



E-Connections

The Electronic Bulletin of Volunteer Richmond Information Services



Volunteer Richmond Information Services

"Bringing people and services together through community information and volunteerism"



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National Volunteer Week 2012



Given that it's still two months away, it may seem a bit early to be talking about National Volunteer Week, which takes place April 15—21. But to us and the 12.5 million volunteers across Canada, it's a pretty big deal. Volunteer recognition happens year round—as it should—but during that one week in April, the entire country is watching. It provides an opportunity not only to thank those who donate their time, energy, and expertise to an endless number of worthy causes, but also to shine a spotlight on volunteerism itself. What does it mean to our country?

What does it mean to our communities? Where would we be if volunteers, one day, simply decided to *stop*? Think of the organizations (ours included) that would cease to exist. Think of the services that would no longer be offered. If there were no volunteers, each and every one of us would feel the impact. Such a scenario gives new meaning to the phrase, "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone."

Luckily, though, volunteers are all around us. They're in our communities making a difference day in and day out. In two months time, let's make sure they know how much we appreciate it.

2012 National Volunteer Week Campaign Materials

Passion. Action. Impact. We can think of no three words that better represent the volunteer spirit. It was the theme of National Volunteer Week in 2011, and will be used again this year (as illustrated in the spiffy tree wordle above). At Volunteer Richmond, we'll be celebrating in a very unique way, but, as much as we'd like to, we can't unveil our plans just yet.

In the meantime, however, Volunteer Canada has put together some National Volunteer Week campaign materials, including posters, banners, as well as a digital 'thank you' card that can be sent to volunteers. They've even set up a gift shop so individuals and organizations can purchase volunteer recognition items. Visit nationalvolunteerweek.ca to see for yourself!



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Christmas Fund News and Notes

Back in January, the Richmond Review printed a letter from Volunteer Richmond's Executive Director, Elizabeth Specht. In it, she thanked the volunteers and supporters of the 2011 Richmond Christmas Fund. More than that, though, she made the point that the Christmas Fund is truly a community effort, one that all of us should take great pride in. In case you missed it in the paper, we decided to reprint the letter here.



The Richmond Christmas Fund: Part of Our Community

The Richmond Christmas Fund is a program of Volunteer Richmond Information Services. That being said, we can't really take ownership of it. The Christmas Fund, more accurately, belongs to the community. It's everyone's program, because everyone supports it in their own way.

It belongs to the volunteers who so graciously give their time year after year. Sorting toys, registering families, wrapping gifts – they contribute thousands of hours so the Christmas Fund can run smoothly. It goes without saying, but can never be said enough: we couldn't do it without them.

As well, the program belongs to the donors. The Christmas Fund benefits from the countless individuals, businesses and community groups who hold fundraisers and toy drives. This is all done at the grassroots level. Every penny raised, every toy we receive, every family that's sponsored is a result of the community's generosity.

The program belongs, too, to those who receive assistance. Some are new immigrants, some are single parent families, some are seniors living on a fixed income. All of them, though, are our neighbours. We help them in their time of need because we know they'd do the same for us.

The Christmas Fund, simply put, belongs to all of us. It serves as proof that even as our community grows and becomes more diverse, we still have the ability to come together for a common cause. We're still there for one another. I'm confident that we always will be.



Lansdowne Centre Makes Christmas Fund Donation

If you've eaten at the Lansdowne Centre food court, you've probably noticed the signs indicating that proceeds from recycled bottles are donated to the Richmond Christmas Fund. How much does that amount to, exactly? Well, at the beginning of January, we took a trip to Lansdowne and were presented with a cheque: in 2011, an astounding \$1,200 was raised! We'd like to offer our sincere thanks to everyone at Lansdowne Centre for their tremendous generosity.

Richmond Caring Companies



The Making of a Caring Company: Part 1

The Richmond Caring Companies (RCC) program, designed to help local businesses and non-profit organizations develop mutually beneficial partnerships, launched back in January. Over the next four months, volunteer writer Benjamin Yong will be following Misty Mountain Specialties, a participating business, as they progress through RCC and ultimately implement an employer-supported volunteer program. For the first entry in the series, Ben spoke with Misty Mountain Operations Manager Moushtak Estepho on why it's important for a business to embrace a culture of caring.

As is the case with many businesses taking part in the new Richmond Caring Companies program, there isn't just a singular reason why Misty Mountain Specialties decided to join RCC, which kicked off with its first workshop on January 26. Interest for an employer-supported volunteer program came from all levels in the organization, said Misty Mountain Operations Manager Moushtak Estepho.

"We do a lot of donations and things like that. We have scholarships we support but wanted to be more active and [create] a culture at the company where we give the opportunity to not just employees, [but] maybe their families as well," said Estepho.

"We get a lot of clients that want to do something, too."

Misty Mountain, a wholesaler of fresh produce (mushrooms, exotic greens, wild berries) since 1997, first heard of the program through one of the Caring Companies' partners, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce. Estepho said that even before that, however, he'd already had discussions with his business partner and Misty Mountain

President, David Lee Kwen, about starting something. But being a small company of about 15 to 18 employees, where a respite from the workday is uncommon, finding time to plan was an issue – during the two-hour workshop, the notification light on Estepho's BlackBerry kept flashing away.

"There's so many things going on, even a short meeting like this we have e-mail and texts coming in like crazy."

That's why he said RCC fit the bill perfectly, calling the first workshop informative and a "good start." Logistically, there are still lots of things to be worked out, like picking a non-profit to work with, developing policies and procedures around volunteering, and deciding how scheduling will work. These topics are all going to be addressed in the upcoming sessions spread out over the next four months.

Estepho said Misty Mountain wanted its interaction with Richmond to go beyond the traditional one-way format.

"There's a lot of focus on companies that are involved in the community and sometimes the easiest thing is just to give money and that's it," he said. "[We want to] find out where the money's going and what's happening. What are the needs of the community?"

Beyond that, he added it just makes good business sense.

"[We want] to create team camaraderie and build a stronger bond between employees."

The people at Misty Mountain already know a thing or two about volunteering, even if there isn't yet a formalized system in place at work. In his free time, Estepho volunteers through the church he regularly attends.

"Personally I know a lot of other employees that do that too, so each one is kind of involved on their own."

Check the Vol 'n' Tell Blog for Part 2 of "The Making of a Caring Company," coming in March!

The Richmond Caring Companies program is a joint initiative of



Volunteer Richmond News and Notes

11 Graduate from Volunteer Management Training Series



Our first Volunteer Management Training Series of the new year went off without a hitch! A hearty congratulations to the 11 graduates, all of whom we know will put their newly learned volunteer management skills to good use.

If you'd like more information on the course or are interested in participating, give us a call at 604-279-7020 and we'll provide you with all of the details.

Your Community Is Here

One of our goals in 2012 is to transform the image of Volunteer Richmond, or, perhaps more precisely, reaffirm our identity as an agency. We want it to be known that we are, first and foremost, a centre for community engagement. To that end, we've embarked on a new marketing campaign with a simple message: *Your community is here*. To the right you'll find the first ad of the campaign. Videos, posters, and much more will follow in the weeks and months ahead.

Programs

- Child Care Resource & Referral Centre
- Information & Volunteer Centre
- Leadership Richmond
- Richmond Christmas Fund
- Seniors Community Support Services

Funders

- United Way of the Lower Mainland
- City of Richmond
- Province of British Columbia
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- The Government of Canada

Circle of Friends

- Opacity Design Group
- Richmond Review
- Richmond Centre
- Coast Capital Savings
- Richmond Chamber of Commerce
- Milan & Maureen Ilich Foundation
- Innovation Networks
- Ashton Service Group

Happy Retirement, Muffet!



As many of you are surely aware, Muffet Chambers is retiring. Over the past 20 years, she's made an immeasurable contribution not only to our agency, but to all of Richmond. From the Christmas Fund to our Seniors Community Support Services to the Child Care Resource & Referral Centre, Muffet's had a positive and lasting impact on every single one of our programs. She's helped guide Volunteer Richmond through both good and challenging times, and to say she'll be missed is the epitome of an understatement. We'd like to wish Muffet—a colleague, but more importantly, a friend—all the best in retirement, though we're sure she'll be back to volunteer soon!

