if she would ever consider moving closer to her workplace in Vancouver. They have been living in a basement by Burnaby Mountain for about 8 years. "It's great there, the people upstairs are a big help! They help me out in so many ways, and they even drive Evan to school," she says. Everybody watches for the safety of each other, and work together to foster a sense of community. "I've been to the Boys & Girls Club, and they're a big help for single mothers".

Natalie and Evan have been to Burnaby Community Connections before. "For the last four years, Evan has been to Camp Howdy for a whole week!" says Natalie enthusiastically as she talks about the Burnaby Camping Bureau. Through the Recreation Credits Program, she was also able to enroll him in day camps during the summer. He had a great time and looks forward to going back every year.

Christmas has always been difficult, but she always managed to make it happen. However, it has always been hard for her to make ends meet. "I didn't have enough money for

continued from page 1

a turkey last year," she says with blatant honesty. "This Christmas, I didn't want to tell Evan again that there is not going to be a turkey."



Evan's school picture

The Burnaby Christmas Bureau needs your support to help families like Natalie and Evan. Please bring your cash or toy donation to our office at Holdom Ave (Corner with Lougheed, next to the skytrain station), or directly to the Toyroom (250 Willingdon Ave, back of the building, from 11am to 1pm). For more information on the Burnaby Christmas Bureau or on how to give, please call 604-299-5778 ext 21 or visit www.burnabycommunityconnections.com.



Evan and Natalie

This is the first year that she has registered for the Burnaby Christmas Bureau after hearing about it when she came in for the Burnaby Camping Bureau. She wanted to make sure that this year, Evan would get something underneath the Christmas tree and that she would not have to further juggle her bills, which already include gas to drive to work, dog food, and rent.

Seniors Christmas Hamper Conclusion



Scientology volunteers delivering seniors hampers

Thank you all for your generosity in supporting the first year of the Seniors Christmas Hamper! With your help, Burnaby seniors with low-income can have a little more cheer in their Christmas dinner and the rest of the holidays.

At the Burnaby Christmas Bureau, we were able to sponsor a total of 176 seniors, all of whom received a hamper full of non-perishable food and household items. A big thanks goes towards the Tzu Chi Canada, who spread good will and spiritual happiness by sponsoring 30 families and 30 seniors.



Birthday money goes a long way

By Joyce Quach



Joyce and Madeleine at the Burnaby Christmas Bureau

This is a story about Madeleine. Madeleine is an eight year old girl whose birthday coincidentally collides with the holiday season. For those of us blessed with late birthdays, the holidays can mean only one thing – twice the celebration. So what’s so special about Madeleine?

Christmas, as we all know, is a time for giving. From the masses of holiday shoppers, to Santa photos and egg nog, it is easy get lost in all the festivities. However, behind all the bright lights and decorative ornaments are families struggling with Christmas, not to mention everyday living expenses. These constraints are even more apparent during the busy holiday season.

The Burnaby Christmas Bureau has been dedicated to helping Burnaby families with low-income for over 20 years. This is where Madeleine comes in. As a member of the December birthdays’ circle, Christmas came early for Madeleine in the form of birthday money. What indulgences did Madeleine spend her birthday money on? You may have already guessed; Yes, Madeleine selflessly gave all two hundred and twelve dollars and fifty cents of her birthday money on the Burnaby Christmas Bureau.

With Madeleine’s help, the Burnaby Christmas Bureau is able to purchase grocery certificates, and brand new toys to be distributed among Burnaby families with low-income just in time for Christmas. Madeleine is an inspiration to us all. She is the epitome of a selfless good deed and has relieved some of the stresses of the holiday season for less fortunate families.

Community Events

January is a time to wind down from the hectic holidays, but there is always something happening in Burnaby. Check the E-Calendar on our website (www.burnabycommunityconnections.com) to see other upcoming events.

Burnaby Express vs. Powell River Kings Bear Toss

When: December 19, 2008; 7:30pm

Where: Bill Copeland Sports Centre

When the first team scores, toss a bear onto the rink to show your support! Buy a bear from the Burnaby Express, and all proceeds go towards the Burnaby Christmas Bureau.

Robbie Burns Luncheon

When: January 23, 2009; 12:15pm - 2:30pm

Where: Confederation Seniors Centre

Price: \$10 for members, \$12 for guests

Calling all ye lads and lassies to a celebration honouring Scottish poet Robbie Burns. Register early!



Office Events

Burnaby Christmas Bureau begins to distribute toys



The Burnaby Christmas Bureau is about to come to a close, and all of us at Burnaby Community Connections would like to thank everybody that contributed to making the holidays a little more festive. We are helping almost 1,200 families this year, and as a community that comes together to help each other in their time of need, we are all moving together towards a closer and connected society.

During this economically difficult time, many people are facing hard situations, but there are also those who generously give what they have left even though they are affected.

We would especially like to thank everyone from the Burnaby NOW, ABC Recycling, Desjardins Securite Financiere, the Burnaby Loughheed Lions Club, Costco Wholesale Canada and Chevron Canada. These donors, along with other individual donors and organizations, have together raised more than \$53,000 among which would provide food certificates for Burnaby families so that they can share something special this Christmas.

It is only together that we can help brighten up the lives of others, and at the Burnaby Christmas Bureau and Burnaby

Community Connections, you can really see the spirit of Christmas and true giving when you look in the Toy Room to see parents leaving with a big smile of joy and relief on their faces and a toy in their arm.

Thank you all very much, and we hope that you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

From the Burnaby Christmas Bureau Staff

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.

To subscribe to our newsletter, visit our website, email us or contact us by phone.

Subscribe now!

The *Burnaby Connexions* is published monthly in both electronic and print format.

Newsletter Coordinator and Writer: Cherise Louie

Publisher:

Burnaby Community Connections
204-2101 Holdom Avenue
Burnaby, BC V5B 0A4
Phone: 604-299-5778
Fax: 604-299-3755
www.burnabycommunityconnections.com