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BC Housing

Tenant Newsletter
December 2005

News FOR YOU

H O U S I N G U P D A T E

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Message from the CEO



Shayne Ramsay, CEO

It's been a busy year. There have been many exciting milestones, from the first graduates of our Family Self-Sufficiency program in Victoria to developments celebrating special anniversaries. Many of these are highlighted in *News For You*, along with news about other unique programs running in buildings around the province.

The holiday season serves to remind us of the importance of family, home and community. One of our objectives at BC Housing is to build healthy communities. You help us in this work whenever you participate in a tenant program or are active in your development, and throughout the year, simply by being a good neighbour. I would like to extend a special thank you to all our tenants who have volunteered over the past year to make their communities better – we can't do it without you.

I hope that you will have many opportunities to celebrate the season with family and friends. Best wishes for the holidays and for the coming year.

Regards,



Doug Drummond Manor's meal program celebrated its tenth anniversary in October with lunches offered at 1995 prices and a free roast beef dinner for all tenants. The meal program is run by volunteers and is completely self-sufficient. Pictured here are meal program volunteers Shirley Black, Jack Patry and Ken Best, with BC Housing CEO Shayne Ramsay.

Back to school...

Three BC Housing bursary winners hit the books

Every year BC Housing awards 46 bursaries and the Margaret Mitchell Outstanding Achievement Award to tenants living in public and non-profit housing. Three 2005 bursary winners share their hopes for their education.

Eighteen-year-old Sarika Narinesingh has lived in public housing on Comox Street in Vancouver's West End for as long as she can remember. In September she started her first year at UBC, doing a degree in International Relations. "I'm interested in connecting with people in other countries," Sarika said.

In addition to the BC Housing bursary, Sarika has received several scholarships. "These mean a lot to me financially," she said. "I want to make a name for myself and I want to be economically independent," Sarika added. "This is the first step."

In Victoria, Shelley McGrath is in the middle of a two-year Criminal Justice program at Camosun

College. A single mother, Shelley returned to school when she realized that there were not a lot of options for her without a diploma or degree. Her long-term goal is to receive a social work degree and work in youth crime prevention.

"Going back to school at age 26 was difficult at first," explained Shelley, who has lived at Bayview in Victoria for two years. "My goal is to graduate and get a job that will allow my daughter and me to lead satisfying lives. I want a career that will have a meaning; I want to affect peoples' lives in a positive way."

Thirty-seven-year-old Lisa Bailey expects to complete her diploma as an Engineering Design Technician

at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George at the end of 2005. "I shouldn't have any trouble getting a job," said Lisa, who hopes to have her own business one day. "I've always been good at math and sciences, so this is definitely the right field for me."

Lisa never completed her university degree; she got married, had two children, and moved across the country. After her divorce, she raised her family and worked in a variety of jobs. "Time just slipped away," said Lisa, who has lived at Westwood Court for 2½ years. "It feels great to win the BC Housing bursary... to be rewarded for making a change in my life."

BC Housing's bursary program encourages tenants between the ages of 17 to 64 to pursue educational goals. The \$750 awards are for post-secondary education including training programs. Applications for the 2006 awards will be available in March. Please contact your site rep or a Community Development Officer for more information.



Sarika Narinesingh graduated in June from King George High School in Vancouver's West End.



Shelley McGrath and her daughter Sophie at their home at Bayview in Victoria.



Lisa Bailey at a drafting table at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George.

BC Housing Holiday Schedule

BC Housing's offices around the province will be closed on Monday, December 26 and Tuesday, December 27, 2005 and Monday, January 2, 2006.

If a major emergency arises when BC Housing offices are closed, such as burst or frozen pipes, fire or loss of heat, please call our Emergency Services:

Greater Vancouver: 604-682-4852
Victoria: 250-213-8798
Prince George: 250-562-9251
Prince Rupert: 250-627-7501

All other communities are encouraged to contact their Site Representative.

A reminder to residents in our northern and interior communities: during cold spells, please leave your heat on when you are away to prevent frozen piping. If possible, have a friend or family member check your home while you are away.

Festive holiday centerpieces

Bring some festive cheer into your home. Tenants in Greater Vancouver and Victoria are taking part in special centerpiece workshops again this holiday season. The People, Plants and Homes (PPH) program offers these free workshops annually. Look for signs in your development to see if there is a workshop planned near you and sign up for a fun and relaxing morning or afternoon with the PPH team.



Vice President, Operations Margaret McNeil (left), gardening guru David Tarrant (second from right) and CEO Shayne Ramsay (right) present Gordon and Ella Allen with the 2005 David Tarrant Spirit of Gardening Award. The award is given annually to a long-term PPH participant in recognition of their gardening ability as well as their contribution to the greentogardening community. The Allens live at Steeves Manor in Vancouver.



Members of the Public Housing Advisory Council

Holiday Greetings

from your Public Housing Advisory Council
Sharon Mohamed, Chair

With the year coming to a close, it's time to reflect on the accomplishments of our many tenant groups and associations. None of these tenant-led activities would be possible without people who volunteer their time to make their buildings a better place to live. Thank you.

Your Public Housing Advisory Council works with BC Housing to enhance the well-being of tenant communities. Over the past year, we have been organizing workshops and training sessions and we look forward to welcoming new volunteers in 2006. My thanks to fellow council members Peter Bartlett, Ken Best, Janet Bording, Mohana Fiddler, Pat Georgeson, Dennis Hawn, Loree Nicholson, Rosie Shandil, George Stickle, and Betty Turner as well as to committee members Laura Forrest, Del Griffith, and Edgar Kruger for all their hard work.

All the best for the holiday season and for the new year.

Make your own centerpiece

You can make a beautiful holiday centerpiece using materials that are easy to find.

Take a walk to a nearby park and collect some freshly fallen evergreen boughs, holly, and pine cones. Choose a container that will be a good size centerpiece for your table (a festive holiday mug works well). Place some Oasis floral foam (the kind you wet; available from craft stores) in the bottom and then start decorating. Add items to your arrangement until it suits your taste... use your imagination! Remember to keep the floral foam damp to give your centerpiece a longer life.

Spring is just around the corner!

Looking forward to sunshine and flowers? People, Plants and Homes order forms for 2006 will be available in March. All tenants are invited to participate... you provide the enthusiasm, energy and green thumbs and we provide the plants and fertilizer.

Nursing students gain community experience working at BC Housing developments

University of Victoria nursing students studying at the UVic satellite campus at Langara College are assisting with special programs at BC Housing developments in Greater Vancouver. The program, which started in 2004, gives students valuable experience and broadens their understanding of a nurse's role.

"The students work in a variety of placements," said Heather Pattullo, Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of Victoria. "Some work with seniors, offering things such as blood pressure clinics, holding health fairs, helping with meal programs and forming walking clubs. Others work with youth, doing different activities such as playing basketball together, working on crafts, or even planting a garden. We've also run moms and tots programs at different sites. The students teach about health, cooking, nutrition and the importance of exercise."

"The placements are four months long and are for third

and fourth year students working on their Bachelor of Nursing degrees," said Kara Schick Makaroff, Practice Coordinator, University of Victoria. "Right now we have 11 students working at six BC Housing developments. Each student works at the same site during their practicum, for about one day a week. When they complete their degrees, some will decide to become community nurses."

"Community nurses look at the way people function, how families function and how groups work together," explained Heather. "They have to figure out what the people they're working with want and need and help them learn to access the resources that are available to them."

In turn, the students practice their communications and assessment skills. They learn to be non-judgmental, to build trusting relationships, and to be sensitive about barriers facing people with low incomes.



Grandview Terrace recreation program

Recreation directly affects a person's quality of life. That's the message Lisa Wood tells residents at Grandview Terrace.

A recreational therapist, Lisa works at the Vancouver development where she organizes a weekly walking club, coffee klatches, monthly birthday celebrations and arts and crafts activities, and acts as a resource for tenants wanting referrals to other programs. Once a month, tenants are invited on a major outing and Lisa also encourages residents with special talents to share their skills with their neighbours.

Lisa publishes a monthly calendar of events that is distributed throughout the building. All Grandview Terrace residents are invited to participate and their friends and families are also welcome to join in.

"The recreation program was established in 2004 to create a sense of community at Grandview Terrace," explained Lisa. "Recreational activities can create a support network, which leads to reduced stress levels and to better physical fitness. The programs can provide laughter and happiness; bring you out of isolation and encourage socialization. They're a great way to build community and support with your neighbours."

She added, "Recreation has the ability to enhance a building's unique culture, creating a place where we respect others and value differences."



Above: Grandview Terrace walking club regulars Shirley Johannesson, Gandalf and Kevin.



Left: Grandview Terrace resident Sandra Jim shows off a finished piece from an arts and crafts class.

Tenant Activity Grants help get things happening

Create community spirit at your development with a BC Housing Tenant Activity Grant. Grants are available for seasonal parties, after-school programs, community kitchens

and any number of celebrations. Christmas, New Year's and Chinese New Year are all just around the corner. Planning an event contributes to your development's quality of life and allows you to develop important organizational and social skills.

Talk to your Property Portfolio Manager or a Community Development Officer for details.



Above: Steeves Manor in Vancouver celebrated its 30th anniversary recently with a party that included musical entertainment.

Left: Doug Drummond Manor's newly landscaped courtyard in Burnaby was officially opened July 15 by tenants and BC Housing staff. Left to right: Resident and Tenant Association President Ken Best, resident Shirley Black, City of Burnaby staff Anne Waller, and BC Housing staff Warren Jacobs and Margaret McNeil.



BC Housing's new website

If you visit BC Housing online at www.bchousing.org you will notice that we have redone our website recently. The new site is designed to be more user friendly and there is a section devoted to tenants. Visit the site to get the latest information on tenant services, to read a copy of the Tenant Handbook online, or to get copies of forms you may need to fill out. You can also add your name to our new email subscriber list. Sign up and we will notify you if something of interest to tenants comes up, including when *News For You* is available online.

Student Tenant Employment Program

A former participant tells her story

Little Mountain resident Kim Griffith received her first job training at age 17 when she participated in BC Housing's Student Tenant Employment Program (STEP) in 1999. She even worked for the program as an instructor for two summers.

"Back in '99 there were two STEP programs – STEP To Work and STEP PPH," explained Kim. "My first job was with STEP PPH and participants went into the community and helped seniors with their gardens. As part of my training, I took a basic grounds maintenance course through Kwantlen College as well as my first aid certificate. The following year I was hired as an instructor with the STEP To Work program. I organized workshops for participants to learn about writing resumes and interview skills. I took the teens to different job sites and I set up job placements for them.

"STEP gave me my first work experience and helped build my self-esteem and confidence," she added. Kim encourages other tenants to sign up for the summer program. "It's a really good opportunity to help you gain employment skills and experience."

Today Kim is in her third year studying sociology at Simon Fraser University and works part-time at an after-school program. She hopes to pursue a career in teaching or social work after she finishes her bachelors' degree.

STEP To Work is open to BC Housing tenants ages 15 to 18 in the Lower Mainland who are looking for their first job. Recruitment for the 2006 program will occur in May and June. During the months of July and August, successful applicants receive two weeks of job readiness training, followed by a six-week job placement with an employer in the community. Watch for information posters or talk to your Building Manager if you would like to apply.



Important Dates to Remember

- ▶ 2006 Bursary applications: available March 2006
 - ▶ 2006 STEP applications: available May 2006
 - ▶ Applications for Annual Funding for Tenant Activity Grants: available March 2006
 - ▶ Applications for Special Event Funding for Tenant Activity Grants: available throughout the year
- Contact your Building Manager for more information about any of these programs.

Tenant Tips

Holiday Blues

The demands of the holiday season can be stressful for many people. Here are some tips to keep your expectations realistic.

- Don't expect everyone to behave perfectly. There is no such thing as a perfect family.
- Family members grow and change and so can your holiday traditions. Try to be flexible if family members suggest new traditions.
- Holidays can be difficult for families where there has been a death or divorce. Create new rituals that include elements that have shared meaning for all current family members.
- If you feel stressed or have health problems, you may want to opt out of some holiday activities this year. Use the time instead to reflect or recuperate.
- Remember that what matters is the thought, not how much money you spend. Avoid overspending and giving in to children's demands for expensive presents. Set a spending limit and stick to it.
- Do not feel like you have to participate in every holiday event you are invited to. Make an effort to enjoy what you find to be the positive parts of the season: the lights, the music, the opportunity to sleep in.

If you need to talk to someone about your feelings, there are crisis centres you can call. Check the first page of your phone book or call 1-800-784-2433.

Uninvited House Guests

- If you see any unwelcome bugs or rodents in your home, contact your Building Manager immediately. The sooner we are aware of a problem, the sooner we can deal with it and prevent it from spreading to other units.

Safety First!



Many of us want to make our homes festive for the holiday season. Please keep the following safety tips in mind as you decorate.

- Use only artificial trees. Real trees can be a fire hazard and are difficult to dispose of properly after the season.
- Connect no more than three strands of lights together.
- Avoid overloading wall outlets and extension cords.
- Turn off Christmas lights before you go to sleep or if you leave your home.
- Unplug light strings before replacing bulbs.
- Have an operable fire extinguisher readily available.
- Never leave a candle unattended.
- Keep candles out of reach of children and pets.

For those residents who live in a part of the province that enjoys a winter wonderland, here are a few tips to help you cope with the weather.

- Leave your heat on during cold spells—even if you are away—to prevent frozen piping. If possible, have a friend or family member check your home while you are away.
- Icy sidewalks can cause many falls and injuries and can keep people trapped at home. You can help by clearing snow and spreading salt over pathways. Also, avoid carrying heavy loads over icy sidewalks, as these may make you more likely to fall.

BC Housing Contact Information

News For You is published twice a year by the BC Housing Management Commission for the tenants of its public housing developments.

We welcome your feedback and inquiries.

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BC Housing

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