

vancouverfoundation

Fall 2012

stories of modern philanthropy

GRAND PARENTING

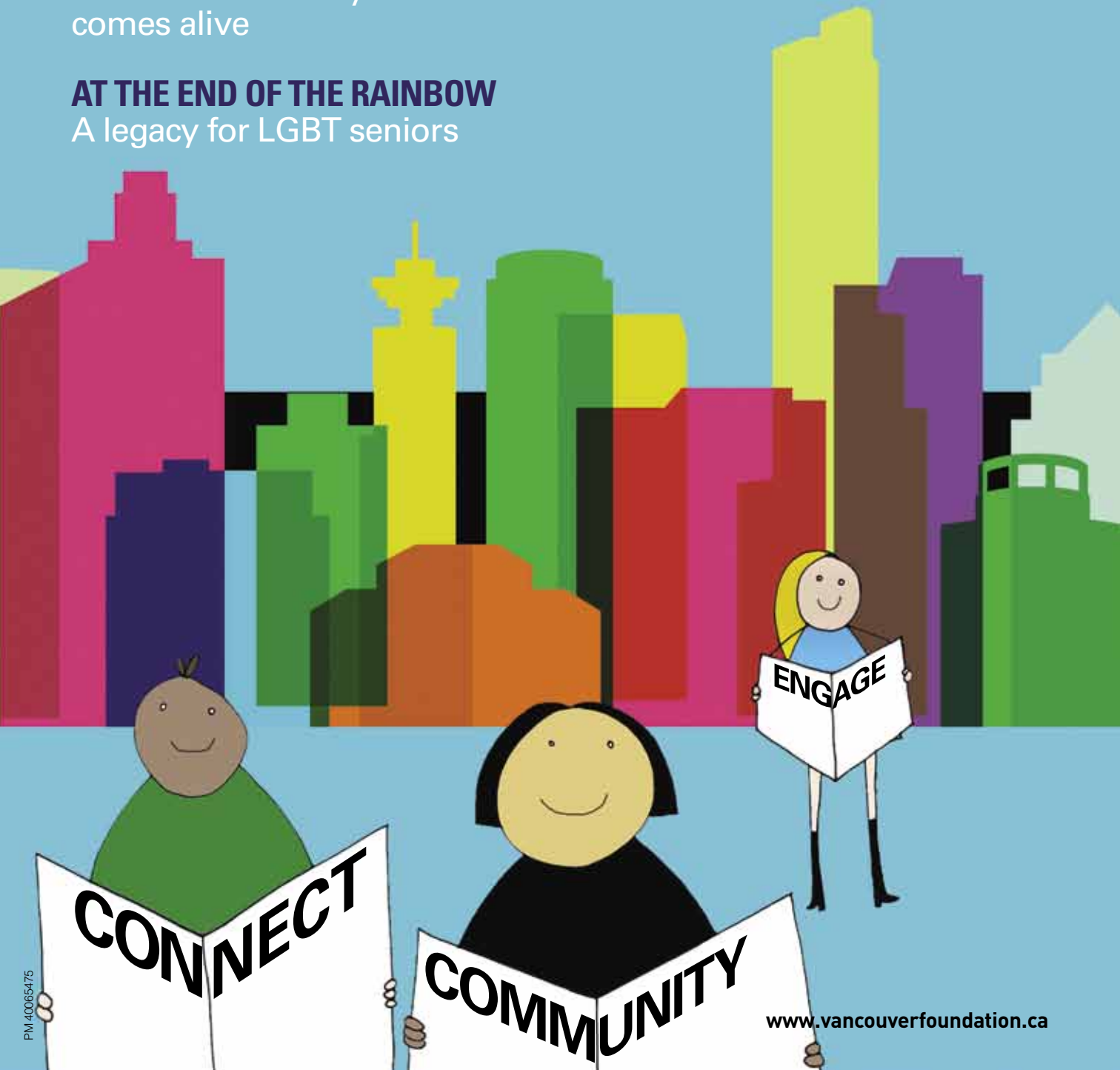
The challenges of bringing up baby – again

THREADS OF TIME

Chinatown's history comes alive

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

A legacy for LGBT seniors



The First Word . . .

Inspiring connections

There was a moment this past summer that stands out as one of those “aha” moments; the moment when a realization hits with such force that it changes how you think forever.

It happened during a meeting with a prominent community leader about some of the pressing social issues we face as a region and as a province. We were talking about issues like homelessness, poverty, affordability and climate change. At one point during the wide-ranging discussion, he stopped and looked puzzled. Then he asked a tough question: How are we going to tackle any of these issues if people are indifferent to one another and can't work together?

This question gets to the heart of Vancouver Foundation's two priorities.

One grows from the Connections and Engagement Survey we conducted in the spring. The metro-Vancouver-wide survey revealed the extent of the isolation people across metro Vancouver feel – isolation and disconnection from one another and from the life of the community.

Over the summer we had time to look more closely at the survey results. We dove deeper and produced a series of mini-reports that showed how particular groups of people experience life in the region, such as 25- to 34-year-olds, people living in highrises and new immigrants. Now we are developing ways to help people become more connected and engaged, particularly in their neighbourhoods. You'll see several stories in this issue about the power of neighbourhood connections.

Our second priority is youth homelessness. In fact, this has been a Vancouver Foundation priority for four years. Across metro Vancouver, far too many young people are homeless or living in temporary, risky arrangements. On any given night, an average of 400 people under the age of 25 can be identified as absolutely homeless. Hundreds more are couch-surfing or somehow making do, out of public sight.

There are many pathways to homelessness for young people but we are focusing on youth who have been in government care. These youth are over-represented among the homeless; as many as 40 per cent of homeless youth are estimated to have been in government care. Studies show that these youth are particularly vulnerable to homelessness as they “age out” of the child welfare/government care system when they turn 19 years of age.

Our goal is to end the experience of homelessness among former youth in care.

These two priorities are linked and they speak to the power of collaboration in addressing complex issues. It is only through strong relationships that we can care enough to work together to make our community a better place for everyone.

We hope you will read the stories in this issue and have your own “aha” moment. We hope you will become inspired to help, to connect with others, and to become actively engaged in the life of your neighbourhood and your community.



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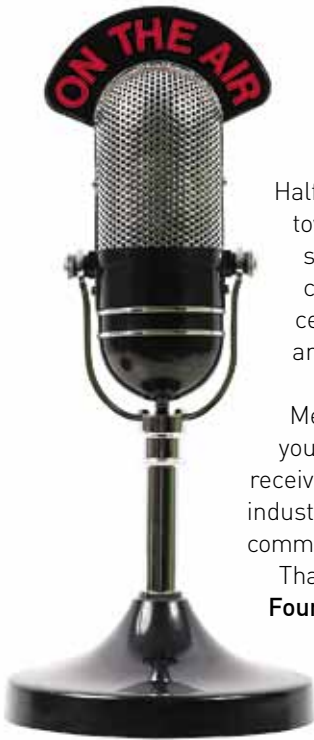
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HENDERSON SCHOOL GARDEN

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Here are a few of the projects Vancouver Foundation and our donors recently supported



Telling old stories with new media

Halfway between Prince George and Prince Rupert is the scenic town of Smithers, boasting a vibrant arts community and small-town hospitality. But despite its idyllic setting, the community is struggling to retain its youth, with only 51 per cent of First Nations students graduating from high school and an unemployment rate above the provincial average.

The Smithers Community Services Association's Youth Media Literacy Project aims to help at-risk First Nations youth build cultural esteem and media literacy. Participants receive interview coaching and radio broadcast training from industry professionals, cultural education from the First Nations community and credits toward high school graduation.

Thanks to \$30,000 in funding over three years from **Vancouver Foundation** and its donors, the Youth Media Literacy Project started this fall; the students' multimedia projects will be shared with the community in the fall of 2013.



Leadership by example

Drawing on the age-old traditions of Vancouver Island's Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, the Future is Born from the Sea program aims to help First Nations youth rediscover the value of mentorship. By connecting intergenerational leaders with First Nations youth who show leadership capacity, the two-year program will nurture youth in business, governance, management and science – building bridges between generations and building capacity in the region.

Vancouver Foundation has granted \$45,000 over two years to the program, led by the Nuu-chah-nulth in partnership with the West Coast Vancouver Island Aquatic Management Society.





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Revelstoke girls going strong

The transition to adulthood is one of intense physical and intellectual growth, the stress and anxiety of which can lead to emotional turbulence and risky behaviour – particularly among girls. But with support from the Revelstoke community and school district, along with \$8,000 from **Vancouver Foundation**, the Community Connections Society has launched Girls Move Mountains. Each week, program participants meet with youth mentors and take part in adventure-based activities – such as hiking and camping – designed to nurture the girls' confidence, courage and leadership skills.

Dance with me

More than 40 of Canada's up-and-coming contemporary dance artists will gather in Vancouver next March to share artistic practices. During the Vancouver International Dance Festival, participants will use the Roundhouse Performance Centre and the Roundhouse Exhibition Hall as open spaces for alternating sessions of performance and discussion. The Dance Gathering will foster a mutually supportive network of aboriginal and culturally diverse dance artists to help get their artistic creations seen by more people outside their own communities.

Vancouver Foundation contributed a grant of \$25,000 to help with this project of connection and communication.



we're in th

| BY FAYE WIGHTMAN

By now, many of our readers are familiar with the Connections and Engagement Survey Vancouver Foundation conducted in the spring.

Our survey found that most neighbourhood connections in metro Vancouver are weak, most residents do not participate in any form of community activity, and forging meaningful relationships is a challenge for many – particularly across barriers of difference such as ethnicity.

There has been an incredible reaction to these findings. We've been asked to make presentations across the region. We're constantly fielding inquiries from governments, other community organizations, media and people who just want to get involved. Simon Fraser University used the issues the survey raised for its 2012 Community Summit: *Alone Together*. And the City of Vancouver passed a motion to create an Engaged City Task Force.

Still, there are those who say, "Isn't this just the price we pay for living in an urban environment? Does it really matter that one in four people say they are alone more than they would like? Does it really matter that I have little to do with my neighbours?"

Well, it turns out it matters more than we might think.

Our survey showed that people who report feeling isolated and alone are less trusting of others and they feel less cohesion with their neighbours. They are more likely to think there is too much foreign ownership of real estate here, and that Vancouver is becoming a resort town for the wealthy. And they are less likely to participate in the kinds of activities that make their neighbourhood a better place to live.

In other words, feeling alone infects many aspects of a person's attitudes and actions in ways that can have negative consequences for the entire community.

And remember, we're talking about 25 per cent of the population.

Another example relates to diversity: In 1981, Canada had six ethnic enclaves, which Census Canada defines as neighbourhoods where more than 30 per cent of the population is a visible minority. Now there are 260. A *Vancouver Sun* series earlier this year found that 110 of those enclaves are in metro Vancouver – no major Canadian region has more enclaves as a proportion of its population. More than 70 of those enclaves are predominantly Chinese, and most are in Vancouver and Richmond.

We celebrate diversity and we believe our region is better because of it. But our survey reveals the challenges of living in an increasingly diverse region:

- Over one-third of respondents have no close friends outside their own ethnic group.
- Most agree that people prefer to be with others of the same ethnicity.
- Survey respondents of Chinese descent had fewer interactions with their neighbours.



is *together*



- In enclaves where most people are of Chinese descent, there is a lower sense of trust and a lower sense that the neighbours would work together to solve local problems.

Building bridges across ethnic backgrounds is critical for our community. We must develop shared goals and the ability to work together to solve issues – small ones like neighbourhood

improvements and large ones like homelessness and poverty.

The survey did not examine what people need in order to move from being isolated and disengaged to being caring and involved citizens. But our further research does tell us what we can do. It shows there are two pathways to helping people become more connected and engaged.

One is what we call a bridging pathway. When people feel freedom from discrimination of any kind, whether it's based on race, gender, age or ability, they feel a stronger sense of belonging. That makes them feel safe in reaching out to others, and safe in the knowledge that people want to know and accept them. This creates an environment where they care about others and want to become involved in activities that benefit the entire neighbourhood or community.

The second pathway is a bonding pathway. The survey showed that the more often people talk to their neighbours, the higher the trust levels in the neighbourhood. People who do more than just know their neighbours' names, who do favours for each other and who go over to one another's homes, report higher levels of trust and are more optimistic that the ties in their neighbourhood are growing stronger.

You might say this is pretty obvious. But if it's so obvious, why aren't we all doing it? Across the region, we found that less than 30 per cent of respondents scored reasonably high on our measure of connections and engagement. This means over 70 per cent are far less connected and engaged in activities that can help make our community a better place to live.

So this is our challenge. How can we help residents across metro Vancouver become more connected and engaged?

One of the key initiatives Vancouver Foundation plans is an expansion of our Neighbourhood Small Grants program. It encourages residents to come up with their own ideas for strengthening their neighbourhoods. People hold block parties, arts events and festivals. They build community gardens, establish lending libraries and run workshops. Vancouver Foundation then funds those ideas with small grants of \$50 to \$500.

It is a simple but powerful idea – an idea confirmed by our survey – that when people feel a connection to their neighbours and neighbourhood, they are more likely to get involved in activities that make their neighbourhood a better place to live. When strangers living in close proximity become trusting neighbours – when they become caring and involved – anything is possible. **VF**

fresh voices

Speaking up, speaking out

BY CHRISTINE FARON CHAN | PHOTOS VINCENT L. CHAN

Saad Al-Samarrai has found his voice. With help from Vancouver Foundation, he and other immigrant and refugee youth are overcoming the challenges of language, school and racism, to tell their stories and find common ground in the community.



The summer sun streams into the Teen Lounge at

Surrey's City Centre Library. The "hangout" room is designed specifically for youth. It's a fitting location to interview Saad Al-Samarrai, a participant in Vancouver Foundation's youth engagement work.

With his dark eyes and round cheeks, Saad has the face of a boy who is growing into a young man; he just celebrated his 15th birthday. The soft-spoken teen settles into his chair, declining the offer of a glass of water. "I'm fasting," he says with a shy smile, a subtle hint at his observance of Ramadan, a holy period of prayer, fasting and charity for Muslims. He is self-conscious about his English, but what he communicates in earnest more than makes up for his search for the right vocabulary.

Saad was born in Iraq and grew up in Dubai. He and his family arrived in Canada four years ago after waiting a decade to be accepted into the country as immigrants. A self-professed "nerd" who has a love for physics, Saad hangs out at the library to read – a penchant inherited from his dad, who has "stacks" of books at home.

After arriving in Surrey, Saad started in a new school. He didn't know any English, and it wasn't until he started to understand what the kids were saying that he realized they were making racist comments about him. "It's a daily occurrence still, to this day," he says. Getting angry would be an understandable response. But Saad chose a different path – one grounded in a hope for greater understanding between people, rather than a fleeting verbal comeback. In this, and many things, he shows a wisdom beyond his years.

Saad began attending educational workshops on racism, and he connected with organizers of the 2011 Fresh Voices Summit – a two-day conference for immigrant and refugee youth. Vancouver Foundation, with the B.C. Representative for Children and Youth, helped Saad and a group of youth from across metro Vancouver to harness the power of their stories and common experiences to help plan and deliver the 2011 summit.

It was here that Saad discovered he was not alone in his struggle to find a voice as a newcomer. He heard similar stories from other youth who shared their experiences of racism, isolation and frustration with bureaucracy. Ensuring a dedicated "space" for sharing experiences was, and is, important for Vancouver Foundation. It was the "game-changer" for Saad.

According to Mark Gifford, director of grants and community initiatives at Vancouver Foundation, "The Fresh Voices project is just one of many ways the Foundation has been deepening its investment in youth engagement work. Our Youth Philanthropy Council; Youth Vital Signs (the first comprehensive youth-led report card on their city and region, now replicated in a number of cities across Canada); Generation Green; our Youth Homelessness Initiative; and grant support for numerous community-based programs – these are all ways we put youth back at the centre of the story.

"By developing and supporting programs that encourage youth growth and dignity, inclusiveness, fairness and equality, the

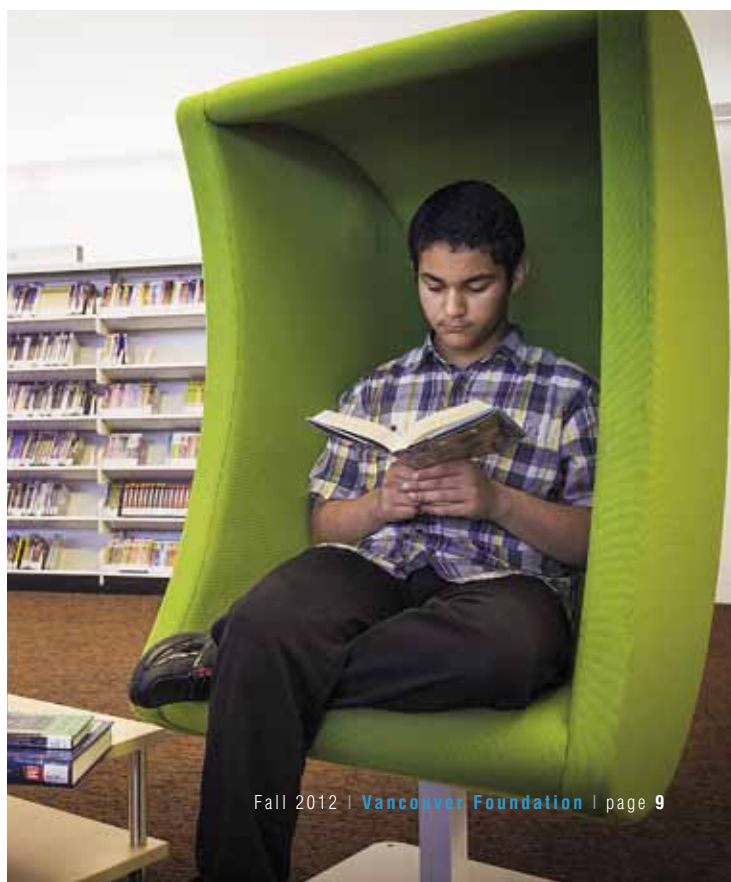
Foundation promotes youth voices and increases opportunities for youth participation."

Jorge Salazar, a former member of Vancouver Foundation's Children, Youth and Family advisory committee, who facilitated at the Fresh Voices Summit, agrees. "Through YPC's advocacy it's the first time in the province, and in the country, for a conference to focus on immigrant youth, led by immigrant youth, for immigrant youth."

For Saad, opportunities for youth empowerment, like the summit, have given him a sense of purpose. He is now a part of the summit's Youth Advisory Team, which is leading the follow-up work from the conference. "This is youth engagement to me – having the same power as an adult, the same voice as an adult. Not being looked down on for your thoughts just because you're younger," Saad says resolutely.

While most 15-year-olds spend their time locked in a power struggle with the latest video game nemesis, Saad is thinking of ways to engage youth like him who struggle to find a voice. How does he convince them that this matters? He shrugs his shoulders. "It's better than playing PlayStation in your room," he says. "Try to do something with your life. You know that saying, 'if life gives you lemons, you make lemonade?' Well, I believe that when life gives you lemons, you use them; and you give back."

At 15, Saad is already set to live a purposeful life. He wants to change the world. And he's determined to do it by helping youth find their own voice. He has already found his. **VF**





Six of the nine members of the ESL Baking and Cooking Project in Kitsilano: They learned to cook new dishes, improved their English skills and created community at the same time.





the *power* *OF* *PIE*

Nine women from nine countries make lunch and a community

BY DEBBRA MIKAELSEN | PHOTOS JAIME KOWAL



Never underestimate the power of an apple pie. That simple dessert became a catalyst for building community last year, inspiring nine women – originally from Germany, Brazil, Venezuela, France, China, Taiwan, Japan, Egypt and Iran – to begin cooking together and teaching each other how to make traditional dishes from their mother countries. They gathered in each other's kitchens. They prepared a list of exotic dishes. And they made several interesting discoveries.

"We had much more in common than we would have thought," says Daniela Korinth, an outgoing young woman with long dark hair who recently moved to Kitsilano from an area near Germany's Black Forest. "This surprised us because we were such a mixed group." She met the others in 2011, while participating in a Multicultural Women's Support Program at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, where newcomers with varying levels of English had gathered to join a community and practise their language skills.

When someone brought that apple pie to a meeting, the conversation quickly turned to stories of the foods from their home countries, and they discovered a common interest in cooking. "Even though the foods themselves are different, its importance to us, its social aspect – that's common to everyone," observes Daniela.



Soon, just talking wasn't enough; they were hungry for action. So when they heard about the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, funded by Vancouver Foundation and administered through numerous neighbourhood houses, they decided to launch a cooking project that would combine their love of food with an opportunity to improve their English.

"We wanted to learn to cook new dishes – ethnic dishes," Daniela says. "And this forced us to speak, read and translate recipes into English." Their first meeting was at the home of Monica, who showed them how to make a condensed milk pudding from her native Brazil. Using the \$500 grant to purchase some of the ingredients, they met twice a month, making recipes as varied as sushi, tiramisu and cheese soufflé. In January, when the program finished, they'd only used half the grant, so they returned the rest of the money.

But they continued to get together frequently, and welcomed a few new members to their group. "We became friends. That's been the most important outcome," says Daniela.

Eating together is one of the most traditional and most obvious ways of connecting with people, but a special bonding happens when you first cook together and then sit down to share the results of your labour. "At first, our conversation was about the how-to, the recipe instructions. But as we met regularly, we began to talk about being new in a strange place and the challenges we faced. We talked more about what was going on in our lives," explains Daniela. "We talked about our cultural differences and similarities." At the start of the project, they thought they were just making lunch, but actually they were making a community.

Such community-building initiatives are important steps toward making people feel at home here. Those new to metro Vancouver are quick to rave about its beauty, and say its citizens are generally polite – but not always warm and inviting. Vancouver Foundation launched an extensive community consultation in 2011 and made a startling discovery: the number-one concern expressed was a growing sense that residents in metro Vancouver are increasingly disconnected and disengaged.

Delving deeper, the Foundation followed up that work with its Connections and Engagement survey this past spring. The survey asked more than 3,800 people about their experiences living in the

region, and those findings reinforced what was heard in the consultations: one person in three finds it a difficult place to make friends. And neighbourhood relationships in metro Vancouver are cordial, but weak: people tend to know the first names of their neighbours, but that's about it. Few have regular conversations with a neighbour. Not many have done a simple favour for a neighbour, or have visited a neighbour's home. As a result, about half of residents either don't trust their neighbours or don't sense that their neighbours trust each other.

There is, however, reason to be optimistic: it would seem that creating community is simpler than most of us would have imagined. This past July, several members of the ESL Baking & Cooking Project got together for a reunion lunch, making empanadas at Nathaly's place, and filling the kitchen with casual conversation and easy laughter.

Nathaly tells the group to fill the circles of dough with cheese and guava paste, a sweet-salty flavour combination that's a favourite in her home country. There's both enthusiasm and a hint of longing in her voice when she says that in Venezuela, every house has a guava tree. Then her warm brown eyes start to sparkle and her smile is relaxed and happy as she rolls out another batch of dough. "I love baking. Working with dough is like therapy. You knead it and roll it and your problems just go away."

Baking is good for the soul and cooking must be good for the heart, at least if this warm and inclusive group is any indication. "Now we feel like part of a community. And we're reaching out to others who've heard about our project and want to start projects of their own," says Daniela, adding that they've received another grant, and will use those funds to host a picnic so they can invite more people to participate.

The empanadas and other recipes can be found on the group's blog at multiculturalfoodlovers.wordpress.com. **VF**

If you would like to find out more about Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG), or if you have an idea for a community-building project, visit our website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg or see page 31.

Henderson school garden

Raising Spirits

| BY PAUL HERATY

You can be forgiven for thinking the Henderson Spirit Garden is an eerie place full of cobwebs, ghosts and apparitions. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. The garden takes its name from the student council of a south Vancouver elementary school – the Henderson Spirit Team. The spirit they refer to is anything but ghoulish – it's the enthusiasm and energy that the student council, the 490 students they represent, and the teachers, seem to bring to everything they do.

The Henderson Spirit Garden is on the southwest side of the school, and consists of two large raised beds built in 2011. Just off 53rd Avenue, it follows the west side of the school up to three brand-new composters.

The Henderson Spirit Garden started with a Vancouver Foundation Generation Green award in 2011. This year, Henderson School was one of six projects to receive a grant from the Greenest City Fund – a program co-sponsored by the City of Vancouver and Vancouver Foundation that supports community-led green projects in Vancouver.

The grant of \$1,260, together with \$1,200 from the school's parent advisory council, enabled Henderson to increase the size of the garden and to double the number of students, from 100 to more than 200, who could take part in the school gardening projects.

Teachers Marguerite Leahy and Manjit Gosal help with the Spirit Leadership team at Henderson School, and they have encouraged several other teachers and classes to take part in gardening projects such as worm composting, planting, weeding and watering. The Spirit Leaders also introduced a green waste composting collection into the new school composters in May 2011.

"When you start something that works," says Leahy, "it draws people in. Interest starts building, and soon other students, teachers, even neighbours, want to be involved," says Leahy. "A lady across the street from the school grows tomatoes from seed. When she saw us building the garden, she donated a bunch of tomato plants. Another woman donated all of our bulbs last year, and wants to add some rocks this year.

"During 2011, we had a garden club. The students came out on Friday lunch breaks to help with weeding and watering. During school time, we garden in small groups or some teachers bring out their entire class. I find that team teaching with another colleague works well as one teacher can work with groups of six students at a



planting station while the other students work in small groups on big art projects.

"We're just so glad that the Vancouver Foundation would take us on again. They were very encouraging, and we have so many plans. And now we can accommodate more children because we want to build three more raised beds at Henderson."

Leahy is looking into what's called a hoop garden, which could keep the Henderson garden going right through the winter.

For Leahy, these raised beds are not just a place to grow everything from arugula to zucchini. For many of the children she introduces to the Spirit Garden, gardening – getting your hands dirty – is a transformative activity.

"You get to see a side of the children you don't normally see," says Leahy. "Some kids really struggle in the classroom. But you get them out here with a trowel – get them out here growing things – and they become gentler, and they notice things. They're quite different people in a hands-on setting outside."

For Leahy and the Henderson School gardeners, "spirit garden" sums up the experience perfectly. "As soon as we touch the earth we're better for it."

The Greenest City Fund is a fund for community-led green projects that support Vancouver's Greenest City 2020 Action Plan goals. A partnership between the City of Vancouver and Vancouver Foundation, its goal is to help make Vancouver the greenest city in the world by 2020. Full program and application details can be found at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/greenestcityfund/communitygrants VF

If you would like to support similar programs and projects in neighbourhoods across metro Vancouver, contact Peter Jackman in Development and Donor Services at 604-629-5357. Or visit <https://vancouverfoundation.ca/greenestcityfund/Donate/donateonline.asp>



Julien Thomas and the neighbours at 10th and St. George have created Vancouver's smallest park.

Gather round

Vancouver's first micro-park

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTOS TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

There are more than 200 parks in Vancouver, and Julien Thomas has added another to the list. It's small. Really small. About three square metres (or 0.0003 hectares). So small that if you blink while cycling by the intersection of 10th Avenue and St. George Street in east Vancouver, you'll miss it.

Except on Sundays, during the summer. That's when Thomas serves coffee. It's hard to miss a small group of neighbours and cyclists (and anyone who drops by) sitting on chairs, sipping coffee and chatting, in the middle of the street.

It's incongruous, delightful, and a little unnerving at first. Did I mention that Thomas's park doubles as a traffic circle? (Or is it the other way around?) It has all the signage needed to do its job. It also has a table, artwork (a stone mosaic by a local artist) and well-tended plants. It even has a name – in March, this little micro-park, known by street engineers as a “traffic calming measure,” was christened “Gather Round.”

And that's what people have been doing: gathering. What it lacks in size, Gather Round more than makes up for in impact. It has brought the neighbourhood together in a unique way.



The City of Vancouver runs programs that allow residents to take care of street gardens in traffic calming spaces, such as traffic circles and corner bulges. It was the idea of turning his street into a park that got Thomas excited. For him, it was a way of “re-prioritizing our streets for people over cars.” Though it didn’t happen overnight. While finishing a degree at SFU, he spent time researching the subject, and around Christmas 2011 he found the right location. There were lots of discussions with streets engineering, water engineering and the local community.

“Not only do we have this amazing policy that allows people to take part in transforming their urban space,” says Thomas, “but this intersection at 10th and St. George is at the epicentre of urban change – 10th Avenue is one of the most thriving bike lanes in Vancouver. And, you can’t see it now, but St. George is the passageway of an ancient creek.”

A neighbour told him about Vancouver Foundation’s Neighbourhood Small Grants program. Thomas applied for a project grant and for money from the artist enhancement fund. He got a total of \$800.

He met the neighbours, and invited them to join the project. They’d never met each other before, but since March 2012, “the little traffic circle that could” has been drawing the community together. “Most neighbours immediately get it,” says Thomas. “It’s a

community collaborative effort.” Thomas has convinced Matchstick, a local coffee shop, to supply free coffee on Sundays. One neighbour stores the table and chairs, another supplies water and kettle.

Every few weeks, Thomas puts a notice in local neighbours’ mailboxes, encouraging them to come by for some coffee or to check out the website (www.gatherround.ca), asking for donations of plants if they have any extra, and notifying them of what’s going on. Gather Round has become a focal point in the community, and Thomas couldn’t be more pleased.

There are 280 traffic circles in Vancouver. Julien Thomas smiles broadly at the prospect – he’s already planning ways to link them up, bridging communities by creating more interesting places to meet, and make friends.

John Donne’s dictum that “No man is an island” may be true. But a park in a traffic circle? That’s something to aspire to. **VF**

Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) is a program that can have a big impact on people’s lives, for a small amount of money. If you want info on how you can contribute to this amazing program, or if you have a great idea that brings people together in your neighbourhood, visit the website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg or see page 31.

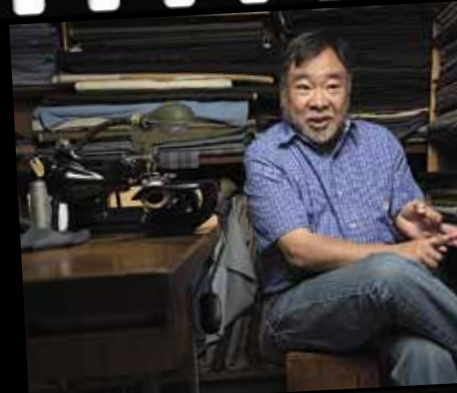


Threads of time

One donor has ensured his future
will help uncover the past

BY CATHERINE CLEMENT | PHOTOS VINCENT L. CHAN

Larry Wong – donor, author,
amateur historian, storyteller
– remembers growing up in
the 1940s in Chinatown.



As a toddler, Larry Wong would wake each morning

to the staccato rhythms of his father's Singer sewing machine. By the afternoon, he would be crawling on the floor, playing amongst clippings of silk fabric and discarded cotton thread. He remembers his father's slippered feet that furiously pumped the machine's cast iron treadle.

"My father owned a tailor shop. He made men's shirts and sold women's lingerie," Wong recalls of growing up in the 1940s and '50s in Vancouver's Chinatown. "He could make a shirt in three hours."

The small store was on Main Street between Hastings and Pender. In the front, it welcomed customers with glass display cases and bolts of fine fabric. In the back, it housed a cramped workshop and tiny living quarters divided only by a flimsy curtain.

"It was a narrow place," Wong chortles, as his hands illustrate how tiny the space was. "We had a sofa bed in the workshop. And there was a wooden ladder that led to the mezzanine level, which had a mattress. We took turns sleeping up there."

It was a humble beginning. And a sad one. When he was only 18 months old, Wong's mother died suddenly of an asthma attack. With a big age gap between him and his older siblings, Wong often felt like an only child in those early days, spending long hours on his own. His father, who never remarried, worked hard to run the business by himself while raising his young son.

"My father would work all day, cook me dinner, then at seven in the evening a friend of his would come over, and my father would head off to another job at a confectionary store," Wong recalls. "He wouldn't get home until after midnight. I think he was lonely."

Some nights his father would sneak back home with a special treat. In a deep sleep, Wong would be roused out of bed and tempted by the smell of chow mein his father had picked up at a local, late-night eatery. "I would eat with him, but I was so dozy," Wong remembers with a chuckle. "The next morning I would come down for breakfast and would not remember I had eaten just a few hours before."

That memory, and many others, has been captured by Wong in his 2011 autobiography, *Dim Sum Stories: A Chinatown Childhood*.

A historian and sometime museum curator, Wong is also a natural storyteller. The youthful-looking 74-year-old is a master at capturing the attention and imagination of his audience. When he tells a story, Wong becomes so animated he can barely contain himself. Every part of his stout body plays a role: his voice rises and falls with excitement; his head bobs up and down eagerly; his eyes grow large and then suddenly contract into crescent moons; his hands cut the air to make a point. He's like a marionette, and the story is pulling the strings.

Even when he is sharing some historical fact for the 10th time, Wong will describe it with as much energy and emotion as if it were the very first telling. He often punctuates his sentences with snorts of laughter.

Occasionally, however, talking about history will make him solemn, even sad – like when he reminisces about his mother. Her loss seems to haunt him to this day. Two pictures of her adorn his otherwise bare office walls – like small shrines placed with great care. These are Wong's treasures – images of her from around 1938 (the year Wong was born). In one image, a family looks at the camera and in the centre of the shot is a slender, attractive woman – hair tied back and perched elegantly in a chair with an infant Wong in her arms. In the other image, only Wong and his mother fill the frame.

"Her remains were shipped back to China on the *Empress of Asia*, the same ship that brought her to Canada," Wong says soberly, without the usual glint in his eye.

After a long pause, Wong sighs and turns the topic to the many jobs he has held. The energetic storyteller returns as he recalls life as a teenager in Chinatown. His first job was in a bowling alley, working as a pin boy. "I was responsible for two lanes. I had to jump down and reset the pins each time someone hit them. Boy, it was a noisy job."

Later, Wong earned cash in a used car lot, washing cars inside and out. "I learned there is a sequence to washing a car," Wong explains, his hands making circles as if polishing the air. "And I still wash a car the same way to this day."





After that, he sold ads for a local newspaper. Eventually, Wong saved enough to enrol in university, but dropped out after only two years. Unsure of what he wanted to do, he accepted a job at the post office sorting mail. Over the next few years, Wong worked his way up the career ladder and discovered he had a knack for numbers and for sleuthing. He eventually became an internal auditor for Canada Post, and then later with the federal government.

Despite the distractions of a busy career, Wong found himself continually drawn to the stories of the past. “I remember reading *Lawrence of Arabia* when I was in public school. I loved it.”

Years later, his interest in history was reignited when Wong went looking through immigration records to learn about his mother. As he uncovered more about her, he also learned about the difficult early history of the Chinese in Canada – the 1907 race riots, which saw parts of Vancouver’s Chinatown vandalized; the hefty head tax that applied to all Chinese wanting to come to Canada; followed in 1923 by the Exclusion Act, which banned most Chinese from immigrating; and lastly, the fact that even Chinese who were born in Canada, like Wong himself, were not considered Canadian citizens until 1947.

“When I was a young, I didn’t want to be Chinese. I wanted to be white. Or what we called back then ‘English.’ ” But learning more about his Chinese heritage, Wong not only became hooked on history, he also found himself drawn back to his culture.

In 1994, Wong retired and threw himself into volunteering with various history groups. He helped establish both the Chinese Canadian Historical Society and the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society. He interviewed elderly Chinese residents and war veterans to record their stories. He appeared in several documentaries and wrote articles. He arranged for exhibitions of artifacts and photographs to help showcase the story of Chinese Canadians. And last year, he finished his memoir of his Chinatown childhood.

But the death of his last remaining sibling, just before the book went to press, profoundly shaped Wong’s thinking about the future. He knew he needed to plan. “I never married and I don’t have any children, but I do have some savings and my condo is worth something. I need to do something with this money when I go and what’s better than dedicating it to something I care about?”

Wong worked with Vancouver Foundation to create a legacy fund. He discovered that it would be simple and inexpensive to set up, and that he didn’t need to be wealthy to create his own endowment fund.

Wong learned he could establish the fund now with a deposit of \$1,000, and the remainder of the funding could come from his estate after he passed away. What’s more, through a Letter of Wishes, Wong could provide clear direction to the Foundation on how the money was to be used – in this case, for a University of British Columbia history project. However, at any time Wong can change how he wants the fund to be used – without having to go back to his lawyer or change his Will – by simply changing his Letter of Wishes at no cost.

As Wong knows so well, history is about the threads that link us to yesterday; how the past affects the present and shapes the future is often open to debate. But Wong is leaving no room for interpretation of his past. He knows what his legacy will be, even before the story is finished. **VF**



Want to help preserve the past for future generations? Start with a legacy fund. Visit our website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call Kristin Helgason in Development and Donor Services at 604-629-5186.



muffin U.

Coco Café builds community

BY SONDI BRUNER | PHOTOS SONDI BRUNER AND COCO CAFÉ

Amy McMillan dreams of opening a 1960s-themed diner. Until that happens, she's having a brilliant time learning the ropes at the COCO Café. When she's not bustling around greeting customers with her unbridled enthusiasm and bright smile, she's acquiring a collection of new talents like food prep, baking, cooking and serving, and improving her math skills by learning to use the cash register.

"It's been a dream for me to work here. I'm learning a lot," she says. "It's just a miracle for me to have something that I can accomplish, something I can do, and use the skills that I have learned. Being here is like being with my family. That's what it really means to me."

These words are like music to Trish Johnston, one of the founding board members of the COCO Café. Five years ago, she belonged to a running group of mothers who all had children with disabilities. One day, they were musing about the lack of employment opportunities available for their adult children, and the idea for a café was born.

"We wanted meaningful employment for our children as they matured into the adult world, and for them to be a part of their community," she says. "With home-based businesses like catering or crafts, it would mean that they would be isolated, and we didn't want that. We want them to be a face, and a voice, and a presence."

The COCO Café, located in the small Vancouver Island community of Cedar (near Nanaimo), opened its doors in June 2011 and

has been a thriving hub of activity for residents ever since. In addition to offering fresh fare and specialty coffees, the café hosts a monthly open mic night, caters local events, sells baked goods at the Cedar farmers market, and supports local artists by displaying and selling their work (McMillan is currently selling her hand-drawn cards here).

With its expansive windows, cheerily painted walls, plush couches, reclaimed wood tables and a bookshelf filled to the brim with titles for patrons' perusal, the café's inviting environment is as unique as its mission. Unlike other cafés, here you'll find support staff working alongside 17 people with developmental disabilities to teach them the job and life skills they need to function in any workplace, and nurturing their independence. The staff who have special needs are not volunteers — they are paid employees, a business model that is the first of its kind in B.C.

Café manager Melanie Cadden tailors job responsibilities to each employee's abilities and interests. Some thrive performing repetitive tasks; some enjoy washing dishes, taking out the garbage and cleaning tables; while others love to cook and bake. She begins by scheduling employees for one two-hour shift a week, and gradually increases hours as they become more comfortable in the café environment.

"You see their progression from you having to guide them every step of the way when they start, to their becoming more independent,





functional and part of the team,” she says. “To see everybody absorb what we’re teaching them, and to watch them grow, it’s just amazing to watch. I learn from them as much as I teach them.”

Johnston has seen a vast improvement in her 22-year-old daughter Carolyn’s confidence and skills, and has even discovered that Carolyn’s new abilities can be applied at home.

“She has a real pride of ownership. She comes in, she holds her head up high and she greets people. I’ve learned to push her a little harder, too. I tend to baby her, and when I see her doing things here, I think, ‘she should be doing that at home!’ ” Johnston says with a laugh. “So it’s helped a lot in all ways.”

Everything at the COCO Café is made from scratch – soups, muffins, pastries, breads (which they sell to the restaurant down the street), sandwiches, wraps and paninis – and each item is made to order. Cadden makes a point of shopping at the farmers market, and purchases items like fresh eggs and blueberries from local farmers, too.

Special adjustments to equipment include a colour-coded cash register specifically designed for people with special needs, which corresponds to stickered items in the prep area. Cadden is also developing pictured recipe books to make cooking easier for those with reading difficulties.

Sometimes orders take a little longer, but thankfully the café has a slew of devoted regulars who bring their patience with them. They also stop to greet employees by name, and offer a smile, a joke or an affectionate shoulder squeeze. Customers even make special trips from outlying communities to visit, and are interested in replicating the café in their own neighbourhoods.

A \$125,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation’s Disability Supports for Employment Fund over the next two years will be used for support staff wages, as they play an integral role in giving employees with special needs the skills they need to succeed. By the end of the grant period, the café expects to be a self-sustaining, profitable business.

“The grant takes the pressure off and allows us to function,” Cadden says. “I really don’t think the café would be open without it.” **VF**

Clockwise from top left: Staffer Camille and café manager Melanie wait on customers; Carolyn and Sarah keep busy in the kitchen; Greg preps ingredients in the back; Paul’s favourite job is doing dishes.



at the end of

Retirement is looking a little brighter
for LGBT seniors in need



Bill and Manny are enjoying their retirement. They both worked hard and invested their money wisely – Bill was a chartered accountant, and Manny (who trained as a miner in Germany) worked in the mining industry, and eventually liquor distribution.

Now, at 68 and 72, they are reaping the benefits: a beautiful apartment where they live comfortably – not ostentatiously – and the chance to indulge their mutual interest in travel, gardening, opera and art.

Bill and Manny love to travel. They have taken dozens of cruises together, and are planning their next trip – to circumnavigate Australia this year. Their apartment is filled with photo albums and memories of their voyages.

They are a delightful couple. Bill usually does most of the talking, as Manny is more reserved. But bring up cruising the Aegean or visiting Luxor and Manny lights up with stories of

their trips together. With a shock of white hair and his tanned healthy face, Manny is suddenly incandescent. Bill laughs and ribs him for it. There is still genuine affection between the two, even after almost 40 years together.

Life is good. But both men have friends, and friends of friends, who are not having an easy time. Singles and couples, straight and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, who have not made even the most basic preparations for their “golden years” and are now struggling financially.

“That’s why we decided to start the Rainbow Fund,” says Bill. “It started with our first Will together, on November 6, 1994.” (He rattles off the details as if it were yesterday). “We had made money on a couple of properties, and were thinking ahead about what happens to this money when we die.

“We have no children, and we didn’t want to give money to relatives who we rarely see. We thought of setting up a private

the rainbow

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO



foundation. But that proved to be too much work. Then, in 2008, the Will needed to be looked at again. And by that time our plans had become clearer.”

“We had some older friends, and thought ‘What’s going to happen to these people who don’t have a lot of money? One friend of ours lived for many, many years in a small apartment in the West End. He didn’t have any money to speak of. He just made ends meet. When he got sick, he was placed in a facility far from home and friends, in a room with a straight, elderly gentleman of a completely different ethnic background – someone he had nothing in common with. He was very bitter. He died eight months later.”

It was stories like this that reconfirmed Bill and Manny’s plans.

“We decided on trying to create a retirement home for the gay and lesbian community. We wanted to look at something that was doable. Maybe not in our lifetime, but doable. So when we did our Wills in 2008, we included Vancouver Foundation.” ▶



Manny (left) and Bill have travelled the world, but they want to create a retirement home for the LGBT community here in Vancouver. Their Rainbow Fund will contribute to that goal.



Timely assistance

Bill and Manny's timing is spot-on. And they are right to be concerned, because the statistics tell a disturbing story:

Most people are reluctant to talk about – much less plan for – their death.

A recent Leger Marketing survey found that the majority of Canadian adults (51 per cent) do not have a signed Will¹.

A recent MetLife study of American gay and lesbian baby boomers found exactly the same result – more than one-half (51 per cent) of LGBT boomers had yet to complete a Will.²

LGBT elders face unique problems

LGBT elders are twice as likely to live alone than heterosexual older adults, and four times as likely to have no children. Thus they often have limited access to traditional support networks such as adult children, extended family, or the church, to provide care.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many gay or lesbian couples even end up “back in the closet” rather than deal with the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle prejudices of some nursing homes.

Wills

A **Will** is a document that leaves instructions about what you want done with your personal possessions and land (your estate) after you die. Dying without a Will means letting the government decide how your estate will be settled and then charge your estate to do so.

Bill and Manny started a legacy fund at the Foundation that will contribute towards a home for elderly and financially challenged gays and lesbians who want a sense of community, in their community. Asked why they chose Vancouver Foundation for their fund, Bill replies, “I knew of Vancouver Foundation for a long time. I had a client who had a fund with the Foundation. I knew there was diversity in the causes it supports, and that it had a good board.

“In fact, I can't think of any other foundation in the city that would be suitable for what we wanted to do. There isn't any, really. Certainly not one with the variety, the breadth of offering that Vancouver Foundation has. You can put money into the arts, into medical research. And you could change your plans if you wanted to. Also, I wanted to know where the money was going. You can give to the BC Cancer Agency but it often goes into general donations – it's not specific and it's not separate. Vancouver Foundation has a lot of different components. And we knew there would be oversight on the money.”

Bill and Manny aren't shouting from the ramparts about gay rights, or flying the rainbow flag. That's not their style. They are quietly, steadily enabling change. They contribute regularly to their legacy fund, putting their resources to work to create a home for less fortunate members of the LGBT community. Eventually, they hope the fund will be big enough to buy a heritage house in the West End and outfit it to care for elderly people.

“It's tough if you've been renting all your life,” says Bill. “Living for the late nights and parties, and not putting anything away for the time when you can't, or don't want to, work anymore. Manny and I have been very lucky. And we want to help where we can.”

They are encouraging others to join them. “There are just so many gay people who don't know what to do. You can will your estate to Vancouver Foundation, or any foundation you like for that matter.

“You don't have to be a millionaire to contribute. Make regular contributions to your fund to get your tax credits every year. Think about making a donation in your Will to Vancouver Foundation in support of the Rainbow Fund. And on your death, you will be contributing to a very worthwhile cause.”

This is not the end of the rainbow for Bill and Manny. In fact, it's just the beginning. **VF**

For more information about the Rainbow Fund or to establish a legacy fund, contact Kristin Helgason at 604-629-5186 or visit Vancouver Foundation's website at <https://vancouverfoundation.ca/donate/donateonline.asp>

¹ <http://retirehappyblog.ca/too-many-canadians-have-no-will/>

² <http://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/mmi/publications/studies/mmi-out-aging-lesbian-gay-retirement.pdf>

this is not a granola bar

This is a ticket to a high-school diploma, a good job and a future

| BY PAUL HERATY

Champlain Heights Elementary School is located in the southeast corner of Vancouver near Boundary Road at 49th Avenue. About 250 students enjoy its expansive, park-like grounds and unique landscaping. It doesn't look like an inner city school. But looks can be deceiving—there are students “at risk” here. Between 25 and 30 come to school unfed every morning.

“When students come to school hungry, they have a hard time settling down,” says Peter Evans, former principal at Champlain Heights. “They are upset and distracted. It's tough to focus on learning when you're hungry.

“We ran a breakfast program for these children for five years,” says Evans. “The program changed several times over the years. It



started as a ‘club,’ then morphed into a ‘Breakfast with Books’ program to enhance literacy levels. Now it's mainly a program that reaches needy students by providing classroom teachers with a ‘stash’ of food and drink that can be distributed quietly to children in need without drawing attention, or having them ‘stand out’ as needy.

“Last year, we spent \$1,000 of grant money feeding hungry children. But funding for the program dried up this year. Some teachers are now paying for granola bars, yogurt bars and Tetra Pak drinks out of their own pockets.”

Before he was assigned to another school, Evans contacted Vancouver Foundation hoping that he could secure \$1,000 for the breakfast program. Director of development Peter Jackman made a quick phone call to a donor he thought might be interested. The answer came back in less than 10 minutes. The donor, who wished to remain anonymous, would fund the breakfast program for three years.

It's another great example of a little money going a long way. These young people can now concentrate on learning, instead of grumbling tummies. **VF**



Learn more about **Vancouver Foundation** and the generosity of our donors. Visit our website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca

Grandparenting

A growing community of second-time-around parents seeks support in raising another generation

| BY DOUG WARD

"I heard a bluebird singing one day."

An elfin, tousled-haired girl sings onstage at Burnaby's Museum Village, sweeping a broom and blowing bubbles . . .

"He seemed a messenger of happy news.

But now my bluebird is singing the blues."

Thirteen-year-old Avy Crowchild belts out the lament about unrequited love with precocious bravado. She's rehearsing her role as a child singer in Footlight Theatre's annual summer production of "Vaudeville Varieties." Her performance sparks a "bravo!" from proud parent Bernadine Fox. The two meet backstage and embrace.

Anyone watching the familial scene would assume that Fox, 53, is Avy's mother. Just the day before, a salesperson referred to Fox as "Mom" when she and Avy were buying jazz dance shoes. But Fox is her grandmother and has been raising Avy for the past 11 years. She was granted legal custody of Avy because her daughter, Avy's mother, was and is a drug addict.

"Invariably, people call me Mom. And Avy wanted to call me Mom. But I tell her: I am your parent. But I am your grandparent. I'm not your mom because you have a mom."

Fox is one of 10,000 grandparents in B.C. who are raising grandchildren. More than 65,000 Canadian kids are estimated to be living with their grandparents. "There are more kids being raised in B.C. by their grandparents right now than are in the entire foster care system," says Fox.

The circumstances behind grandparents becoming guardians of their grandkids vary, but most involve heartache, trauma and crisis. Some biological mothers and fathers have died or are in jail. Others are troubled by drug addiction, mental illness, physical handicaps or the acrimony of marital strife and divorce.

Fox felt she had no choice but to take custody of Avy – against the

wishes of her own daughter – after B.C.'s ministry of children and family development threatened to apprehend the girl and place her in foster care. "To take Avy away from everyone she had bonded with would have been a great emotional trauma for her."

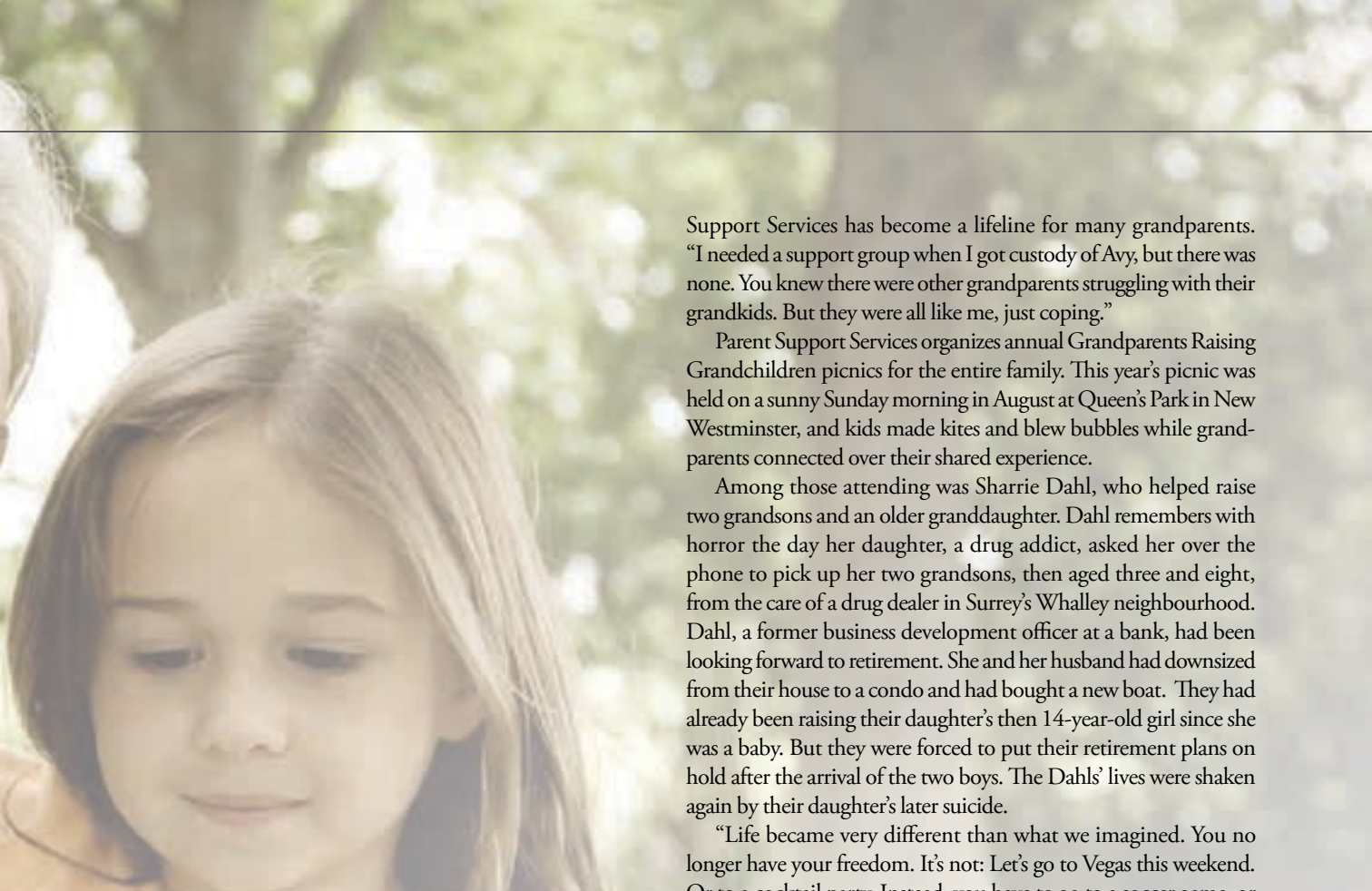
Fox endured years of sadness, watching her daughter consumed by addiction to cocaine and heroin. She has struggled financially, living on a long-term disability pension because of chronic fatigue syndrome.

Fox is a visual artist whose work is in many private collections, but she has channelled most of her energy into raising Avy rather than into marketing her art. "Everything else became secondary to Avy. But I could do it and I was grateful to do it because Avy is such a price-less little kid."

She counts herself lucky. Many other grandparents are raising kids with behavioural disorders, including fetal alcohol syndrome and autism. But when Fox sought and won custody of Avy, she was not expecting to become the long-term parent. "Initially I thought I'd look after Avy for six weeks, then I thought six months max. But I didn't understand drug addiction," recalls Fox. "Now I'm at 11 years."

Carol Ross, executive director of Parent Support Services of B.C., says Fox and other grandparents bringing up their grandkids are a largely invisible demographic. "They provide B.C.'s underground child welfare system. They do it for nothing, which makes it a very affordable system for the government. Because otherwise many of these children would be in foster care, which is expensive."

A majority of these grandparents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Money for their grandkids – whether it's for daycare, clothes, therapy or extracurricular activities – is a constant issue. And while others in their age group are looking forward to a post-retirement lifestyle of travel and leisure activities, these grandparents



struggle with their grandkids' emotional ups and downs, interviews with school teachers, clothes shopping, immunizations and the strange new world of social media.

Parent Support Services has, over the past 12 years, become the go-to social agency for these second-time-around parents. "The grandparents have been a feisty bunch, saying: 'Hey, look at us. We need help. Things are not fair,'" says Ross.

Parent Support Services has established a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) toll-free support line, organized GRG support groups, published a legal guide and staged larger meetings called Grand Gatherings. And this year, the group is receiving \$35,000 from Vancouver Foundation for a co-ordinator to bolster the group's support and advocacy for these grandparents.

The province previously funded the Child In the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program, providing grandparents just over \$300 monthly on average for each child until the age of 19. This program was terminated in 2010, with the recipients grandfathered for continued funding. The provincial government then established a far more restrictive benefits scheme called the Extended Family Program (EFP). Far fewer grandparents qualify for benefits under the EFP than did under the CIHR program. Grandparents with legal custody of their grandkids, for instance, do not qualify.

For Carol Ross, this is a broad societal issue with implications for all of us. "The government has made choices not to support huge numbers of amazing families who raise children who otherwise would be in the foster care system, where foster parents are paid well and offered many additional supports."

Avy's grandmother is not eligible for EFP because she went against her daughter's wishes and gained legal guardianship, though she still receives about \$300 through the CIHR program. Fox says that Parent

Support Services has become a lifeline for many grandparents. "I needed a support group when I got custody of Avy, but there was none. You knew there were other grandparents struggling with their grandkids. But they were all like me, just coping."

Parent Support Services organizes annual Grandparents Raising Grandchildren picnics for the entire family. This year's picnic was held on a sunny Sunday morning in August at Queen's Park in New Westminster, and kids made kites and blew bubbles while grandparents connected over their shared experience.

Among those attending was Sharrie Dahl, who helped raise two grandsons and an older granddaughter. Dahl remembers with horror the day her daughter, a drug addict, asked her over the phone to pick up her two grandsons, then aged three and eight, from the care of a drug dealer in Surrey's Whalley neighbourhood. Dahl, a former business development officer at a bank, had been looking forward to retirement. She and her husband had downsized from their house to a condo and had bought a new boat. They had already been raising their daughter's then 14-year-old girl since she was a baby. But they were forced to put their retirement plans on hold after the arrival of the two boys. The Dahls' lives were shaken again by their daughter's later suicide.

"Life became very different than what we imagined. You no longer have your freedom. It's not: Let's go to Vegas this weekend. Or to a cocktail party. Instead, you have to go to a soccer game, or one of your kids is having a meltdown. And you're spending thousands of dollars without any support from the ministry."

Dahl is no longer looking after her grandchildren, but she is an active volunteer in the grandparenting community, and praises the role played by Parent Support Services. "This group lets grandparents know they are not alone. It understands that grandparents are different from parents. We're a generation older and we've been down that road before," says Dahl. "We didn't put our names in for this. But we came forward and we do it from the heart."

But the heart has its limits – even for a loving grandparent. A few days before the GRG picnic, Fox's daughter gave birth to her fifth baby. Her daughter left the baby in the hospital after a few days, without telling anyone in the family about the delivery. When Fox learned about the birth, she rushed to B.C. Women's Hospital with Avy. She saw other grandparents in the hospital beaming with pride over the arrival of a new member of the family. Fox fears that her grandchild will end up in foster care.

"Honestly, all I wanted to do is cry," she says. "Avy had me and her aunt to swoop in and rescue her. Her two younger sisters had their father, who was not an addict and who took full responsibility for their upbringing. But this little guy has no Dad who has come to be with him there. Mom is an addict. I cannot take on the responsibility of another baby.

"So what is to happen to this lil' guy?" **VF**

Find out how you can help programs like Parent Support Services of B.C. Call Kristin Helgason at Vancouver Foundation Development and Donor Services at 604-629-5186.



a cup of generosity

| BY CATHERINE CLEMENT

We all know that coffee can help kick start our day.

But can coffee help to propel a movement, change a neighbourhood, or transform an individual?

According to Collette Bennett, marketing manager for Starbucks Canada, the answer is a resounding “yes.”

For years, Starbucks Canada has earned a solid reputation not just for the coffee it serves, but for its philanthropic work as well. Through an endowment fund at Vancouver Foundation, each year the company grants hundreds of thousands of dollars to Canadian projects focused on youth and environment. In the last two years, however, the Canadian arm of the company that made “cappuccino” a household word has taken its philanthropy to a whole new level with a new focus: thriving neighbourhoods.

And how do you create thriving neighbourhoods?

“By engaging people in the life of their community,” Bennett replies without missing a beat. “We want to inspire and engage our partners (i.e., employees), our customers and Canadians to get involved and engaged in their own community.”

Bennett’s goal is to encourage more people to volunteer their services to their community. She readily admits that, for many people, finding time to volunteer seems like an impossible task. However, she feels there are many ways people can contribute. And whether it’s a big contribution or small, it all adds up. “The least someone can do is use their tumbler and redirect their [discount of] 10 cents,” she explains. “All the money we collect goes to Volunteer Canada for community engagement programs.”

Another way to get involved is through Starbucks’ Thriving Neighbourhoods website. Launched in May 2012, the site provides opportunities for people to talk about their neighbourhoods, share ideas for what is needed, and link people and organizations together.

“I know for myself that, until I started working here, I don’t think I truly realized the impact volunteering can have on a personal level and on a community level,” Bennett says with the zeal of the newly converted.

We spend the next 20 minutes talking about one story – one event – that transformed not only Bennett’s life, but the lives of hundreds of other people.

For the last two years, Starbucks has organized a community event in April that involves partners and customers in a day of service. The goal is to get as many people as possible together and do one big event that benefits a neighbourhood. Bennett recalls that in 2011 they wanted to find a community organization that really needed help but where they also could see the impact from their work right away. In addition, Starbucks wanted to select an organization with which they could build a longer-term relationship, something beyond the one-day event.

Strathcona Community Centre was that organization. Located in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, the community centre is situated in a residential area with a disproportionate number of low-income, immigrant and urban aboriginal families. Heavily used, and struggling with its budget, the community centre was in dire need of a cleanup and repairs.

“We had 250 partners and customers come out that day. They stayed until the very end – eight hours,” Bennett remembers. “We beautified the outside area. We built an education garden area for the kids. Inside needed a cleanup and an overhaul, so we cleaned, painted and built cubbyholes.

“At the end of the day, when it was all over, the executive director stood up and spoke to all of us. With tears in his eyes he said, ‘I want you to know that in this eight hours you have done what it would have taken us a year to accomplish.’”

“We all just felt ‘wow.’ I gave up just one day of my life. I gave up only eight hours . . . and look what we accomplished for our community! We did something that would have otherwise taken this organization a whole year to do,” Bennett says with a huge smile on her face.

The impact that experience had on Bennett herself was transformative. She decided that despite a full-time job and two kids of her own, she would start volunteering at the community centre once a week. Now, every Thursday evening, Bennett – often with some of her colleagues or friends – helps stuff backpacks with groceries. The backpacks are given to children whose families struggle to afford adequate, healthy food. The idea is to ensure that even on weekends, when regular meal programs are not available through the centre, that these children will have access to nutritious food.



Bennett also volunteers on the board of the North Vancouver Community Foundation. And she works with her own children to instill in them a desire to give time to their community. “My 17-year-old is very much involved in community work, and not just because her school requires it. She obtained her required hours long ago,” Bennett says. The change that volunteering has made on her daughter is equally compelling. “As a teenager, it helps take that self-centred attitude away, and really makes them feel like they are part of something beyond just themselves.”

Bennett is one example of how corporations, by taking a broader approach to philanthropy and supporting their employees’

involvement in service to the community, do something more for the communities in which they operate.

So, can coffee launch a movement, rebuild a neighbourhood and transform a person? You bet it can. And it does it one cup at a time. **VF**

For more information about the Thriving Neighbourhoods program, visit www.starbucks.ca/thrive. If your company is interested in creating a similar endowment fund, call Peter Jackman in Vancouver Foundation’s Development and Donor Services at 604-629-5357.

Vancouver
Foundation is honoured
to continue the legacy
of these generous donors.

Following are new estates from which
Vancouver Foundation received a gift in 2011. The gifts
were used to establish a new fund or as a contribution to a
pre-existing fund.

Jean Hamilton Brakenridge • Frances Cooper
• Janet Cramsie • Alasdair Gordon • Helene Edna Gradley • Katherine
(Kitty) Heller • Donald & Alice Kerr • Donald Macaulay • Eleanor Malkin •
Yvonne McGrane • Raymond Rochat • Candace Sherriff • Anonymous •

As a result of these gifts, a lasting legacy was made in support of the following
charities and causes:

- Community Fund – Vancouver Foundation • Health & Medical Research/Education (FOI) • Animal Welfare (FOI) • Health & Social Development (FOI) • Youth Homelessness (FOI) • Abbeyfield Chapter of British Columbia • PLEA Community Services Society of BC • Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada • Department of Ophthalmology, The University of British Columbia • Vancouver Lower Mainland • VanDusen Association • Vancouver Foundation for Health Care • Gate Hospital • Vancouver Sun • Creation and development of Scholarships and bursaries for young classical musicians • Classical music organizations • patient care and research agencies
- Evergreen House at Lions Children's Fund Society • botanical gardens • for young Scholarships • administration • Health-oriented

To find out more about leaving a gift to Vancouver Foundation in your Will, contact Kristin Helgason at 604-629-5186.

family wealth, family values

| BY RIC LANGFORD

“What can I do to teach my children to manage their inheritance?”

This is an excellent question. Too often there is a reluctance to discuss financial matters with family, but open communication between parents and children is critical in preparing everyone for the transfer of wealth. The word “wealth” comes from the Middle English *weal* and originally included not only the concept of prosperity, but also the concepts of well-being and happiness. Thus, preparing children for a transfer of wealth should also include passing along beliefs and values. Involving children and grandchildren in philanthropy is an excellent way to do this.

Private foundations are one way of achieving this, and can be established to reflect a family’s values and priorities. However, setting up and maintaining a private foundation requires a significant commitment of time.

A less time-intensive option for philanthropic giving – one that is becoming more popular – is the “donor-advised fund” offered by community foundations such as Vancouver Foundation. You can establish this type of fund with as little as \$10,000. Once it is set up, you can make annual contributions

and apply the resulting donation tax credits against your income tax owed in that year. This can provide ongoing lifetime tax benefits and, on your passing, the fund can be increased from your estate.

Community foundations can take care of all the administrative details of setting up and maintaining a fund, including arranging for payment of grants, at a very low cost. They can also provide suggestions for projects of special interest or research particular organizations or charitable activities.

As with a private foundation, the power of a donor-advised fund is the ability to use the investment income to support charitable organizations of your choice. Family members can help research charities that are of interest and projects that meet the family objectives. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to learn from each other, and to gain perspective on what’s important to the family. **VF**

Ric Langford, LL.B., is the director of wealth planning at BMO Harris Private Banking. He has more than 25 years experience providing professional services in estates and trusts.

Yes! I’d like to double my gift.

Vancouver Foundation’s Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) is a unique program that strengthens connections right where people live — in 16 neighbourhoods across metro Vancouver.

We encourage residents to come up with their own ideas of how their neighbourhood could be strengthened. We then fund those ideas. (Look for the lady bug icon in this issue for NSG stories.)

Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, we will double your gift to our NSG program. We will match, dollar-for-dollar, your gift of \$1,000 or more (up to \$15,000 per person).

To double the impact of your gift, please fill out the form below or visit our website.

Step 1 - Donation amount

I would like to contribute: ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$2,500 ☐ \$3,000 ☐ \$5,000 ☐ Other: \$

Step 2 - Contact information

Name: Telephone: Email:

Address: City/Prov./Postal Code:

Step 3 - Payment options

Credit card: Number: Cardholder name:

CSC# Expiry Date:

Cheque: Using the enclosed self-addressed envelope, please make your cheque payable to “Vancouver Foundation”, with NSG on the memo line.

Online: To donate online, please visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca/matching

For more information call 604.629.5357 or visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca/matching



Small is beautiful

Small things can have a big impact.

Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants is a unique program that strengthens connections right where people live — in 16 neighbourhoods across metro Vancouver. We support residents who have small but powerful ideas to bring people together and make their neighbourhood better. When neighbours connect, even in a small way, beautiful things happen.



Donate \$1,000 or more to our Neighbourhood Small Grants program and we will match your gift, dollar-for-dollar, until the end of 2012

For more information call 604.629.5357 or visit our website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/matching