



THE SOS ANNUAL RUN AND WALK: STEPPING UP TO FOLLOW UP FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

By Laureen McMahon

On Sunday, May 24th, lace up your joggers and join hundreds of runners and walkers streaming onto the Richmond Olympic Oval Plaza for the 9am kick off of the 7th Annual SOS Children's Village BC Run & Walk, a major fundraiser supporting SOS homes and programs for foster children.

Kids in foster care face challenges that most young people could never imagine. They endure crises, family breakdown, and perhaps see people they love and depend on abusing drugs or alcohol or suffering mental health problems.

Maybe they have been abused themselves, physically, mentally, or sexually, and their



childhood has been a living nightmare. On average, a foster child's life becomes a travelling circus of seven homes, seven families, seven schools, and seven neighbourhoods.

Foster children are like youngsters abandoned in the aftermath of war. In fact, it was after the Second World War that a doctor, Hermann Gmeiner, decided to find homes for Austrian children left to fend for themselves, homes where they received proper care and, most importantly, unconditional love and respect.

SOS Children's Villages was born!

Lois and Gilles Bouchard, who brought SOS Children's Villages to BC and founded the Run & Walk, say the mission is alive and well because many individuals, organizations, and corporations volunteer their time and talents.

"We help fund five SOS homes in Surrey where foster kids grow up in a family with a mother's care and programs and therapies for their healing and development," says Lois Bouchard. The Run & Walk, she added, is now one of Richmond's most anticipated community events.

"It's a joy to see the athletes and their families having fun on the Oval plaza. With the great riverside location and the spectacular mountain views and so much spirit and camaraderie, how can you lose?"

"Last year, the Richmond Rotary Club came on-board with our Run & Walk Team, so things are just getting better and better. We cannot thank the Rotarians enough for their terrific organizational skills, enthusiasm, and willingness to pitch in for the SOS cause."

SOS BC Communications Coordinator William Brennan explained that the agency continually looks for new ways to solve difficulties faced by foster



children and youth.

“Those who have turned 19 and are no longer eligible for government funding can, without the referral of a social worker or other professional, enter our Transition to Adulthood program to negotiate the challenging next stage of their lives.

“We are tremendously thankful to those who come out each year to the Run and Walk to make such programs possible.”

SOS offers a variety of donation options, including estate planned giving, to benefit children in care today and those who will need services in the future. For information, contact douglasdunn@sosbc.org.

To enter the 2K, 5K, or 10K Run & Walk, to volunteer, or to make a donation for \$20 or more to receive a tax receipt, go to www.sosbc.org/run.



Lois & Gilles Bouchard with MLA Linda Reid & MP Alice Wong

AN EXCEPTIONAL HOLIDAY CHALLENGE

A heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who donated to our Holiday Season Challenge campaign in December. The totals are in and ... drum roll please ... we raised \$21,745! Rather impressive considering the goal for our campaign was \$15,000 - you helped us blow past that!

Before the SOS Children's Village BC office closed for the holidays we were sitting at \$8,000 raised, and after Christmas and the New Year that figure had jumped to more than double. The generosity displayed this past Christmas by the community towards our programs for foster children and youth really warmed the hearts of all the staff at SOS BC. The foster kids we help are so lucky to have our caring donors looking out for them, to lift the heavy burden they carry.

Furthermore, over the holidays, we appealed to the public for gift card donations for youth in our Transition to Adulthood program, many whom lack the funds to purchase life's essentials. The response was overwhelming with over \$7,500 in gift cards donated (a huge increase from \$3,000 the previous year), plus heaps of food hampers and other gifts.

The generous donors included two children age 7 and 9 who decided to give half their Christmas money (\$6 and \$10) to our SOS kids. One young woman came in for a 'special' Christmas gift, a tax receipt for a donation in her boyfriend's name. You see, she hadn't known he had been a foster child until they read our front page article in the Cloverdale Reporter, and he had a very strong emotional reaction to it. She knew that helping our children would be something that would make him far happier than getting another gift under the tree.



**ANNUAL SOS CHILDREN'S
GINGERBREAD VILLAGE AND HOLIDAY
GALA RAISE 24% MORE**

SOS Children's Village BC is thrilled that a total of \$62,000 was raised through the SOS Children's Gingerbread Village, presented by RE/MAX, and the Holiday Gala premiere event. This figure represents a 24% increase over the previous year's \$50,000 raised to benefit foster children.

Ticket revenue alone for the 20th Annual Holiday Gala was up 60% from the year before - the venue at Grouse Mountain, the Peak of Vancouver, reached full capacity with 230 guests. Sponsorship, live and silent auction, and 50/50 revenues were all up as well. Event proceeds support our charity's in-demand neurofeedback therapy, counselling, educational, and transition to adulthood programs for children and youth in foster care.

"This past holiday season was unprecedented for SOS Children's Village BC and our annual Christmas

event," said Douglas Dunn, Executive Director of SOS BC. "With the Holiday Gala celebrating its 20th year, strong interest from the community led to tickets selling out a full two weeks before the Gala, a first for us."

"On behalf of everyone at SOS, I would like to sincerely thank the wonderful team at Grouse Mountain, our corporate, media and service club sponsors - including the German Canadian Business Association - the gingerbread bakers, and every member of the public who helped make Christmas much more special for the children and youth we support who cannot live with their biological parents."

Grouse Mountain has been a dedicated partner of the SOS Children's Gingerbread Village - and preceding Parade of Trees - since 2005, generously supporting all components of the event as the highlight of their Peak of Christmas activities. Significant funds were raised through donations from visitors who had a photo with Santa in his workshop.

Gingerbread Village Presenting Sponsor:



Venue Sponsor:



Holiday Gala Group Sponsor:



GERMAN CANADIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
Connecting our community

Media Sponsors:



Gingerbread Village Sponsors:





HOLIDAYS AT THE VILLAGE

By Kistie Singh, Village Director & Education Coordinator

At the end of 2014, the kids and families at the Village were fortunate to team up with a new corporate sponsor, Qoola Frozen Yogurt. Unlike many organizations in our community, Qoola has a strong piece of community involvement and giving practices. This year, Qoola teamed up with SOS to deliver an incredible Christmas Party. Over 20 members from their organization and all of our families at our Village attended this event and it was a huge win!

All the kids met their sponsors directly and were given gifts for Christmas, and even the caregivers, including the dads, were given gifts as well. We shared a few dances and holiday carols and then spent the evening enjoying Qoola frozen yogurt and their amazing paninis and treats. CEO Warrick Chu made an amazing speech on the importance of being involved in the community and giving back. It touched our families so much, that one spoke out about how humbled and blessed she felt that they chose to give back to their community here at SOS.

Warrick feels strongly towards the foster kids in our care - when Warrick was just a youth he had to find his own way in life without the support of his family and was able to find the path to success. He hopes to continue influencing and inspiring children to reach for their absolute best. Qoola's partnership and involvement this Christmas was just the beginning of a growing relationship and we look forward to working with them in 2015!



BC Lion Adam Bighill talks to the kids with Warrick Chu on the right

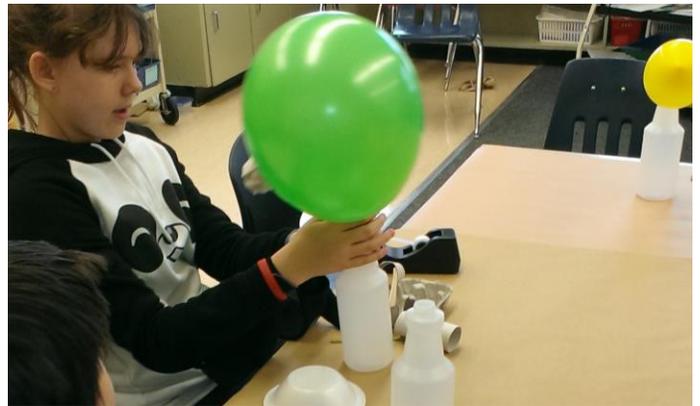
LEARNING CLUB GOAL ACHIEVED

By Kistie Singh, Village Director & Education Coordinator

Kicking off the 2015 year, our Learning Club managed to reach our goal of 200 students enrolled. We now have 200 kids registered in our Learning Club program including our Village locations and our School District 36 locations in Surrey! This is a huge achievement considering the Club started out with just 15 kids in its pilot phase. We've worked very hard to ensure our goal was reached and we did it!

The program also prides itself on the fact that we are being as resourceful as possible, meaning that any funding we receive for academic purposes gets

pushed into ensuring we are affecting as many inner city populations as possible, and helping families who otherwise wouldn't receive academic and social development opportunities for their kids!

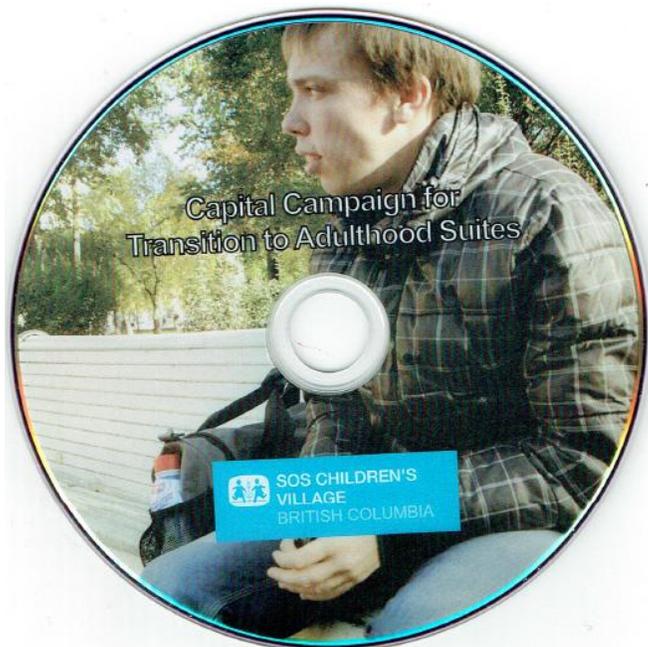




PRESENTING THE BRAND NEW SHORT FILM FOR OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The Capital Campaign for Transition to Adulthood Suites short film has been released! Professionally produced, it premiered at our 20th Annual Holiday Gala in Grouse Mountain's *Theatre in the Sky*, and the video is now available to the general public at www.sosbc.org/notothestreets.

Please help us share it far and wide, and special thanks to film producer Thea and editor Shane. We need your help to reach our goal of \$250,000 to build suites for youth aging out of foster care, who otherwise would be homeless. Our campaign was highlighted in a front page article of The Vancouver Sun about foster care in BC, on Boxing Day. So far we have raised \$50,000!



SPECIAL THANK YOUS

- **BC Gaming** for a **\$100,000** programs grant
- **Boag Foundation** provided us with a **\$10,000** grant for our Capital Campaign
- **Coast Capital Savings** for a **\$15,000** grant for our Capital Campaign
- **Hellenic Canadian Congress** provided us with **\$500** for our Capital Campaign
- **HSBC - Future First Program** granted **\$54,329** for our Learning Club and Neurofeedback programs
- **RBC Foundation** gave **\$500** in honour of volunteer services provided by Sandra Webster
- **RCMP Ladies Auxiliary** donated **\$400**
- **Rotary North Delta** donated **\$1,000** to our Transition to Adulthood program
- **Sook Ching Foundation** for a **\$10,000** grant to our Therapy programs and **\$5,000** for our Sounds of Learning program
- **Steveston #284 Army, Navy, and Air Force Veterans** donated **\$1,000**
- **Sunshine Hills Elementary School** in North Delta donated **\$340** from their Christmas Fair

- **Telus House Ottawa** for **\$1,000** through employee Sid Sidhu and their volunteer program
- **Vancity** for a **\$8,000** grant to our Transition to Adulthood program
- **West Coast Title Search** for a **\$700** donation
- **White Rock Rotary Club** gave **\$1,500** to our Capital Campaign
- Anonymous gift of \$2,000 to our Capital Campaign
- Anonymous donations of \$5,000 and \$2,000
- Devine Elden generously donated \$1,200
- Janet Wilson generously donated \$5,000 to our Capital Campaign
- Alfred Wirth generously donated \$1,000





**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER OF
OUR TRIP RAFFLE**

Sheri Perepolkin, winner of the grand prize in our holiday trip raffle, dropped by our office in Cloverdale to receive her 2 airfare tickets to anywhere in North America that Air Canada flies (including Hawaii, Mexico, and the Caribbean) from our Executive Director. She was very excited, and told us how she had listened to the voicemail telling her she had won during her lunch break at her new job, and tried not to make too much of a raucous in front of her new co-workers!

Sheri plans to take her niece - who has never travelled before - along to wherever she decides to go. We're imagining somewhere warm!



**OUR COMMUNITY GOES ABOVE AND
BEYOND FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

Christmas was quite a bit merrier for the children at the Village in 2014 thanks to the remarkable gifts straight from the heart of some wonderful, kind, generous, donors.

- **Aztec Maintenance** went above and beyond with their month-long toy drive
- **Beachcomber Hot Tubs** stepped up again and made sure that no child went without
- **HSBC** collected a mind-blowing, awe-inspiring 470+ toys
- **Lotus Light Charity Society** showered our kids with an abundance of goodies and our youth with some greatly needed home necessities
- **Sangeeta** stopped in with her incredible children and a mountain of gifts to show the true spirit of giving; thank you **Michael** and **Lana**





HAPPY TO BE HERE

By Brenda McGuire, Thrift Store Manager, Kerrisdale

A couple of years ago, I was at the peak of my 'success': a big house, a thriving business and 400 Facebook 'friends', but I was the most unhappy I'd ever been. To truly make a long story short, I ran away. I got rid of 95% of my possessions, put the rest in storage, and fled to Italy.

Over the following two years, I obsessively studied happiness and how to achieve it. I mined mountains of research and smelted it down to this one nugget: **"Go be a blessing on the world and joy will be fast on your heels"**. I made a promise to myself that I'd return to working only if and when I could be that blessing.

Six months ago I saw an ad for part-time manager in the window of my favourite thrift store and cobbled together my first resume in 25 years.

That ad and resume landed me in a community that understands what I discovered through 18 months of research. I'm surrounded daily by people who are a blessing on the world. Donors bring us beautiful, valuable things, volunteers give enthusiastically of their time and expertise and SOS

team members are consistently warm and kind.

The six months have flown. Under the strict tutelage of long-time store manager Vera (and the volunteers), I am learning to operate this very efficient machine of a store. I think I've got most of the names and faces of the volunteers and regular customers set to memory. I love mining the mountains of donations for gems, and with the help of Chris and Lady Google, I enjoy appraising them.

As an avid Facebook user, I enjoyed creating a page for the store. I love taking photos of all the cool stuff that comes in and sharing it with the online community. I'm happy to report that it has brought in donations and customers, and feedback has been great. The page's 'reach' in the community is gradually climbing!

Also during this time, Vera recruited a team to give the Kerrisdale store a touch of fresh paint. I visited the Steveston store during their very successful Christmas event, and **together the stores had record-breaking sales for the 2014 holiday season.**

I thank the winds of the universe for blowing me in the door of this wonderful organization. I'm happy to be here.



SOS Children's Village BC Thrift Store Kerrisdale Volunteers Jody, Marie, and Sue (from left to right)