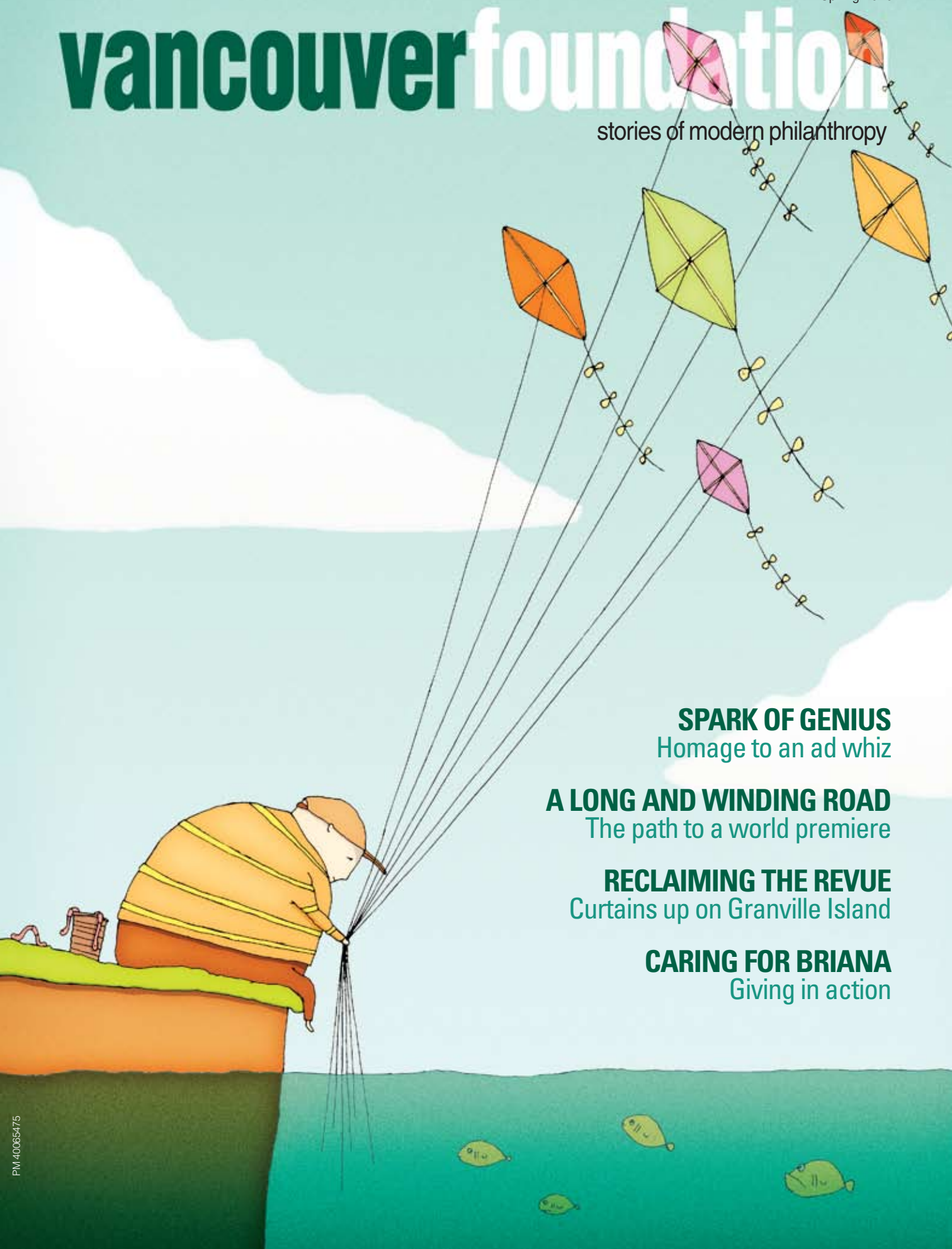


Spring 2010

vancouver foundation

stories of modern philanthropy



SPARK OF GENIUS

Homage to an ad whiz

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

The path to a world premiere

RECLAIMING THE REVUE

Curtains up on Granville Island

CARING FOR BRIANA

Giving in action

The importance of stories

Humans have told stories for millennia. They've scratched them onto the walls of caves, carved them into wood or stone, painted them onto canvas, written them on parchment, etched them into vinyl and recorded them on film. Now we share our stories digitally.

While the media have changed over the years, the intent remains the same. We tell stories to communicate, to teach, to motivate and to entertain.

Thanks to the nature of our work, and the generosity of our donors, Vancouver Foundation is blessed with an almost inexhaustible supply of stories – positive stories about the good things happening in our communities as a result of philanthropy.

You will find these stories in the magazine you are holding. We encourage you to read on, to learn the heartwarming story of Briana Shephard and how the Giving in Action program changed the quality of her family's life; about a project that is documenting B.C.'s birds so that we can better understand what we have and what we have lost; about a UBC study that has seniors pumping iron and getting smarter in the process; and the remarkable tale of Lillian Alling and how, with our donors' help, she became the focus of Vancouver Opera's biggest original production to date.

Despite all the good stories we can tell, we also know there have been many challenges in the last year among the organizations we (and you) support. We've heard from charities across the province, from all different sectors, that they have been significantly affected by the economy. The impact has hit them in many ways: decreased donations, reduced corporate support and, sometimes, increased demand for services, combined with less income from endowment funds and grants.

At Vancouver Foundation, we are stepping up to the plate as best we can – by increasing the amount of funds we allocate to grants, sharing grant proposals with our donors and generally looking for ways to help charities cope with and adapt to what could be a long, difficult period.

We hope our donors will consider how, in these extraordinary circumstances, they might give more as well. If you are passionate about a cause, or care about an organization and the work it does, then please consider offering more support to that charity this year.

Just to close with some good news, before this issue went to press, we learned *Vancouver Foundation* magazine had won gold in the Wilmer Shields Rich Awards – a North America-wide competition that recognizes excellence in communications among public and community foundations. We won the top award in the magazines and periodicals category for foundations with assets over \$250 million.

It is always gratifying to be recognized by one's peers, and very encouraging, as we continue to tell the stories of how you, our donors and this organization are creating positive and lasting impacts in communities across B.C. This is, after all, our mission. And these are the stories of our mission in action.



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Spring 2010
Volume 3 Number 1

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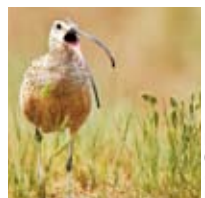
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Here are a few of the projects Vancouver Foundation and its donors recently supported



East meets west in 1898

Cumberland is a new play about the Chinese coal mining community in Cumberland, B.C. in 1898, and what happens when a touring Cantonese opera troupe arrives. The play, being developed by Pangaea Arts Society, is designed to give audiences insight into the politics, personal lives and difficult working and living conditions of that period.

The unique production, which received a \$20,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation donors, will involve a cross-cultural collaboration between professional Cantonese opera performers and musicians and Western theatre practitioners.



Animals aging with dignity

Some families adopt an animal, but are unwilling or unable to meet the pet's needs as it ages. Too often elderly animals wind up at shelters in desperate need of veterinary care.

In 2004, compassionate volunteers who saw many senior-age animals spending their final days in a pound, created an organization called Senior Animals in Need Today Society (SAINTS).

SAINTS boasts three beautiful acres in Mission, B.C. with a cosy home, a sturdy barn, fields for running and ponds for swimming. Even better, each animal is loved and cared for.

Vancouver Foundation donors made a grant of \$4,150 to help SAINTS build a fence around its entire property for security, and to make sure senior-age animals don't follow their noses too far.

LOVE this fashion show

Leave Out Violence (LOVE) is a not-for-profit, youth-led movement against violence.

It trains and empowers youth who have been touched by violence to become champions against violence in schools and communities across Canada.

LOVE's Beauty Positive Project is a multi-faceted fashion program that will culminate with a fashion show created and designed by LOVE BC youth September 26 at the Roundhouse Community Centre. The project aims to give young people a positive outlet for self-expression and an opportunity to build self-esteem. Participants will collaborate with two local fashion designers and, through a series of free workshops, learn about fashion, beauty ideals, body image, consumerism, sweatshops and branding.

They'll also learn skills such as design, alteration and sewing, which will enable them to make their own clothes. By sourcing costumes from second-hand stores, participants will promote sustainability, and create fashion that reflects the diversity of youth culture.

Vancouver Foundation donors supported the project with a grant of \$4,650.



Inside Vancouver's secret forest

Fifteen years ago, the City of Vancouver planned to cut down one of the last urban forests in the city to expand Fraserview Golf Course. Nearly 100 residents came together to protest, and they successfully preserved Fraserview Forest – 221 acres bounded by the golf course fairways, Marine Drive, Kerr Street, Elliot Street and Rosemont Drive. The deal gave the golf course a small expansion, and residents got a walking trail. The City also planted 1,000 more trees.

Now, 15 years later, a dozen families, including some of the original residents who preserved the forest, went on a nature walk along the trail, led by local resident and architect David Wong. Participants learned about the environmental significance and natural history of the neighbourhood and shared a picnic lunch afterwards. A \$500 grant from Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants Program funded the event.

Wong and his neighbours continue to go on walks together in this little-known enclave, one of the last remnants of forest in urban Vancouver.



Reeling them in

All over B.C., kids are making movies, thanks to a program that teaches them how to create and distribute films.

Reel Youth aims to empower young people to share their visions for a more just and sustainable world through film. The program works in partnership with youth-serving organizations throughout the province to support mobile animation and video production programs.

A grant of \$20,000 from Vancouver Foundation donors will help Reel Youth distribute kids' messages through community screenings, the Internet and the youth-juried Touring Reel Youth Film Festival.

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO

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

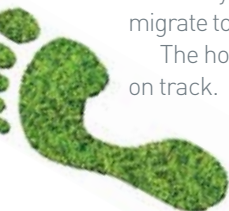
Helping homeless youth stay home

Vancouver has long been the end of the line for homeless kids from all over B.C. Drawn by the allure of the big city and the services available to youth, many hope to escape troubled pasts by moving. But in a completely new place, without friends, family or support, they sometimes lose their way.

Vancouver Foundation's Youth Homelessness Initiative originally focused on Vancouver because of the city's high population of homeless youth. This year, the program has expanded its granting to Metro Vancouver in the hope of helping at-risk youth stay in their communities.

A \$100,000 grant from the Red Hibiscus Foundation – a donor-advised fund held at Vancouver Foundation – supported an Aldergrove Neighbourhood Services Society plan to develop youth housing in that community and in Langley City, as well as a youth drop-in centre in Aldergrove. The drop in-centre will serve as a focal point for helping troubled youth before they migrate to larger urban centres. Rental housing, with the support of live-in mentors, will be made available in the area.

The hope is that kids who stay in their communities will have more support and a better chance of getting their lives back on track.



Greening local landlords

Plenty of government programs help businesses and homeowners reduce their ecological footprint. But there are few efforts directed at the rental housing market. The Green Landlords Project will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from B.C.'s rental housing sector and also reduce energy bills for tenants.

The program, a joint project of the Sierra Club of B.C. and the B.C. Sustainability Energy Association, will help landlords retrofit and improve energy efficiency on their properties. Vancouver Foundation donors gave a \$10,000 grant to the project.

Biodiversity on display

UBC's new Beaty Biodiversity Museum has one very large roof. The new facility houses UBC's spectacular biological collections of over two million specimens of plants, insects, fish, vertebrates, fungi and fossils, along with one extra-large attraction: a 26-metre skeleton of the largest animal in the world – a blue whale.

The museum, which opens this fall on the Main Mall of UBC's Point Grey campus, aims to enhance public understanding and appreciation of biodiversity, and make the research conducted by UBC Biodiversity Research Centre scientists more accessible, through a combination of museum exhibits, discovery labs, outreach workshops, education resources and public presentations.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$50,000 to the project. **VF**



To find out more about any of these projects, or to make a donation, call 604-688-2204.

PUMPING UP

STRONG MUSCLES MAKING STRONG MINDS

BY KIMBERLEY FEHR | PHOTOS TIFFANY BROWN COOPER



SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD JOYCE MAR didn't like lifting weights. But when an opportunity came up to participate in a free six-week exercise program as part of a UBC pilot study on how weightlifting affects cognitive function, she signed up, partly out of curiosity and partly because it was something she thought she should be doing.

When the six weeks were up, she didn't want to stop. And she didn't have to. Vancouver Foundation gave the UBC project a \$50,000 grant to develop a full-fledged year-long study of 155 Vancouver-area women aged 65 to 75.

Results of the study, led by UBC's Teresa Liu-Ambrose, were published in January 2010 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* and reviewed by the *British Medicine Journal*—a prestigious accomplishment for the 37-year-old assistant professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at UBC.

"Simple training with weights improved the ability to make accurate decisions quickly for the women who participated," says Liu-Ambrose, who used a variety of different tests to measure this ability. ▶

One example is the Stroop test, which seems designed to confuse. The test culminates with participants looking at 120 names of colours, printed in colours that don't correspond to the names. Instead of reading the word, participants have to say the colour of the letters.

Weight-training improved executive cognitive functions – processes responsible for such skills as planning, abstract thinking and rule-forming – in the women who took part in the study. These are the functions that make a difference in day-to-day decisions that allow elderly people to function independently. For example: paying a bill, planning a meal or even avoiding a fall.

“A key risk factor for falls is cognitive impairment, and if you look at the research in the past, this has been raised for many years now,” says Liu-Ambrose, who conducted her study out of the Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, run by Vancouver Coastal Health and UBC.

The statistics are daunting. Approximately 30 per cent of B.C. seniors experience one fall each year, and the resulting hip fractures cost the health-care system \$75 million, according to numbers provided by the Centre for Hip Health. As baby boomers retire in droves, the number of B.C. seniors is expected to increase 220 per cent by 2031, which means falls and consequent medical costs will only become more of an issue.

The study also lends credence to the possibility that weightlifting could help avoid the onset of Alzheimer's and dementia.

“Exercise to me is a beautiful strategy,” says Liu-Ambrose. “It can be applied at a population level fairly easily and it has so many benefits other than cognitive function, it seems to me to be an easy sell.”

The study was empowering for the women who participated, says Liu-Ambrose.

“Not many older women think of resistance training and, if they do, they typically use very light weights or a Thera-Band,” she says. “We put them on weightlifting machines and progressed them in a very systematic way throughout the trial. They felt that they were really achieving something that's atypical [among] their peers, and they received a lot of positive affirmation from their families because of it. [We heard] comments like, ‘Now I'm the cool granny.’”

Seniors who are unable to participate in other types of exercise



Brains and brawn (left to right): Joyce Mar, Barbara Lever and Millie Hawkins lift weights to strengthen their bodies and sharpen their minds.

can also reap the benefits of weight-training. Some women in the study couldn't walk much more than a block, but still benefited.

The idea for the study came out of Liu-Ambrose's PhD research (which was also funded by Vancouver Foundation donors). Previous studies had looked at aerobics and cognitive function, and run for shorter periods of time. Other studies showed cognitive impairment was related to falls, but there was a gap: not much research had been done on how to improve cognitive functions so people don't fall in the first place.

Thanks to the grant from Vancouver Foundation, Liu-Ambrose was able to conduct the study she envisioned: one that ran for a year, and with a large enough sample size to be taken seriously. “No one ever forgets the first grant they get

as a faculty member and it really provided that sense of security that I had something to work with,” she says.

They also captured the subjective experience of the participants through a complementary study conducted by Joanie Sims-Gould at the UBC School of Social Work and Family Studies, which was published in *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*. Sims-Gould asked participants to take photos that expressed how they were feeling, and captured their reflections on the benefits of exercise in video interviews.

Sixty-seven-year-old Sharron Williams says her favourite picture she took was of a statue at Kits Point. “It was a man walking and it was a good day and he was very upright in his stance,” she says. “He looked healthy. That was how the exercise class made me feel.”

The exercise program was very powerful, she adds: “Just because you're 65 doesn't mean you have to stop exercising. If you commit yourself and are willing to work, you can easily become a lot fitter than you think you could be at 65.”

As for Mar, she still doesn't really like weight-training. But when the study ended last year and the women were offered a chance to continue working out at the YMCA on 49th and Cambie, she signed up.

“Once I got used to it, I thought, ‘Why don't I just keep it up?’” she says. It wasn't just because of her improved strength. It was “just an overall feeling – I didn't feel as tired,” says Mar. “I noticed it in my clothes. My clothes didn't feel quite as tight as they normally did, which was a good sign for me. I thought, if I can keep this up, it would really help.” **VF**

YOU GO, GIRLS!

| BY KIMBERLEY FEHR



A BIG SISTERS PROGRAM HELPS ADOLESCENT GIRLS GET HEALTHY

YOUNG WOMEN FACE enormous pressure to be thin, sexy and beautiful.

“We are bombarded by media images from a very young age,” says Carly Geistlinger, who is trying to help young girls avoid the pitfalls of adolescence as a volunteer for Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds. The program, run by Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland, advocates healthy eating and healthy attitudes.

Geistlinger herself struggled with an eating disorder in high school. But now that she's 25 she can see through the gloss and shine, the photo touch-ups and the fakery. And through Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, she's helping girls aged 12 to 14 realize it's OK for them to feel good about themselves for who they are.

“I got involved with Go Girls! because I wanted to help girls who are at a stage where their struggles aren't so bad yet, before they have a serious eating disorder or are [engaging in] self-harming behaviour,” says Geistlinger.

Big Sisters of B.C. Lower Mainland has an endowment fund with Vancouver Foundation. And with a \$30,000 grant from Foundation donors, Big Sisters started Go Girls!, which matches girls with adult female mentors and tutors. The program has made a huge difference in the lives of young girls like 12-year-old Rebecca, who is participating at Hillcrest Middle School in Coquitlam.

“Before the program I was eating a lot of junk food,” Rebecca recalls. “I knew it wasn't really healthy, but it was really addictive.”

Now she's choosing healthier snacks like watermelon, pineapple, carrots and, her new favourite, broccoli. “It's not worth dieting, putting yourself through all that pain,” she says. “It's OK to just eat the right foods.”

Each week Geistlinger starts the class by asking the girls to talk about their goals and two things they learned from the last session. Then they play a few games to get moving – wheelbarrow races, or just laughing or skipping around the room. Sometimes they give themselves a standing ovation, just because. “It's being able to act like kids and have fun,” says Geistlinger.

At snack time, the messages are reinforced with balanced snacks – some veggies and some potato chips – so the girls know it's not about counting calories, but rather balanced eating.

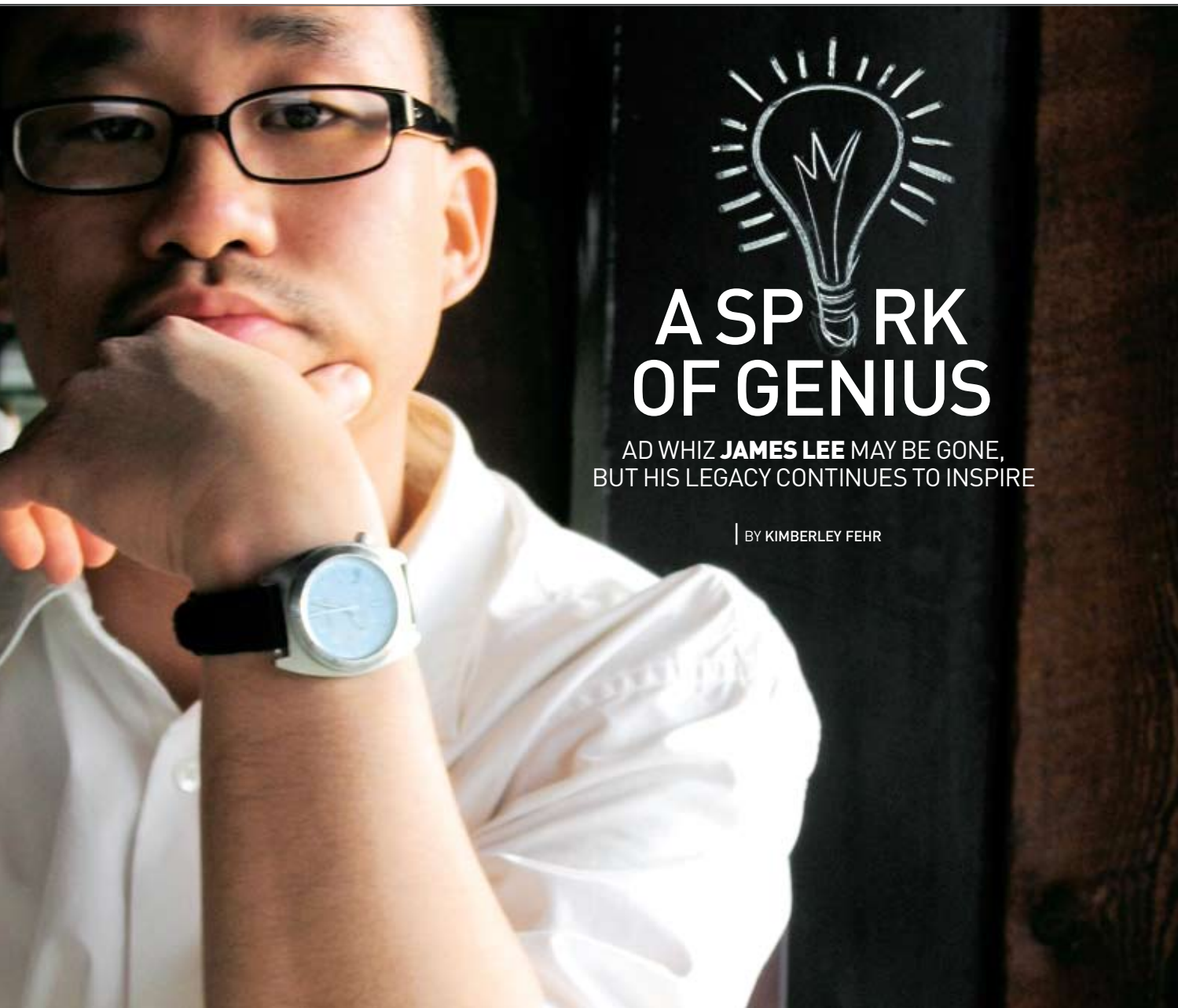
Halfway through the program, says Geistlinger, there was a moment when something clicked and everyone opened up.

It was one day during a game called Wheel of Life, where the girls spin the wheel to pick a subject for discussion, whether it be healthy eating, boys, exercising or getting along with parents.

That day, as the Wheel of Life turned, something changed. The girls began to open up and really share their feelings.

“For me, it was like, wow, I get what this program is about and I believe it's doing what we are supposed to do,” says Geistlinger. “When asked what they learned, the girls responded, ‘to not judge myself, to accept myself, to be comfortable with myself.’ I just wish every school could have this program and every girl could go through this. I wish every girl could be taught to challenge beliefs about self-esteem and body image.” **VF**

For more information about the Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Program, visit: www.bigsisters.bc.ca/en/home/programs/gogirls.aspx. To support the Big Sisters endowment fund at Vancouver Foundation, call 604-688-2204 or visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca.



SUE BELL, an advertising producer with Vancouver-based ad agency DDB Canada, was rushing out the door to her colleague James Lee's funeral when she saw it: a single, beautiful white peony the size of a volleyball.

For 10 years, the plant had never blossomed, and now here it was. Somehow, it seemed like it must have something to do with James. James, who could always think of something just a little bit different. James, who put so much care into the garden when he looked after her place while she was away.

"It was absolutely massive," Bell recalls. "The fact that it was white was

no mistake. James loved the classic black-and-white look."

On May 6, 2007, James succumbed suddenly to a rare heart defect he didn't even know he had. He was 37 years old, a creative superstar in the world of advertising, a mentor to many and, in his brother Stephen Lee's, words: "best friends with everyone."

If there was an award to win, James won it: Clios, Bessies, Pencils, Lotuses – over 500 awards from 2001 to 2007. He even made it to the podium at Cannes, the ad world's Oscars, several times. His humility was such that when his parents came to pack up his things after he died

they found box after box of awards stored away, gathering dust. Nearly two years after his death, he was still on *Strategy Magazine's* top-20 list of writers.

His work is easily recognizable by anyone who watches TV: a Finesse ad that did away with the traditional swoosh of tresses in favour of portraying women's hair through the eyes of somewhat-clueless men. For the B.C. Dairy Foundation, bodiless humans – heads attached directly to feet – to illustrate the slogan, "Don't take your body for granted," and a caveman getting devoured by raptors for making a poor dietary choice like soda pop.

"It just goes to show you sort of have to try everything to find out what you are really good at," says Stephen, who describes the copywriting program at Humber College in Toronto as a real turning point for his brother. "He had no background in advertising, but it quickly became clear he was really amazing at it."

People seeking to break into the business often came to him, says his office mate at DDB Canada, Dean Lee.

As Paul Little, who landed his first advertising job at DDB Canada, recalls: "From day one, James helped me out. He was a mentor for me and a huge reason why I was able to continue and be somewhat successful in this business."

They all became close friends, almost like family. Says Little, "He was always an open door, always had time, was able to read your work and give helpful ideas. And it was always done with laughter. He just wanted to make everyone's work better." And he'd never stop pushing. Bell recalls late-night calls that required her to "pull rabbits out of a hat," but always made the work better.

Once at 10 p.m., the night before a 6 a.m. shoot: "Sue Bell. James Lee here. Listen, I was thinking about this spot tomorrow. I think we need an ambulance and an ambulance driver."

After a tough day on an overseas shoot, Bell heard a quiet tapping at her door. It was James, with ice cream. "James was incredibly demanding when it came to work, but he always made

Left: James Lee at work, where he created some of Canada's most memorable and creative ads. Right and below: Imagery from some of his well-known ad campaigns.



these thoughtful little gestures," she says. Shortly after his death, an idea began to grow – a groundswell of colleagues, family and friends wanting to commemorate him in a way that would endure. Together they established the James Lee Foundation, with the goal of providing a financial award to help aspiring creative minds realize their true potential, as James always had.

Just a year after its creation, the James Lee Foundation has received nearly \$150,000 in donations. The initial contributions came from the founders – his friends and family, DDB Canada and (competitor) ad agencies Rethink, Lowe Roche TBWA and Grip Limited, and the Advertising Agency Association of B.C.

They sought professional advice in setting up the fund. As Dean Lee recalls, "James' father wanted to make sure that whatever was done, was done with the utmost class, and was going to be something that was going to last and stick around. Knowing that Vancouver Foundation has a great reputation was what made us want to work with them." The low administration fee also meant more money would go to the recipient.

The fund kept growing as more people, even some of James's former clients, made donations.

"It's a real measure of his contribution that so many people were interested in participating," says Stephen Lee. "You really don't expect that. I was really overwhelmed by it."

All this meant the fund has been able to provide awards worth approximately \$4,000 a year, starting in 2008. For 2009, it went to Robyn Shesterniak, who was working at a coffee shop to make ends meet while studying graphic design at the University of Manitoba.

When Dean Lee called Shesterniak to tell her she won the scholarship, she responded: "Thank you, thank you and thank you again to the Lee family and everyone involved with the Foundation. It's an honour to be chosen, not to mention that it's incredibly appreciated."

Shesterniak says the award will allow her to keep her mind on the most important things – learning, growing, and staying creative – values James lived by.

He was brave, authentic, curious and incredibly funny. Someone who dared to be different, dared to push hard. Someone who reached out to his younger colleagues and someone who died far too young.

Everyone agrees James probably wouldn't like the attention in his name; all the fuss. But he might appreciate how his ideals are still touching others. And thanks to the will of his friends, family, colleagues and competitors, the James Lee Foundation continues to do what he always did: help others shine. **VF**

For more information about the James Lee Foundation, visit www.jamesleefoundation.com or contact Peter Jackman: peterj@vancouverfoundation.ca or 604-629-5357.

A LONG & WINDING ROAD

ONE WOMAN'S MONUMENTAL JOURNEY ACROSS TIME AND A CONTINENT BECOMES THE SUBJECT OF A NEW OPERA

BY PAUL HERATY | IMAGE CATHERINE CLEMENT

IN THE EARLY 1920s, a young woman named Lillian Alling arrives on the east coast of North America. Part of the post-war crush of immigrants from Europe, she joins hordes of people seeking prosperity, a new world or just a fresh start in America. Like millions of others, she is processed through Ellis Island, and then dumped, dazed and slack-jawed, on the burgeoning streets of New York.

And, like countless others before her, Alling is penniless after the trip, working menial jobs to survive and growing increasingly dissatisfied with the unfulfilled promise of America. But unlike most of her fellow immigrants, she decides to do something about it: she decides to go home. With no money for the boat fare back, she decides to walk ... to Russia.

Over the next three years, Alling is spotted walking, in Chicago, Fargo (North Dakota), Winnipeg and Ashcroft, B.C. By 1927, she has crossed the continental U.S. – a distance of almost 4,000 kilometres – alone and apparently completely on foot, with only the clothes on her back (men's garments at that, as they didn't make hiking clothes and boots for women then) and a piece of lead pipe for protection.

In the fall of 1927 she stops briefly in Vancouver, preparing to head north another 2,300 kilometres to Alaska and the Bering Strait. She ends up spending the winter on the coast, part of it on Oakalla Prison Farm. Some say she was

imprisoned for swearing. Others claim the local constable put her in jail because he was concerned she would try to head north during the bitter winter months.

When spring arrives, Alling is off again, and is seen numerous times on the difficult Telegraph Trail – the only land route between Quesnel and Hazelton. There are rumours of love with a linesman, and occasional glimpses of her travelling with a dog in northern B.C. and Alaska. There is even an alleged report by two Inuit hunters who claim to have transported a white woman across the Bering Strait.

What happened to Alling? Did she find her way home at last? Or did she perish *en route*?

We may never know the answers. For nothing more is ever heard of Lillian Alling. It's as if she has walked off the edge of the earth. Like a trail of footprints in the snow, she disappears; becomes part of the mist, and the myth, of the North.

Now, more than 80 years later, Vancouver Opera is about to premiere a new production that tells the story of Lillian Alling and her mysterious, monumental journey.

This is really a story of parallel journeys, separated by time: Alling's cross-country walk and the effort to bring her life to the stage have a lot in common. Both are long, arduous trips, full of risk and adventure.

James Wright, general director of Vancouver Opera, is the driving force

behind the project. He's not one to shy away from a bit of risk; in fact, he seems to embrace it.

Hard on the heels of another new production – *Nixon in China* – which played during the Olympics, Vancouver Opera will, in just a few months, give the world-premiere performance of *Lillian Alling*. This new Canadian work will close celebrations of Vancouver Opera's 50th anniversary as an organization, and start the new season. Opening night is October 16, 2010, and Wright is basically risking 25 per cent of the season on new work. No pressure.

And he has committed a lot of resources to telling Alling's story. At \$1.6 million, *Lillian Alling* is the biggest and most expensive production Vancouver Opera has ever taken on. With two hours of music, 14 scenes, 12 principals, a chorus of 36, a 60-piece orchestra and more than 175 costumes, it's no small undertaking.

"We're really putting it all on the line with these two productions [*Nixon* and *Lillian Alling*]," says Wright. "I'm biting my nails just talking about it."

But you can tell he's also enjoying the challenge. His voice and smile betray more than a hint of glee at the prospect of pushing hard for the next few months and bringing new, original work to the stage of Queen Elizabeth Theatre.

"There is not much in the way of tonal, post-romantic operatic writing in



Canada, in part because it's such a small field, with small audiences," says Wright. "We believe we have a responsibility to refresh the repertoire with new work. At the same time, it's very daunting for a company [even the second-largest opera company in Canada], and its board of directors, to take that on."

When Vancouver Foundation donors offered support – in the form of a \$100,000 grant over two years – it was a significant boost that came at the right time. "The donation from Vancouver Foundation is hugely important for many reasons," says Wright. "It came early. Early enough in the process that it gave us more confidence about this work."

"It's also a real stamp of approval from a very respected organization. And I'm not pandering to the Foundation. I know this, because I've served on the Foundation's Arts and Culture Advisory Committee, and I know there is real rigour to their process. That signals a lot when you get a large grant from

Vancouver Foundation ... There are just not that many companies that would consider going out on a limb like the Foundation."

It's taken more than four years to get to this point. Four years of research, meetings, libretto workshops, music workshops – a gradual process of moulding the production, filling in gaps in the story and giving voice to this strong, shy woman about whom we know so little.

So does Alling make it home? Does this long and winding road eventually lead to Russia?

Wright demurs. Librettist John Murrell will only say, "Somehow our words and music will have to convey the madness and also the majesty of one woman's dream of walking home to Russia."

We'll have to wait until opening night to find out if Alling ever reaches her destination. **VF**

For more information on Vancouver Opera's production of *Lillian Alling*, visit: www.vancouveropera.ca.

The male sex trade in Vancouver has always existed in the shadows.

rough trade

| BY PAUL HERATY

It's just a pair of socks.

But Matthew Taylor knows those two bits of grey wool could make the difference between a good decision and a bad date tonight for a young man on the rain-slicked streets of downtown Vancouver.

Taylor and another outreach worker are walking through downtown south and Yaletown. At night, this tony enclave of brick-faced boutiques, galleries and restaurants reveals another, seamier side – one not mentioned in the tourist brochures or

condo ads. That's when part of Vancouver's trendiest residential neighbourhood for urban professionals becomes "Boystown," a popular stroll for men seeking sex with young men.

Taylor and his co-worker are making the rounds and making contact, dispensing food, warm clothing and support. Three nights a week they're out, on downtown Vancouver street corners and in the bars. The shifts are late – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., 9 p.m. to midnight and even 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. on occasion. They carry safe-sex materials, needle-exchange kits, beverages, snacks and socks.

On a typical night they'll see 25 to 30 young men. Some are under 18. Many are addicted.

"These guys have very little support," says Taylor. "Some of their realities are broken homes, sexual abuse, identity crisis . . . Addiction is big. We're seeing a lot of serious problems – crystal meth, pot, alcohol, heroin."

Taylor is the driving force behind HUSTLE – Men on the Move, one of the few outreach and support programs for male sex trade workers and at-risk youth in Canada. He leads a team of four. And he knows what he's talking about. He worked as a male escort in Vancouver, on and off the street – sometimes this very street – for six years. "I wasn't the typical guy in the trade," says Taylor. "I got into it late, and I came from a wonderful, loving family. At one point in my life I made some bad decisions.

I got really good at being really lost for a few years . . . That's why I know a full stomach and warm, dry feet can do a lot for making better decisions. It can make a huge difference in terms of somebody's perceptions, and their empowerment. If we can make these guys feel less isolated, feel like they matter, then that's accomplishing a lot."

The lack of support specifically for male sex trade workers led Taylor and a colleague to start HUSTLE as a pilot project in May 2007, in partnership with Prostitutes Empowerment Education Resource Society (PEERS) Vancouver.

While their core funding comes from the CKNW Orphans Fund, a recent grant of \$60,000 over three years from Vancouver Foundation donors has helped keep the program running and enabled HUSTLE to offer mentoring to a youth worker in front-line service and support.

According to Taylor, men often don't feel comfortable accessing traditional services for sex workers because these are usually geared towards women. This focus does not address issues of shame, sexual identity or the repression of emotion that is such a strong part of the male experience.

Taylor and his outreach workers also know how tough it is to get off the street. "When you're hungry and addicted, you're going to do whatever it takes to survive, he says. "Because we're hands-on, we're front-line, in the trenches dealing with people with addictions, we see it all the time," he says.

Gaining trust often takes time, and may involve taking some verbal abuse. "We don't take it personally," says Taylor. "But we come back. We're consistent."

That commitment has led to grudging respect from young men on the street, and a glimmer of recognition from funding agencies. "It's taken a while to build those relationships," he says. "There's some street cred and some recognition that we've been there, done that."

Some experts estimate that only 10 to 15 per cent of the sex industry in B.C. is based outdoors – most of it takes place in homes, hotels or municipally licensed businesses. But no one knows how many boys and men are selling sex in Vancouver, or where.

And until 2007, and HUSTLE, there were no specific programs for men in the trade. The exploitation of young men has never had

Troubles of the trade

Dr. Sue McIntyre is one of only a few researchers to study male sex-trade workers in Canada. Her 2005 report *Under the Radar: The Sexual Exploitation of Young Men* offers a disturbing glimpse into the world of male prostitution. Her findings, the product of more than 150 interviews, back up Matthew Taylor's experience on the street:

- ▷ Most male sex workers (75 per cent) enter the trade before the age of 18.
- ▷ Young men start younger and tend to stay longer in the trade than women.
- ▷ Many male sex workers (more than 40 per cent) are Aboriginal boys and men catering to a customer base that is predominantly middle- to upper-class and white.
- ▷ It's a rough business. Most male hustlers have experienced violence (80 per cent report being beaten up at least once).
- ▷ There are fewer opportunities for males to exit the trade. For example, childbirth sometimes presents a chance for young women to get out, bringing with it support from family or state. This is not an option for men.
- ▷ Exiting the trade is a long process, usually attempted more than once.

the same profile as that of female sex workers. It has always existed, literally, in the shadows.

Though even that's changing, says Taylor. The trade is moving indoors, and online. The street corner is being replaced by chat lines, Craigslist, Facebook and other social networking sites. "Actually it's going back and forth between the street and the computer. The lines are more blurred now," he says.

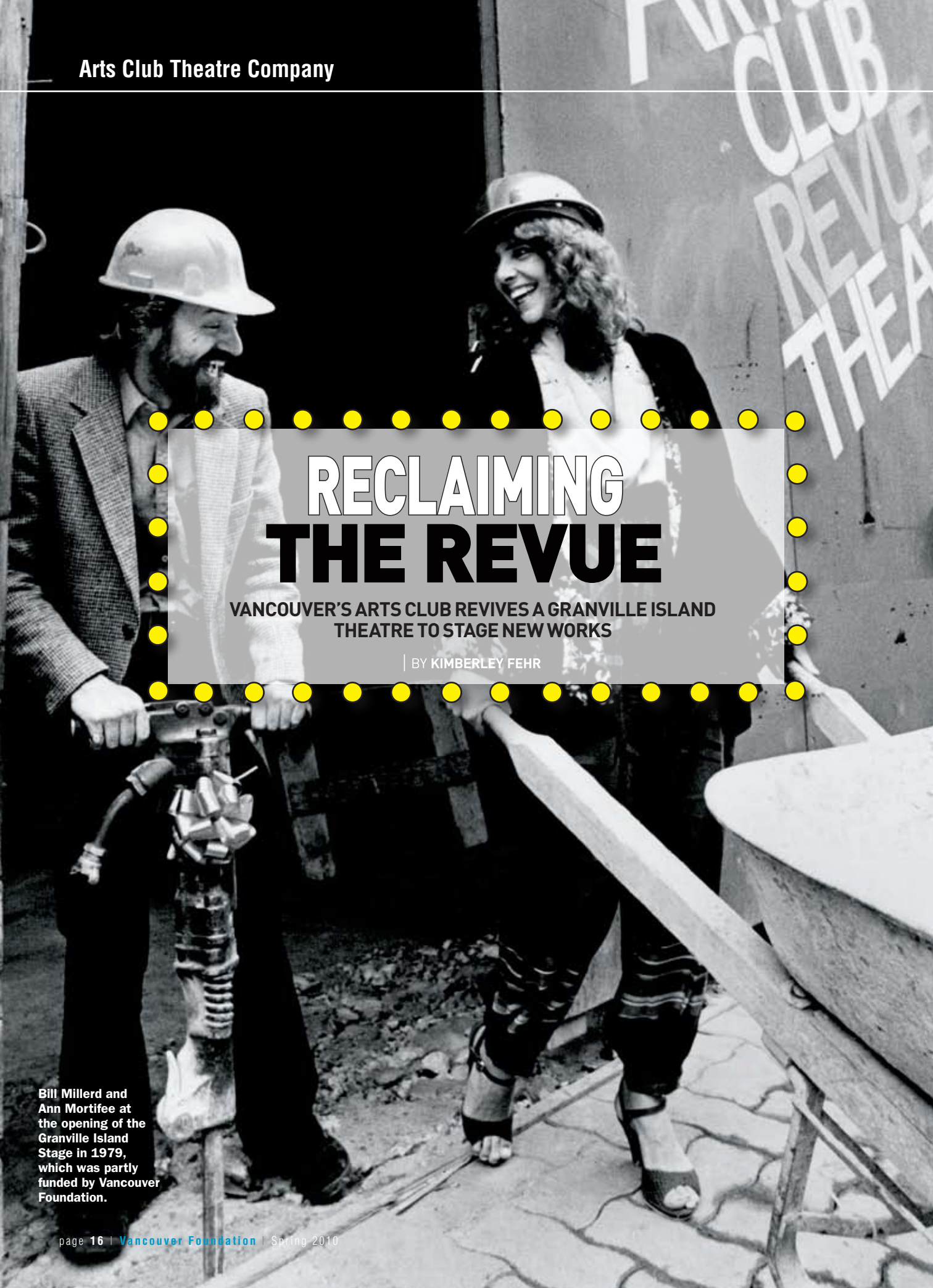
HUSTLE is adapting to keep up. In addition to street outreach, they have a support group for sex-trade workers that meets every Wednesday night. "It's a safe and comfortable atmosphere where men can share their experiences and challenges," says Taylor. "Very come-as-you-are. Very low-barrier."

HUSTLE also has plans to build a life-skills toolkit specifically for male sex workers, and they'd like to explore the possibility of dedicated housing.

In the meantime, the street outreach continues. HUSTLE workers are out three nights a week, in all kinds of weather, making contact with male sex workers and at-risk youth.

It may be just a pair of socks. But for Taylor, and the young men waiting in the shadows, it's a start. **VF**

To find out more about HUSTLE – Men on the Move, visit the website at www.peersvancouver.org or call 778-868-1776. To donate to the program, call 604-688-2204.



RECLAIMING THE REVUE

VANCOUVER'S ARTS CLUB REVIVES A GRANVILLE ISLAND THEATRE TO STAGE NEW WORKS

| BY KIMBERLEY FEHR

Bill Millerd and Ann Mortifee at the opening of the Granville Island Stage in 1979, which was partly funded by Vancouver Foundation.

OTHELLO, WAITING FOR GODOT, and *Death of a Salesman* are all classics of Western theatre. It's easy to forget that before they were considered great, they were nothing more than a spark of inspiration in a playwright's imagination.

It's only because someone took a chance – and took these ideas from the notebook to the spotlight – that these great works had the opportunity to meet their audience, and to entertain, challenge and enlighten the way only live theatre can.

“You have to have people writing for your audience in the day in which you're living, dealing with issues that we all deal with on a day-to-day basis,” says Bill Millerd, artistic managing director at the Arts Club Theatre Company. “Producing [an already-written work] is useful, but it's equally important, if not more important, to have your contemporary playwrights, who live . . . and experience the same things you do.”

Tall and bristled with a trim, grey beard, Millerd is one of few people about whom it's not a cliché to say he has a twinkle in his brown eyes. Maybe that's because he has been immersed in the Arts Club Theatre Company for 35 years, which gives him the honour of being the longest-serving theatre director in Canada. Under his vision, the Arts Club has given life to 70 new Canadian productions, and Millerd himself has directed over 100 plays.

His office is crammed but organized, the walls plastered with posters that span decades of theatre life. Inside his filing cabinet, and outside too, are stacks of hopeful manuscripts. Maybe a few more of them will meet their audience, now that Millerd has realized his long-standing dream to reclaim Granville Island's Revue Theatre.

When the 600-seat Stanley Theatre opened 12 years ago, there was one too many theatres for the Arts Club to sustain. They also had the Granville Island Stage, a 440-seater, and across the lane, the smaller 200-seat Revue Theatre, which they decided to lease to Vancouver TheatreSports. Even



Bill Millerd and Anosh Irani in the Revue Theatre this year. Irani's latest play, *My Granny the Goldfish*, opened the newly renovated stage, which was partly funded by Vancouver Foundation donors.

then, in the back of his mind, Millerd hoped one day he'd get the Revue back.

That day has come. Vancouver Foundation donors gave \$100,000 to help reclaim the Revue Theatre, and revamp it for the rigours of small plays.

“I think Vancouver Foundation always makes a difference,” says Millerd. “But in this case it's a critical difference. Sometimes if you don't get a grant, you figure out how to do the project without it. But this was of such a scope that receiving that grant allowed the project to proceed. Without the grant it would not have.”

A third venue opens up a world of possibilities for the Arts Club. With only 200 seats, there's less risk involved in staging a play: the Revue allows the company to take chances – to showcase new work, bring new plays to light – even do something radical.

Says local playwright Lucia Frangione, “It's really exciting for that venue to be turned back into theatre space. Some of my favourite shows have been in that theatre, so it's great to claim it again. There's a really friendly feel to it down there, a cabaret feel. It's intimate.”

The new theatre opened April 15, 2010 with *My Granny the Goldfish*, which came with the tagline, “Because blood is thicker than whiskey,” from playwright Anosh Irani. The play is about Nico, a young Indian student in Vancouver who is hospitalized. His grandmother comes from Bombay to care for him, armed with nothing more than a whiskey bottle.

Without fancy sets or lavish visuals, the Revue is a smaller theatre good for, in Millerd's words, “Plays that people really have to sit and listen to. It's a more intimate setting where the words become

very important.”

Since 1973, Vancouver Foundation donors have given approximately \$450,000 to the Arts Club. In 1979, the Foundation played what Millerd calls an “instrumental role” in launching the Granville Island Stage with a \$50,000 grant, which was a lot of money back then.

Millerd says, “Vancouver Foundation is so important because the money comes in at the beginning of the production process where it's really critical to get support.”

Funding from Vancouver Foundation donors has helped get several new plays off the ground; donors provided \$30,000 in 2003 for *The Matka King*, also by Anosh Irani, and \$20,000 in 2008 for *Poster Boys*.

“*The Matka King* was the first play that Anosh Irani had written,” says Millerd. From *The Matka King*, Irani received commissions from theatres in Ottawa and Toronto. “Having one of his plays on stage was tremendous for him, and since then he's gone on to write a couple more plays, one of which we did last season. He's working on his third novel. When we started working with him he was right out of UBC. Now, he's an established writer and an ideal choice to open our new theatre.”

That's what comes from taking chances on new works, and new theatres. New writers find their way, new plays see the light of day and, maybe, new classics are born. **VF**

For more information about the Arts Club Theatre Company, visit www.artclub.com or call 604-687-1644. To support the Arts Club, contact Kim Macphee at Vancouver Foundation at 604-688-2204.



The mountain bluebird is one of many species being studied as part of the B.C. Breeding Bird Atlas project, which is gathering comprehensive, province-wide data about bird habitat in B.C.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

LOCAL BIRDERS SURVEY B.C.'S DEEPEST BACKCOUNTRY

BY KIMBERLEY FEHR | PHOTOS IAN ROUTLEY

A **FALLEN TREE** stands between birdwatcher Heather Baines and a pile of bumpy rocks that is supposed to be a backcountry road.

It's the summer of 2009 and Baines, a retired doctor, has driven up the deactivated forest service road hoping to access the Gold Bridge area, north of Pemberton. Her mission: to survey the region for the B.C. Breeding Bird Atlas, a project that, for the first time, is gathering comprehensive, province-wide data about which parts of B.C. are most vital to local birds.

Her red Ford pickup bears the war-wounds of many 20-point turns on narrow backcountry roads like this one. It's red for a reason – she wanted it to be as visible as possible from the air should she break down in a place like this.

She steps down from the truck to survey the situation. After pausing for a moment, she turns back to the truck. The situation calls for a portable chainsaw, one of many helpful gadgets she happens to have in the back of her truck, just in case.

She rolls the tree to the side of the road and drives on, but only gets a few kilometres further – there has been an avalanche on the road to the lake. And that's that.

She planned to try again, but forest fires and electrical storms conspired against her, and she never did make it to Gold Bridge that summer. But Baines, who volunteers as regional coordinator of the B.C. Breeding Bird Atlas for the Pemberton area, managed to log over 400 hours of birding in 2009, and she still has three

more summers left of the project to explore the area.

This type of birding is more extreme than most, and it's done with a purpose. Over 950 birdwatchers across the province are coming together in an effort to survey the nooks and crannies of B.C.; the high mountains and forgotten valleys – places few people ever get to see.

Thanks in part to a \$50,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation donors to Bird Studies Canada (the non-profit organization leading this project), the online database is well underway, and is already being used in conservation planning decisions – as a record of what we have, and what we have lost. Peter Davidson, B.C. program manager for Bird Studies Canada, says the data is a veritable



Left: A Lewis's woodpecker at a nest cavity, in the 40-degree heat of a Lillooet summer. Vancouver Island used to have a population of these birds in the 1940s. But now they are found only in the Interior, with occasional non-breeding sightings on the coast.

Below: A long-billed curlew makes a "distraction display" to draw predators away from its nest. Many novice birders associate these birds with coastal Mexico, but they nest in the threatened grasslands of B.C.'s Interior.



While driving with the windows open, Di Corrado heard the song of the bay-breasted warbler, which sounds a bit like a high-pitched squeaky wheel. It was an amazing sound because the bird is on the B.C. government's Red List of endangered and threatened species, and according to Di Corrado, is generally an "east-of-the-Rockies species."

Later, at 11:30 p.m., he was camping in the Chilkat Pass and the birds were still singing. A pair of northern shrikes chased a grey-cheeked thrush for a midnight snack.

"At midnight it started to get darkish and there were some ptarmigans that started clucking – I was lying there thinking this could be kind of scary – they sounded like gremlins," he says.

Baines, who can also identify most birds by sound, brings her iPod Touch, complete with an online bird guide and song reference, a recorder to capture a song in case she doesn't know it, a camera, her binoculars and, often, her cardigan corgi, a tiny dog with a big bark that helps her avoid bears.

She says many birds are changing where they go, and their numbers are decreasing – for example, flycatchers – so it's important to document all of this so we can understand what we are doing wrong.

"If we change the world so much that something can't live here, we're changing it for us too," she says.

But the seriousness of the undertaking doesn't mean she can't birdwatch in style sometimes. "I was at Meager Creek lolling around in the hot springs, working hard trying to find band-tailed pigeons, and surprisingly I wasn't finding any," she says. "A forest service guy came and told me to get out of there quickly. I had noticed when I got in that Capricorn Creek did look very brown. He said there was a mudslide coming down and we had better get out of the area or we were going to be stranded. So I did." Just another day in the life of a dedicated birder. **VF**

For more information on the B.C. Breeding Bird Atlas project, visit: www.birdatlas.bc.ca.



BERNIE AND BRIANA

CARING

LESSONS

FOR

IN JOY

BRIANA

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI | PHOTOS TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

“EVERYONE THAT LOOKS AFTER HER falls in love with her. They just get hooked. We call it the ‘Briana fix’ – they all want more, more, more,” says Bernie Shephard, laughing with his wife, Marilyn. Some might think the Shephards don’t have much to laugh about. While their 20-year-old granddaughter Briana is indeed joyful, with angelic wide-set eyes, tightly curled hair and an irrepressible grin, she was also born profoundly disabled. She is deaf, blind, in a wheelchair and completely dependent on others to meet every physical need.

BRIANA AND BERNIE



Taking care of Briana was hard enough for her young parents, who were both tragically killed in separate car accidents when she was young. The Shephards became Briana's caregivers 11 years ago, and that's when their exhausting daily routine began.

"We have to spoon-feed her seven times a day, and change her diapers all the time. At night, Marilyn sleeps in a chair beside her until two in the morning, and then I take the next shift and sleep on a cot beside her. Someone has to be close by in case she chokes, needs a diaper change or has a dream – or just needs a hug," Bernie explains, his face creasing with concern. "Caring for Briana is a 24-7 kind of thing. Our last vacation was 11 years ago, before her mother died."

In addition to the constant attention Briana requires, a litany of medical conditions has required her to undergo seemingly endless surgeries and hospitalizations. It isn't how most couples would want to spend their golden years.

But the Shephards aren't looking for sympathy. "We don't feel put-upon, because she's such a beautiful child," Bernie says quickly and earnestly. "In fact, we feel honoured to have her and to look after her. She gives our life purpose. She wasn't supposed to live very long,

but she just turned 20. In 2005 we spent six months living at [B.C.] Children's Hospital while Briana had all these major operations. She wasn't expected to live, and the doctors told us to prepare for the worst. But Briana proved them wrong, because she's a fighter. She really enjoys life. She's laughing 98 per cent of the time. She just exudes love, and lets us know it every day."

There's obviously a lot of joy in the Shephard household, but there are also some harsh realities. Briana is outgrowing her grandparents' physical abilities and old equipment; their home now presents some formidable barriers. Though Briana only weighs 62 pounds, Bernie struggles to lift her frail body in and out of the tub safely. When his back goes out, the task becomes impossible.

The back steps are another problem. Briana loves to be outdoors, but there are eight steps from the house to the backyard. It's only six feet, but it might as well be 60 – Bernie simply can't get Briana up and down those steps anymore. And she no longer fits into the car seat in the family car, so transporting Briana outside the home has become another major issue.

So the Shephards say they are immensely grateful for a Giving in Action grant from Vancouver Foundation that

will pay for a wheelchair-accessible shower and van, and a lift to access the backyard.

"With the van, we will be able to transport her safely and without a lot of discomfort for her. She has rods in her back and hip stabilizers, so we have to be extremely careful handling her," says Bernie. "The van will be a huge help; we will be able to just wheel her in and out of it. The lift to the backyard will mean she can be out there all summer with us, enjoying the birds, trees and flowers; she'll just adore that. And with the shower, if my back goes out she'll still get bathed properly and safely."

"We're both retired and on fixed incomes, so there is no way we could do this ourselves," says Marilyn. "The help that we're getting is going to improve Briana's life immensely. We don't know how or who to thank, but we are so very grateful." **VF**

With support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Community Living B.C., Giving in Action provides grants to families for projects such as home renovations – including lifts, elevators, ramps, flooring and door widening – and for purchasing wheelchair-accessible vehicles. To learn more, call 604-683-3157.

a calm connection

HELPING NEW MOMS DEAL WITH POST-PARTUM ANXIETY

| BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI

"I WAS TOTALLY SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL," Sarah* says.

Today, she looks like a healthy and happy young mother, with a mane of blonde curls and hip-but-comfy clothing. But shortly after giving birth to her first child, Sarah was seriously worried about her sanity.

"At first I thought it was just normal new-mom worries about whether I was doing things right. But it kept getting worse. I was thinking the baby had stopped breathing and I had to keep checking. I knew it was crazy but I couldn't stop. Then I became convinced I was a horrible mother and that I was actually going to hurt my baby. I felt like I couldn't breathe. I couldn't sleep. I was having panic attacks," says Sarah, her fists clenching unconsciously as she recalls the traumatic first months after her son Benjamin was born.

Sarah was experiencing post-partum anxiety. While most people have heard of post-partum depression – a debilitating condition women can experience after giving birth – post-partum anxiety is not as well known. But many researchers suspect post-partum anxiety may actually be much more common than post-partum depression.

Their logic is that anxiety disorders are the most common of all psychiatric conditions – more than twice as common as depression. Women are much more likely to suffer from an anxiety disorder than men. It follows that post-partum anxiety disorders may be nearly twice as common as post-partum depression – or even more. ▶



Unfortunately, nobody knows for sure how common post-partum anxiety disorders are. Unlike post-partum depression, which has been extensively researched, there's been very little scientific study on post-partum anxiety. As a result, the condition isn't even on the radar of many health-care professionals.

That's a serious concern for Dr. Nichole Fairbrother, a researcher with the Women's Health Institute of B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre. Fairbrother is a vigorous woman with a cheery grin who specializes in reproductive mental health. She worries many women could be suffering unnecessarily because post-partum anxiety disorders are so poorly researched.

"All new moms feel anxious, especially first-time moms. But the kinds of anxiety we are talking about cause clinically significant distress or impaired functioning," she says. "How many women with these disorders are going undetected and untreated?"

These are painful and debilitating conditions such as panic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social phobia, post-traumatic stress disorder and agoraphobia. Not only can they seriously affect a mother's health, but they can also affect her infant and the rest of her family, over both the short and long term.

Possible failure to detect post-partum anxiety is especially frustrating,

Fairbrother says, because "... we have really nice, effective treatments for anxiety, including non-pharmacological treatments." That means women with post-partum anxiety could likely be helped, even those who want to avoid medication because they're worried about possible effects on their babies.

That's why Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$50,000 to help fund Fairbrother's groundbreaking research into post-partum anxiety. Her study aims to find out how common anxiety disorders are in women who are pregnant or who have recently given birth.

"The majority of the studies on anxiety disorders to date have used small sample sizes or questionnaires only, or have looked at some, [but] not all, the anxiety disorders. I think it's safe to say this is the first comprehensive study with a large sample size," Fairbrother says. Fairbrother believes this baseline research will pave the way for the kind of understanding and awareness post-partum depression now has among medical professionals and the general public.

"I felt it was going to be really tough to get researchers going on this issue if we couldn't say it's common. This is a foundational piece that provides a backbone rationale for further research," she says. "It will help get the attention of funders for this issue. And maybe we'll

find that one kind of anxiety disorder is particularly common, and that we should focus in on that. It'll give us a good idea of where we need to go next."

Fairbrother also reports that once she was able to secure funding for the initial research, with the help of Vancouver Foundation, she was then able "to secure a second pot of money to compare women experiencing low-risk pregnancies to women experiencing high-risk pregnancies, to see whether they have different rates of anxiety disorders So we were able to squeeze even more useful information out of our study," she says.

Because the study follows women during and after their pregnancies, and because Fairbrother wanted to work with a large sample size, the study is taking place over several years; it should be complete by late 2011.

Meanwhile, Sarah, the young mother who was suffering from post-partum anxiety, says she believes she was very lucky, because she was able to get help for her condition.

"My husband was really worried about me, and he finally got me to go to the doctor. I didn't want to admit the kinds of thoughts I was having because I was worried I'd have to be locked up or something, but my doctor was great," she says. "She actually knew a fair bit about post-partum anxiety. She told me it didn't mean I was unfit to be a mom, and that she could probably help me. We tried a few different things, like cognitive behavioural therapy and a bit of medication ... things actually shifted pretty quickly. After a few weeks it was a lot better, and after a couple of months I was pretty much back to normal.

"I can't tell you how much of a relief it was to have myself back," Sarah says, blinking back tears. "I'm so glad I can be there for Ben, my baby boy, and not miss out on this really important time with him. I really don't want to think about what would have happened if I didn't get help, and I wouldn't want anyone else to go through it if it could be avoided." **VF**

To find out more about this study, contact the Women's Health Research Institute at 604-875-3459.



DYING TO BE CLEAN

TOXIC FREE CANADA WARNS OF DANGEROUS CHEMICALS IN THE WORKPLACE

| BY ANDREA MAJORKI

IT SEEMED LIKE JUST ANOTHER DAY FOR JANICE*, a cleaner who worked full-time at a B.C. health-care facility.

As usual, the strong fumes from the many products she used to clean and disinfect the bathtubs were bothering her lungs. But like every other time before, she continued to spray and scrub through her discomfort. She had been more or less told to stop complaining, and no one had ever offered an alternative to the products she used.

Janice left at the end of her shift and never returned to work.

She collapsed at home that night, and later died.

A Worker's Compensation Board investigation determined Janice had been exposed to excessive levels of ammonium chloride, and that this toxic level of exposure was likely the cause of her death.

Toxic chemicals are a part of our lives. Thousands can be found in the products we use every day. Products that kill germs on contact, laundry detergents that make our whites whiter, floor cleaners that help us quickly remove dirt and



grease. While these products are intended to make our lives cleaner and healthier, they're also making some people sick.

Especially vulnerable to the effects of industrial chemicals are workers who are exposed every day through their jobs. Some cleaning products used by janitorial workers, for example, contain toxins such as 2-butoxyethanol, styrene and hydrofluorosilicic acid: ingredients that have been linked to tumours, tissue damage and respiratory disorders.

Today there are hundreds of regulations and procedures to protect the health and safety of workers: employers must ensure workers are not exposed to noise levels above certain limits; protective gear must be worn on construction sites and health-care workers have to follow strict rules to protect against the spread of infectious disease.

However, little attention has been paid to protecting employees who use cleaning products that have been linked to serious health risks. Employees like the janitor who cleans your child's classroom each evening, the housekeeper who disinfects your hotel room or the night cleaner who washes the floors and bathrooms of your office buildings.

According to Canada's Workplace Hazardous Material Information System, employees have the right to know if the products they use contain hazardous chemicals, and the right to seek

substitutions. However, it's estimated that less than five per cent of employees understand these rights or are able to assert them.

That's where the non-profit organization Toxic Free Canada comes in. Since 1998, it has worked to promote healthy workplaces, homes, communities and environments. The group brings together environmentalists, health activists, unions, green businesses, parents, teachers, scientists and cancer-prevention advocates to eliminate health and environmental toxins and reduce our carbon footprint.

Through its Community Right to Know program, Toxic Free Canada is giving employees the information and tools they need to protect themselves. Funded by a \$120,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation donors, Toxic Free Canada educates employees on ways to eliminate toxic products from their workplaces.

Mae Burrows is the executive director of Toxic Free Canada. It's a position that perfectly matches her experience and passions. She boasts a list of awards that include the Eugene Rogers Activist of the Year Award, and being named Environmentalist of the Year by the Canadian Labour Congress. For her work in reducing toxins in schools, she was honoured with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment Pollution Prevention Award.

The energetic Burrows can offer compelling reasons for reducing toxins in the workplace. And it's no doubt that after attending one of her Community Right to Know sessions, even the most hardened skeptics race back and purge their homes of common products that are potentially hazardous.

"Disorders from chemicals are like silent pandemics," Burrows says. "So the key is education. Once somebody becomes aware of harmful products, they will take steps to eliminate them."

After leading more than 100 occupational health and safety and cancer-prevention workshops, Burrows is pleased to see, slowly but surely, changes in product usage are occurring. "These changes mean fewer exposures to harmful chemicals and a decline in the destruction of our environment," she says.

Vancouver Foundation first supported the work of Toxic Free Canada back in 2001 with a \$17,000 startup grant. This was at a time when most funders shied away from non-profits that claimed day-to-day products could cause serious health problems.

Since then, Vancouver Foundation donors have supported projects such as the group's Cancer Smart program and Toxin-Free Aboriginal Communities initiative. "With Vancouver Foundation's support early on, we were able to forge partnerships that still benefit us today," says Burrows.

Although she is delivering a frightening message, Burrows is optimistic about the results of her group's work. "This is the liberating message," she says. "We are not powerless." **VF**

For more information, or to participate in a Community Right to Know workshop, visit: www.toxicfreecanada.ca.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

A PRIMER ON FAMILY PHILANTHROPY

BOB MCGILL IS NOT everyone's idea of a revolutionary. But this soft-spoken, self-effacing 65-year-old has changed the world for hundreds of children in Central America and Africa. And it all started with a golf game 10 years ago.

McGill was a vice-president with investment firm Phillips, Hager & North. A friend invited him and a few others for a weekend of golf in the Okanagan. The friend mentioned he had set up an organization called Universal Outreach and had been donating some time and money to help an orphanage in Honduras. By the time the round of golf had finished, everyone wanted to contribute.

"It started in a very small way," says McGill. "We were all friends and business people. And we were intrigued to know that 99 cents of every dollar was going to the kids. First, with help from the local Rotary Club, we got a container, and then we shipped a bunch of stuff to the orphanage. After that, it just kept going."

Eventually they were putting up buildings. They built a primary school in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. Now they're moving on to secondary school education, supporting technical and agricultural learning experiences that provide valuable job skills.

"These are either orphans or street kids," says McGill. "It's been hugely successful to help them become positive contributors to society. The graduates come back and mentor the kids who are there. Through the same group, we've also been involved in Liberia and building schools there."

The project lingered in his thoughts, and McGill decided he wanted his own two children to have that feeling of making a contribution. "Something that my wife and I feel very passionate about is giving back to the community. We've

been so fortunate in our lives," he says. "It's something that both of our parents gave to us, and we want to make sure that our kids and our grandkids gain similar values."

So McGill set up a family fund in the early 1990s at Vancouver Foundation for that very purpose.

"We started to chat about what we would do as a family," he says. "We tried to identify what areas were most important to all of us. And we narrowed it down to three major directions: health care, education and protecting the environment... We also wanted to give locally."

The McGills meet in October every year to vote on where they will spend the money. It's a good time to have these discussions, especially from a tax-planning standpoint.

"It's been harder to draw [the kids] out, as to what was really important, than I would've thought," says McGill. "On

the other hand, when I think back to when I was in my 30s I was very taken up with my career at the time and my family. I didn't have a lot of time to think about the bigger picture and the world at large."

There were a few options for the family fund. "We investigated setting up our own foundation," says McGill. "But the costs were prohibitive. Besides, Vancouver Foundation provides a structure that keeps the overhead under control. From the outset this was an important reason why we chose Vancouver Foundation."

And the way forward is crystal clear. "The way you change the world is through education," says McGill. "It doesn't matter whether it's kids in Honduras or your own kids." **VF**

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