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BC Housing

Tenant Newsletter
December 2010

News FOR YOU

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

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Message from the CEO and the Public Housing Advisory Council Chair

BC Housing's Public Housing Advisory Council has played an important role in advising on tenant programs and policies for the past 15 years. The council has identified a need to bring local solutions to local issues. Through the joint efforts of the council and BC Housing, we are developing a new way of reaching out to tenants so that your voices are heard.

As a volunteer group of tenants, the council's primary objective has been to enhance the well-being of our tenant communities – an enormous task that its members have undertaken with enthusiasm. The council has maintained links with all BC Housing's directly-managed sites and provided valuable input on many policies and programs that have made a real difference in people's lives.

We extend our thanks to all members for their contributions: Peter Bartlett; Ken Best; Janet Bording; Mohana Fiddler; Dennis Hawn; Loree Nicholson; Rosie Shandil; George Stickle; and Betty Turner.

Over the next few months you will hear about new ways we will make sure your voices are heard and how we will continue to provide programs and services to our housing sites.

Our best wishes to all tenants for the holidays and the new year.

Sincerely,

Shayne Ramsay
CEO, BC Housing

Sharon Mohamed
Chair, Public Housing, Advisory Council

Energy tip

How can you save energy, reduce your impact on the environment, and still enjoy fresh air in your home this winter? Try closing your windows during the daytime when your heat is on. When you go to bed, turn down your heat, and open a bedroom window just enough to let in fresh air. You'll avoid that stuffy air feeling and less heat will escape.



Greenbrook Celebrates

Over the last few years, tenants at Greenbrook in Surrey have been witness to the largest solar panel installation in western Canada as well as many environmental improvements and building envelope repairs. The 127-unit townhouse complex underwent extensive renovations which have transformed the site.

"The difference is night and day," said tenant Lori Gibbs, "the units are beautiful and it's a nicer place to live now."

When Lori first moved into Greenbrook six years ago, she thought of it as a godsend. The single mother was grateful for a safe place to live. Unfortunately, after her first winter at the complex, she also realized that the heating bills were expensive, her unit was draughty and her basement had flooded.

Change on as massive a scale as the Greenbrook project did not come without inconveniences. "It was tough," admitted Lori, whose family had to move out of their unit and into a temporary one just before school started in September 2009.

During the first phase of the project, the site was very muddy with drawbridges required to cross moats while the foundation's perimeter drainage was replaced. During phase two, tenants were relocated for two weeks on a rotating basis while the heating and electrical systems were replaced. It required incredible collaboration between tenants, BC Housing staff, and construction crews.

The completion of the project was celebrated July 17 with a barbecue which was funded in part by Yellowridge Construction (the contractor) and Boni-Maddison Architects. Minister Rich Coleman attended and was given a tour of the site's sustainability features.

Above: Greenbrook homes are looking better than ever since renovations were completed last summer.

Right: Tenant Lori Gibbs outside her home at Greenbrook.



BC Housing is the provincial agency that develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options for those most in need in British Columbia.



Orchard Park celebrates 50 years of public housing

Many tenants turned out September 18 to mark Orchard Park's half-century anniversary. They enjoyed special games, live music, and a barbecue generously sponsored by MCW Custom Energy Solutions (the company currently working on site on building renovations).

BC Housing CEO Shayne Ramsay spoke of the many reasons we have to be proud of this Vancouver public housing site and the people who live there. "Orchard Park has a vibrant tenant community that demonstrates what can be achieved when people care about their homes and their neighbours," he said. "Many community partnerships have been formed to provide programs for tenants and their families. South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, for example, operates the after-school Kids Club and a dialogue circle with tenant volunteers. The Vancouver Public Library will offer a once-a-week early childhood literacy program here this fall. And, tenants will soon be running a community kitchen and garden program."

Artist Norman Kong created a community canvas for Orchard Park tenants to complete.



Ray Cam's Naskarz program one of the STEP job placements

BC Housing tenants Dennis and Nelson spent a summer unlike any other they've had before. As part of the STEP to Work program, the youths spent two months with Ray Cam Community Centre's Naskarz program. There, they gained valuable skills as they worked on fixing up old cars.

Ray Cam partners with Vancouver Community College's automotive department and the Vancouver Police Department to deliver the Naskarz program. Participants first learn work safety skills after which they gain hands-on experience cutting, welding and painting metal. After that, they are able to paint a donated vehicle; this past summer it was a van which was painted to look like the Scooby Doo Mystery Machine.

The program normally runs from February to August, but for the STEP to Work program, Dennis and Nelson were accepted for just the summer months.



Ray Cam Community Centre's Naskarz program teaches automotive skills.

Nineteen-year-old Nelson wanted a job placement with Naskarz because he was interested in pursuing a career in automotives. "I learned valuable employment skills like talking to people and being friendlier," recalled Nelson of his STEP to Work experience. He is now taking an automotive technician apprentice program through ACE IT.

Tenant youth gain valuable job skills through STEP to Work

Twenty-two Metro Vancouver and five Victoria tenants received work experiences last summer through BC Housing's STEP to Work program. The Lower Mainland youth had training in CPR, Standard First Aid, FOODSAFE, WorldHost, WHIMIS, and Back Awareness after which they completed a six-week placement with a variety of employers.

The program also expanded to Vancouver Island where BC Housing partnered with the City of Victoria's STEP Up Leadership Development program. Participants there took a two-week Leaders in Training course dedicated to intra/interpersonal skill development, communication, program planning, and behaviour management. After completing the course, the Victoria youth helped run a day camp for four-to 10-year-old children who live at selected BC Housing sites. The day camp was a great success and created a stronger sense of community at the sites.

Recruitment for next summer's STEP to Work program will begin in spring 2011.



Cedar Place tenant Shahpari participated in the STEP to Work program.

STEP to Work sets tenant on career path

Seventeen-year-old Cedar Place resident Shahpari had sent out hundreds of

resumes looking for a part-time job in retail and had never received a call for an interview. Yet, when she signed up for BC Housing's STEP to Work program to gain that all-important first work experience, she followed her heart and asked for a placement with a theatre group.

Shahpari spent her summer working with Fugue Theatre where she took on the responsibilities of an assistant director and even had a small role in the group's production of Supernatural Noir.

"It really did confirm my wish to be an actress," she said, "I was really nervous the first time but I gained a lot of confidence and really enjoyed it."

With the experience she gained thanks to STEP, Shahpari is now well on her way to realizing her dream of acting professionally. This fall, she worked as an assistant stage manager on Presentation House Theatre's production of Nine Parts of Desire, about an Iraqi girl during the Gulf War.

Her parents support Shahpari's dream to act. "They tell me to follow my dreams and that the best future is one where you do what you want. They want me to be successful and to have fun."

Are you ready for the Big One?

People all over British Columbia will be participating in earthquake drills on January 26, 2011 by practicing the "drop, cover, and hold on" technique for two minutes beginning at 10 a.m. Check out www.shakeoutbc.ca for details on the event and also help prepare your home and your family for an earthquake by following these tips:

- ▶ Identify the safe places in your home. You are safest against an inside wall, under a strong table or desk.
- ▶ Avoid dangerous areas such as windows, mirrors, hanging pictures or plants, swinging doors, tall furniture, and overhead objects, such as light fixtures.

- ▶ Keep an emergency supply kit with food, water, clothing, a first aid kit, flashlight, extra batteries, and a portable battery-operated radio.
- ▶ You should have enough food to last a minimum of three days. Foods that do not need cooking, like energy bars, fruit, crackers and peanut butter (if you are not allergic to it) are best.
- ▶ If you are dependent on medication, store enough to last at least a week.



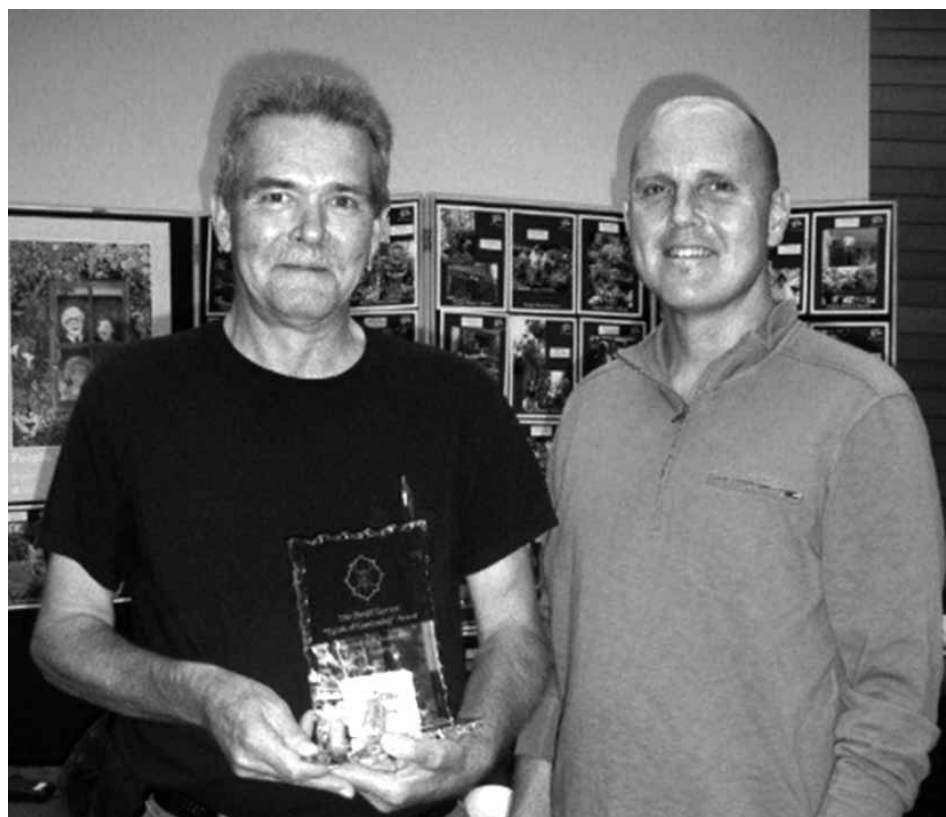
David Tarrant Spirit of Gardening Award



Congratulations to Don Watson, the winner of this year's David Tarrant Spirit of Gardening Award. The award was presented to Don at a People, Plants and Homes (PPH) celebration this summer. The award is given on an annual basis to an individual who makes extraordinary contributions to the PPH program.

"Knowing David Tarrant, this award really means something," said Don, who is the PPH coordinator at Nicholson Tower in Vancouver.

Don likens gardening to "getting something for nothing. You do a little bit of work for which you are highly rewarded." His favourite season for gardening comes in the fall when he is busy gathering seeds and splitting plants to share with others. "That's the best because then everyone can enjoy your garden. It doesn't cost a thing to go that extra mile and help everyone else out."



Above: Don Watson (left) receiving the David Tarrant Spirit of Gardening Award from BC Housing CEO Shayne Ramsay. Top left: Don in the garden at Nicholson Tower.



Tenant Alyssa Skuro is the winner of a BC Housing education award.

Back to school with a BC Housing Education Award

This fall BC Housing distributed 93 education awards and bursaries to people across the province who are enrolled in post-secondary educational and training programs. Congratulations to all the recipients who are pursuing their goals and learning new skills.

Tannis Wied from Vernon is using her award to assist in completing her massage training. Tannis's 12-year-old son has mental health, learning and behavioural challenges and she has taken courses to better understand her son's needs. "I am elated to be one of the five women selected to receive a Minerva Foundation Award," she said. "By completing my massage training I will have the opportunity to realize a great career path and

earn the resources to meet the needs of my family."

A Nanaimo single dad is using his award to complete a vocational trades program. "I look forward to completing my program so I can make a decent wage that will allow me to pay the bills without assistance," he said. "I want to be a positive role model for my son, demonstrating that even when faced with adversity, if you're willing to persevere and work hard your dreams will become reality."

Burnaby tenant Alyssa Skuro received an Alexandra Thorpe Award which she is using towards her first year at Simon Fraser University and her studies in psychology. "This award brings me

one step closer to my dream of becoming a psychologist," said Alyssa. "I know that with hard work and the support of my grandmother, who has taken care of me since I was four years old, I will complete my schooling, get a great job and become financially secure so that I can return the kindness and care for my grandmother."

Are you eligible for a BC Housing Education Award? Tenants between the ages of 17 and 64 who are planning to attend post-secondary or vocational training are encouraged to apply. Visit www.bchousing.org/tenants/services/educationawards for details.

Abbotsford sites earn crime free multi-housing certification

Tenants who live at Fernview, Cedarhurst and Matsqui Townhouses in Abbotsford are enjoying a better quality of life with a significantly reduced crime rate in their communities that has earned the sites certification under the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.

BC Housing staff worked closely with the Abbotsford Police Department to landscape the properties in ways that inhibit criminal activity. Following crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles, the grounds were altered to allow for better surveillance of entry points. Staff and police also addressed serious social issues and dealt appropriately with unlicensed vehicles. The end result is increased tenant involvement and a reduction in calls to police. Officers now do more bike patrols of the sites, attend events, and accompany staff if they need to meet with tenants who may be engaged in an illegal activity.





Dates to Remember

- ▶ People, Plants and Homes program: Plant order forms for Metro Vancouver and Victoria available Mar. 2011.
 - ▶ Education Awards Program applications: available January 2011.
 - ▶ STEP to Work applications: available May 2011.
 - ▶ Applications for Special Event Funding for Tenant Activity Grants: available throughout the year.
- Contact your Building Manager or Site Representative for more information on any of these programs.

VictimLink BC – 1-800-563-0808

This toll-free confidential service provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence. It is available across BC 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

VictimLink BC provides service in over 110 languages, including 17 Aboriginal languages. The service is TTY accessible. Call TTY at 604-875-0885; to call collect, please call the TELUS Relay Service at 711. Text: 604-836-6381. E-mail: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca.

Victim service workers can provide information and referrals to all victims of crime and crisis support to victims. Even if you're not sure if you have been a victim of crime, you can call for assistance. Staff can connect people to a network of community, social, health, justice and government resources, including victim services, transition houses, and counselling resources. They also provide information on the justice system, relevant federal and provincial legislation and programs, crime prevention, safety planning, protection order registry, and other resources as needed.

Building community this holiday season*

1. Say hello to your neighbours.
2. Turn off your TV.
3. Organize a potluck or cookie exchange. Invite someone in your building you would like to get to know better.
4. Look up when you're walking. Greet people.
5. Get to know your community. Visit your library, local community centre or neighbourhood house.
6. Play. In the leaves, in the snow, in the sun or the rain. Invite a friend.
7. Appreciate you!
8. Leave no trace, take what you bring. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
9. Share a story.
10. Dance.
11. Get to know your Building Managers, Tenant Support Workers, Janitors and other site staff.
12. Ask for help when you need it.
13. Take back the night. Organize a safe walk.
14. Listen before you react to anger. Show understanding.
15. Volunteer. Share your skills, meet new people, learn new things and have fun while helping to build your community.

Did you try one of our tips to build community? Would you like to share your experience? If so, we would love to hear from you. Please e-mail your story to glunde@bchousing.org or mail it to Jill Lunde, BC Housing, 1701 – 4555 Kingsway, Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4V8 for the chance to be featured in a coming issue.

*Adapted from *How to Build Community* by Karen Kerney.

BC Housing holiday schedule

BC Housing's offices around the province will be closed on Monday, December 27 and Tuesday, December 28, 2010 and on Monday, January 3, 2011. If a major emergency such as burst or frozen pipes, fire, or loss of heat arises when BC Housing offices are closed, please call our Emergency Services.

Metro Vancouver: 604-682-4852 **Interior: 1-800-834-7149** **Prince Rupert: 250-627-7501**
Victoria: 250-213-8798 **Prince George: 250-562-9251**

All other communities are encouraged to contact their Site Representative.

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

BC Housing Contact Information

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

We welcome your feedback and inquiries.

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